

THE RESILIENT JUDGE: AN EXPERIENTIAL CLE

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GETTING CENTERED

AGENDA

Judges and their Unique Stressors

Understanding the Neuroscience of Stress

What Does Resilience Mean? What are
Reliable Restorers?

BREAK

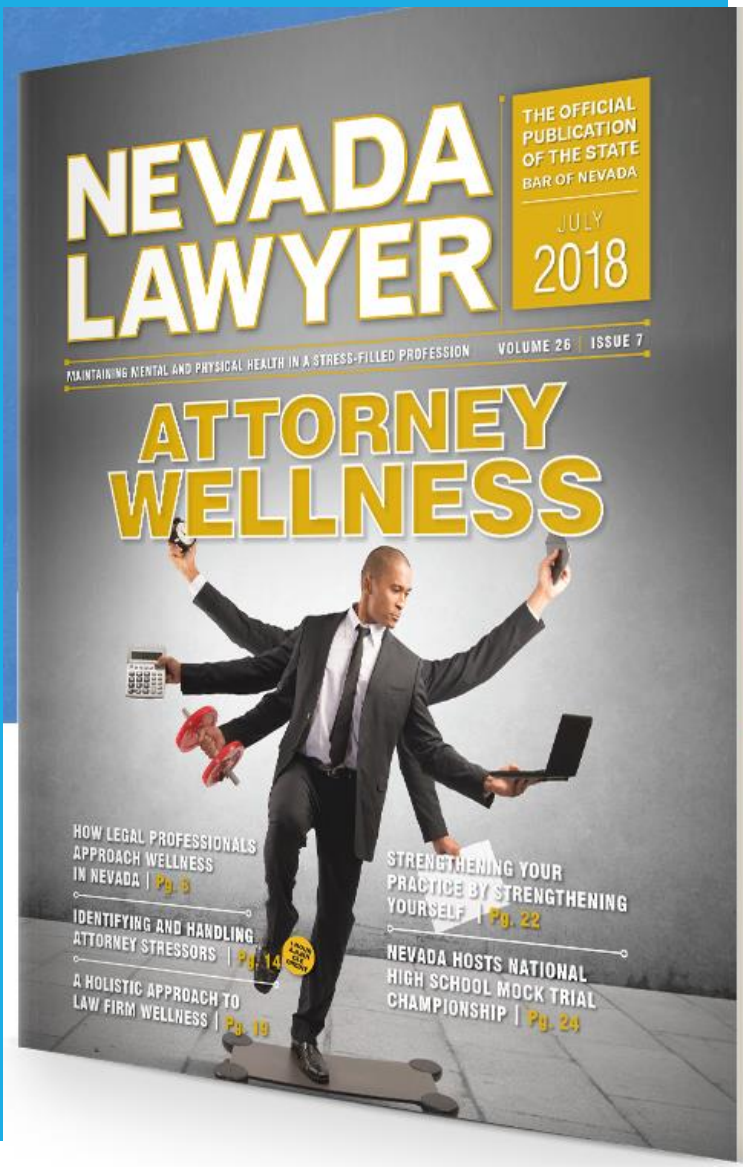
Building Resilience Through Your Senses

Closing Visualization

THE RESILIENT JUDGE

Why us?





NATIONAL TASK FORCE ON LAWYER WELL-BEING

“The Path to Lawyer Well-Being: Practical Recommendations for Positive Change”

- Emphasizing that well-being is an indispensable part of a lawyer’s duty of competence;
- Educating lawyers, judges and law students on practical well-being issues; and
- Taking small, incremental steps to change how law is practiced and how to instill greater well-being in the profession

- 2020 Journal of The Professional Lawyer surveyed 1,000 US judges and they reported:
 - Fatigue and low energy (38.8%)
 - Sleep disturbance (36%)
 - Disturbed attention and concentration (32.3%)

THE JUDICIARY

- 2020 Journal of The Professional Lawyer surveyed 1,000 US judges who reported Depression Symptoms, e.g.:
 - Lack of initiative (22.9%)
 - Preoccupation with negative thoughts (20%)
 - Work is no longer meaningful (17.8%)
 - Can't wait for the day's work to end (16.7%)

THE JUDICIARY

WHY THIS MATTERS FOR OUR PROFESSION

- 18% of attorneys are problem drinkers – almost twice the 10% estimate among American adults;
- 19% of lawyers suffer from depression compared to 3-9% of individuals in western industrialized countries;
- 11.5% of lawyers report suicidal thoughts at some point during their careers;
- Approximately 25% of lawyers are workaholics - double the rate for American adults

AMY & MARGARET'S LEARNING OBJECTIVES



- Understand the neuro-physiological impacts of chronic stress on you and your mental health
- Learn and practice techniques to reduce stress
- Improve your resilience



DEEP BREATHING TO REDUCE STRESS

- Longer exhales cause the parasympathetic nervous system to activate and relax our bodies
- There are a variety of controlled breathing techniques
- You can do them anywhere – at your desk, in court, while driving, at a meeting, while waiting in line



WHAT IS STRESS?

- A state of mental or emotional strain or tension resulting from adverse or very demanding circumstances
- Synonyms: strain, pressure, (nervous) tension, worry, anxiety, trouble, difficulty; informal hassle
- English origin “distress”
- Acute vs. chronic stress

WHAT ARE THE TOP 10 STRESSORS FOR JUDGES?

- Stress related to the importance and impact of decisions (79.7%)
- Heavy docket of cases (73.2%)
- Unprepared lawyers (67.6%)
- Self-represented litigants (62.5%)
- Dealing repeatedly with the same parties without addressing the underlying issues (58.1%)



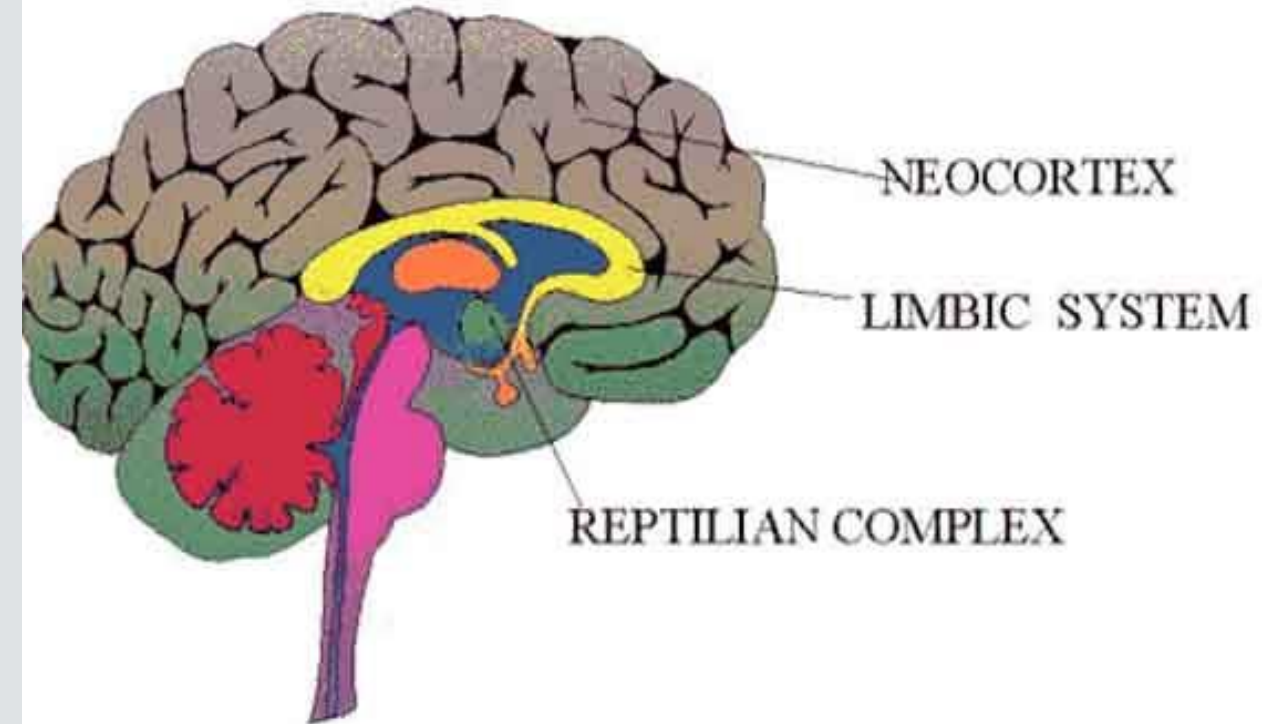
WHAT ARE THE TOP 10 STRESSORS FOR JUDGES?

- Lack of public awareness about the courts (55.5%)
- Long work hours without a break (53.5%)
- Hearing contentious family law issues (50.3%)
- Isolation in judicial service (50.3%)
- Insufficient staff support (49.5%)

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE'RE STRESSED: A LOOK AT THE BRAIN

Brain Basics

- Reptilian – survival
- Limbic – emotions / memories / arousal
- Neocortex – high-order thinking

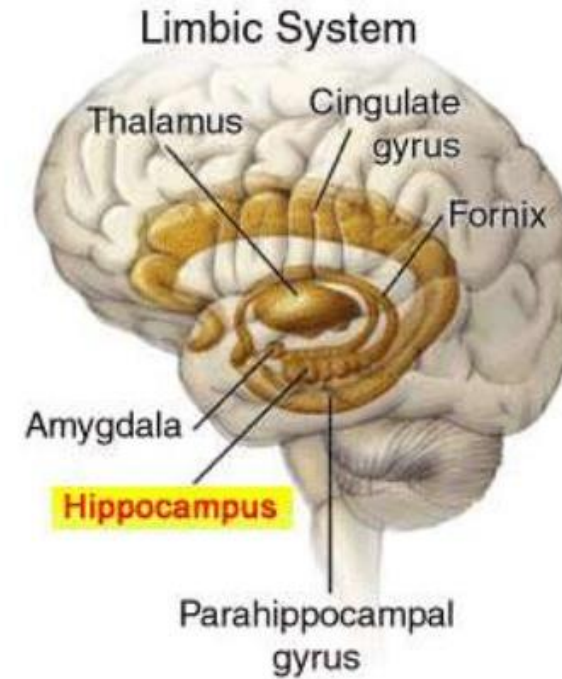


A LOOK AT THE BRAIN

Limbic system: self-preservation;
preservation of the species

Limbic system:

- Emotional reactivity (thalamus and hypothalamus)
- Regulation of aggressive behavior (cingulate gyrus)
- Emotional center (amygdala)



THE LIMBIC SYSTEM

DR.SWATI PATIL

Fight, Flight or Freeze

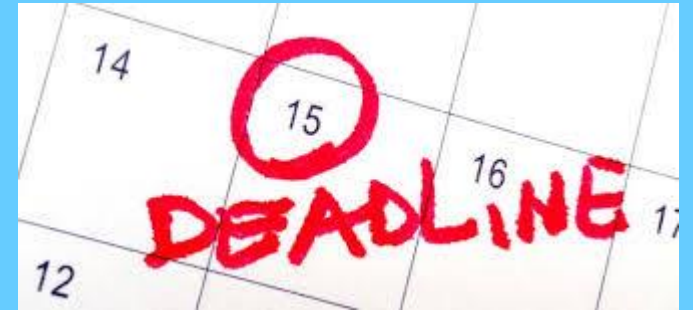
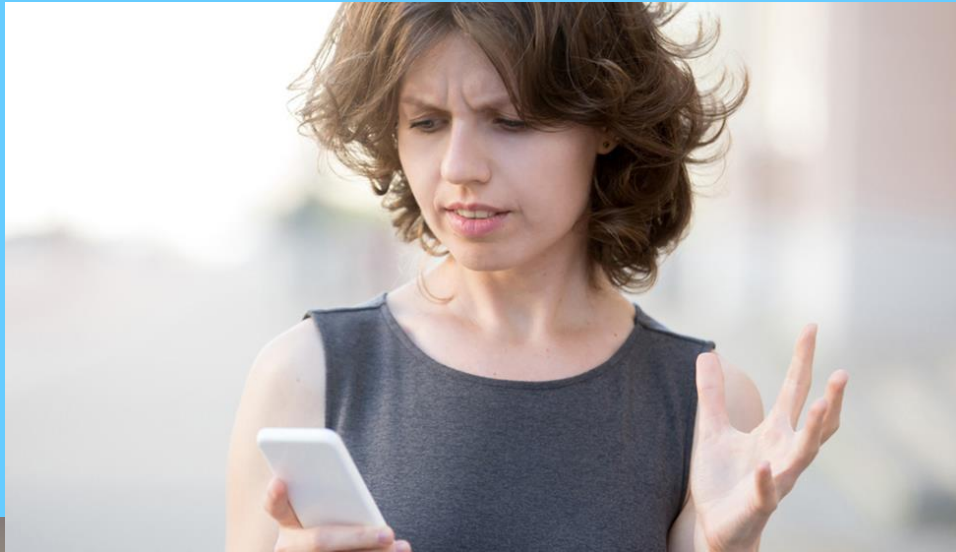
FIGHT OR FLIGHT OR FREEZE

When we perceive a threat,
the limbic system is activated
and the prefrontal cortex shuts
down.

We can't think!



MODERN DAY PREDATORS





The amygdala hijack

Daniel Goleman: Emotional Intelligence

FIGHT, FLIGHT OR FREEZE

- Non-physical threats (modern day predators):
- Exact same reaction:
 - Fight or flee or freeze
 - Overwhelmed by emotions
 - Neocortex is shut down

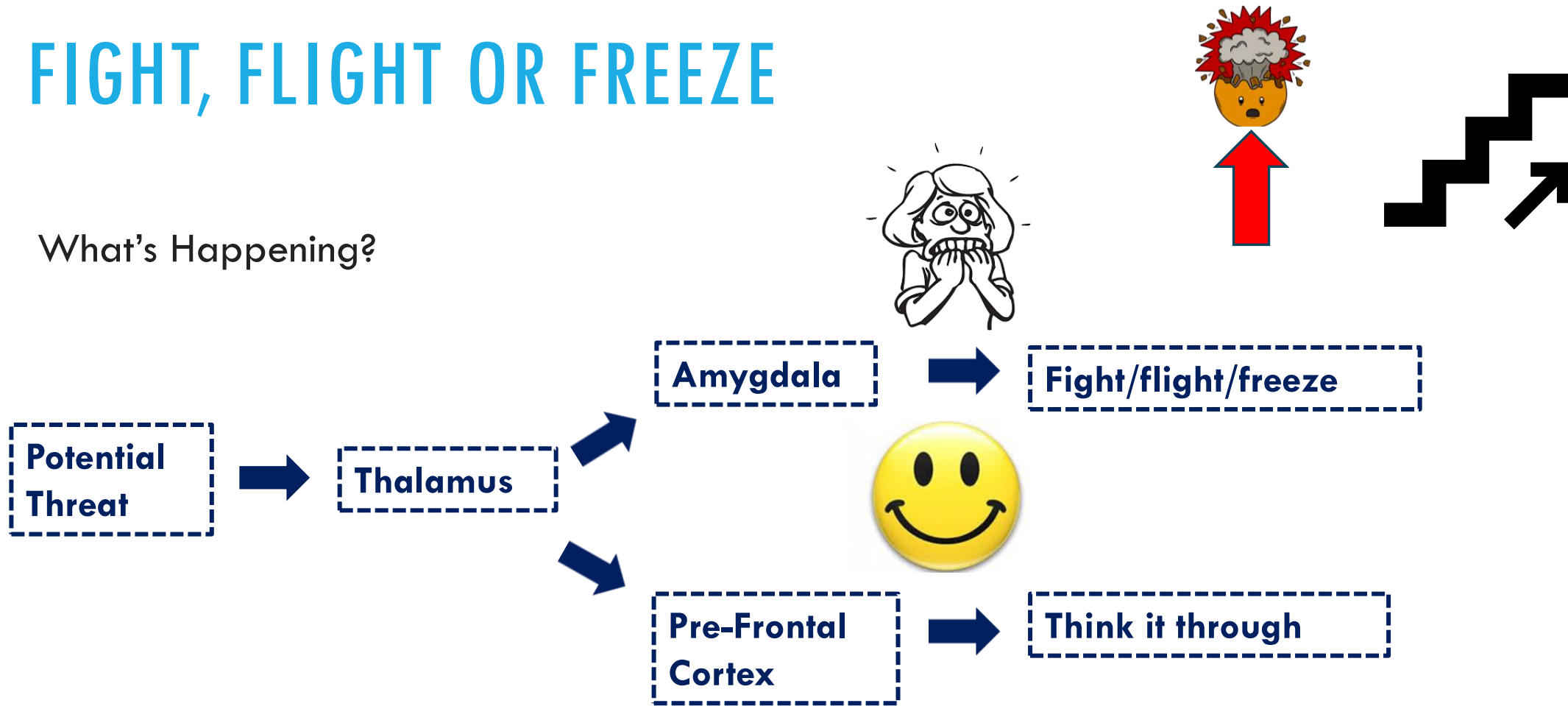
SIGNS OF AN AMYGDALA HIJACK

- Strong emotional reaction
- Sudden onset
- Changes in your heart rate and breathing, an increase in body temperature, a tensing of the muscles or clenching of the jaw
- Post-episode realization that the reaction was inappropriate
- “Going Postal”

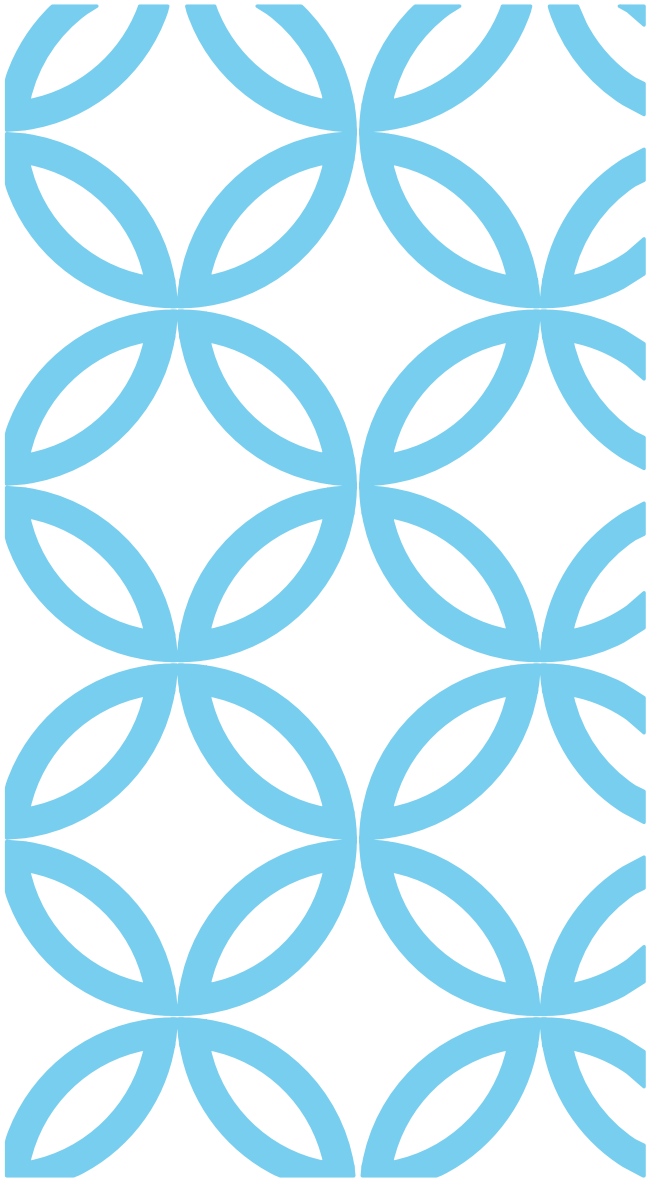


FIGHT, FLIGHT OR FREEZE

What's Happening?



We have five times more fear-based circuits in the brain, and pay about 80% more attention to potential threats than rewards



- It can take 2-6 hours to come down from an amygdala hijack
- Stuck in a reactive mode of anxiety, panic attacks, or unreasonable phobias
- Remember, no access to pre-frontal cortex
- This is not the time to ask someone what they think about something – they can't think
- Goal: Prevent an amygdala hijack in the first place

AMYGDALA HIJACK

STRESS & HORMONES

When we are stressed, our bodies release stress hormones and neurotransmitters like:

- **Adrenalin:** increases heart rate and blood pressure; **does not linger in the body**

Norepinephrine: increases heart rate, triggers the release of glucose (sugar) into the blood; **does not linger in the body**

- **Cortisol:** activates the amygdala and makes us feel angry, fearful, anxious; **lingers in the body and becomes dangerous**

STRESS — ACUTE VERSUS CHRONIC

Short-term, temporary, acute stress

- **Adrenaline and Norepinephrine** can enhance body's response to stress:
 - Help body to move fast
 - Oxygenate brain for better performance
 - Superhuman pain resistance
 - Unleash maximum physical strength
 - Speed up wound healing
 - Fight infection



STRESS: ACUTE VERSUS CHRONIC

Long-term, chronic stress

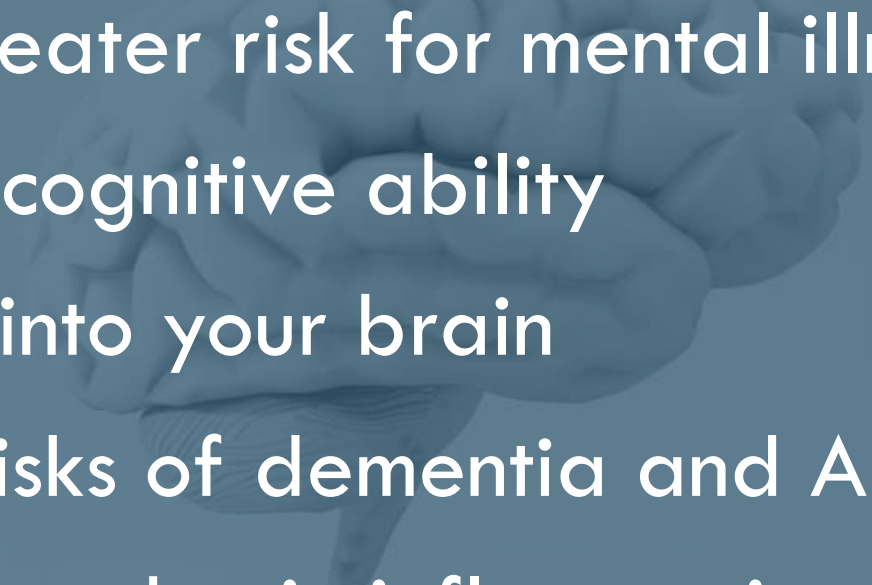
- Causes elevated levels of Cortisol
- Public Enemy #1 – **Elevated Cortisol**
 - Impacts adrenal glands, leaving you wired but tired
 - Linked to weight gain, cancer, heart disease, hormone imbalances, osteoporosis, digestive problems, diabetes
 - Causes memory loss, brain fog, anxiety and worry
 - Changes your brain's function and structure down to the level of your DNA



THE WAYS CHRONIC STRESS AFFECTS YOUR BRAIN & MENTAL HEALTH

1. Creates free radicals that kill brain cells
2. Makes you forgetful and emotional
3. Creates a vicious cycle of fear and anxiety
4. Halts production of new brain cells
5. Depletes critical brain chemicals thereby causing depression

THE WAYS CHRONIC STRESS AFFECTS YOUR BRAIN & MENTAL HEALTH

- 
6. Creates greater risk for mental illness of all kinds
 7. Decreases cognitive ability
 8. Lets toxins into your brain
 9. Increases risks of dementia and Alzheimer's
 10. Contributes to brain inflammation



Ride the rewards pathway = cultivating resilience

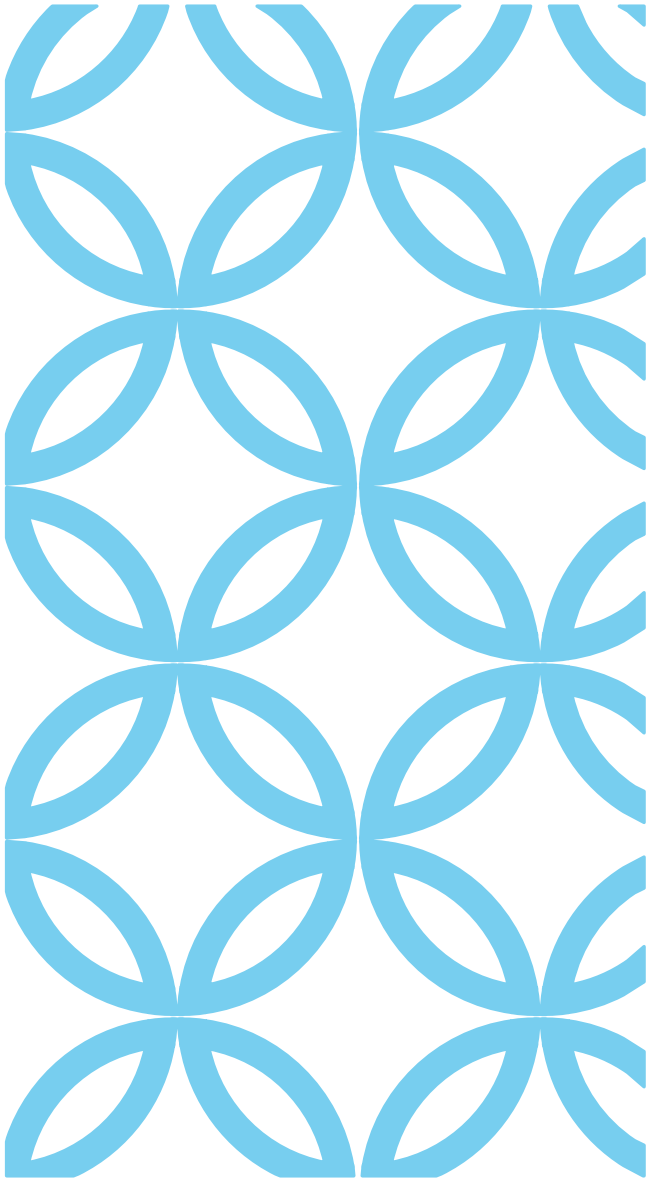
How do we keep the excess cortisol out and instead let in “happy hormones” like oxytocin and dopamine?



CULTIVATE RESILIENCE

- Resilience is the ability to bounce back from stress
- People differ in what restores and depletes them
- Our sources of restoration and depletion change over time

Source: Restore Yourself: The Antidote for Professional Exhaustion, by Edy Greenblatt, PhD.



1. Interruptions
2. Legal Culture of Relentless Drive

RESILIENCE: DAILY DEPLETERS



RESILIENCE: DAILY DEPLETERS

1. Sleep
2. Sunlight
3. Breathing
4. Movement/Exercise
5. Flow
6. Sensory Integration

Worksheet

- A psychophysical state where you are so engaged that you become one with the activity
- Examples: reading a good book, running, and even working on something you enjoy
- Judges:
 - Hyper-focus when researching, writing, preparing, analyzing a case

RELIABLE RESTORER: FLOW




RELIABLE RESTORER: MOVEMENT

SITTING IS THE NEW SMOKING

Sitting for too long increases your risk of:

- Chronic health problems, such as heart disease, diabetes and some cancers
- Mental health issues
- Physical issues:
 - neck and shoulder pain
 - obesity
 - musculoskeletal disorders
 - stress
 - lower back pain
 - carpal tunnel
- Lawyers/judges are generally “desk potatoes”



A background image showing a person's legs and feet in motion, running on a track. The image is dark and blurred, emphasizing movement. A thin blue vertical line is positioned to the left of the text.

People with sedentary behaviors have 20-30% higher risk of all-cause mortality than those who almost regularly practice moderate-intensity physical activities.

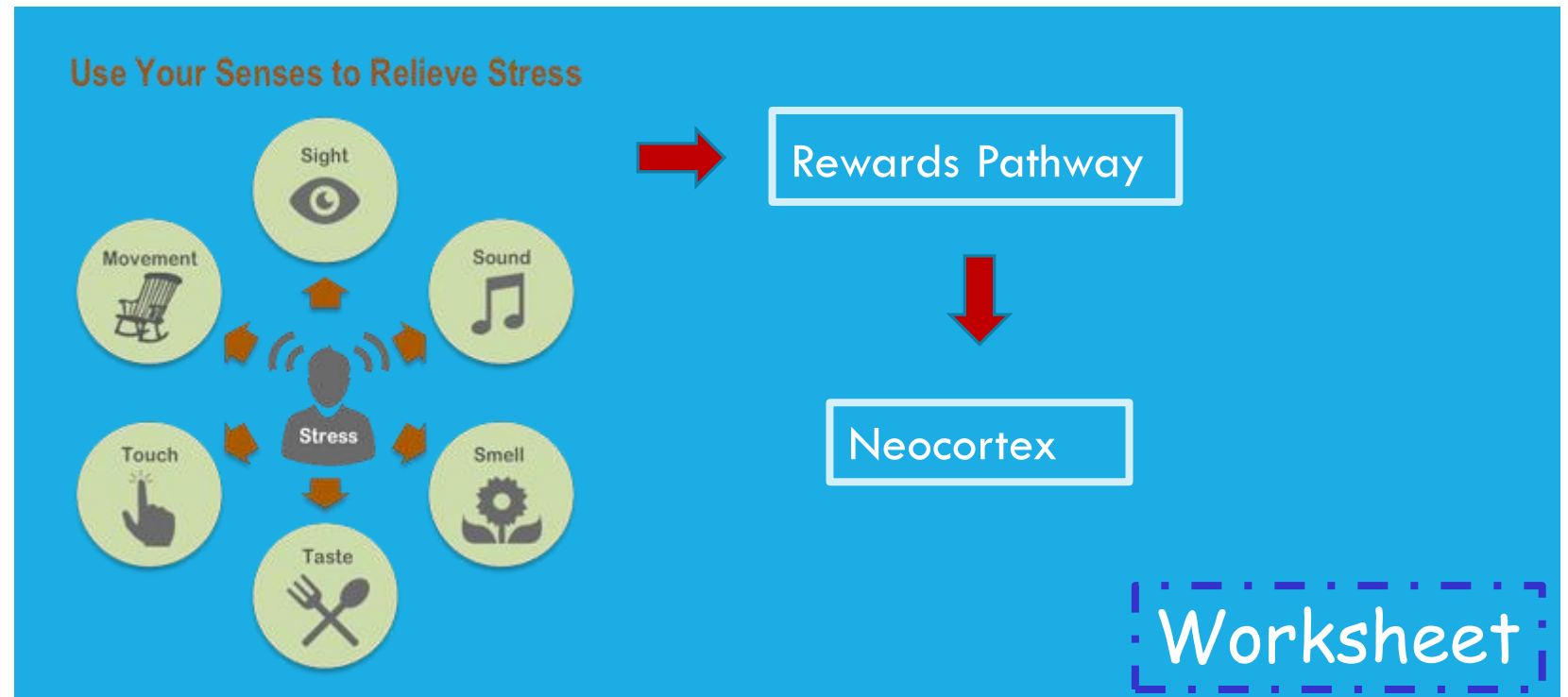
INCORPORATING MOVEMENT INTO YOUR DAY

- Set an alarm to get up and move at least every hour
- Take calls while standing
- Get a sitting/standing desk
- Treadmill desk
- Breathing exercises
- Stretching

Worksheet

The best way to rapidly and reliably relieve stress is through the senses:

- Smell
- Taste
- Touch
- Sound
- Sight



WHAT ELSE CAN WE DO FOR STRESS: SENSORY INTEGRATION

SMELL

- Olfactory nerve sends signals to limbic system and amygdala
- The limbic system and amygdala can turn on our sympathetic nervous system (go!) or the parasympathetic nervous system (relax)
- Scent triggers lasting physical reactions after scent is gone
- Inhaling any scent – good or bad – affects cortisol levels

AROMATHERAPY



- What are Essential Oils?
- Aromatherapy can alter brain wave patterns and behavior
- Aromatherapy can reduce the perception of stress, relax the body, and decrease levels of cortisol

STRESS REDUCING BENEFITS OF ESSENTIAL OILS

Lavender: calms the nervous system, lowers blood pressure, heart rate, and skin temperature

Bergamot: reduces heart rate, blood pressure, chronic pain and even changes brain wave patterns on an EEG

Citrus Fruits: soothe stress and anxiety and lower heart rate in just 10 minutes with effects lasting for almost 30 minutes



TASTE

- Cortisol causes food cravings especially for sugar
- Cortisol triggers an enzyme in our fat cells converting cortisone to more cortisol
- Stress causes us to accumulate more belly fat
- Belly fat cells are linked to a greater risk for heart disease and diabetes and have 4 times as many cortisol receptors as regular fat cells

FOODS THAT FIGHT STRESS

Avocados - rich in glutathione, a substance that specifically blocks intestinal absorption of certain fats that cause oxidative damage

Asparagus - high in folate, which stabilizes mood and reduces anxiety

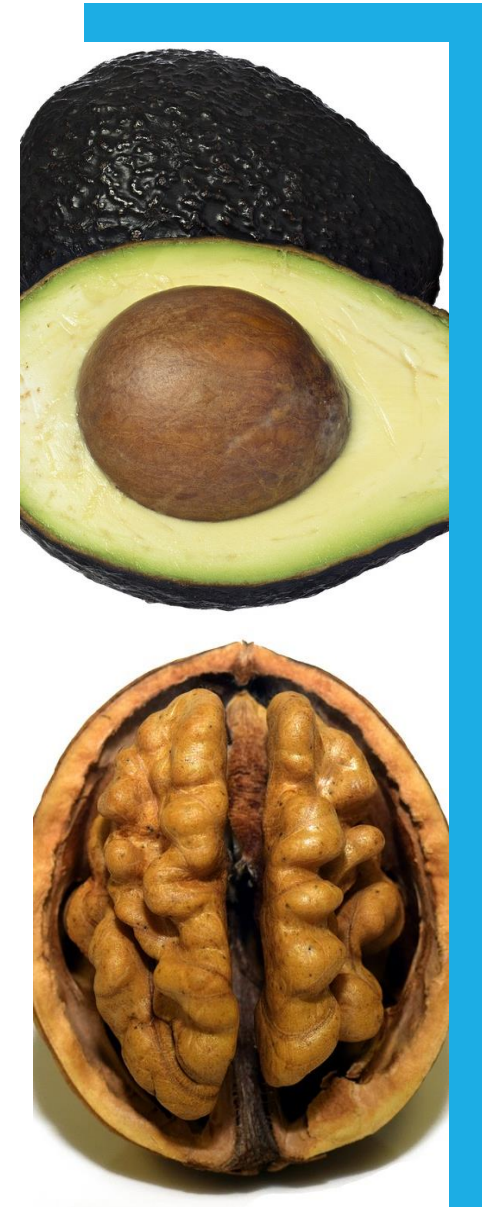
Cashews – zinc; low levels of zinc are linked to anxiety and depression

Oatmeal – serotonin and beta glucan; calming and maintains blood sugar

Oranges – vitamin C; counteracts cortisol

Oysters – zinc; low levels of zinc are linked to anxiety and depression

Walnuts – high in alpha-linoleic acid – reverses signs of brain aging



FOODS THAT REDUCE CORTISOL

Berries – vitamin C; counteract cortisol

Black tea – found to promote post-cortisol episode recovery

Chamomile Tea – calms nervous system and promotes sleep

Green Tea – theanine; improves cognition and brain function

Dark Chocolate – antioxidants; improve mood

Garlic – antioxidants; strengthen immune system

Olive Oil – reduces production of cortisol

Turmeric – reduces cortisol levels

Wild-caught Salmon – omega 3 fatty acids; inhibit cortisol



SOUND: MUSIC

Music

Music activates so many parts of our brain that it doesn't have a center

- Frontal lobe and temporal lobe process the sounds
- If the song has lyrics, the parts of the brain that process language are activated

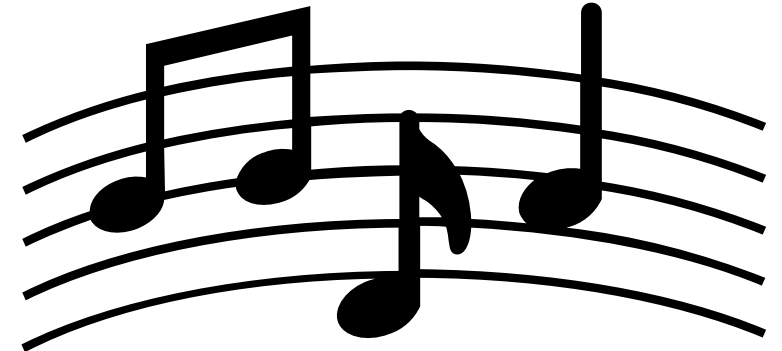
SOUND: MUSIC

Music

- Can trigger neurons in the motor cortex (tap your feet)
- Cerebellum tries to figure out where a piece of music will go next, based on all the other songs it has heard before
- Limbic system is stimulated because it evokes memories

SOUND

- Sound therapies are a way of relaxing and restoring health
- Neuroscientists identified musical tunes having the greatest impact on the human body's relaxation response
- The top song produced a greater state of relaxation than any other music
- "Weightless" resulted in a striking 65 percent reduction in overall anxiety and a 35 percent reduction in physiological resting rates



SOUND: MOST RELAXING PLAYLIST

10. "We Can Fly," by Rue du Soleil (Café Del Mar)

9. "Canzonetta Sull'aria," by Mozart

8. "Someone Like You," by Adele

7. "Pure Shores," by All Saints

6. "Please Don't Go," by Barcelona

5. "Strawberry Swing," by Coldplay

4. "Watermark," by Enya

3. "Mellomaniac (Chill Out Mix)," by DJ Shah

2. "Electra," by Airstream

1. "Weightless," by Marconi Union

<https://www.inc.com/melanie-curtin/neuroscience-says-listening-to-this-one-song-reduces-anxiety-by-up-to-65-percent.html>

SIGHT

- Sight calms your mind by influencing your nervous system with visual information
- Surround yourself with soothing and uplifting images
- Try closing your eyes, taking a deep breath, and imagining a pleasant image
- Keep photos of cherished ones — spouse, child, pet, friends—or a postcard from a happy vacation — on your phone or on your desk

SIGHT

- Keep the color blue in mind. Studies have shown that blue:
- Elicits a high number of positive emotional responses: calm, happiness, peace, hope, and comfort, and a low number of negative responses: sadness and depression
- Helps people doing challenging tasks be less anxious after they saw the color

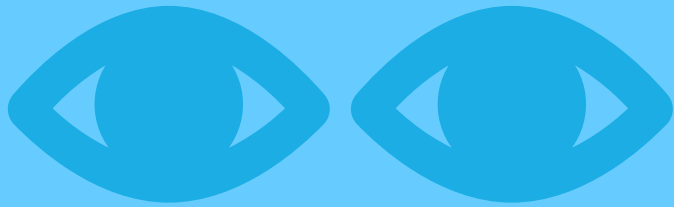
blue



SIGHT

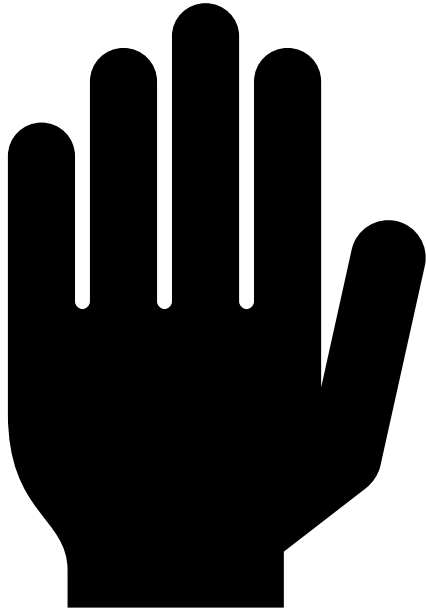
- Our peripheral vision narrows in stress: flight/fight/freeze
 - Our eyeballs actually rotate towards the nose
- We want to broaden our vision, allowing our eyes to relax and take in a wider panorama or view

SIGHT



- Keep your eyes open and look directly ahead of you
- Keep your eyes and head relatively still
- Expand your field of view and soften your eyes
- Focus on seeing as much of your environment around you as possible — left, right, top and bottom — to the point where you can see yourself in that environment
- Hold as long as possible

TOUCH



- Touch activates the prefrontal cortex and signals the rewards pathway
- The right kind of touch elicits the release of oxytocin and counteracts cortisol, e.g. massage

TOUCH

Exercise:

- Your lips have parasympathetic fibers spread throughout them
- Touching them activates the parasympathetic nervous system (relaxation response)
- Take one or two fingers and lightly run them over your lips

GUIDED RELAXATION USING THE SENSES

CONTACT US!

Ms. Tirre is licensed in Nevada and California with a solo practice in Reno, Nevada, practicing in the areas of bankruptcy and commercial litigation.

She is a Certified Professional Coach (CPC) and works with mid-career professionals and lawyers in transition.

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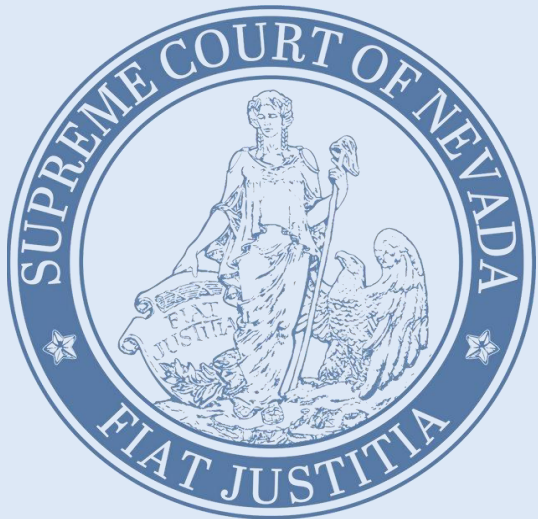
Ms. Crowley has been licensed to practice law in Nevada since 1991. For the past 15 years, the sole focus of her practice has been mediating in a variety of areas, teaching beginning & advanced mediation trainings & conflict resolution workshops.

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The End



2025 Family Law Conference & District Court Judges Seminar

Session Evaluation

Tuesday, April 15th - Friday, April 18th

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Or check your email for the website link.

