

# Putting Resilience into Words and Action

Craig L. Katz, M.D.

February, 2024



Icahn  
School of  
Medicine at  
**Mount  
Sinai**

# Outline

- ▶ Defining resilience
- ▶ Post-traumatic growth
- ▶ Resilience factors

## Reflection

What word or phrase comes to  
mind when you think of  
resilience?

[PollEv.com/craigkatz346](https://www.pollEv.com/craigkatz346)

# Defining Resilience



Icahn  
School of  
Medicine at  
**Mount  
Sinai**









*The power or ability to return to the original form, position, etc., after being bent, compressed, or stretched; elasticity.*

*- Dictionary.com*



# Individual Resilience Defined?

*Resilience to loss and trauma pertains to the ability of adults in otherwise normal circumstances who are exposed to an isolated and potentially highly disruptive event, such as the death of a close relation or a violent or life-threatening situation, to maintain relatively stable, healthy levels of psychological and physical functioning.*

-George Bonnano PhD

## Other Definitions

*Resilience is the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress— such as family and relationship problems, serious health problems or workplace and financial stressors. It means "bouncing back" from difficult experiences.*

- American Psychological Association

**Resilience as an outcome:  
“takes a licking and keeps on ticking”**

*A reintegration of self that includes a conscious effort to move forward in an insightful integrated positive manner as a result of lessons learned from an adverse experience.*

*- Rachel Yehuda, PhD*

# Resilience involves multiple systems

*Resilience refers to the capacity of a dynamic system to adapt successfully to disturbances that threaten the viability, the function, or the development of that system.*

- Ann Masten, PhD

# Resilience as a process

*Resilience is a process to harness resources to sustain well-being.*

- Catherine Panter-Brick, PhD

- ▶ All agree it is about weathering adversity
- ▶ BUT- is it a trait, a process, or an outcome?
- ▶ May vary with the challenge
- ▶ May be different in different contexts, i.e. what resources are available
- ▶ May be different at different times– it can evolve

# Suggested Definition for Resilience

The ability to recover, grow, and adapt following adversity or challenge of any kind.

- Adapted from Jonathan DePierro, PhD and the U.S. National Institutes of Health





*Community resilience has been defined as the sustained ability of a community to withstand and recover from adversity.*

## Components of Community Resilience

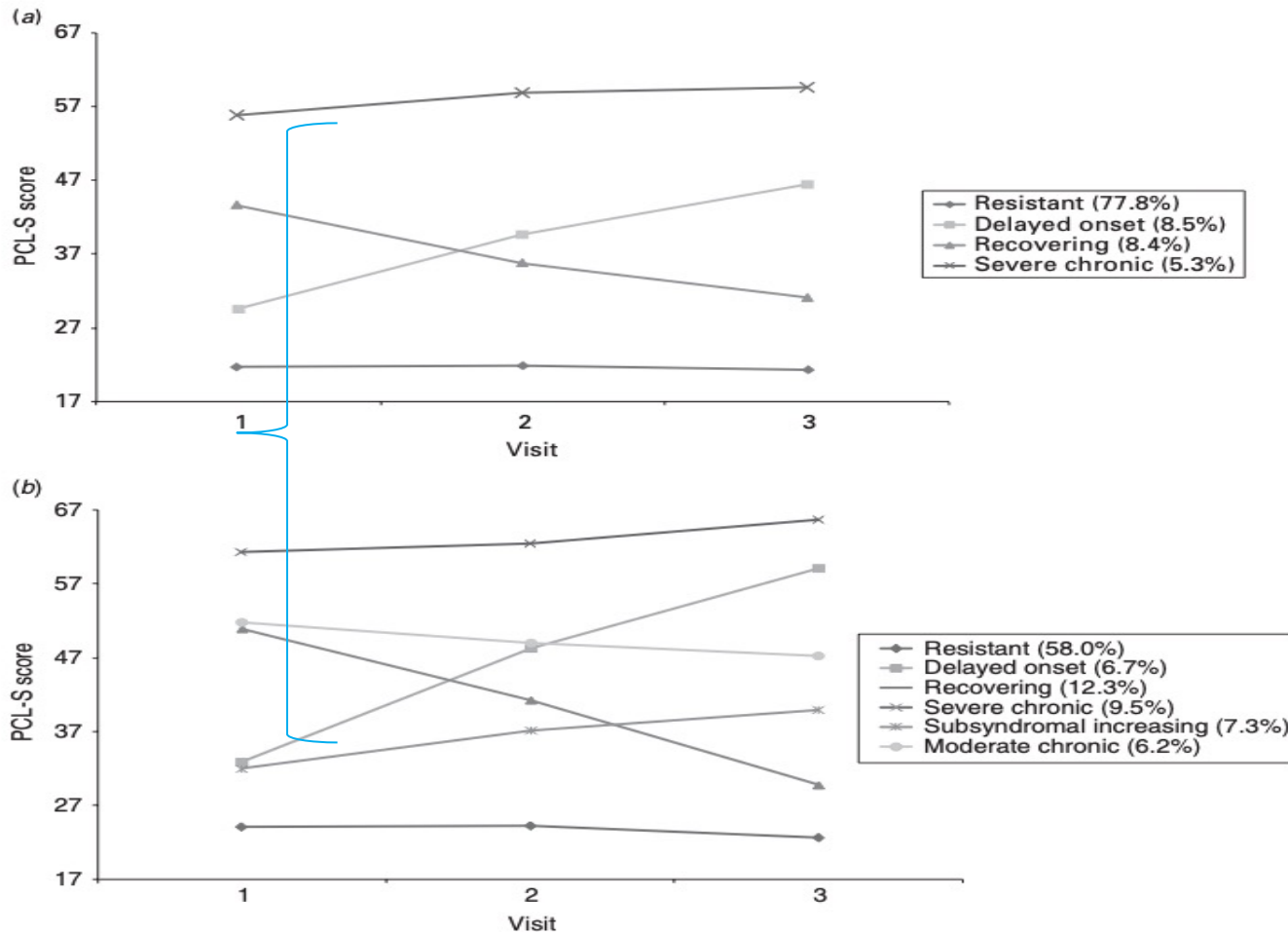
1. Social and economic well-being of the community
2. Physical and psychological health of the population
3. Social connectedness
4. Integration and involvement of organizations in planning, responding, and recovering from community level trauma
5. Effective risk communication

# *Resilience Reserve and Hurricane Sandy*

- ▶ “Hurricane Sandy’s impact was an acute adversity for public housing residents and that their experience was shaped by cumulative social, physical, geographic, economic, and medical vulnerabilities.”
- ▶ Overall, found that residents had a diminished “resilience reserve” = “an inventory of potential capacity to confront unanticipated challenges.”
- ▶ Low socio-economic populations, issues with resilience is not about low resource or capacity levels, but a process of continual depletion.
- ▶ Are they “too” resilient?

(Hernandez, 2018)

# 9/11 Paths of Recovery



**Fig. 1.** Trajectories of World Trade Center (WTC)-related post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms in (a) police WTC responders and (b) non-traditional WTC responders. PCL-S is the PTSD Checklist Specific-Stressor Version; PCL-S scores range from 17 to 85. Probable PTSD is indicated by a PCL-S score  $\geq 44$ .

# Factors contributing to risk

1. Dose of trauma, level of exposure to the event
2. Prior exposure to trauma such as disaster
3. Prior psychiatric history
4. Problems of living prior to the disaster/low socioeconomic status
5. Social support
6. Presence of “secondary stresses”
7. Female
8. Ethnic minority

(Norris et al., 2002)

(Katz et al, 2002)

(Pietrzak et al, 2014)

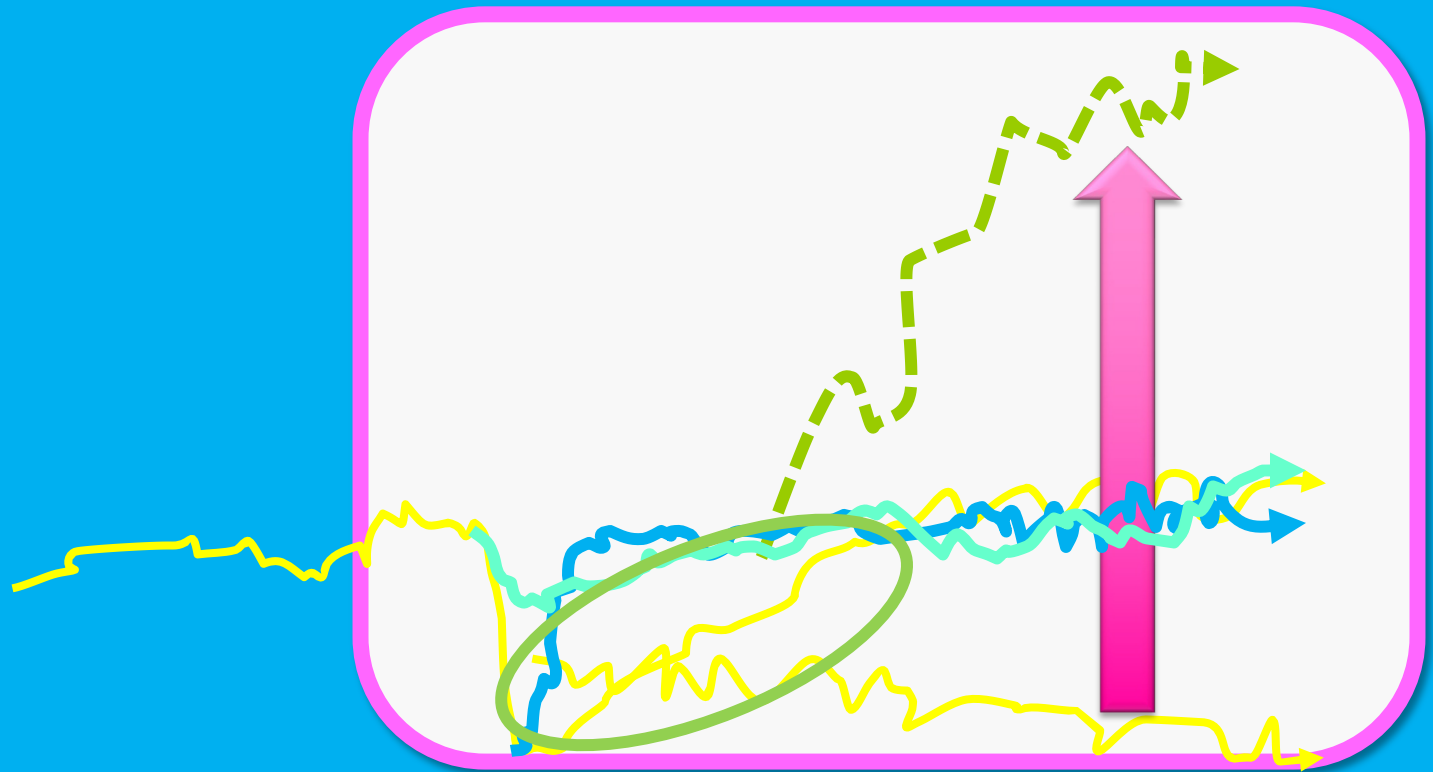
# Post-Traumatic Growth



Icahn  
School of  
Medicine at  
**Mount  
Sinai**



Post-traumatic growth (PTG) = positive psychological changes a person may experience as a result of the **struggle** they engage in following traumatic or highly challenging life circumstances. It is both a process and an outcome.

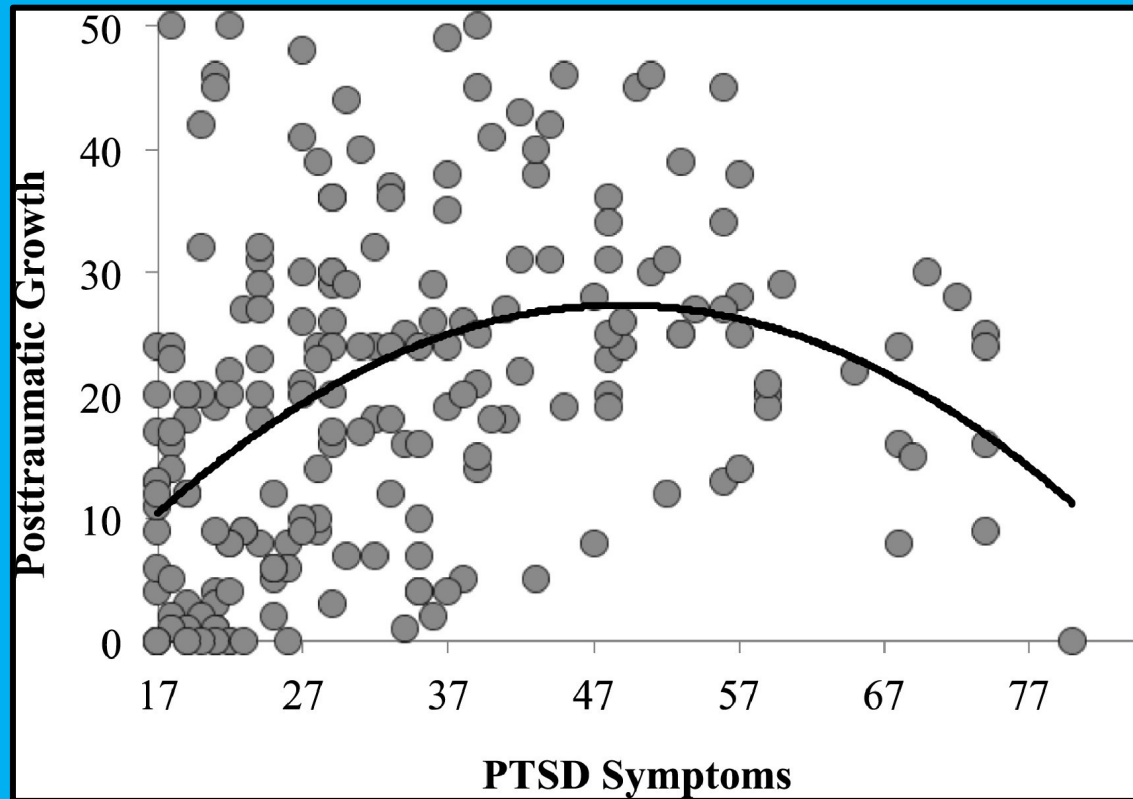


# The Five Areas of Post-Traumatic Growth

1. Personal strength
2. Relating to others
3. Spiritual and existential changes
4. Appreciation of life
5. New possibilities

(Taku et al, 2008)

# Resilience and Growth



Greenberg et al, 2021

# The Resilience Factors



Icahn  
School of  
Medicine at  
**Mount  
Sinai**

# The Resilience Factors

Realistic  
optimism

Facing Fear

Moral  
compass

Religion and  
spirituality

Social  
support

Resilient role  
models

Physical  
fitness

Brain fitness

Cognitive and  
emotional  
flexibility

Meaning and  
purpose

# *REALISTIC OPTIMISM*

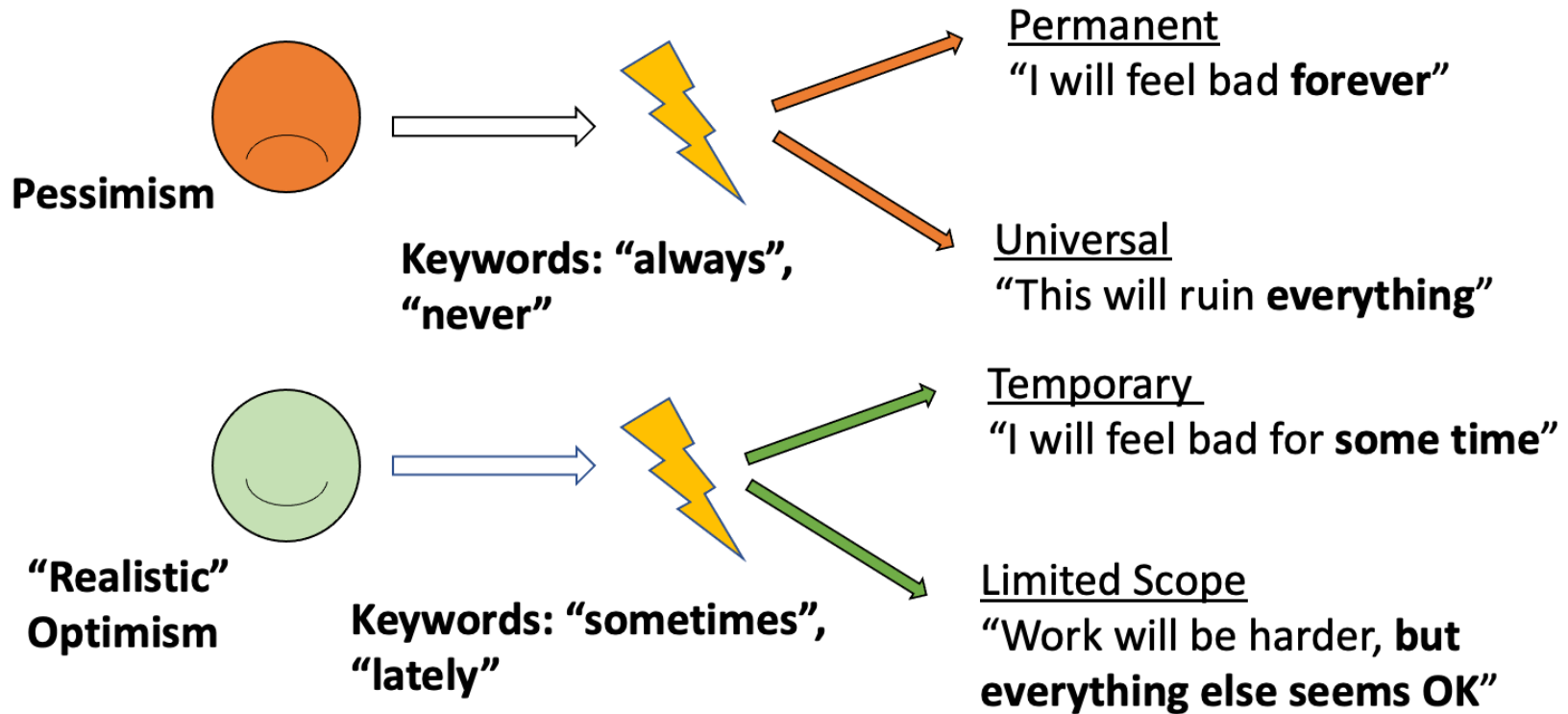


Icahn  
School of  
Medicine at  
**Mount  
Sinai**

“Contrary to popular belief, optimism as a resilience trait does not mean blindly ignoring life’s problems or viewing the world through “rose-colored glasses.” ....As do pessimists, **realistic optimists pay close attention to negative information that is relevant to the problems they face.**

However, unlike pessimists, they do not remain focused on the negative. They tend to disengage rapidly from problems that appear to be unsolvable: **they know when to...turn their attention to solvable problems.”**





# *ACTIVE COPING & FACING FEAR*



Icahn  
School of  
Medicine at  
**Mount  
Sinai**

***“Not everything that is faced can be changed,  
but nothing can be changed until it is faced.”***

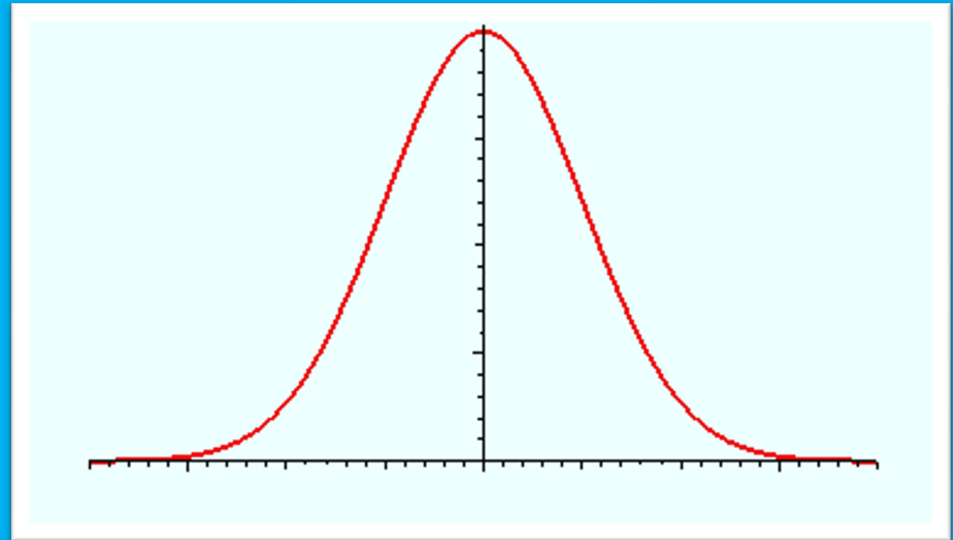
***—James Baldwin***

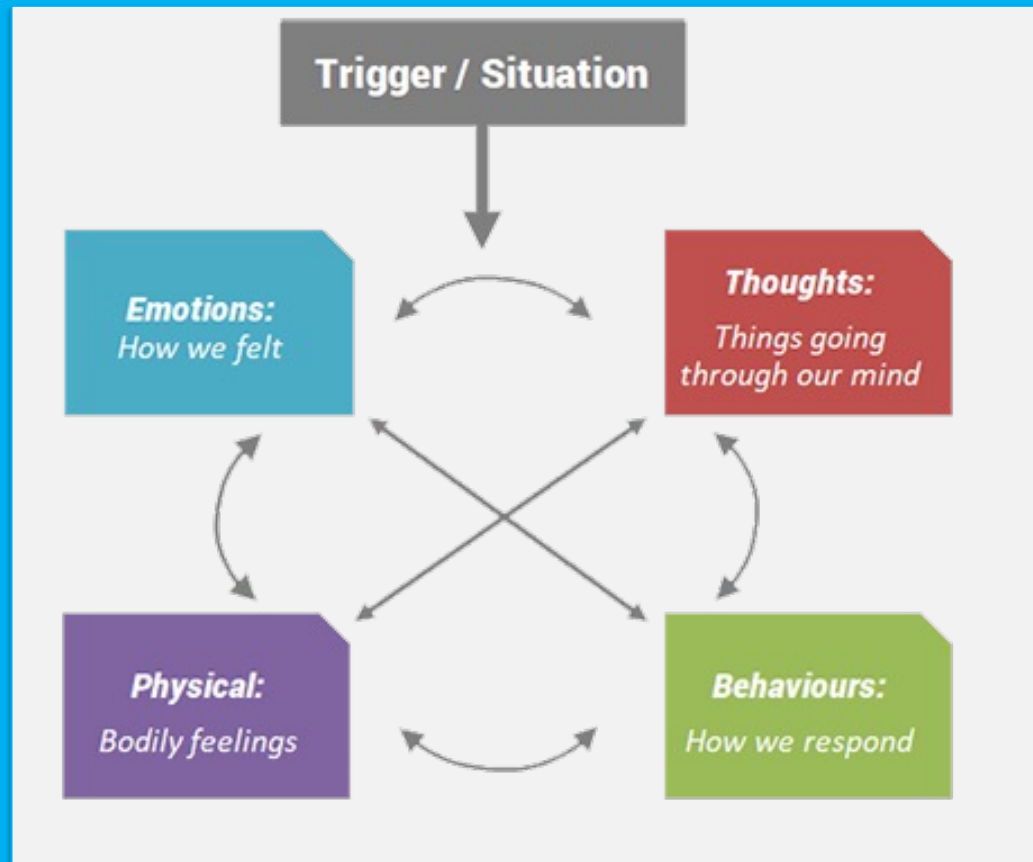
***“There are two kinds of worries—those you can  
do something about and those you can’t. Don’t  
spend any time on the latter.”***

***—Duke Ellington***

# Anxiety and functioning

- ▶ **Some anxiety** can enhance our functioning
- ▶ **Too much anxiety** impairs our functioning





**Examples of Cognition**  
*Negative Cognitions*

**RESPONSIBILITY**

**(I am defective)**  
 I don't deserve love  
 I am a bad person  
 I am terrible  
 I am worthless (inadequate)  
 I am shameful  
 I am not lovable  
 I am not good enough  
 I deserve only bad things  
 I am permanently damaged  
 I am ugly (my body is hateful)  
 I do not deserve...  
 I am stupid (not smart enough)  
 I am insignificant (unimportant)  
 I am a disappointment  
 I deserve to die  
 I deserve to be miserable  
 I am different (don't belong)

**SAFETY/  
VULNERABILITY**

I cannot be trusted  
 I cannot trust myself  
 I cannot trust my judgment  
 I cannot trust anyone  
 I cannot protect myself  
 I am in danger  
 It's not OK to feel (show) my emotions  
 I cannot stand up for myself  
 I cannot let it out

**CONTROL/CHOICES**

I am not in control  
 I am powerless (helpless)  
 I am weak  
 I cannot get what I want  
 I am a failure (will fail)  
 I cannot succeed  
 I have to be perfect (please everyone)  
 I cannot stand it  
 I am inadequate  
 I cannot trust anyone

**RESPONSIBILITY**

**(I did something wrong)**  
 I should have done something  
 I did something wrong  
 I should have known better

*Positive Cognitions*

I deserve love; I can have love  
 I am a good (loving) person  
 I am fine as I am  
 I am worthy; I am worthwhile  
 I am honorable  
 I am lovable  
 I am deserving (fine/OK)  
 I deserve good things  
 I am (can be) healthy  
 I am fine (attractive/lovable)

I can have (deserve)...  
 I am intelligent (able to learn)  
 I am significant (important)  
 I am OK just the way I am  
 I deserve to live  
 I deserve to be happy  
 I am OK as I am

I can be trusted  
 I can (learn to) trust myself  
 I can trust my judgment  
 I can choose whom to trust  
 I can (learn to) take care of myself  
 It's over; I am safe now  
 I can safely feel (show) my emotions  
 I can make my needs known  
 I can choose to let it out  
 I am now in control  
 I now have choices  
 I am strong  
 I can get what I want  
 I can succeed  
 I can succeed  
 I can be myself (make mistakes)  
 I can handle it  
 I am capable, I can choose whom to trust

I did the best I could  
 I learned (can learn) from it  
 I do the best I can (I can learn)

# FACING FEAR

- ▶ Accept the fear: “Avoid avoiding”
- ▶ View fear as a guide/opportunity
- ▶ Focus on goals and mission: “see the bigger picture”
- ▶ Learn about the feared situation
- ▶ Face fear with support: “nudges”
- ▶ Learn skills to address fear (e.g., deep breathing)
- ▶ Make a plan: “fear hierarchy”

# PHYSICAL FITNESS & LIVING WELL



Icahn  
School of  
Medicine at  
**Mount  
Sinai**



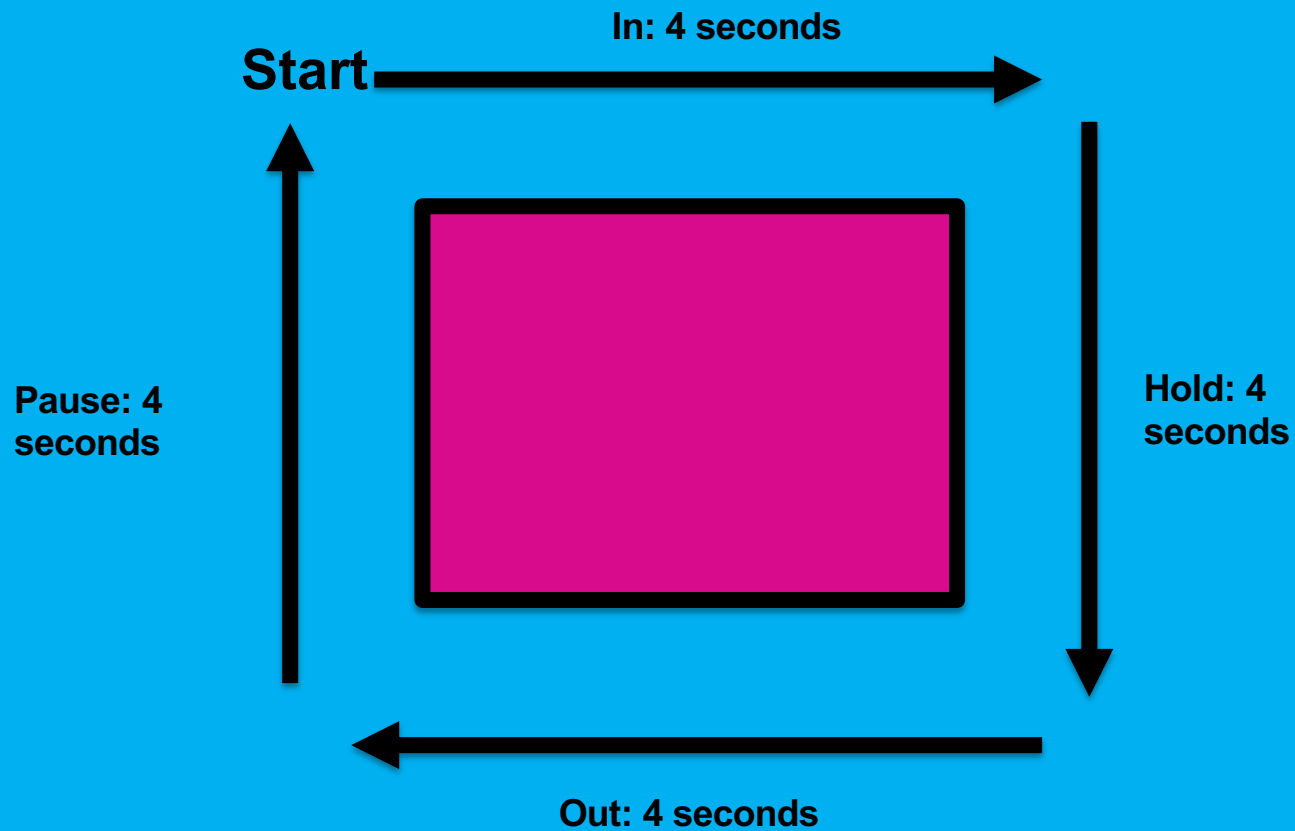
1. Make and stick to goals for physical exercise
  - Give and ask for support from others
2. Practice healthy eating and sleeping habits
  - Meal preparation
  - Sleep hygiene (bed is for sleeping or sex, that's it!)
4. Do one small thing a day – “make your bed”
5. Acknowledge distress you feel – it's real and valid

# Build Stress Awareness

<b>Stress Continuum Model</b>			
<b>Ready</b>	<b>Reacting</b>	<b>Injured</b>	<b>Critical</b>
<i>Doing OK:</i> Sense of mission/purpose, healthy sleep, problem solving/critical thinking, effective and in control, coping well	<i>Transient, more mild distress:</i> Mild anxiety, problems with focus, worry, problems feeling joy and happiness	<i>Increasing severity and risk:</i> Sleep issues, numbness, burnout, disengagement, physical symptoms, exhaustion	<i>Persistent distress:</i> Insomnia, hopelessness, panic, anxiety, depression, substance use, thoughts of suicide

Nash (2011), US Marine Corps and Navy Operational Stress Continuum Model: A Tool for Leaders

## Box Breathing (16 seconds!)



## How much activity do I need?

### Moderate-intensity aerobic activity

Anything that gets your heart beating faster counts.



Tight on time this week? **Start with just 5 minutes.** It all adds up!

CDC Factsheet: [What's your move? \(health.gov\)](https://www.health.gov)

# SOCIAL SUPPORT & ROLE MODELS



Icahn  
School of  
Medicine at  
**Mount  
Sinai**

**“[T]he Tap Code was an essential tool not only for passing on information and organizing resistance but also for preserving sanity. In times of stress and trauma, few things are more painful or more destructive to a person’s mental or physical well-being than isolation. Prisoners used the Tap Code to create a vital social network. Supportive communication was especially important whenever a prisoner returned from being interrogated and tortured.**

**Using the Tap Code allowed the prisoner to unburden himself when beset by worry, guilt, or despair about having “given in” and divulged information, and it provided a way for prisoners to sympathize and reassure one another.”**

# Social Support

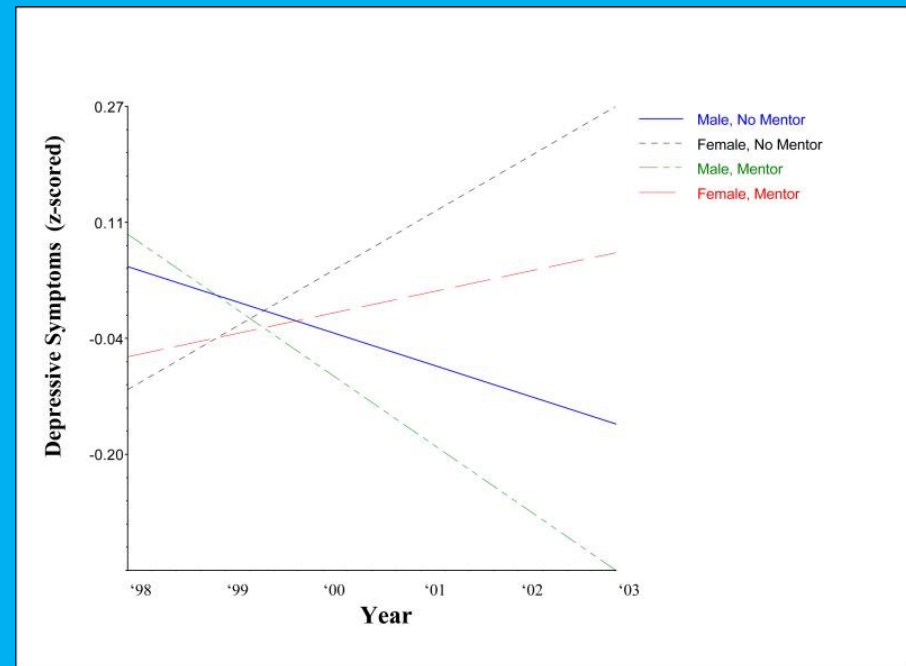
1. Know who I can turn to for support
2. Invest effort in seeking out support
3. Invest effort in giving support
4. Build my social network

# ROLE MODELS

1. Observe the skills of my role model
2. Adapt the skill(s) of my role model
3. Practice the skill(s)
4. Seek feedback on how well you are emulating the role model

## Role models buffer against depression

### Role models buffer against depression



Hurd, N., & Zimmerman, M. (2010). Natural mentors, mental health, and risk behaviors: A longitudinal analysis of African American adolescents transitioning into adulthood. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 46(1-2), 36-48.



# FAITH, MEANING, AND SPIRITUALITY



Icahn  
School of  
Medicine at  
**Mount  
Sinai**

**“Those who have a 'why' to live, can bear with almost any 'how'.”**

**“Life is never made unbearable by circumstances, but only by lack of meaning and purpose.”**

1. Pray or meditate as a daily routine
2. Regularly read scriptures, sacred texts or other writings pertinent to my beliefs
3. Practice a physically active form of spirituality like yoga/martial arts
4. Practice a creative form of spirituality like singing or playing sacred music or writing spirituality inspired poetry
5. Worship or perform other faith-related activities with others

1. Regularly search for meaning in the experiences of my daily life.
2. When facing a challenge, ask myself what is life asking of me or what is life expecting from me?

# CONCLUSIONS

- ▶ Resilience can be defined in different ways but all are about weathering adversity and possibly growing from it
- ▶ Thinking of it as the reserve someone has to deal with unanticipated challenges may be helpful
- ▶ Resilience reflects a mix of psychological and biological factors
- ▶ A number of specific actions and ways of thinking can help deploy or cultivate resilience
- ▶ One need not be resilient in all ways
- ▶ What is one thing that you have taken away from today that you can use to build resilience in your life?