



Imposter Syndrome

Resiliency and Well-being Center

Viktoriya Karakcheyeva, MS, NCC, LPC, LCPC-SP,
LCADS

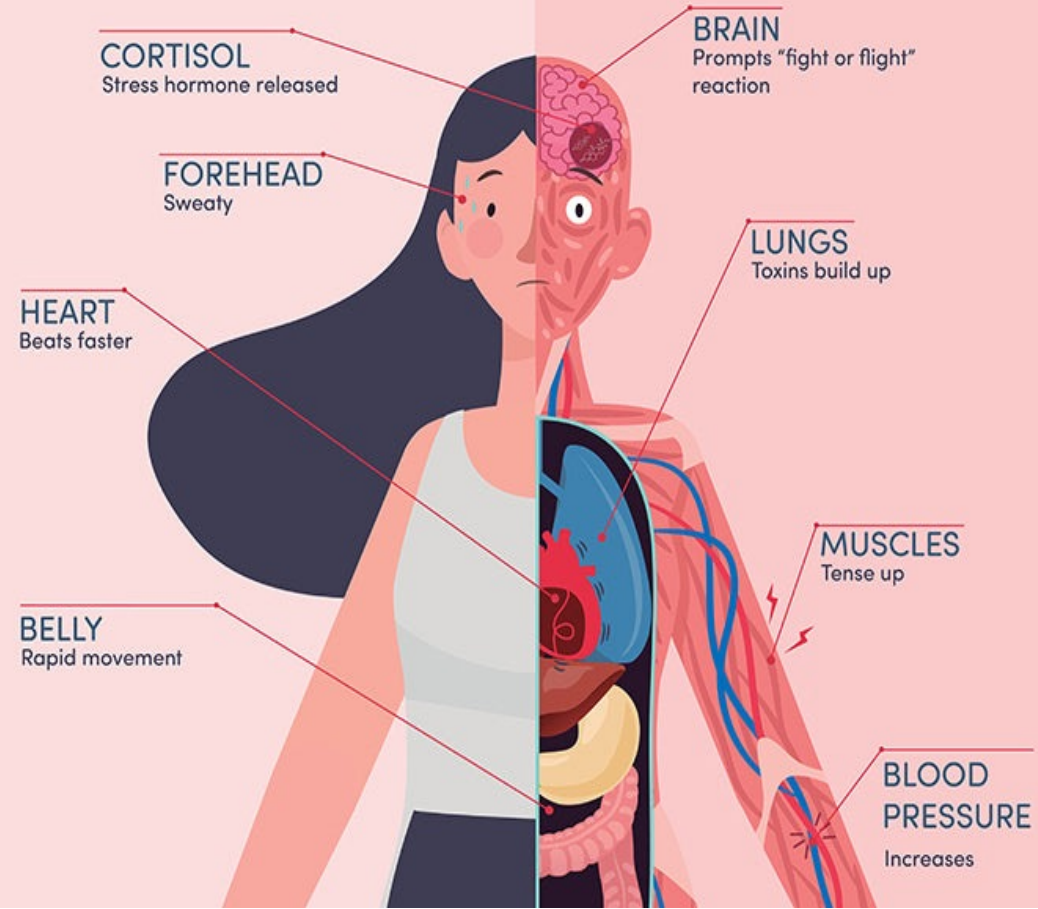
Ashley Drapeau, MPAS, MAC, PA-C, LAC



Breathing Shift

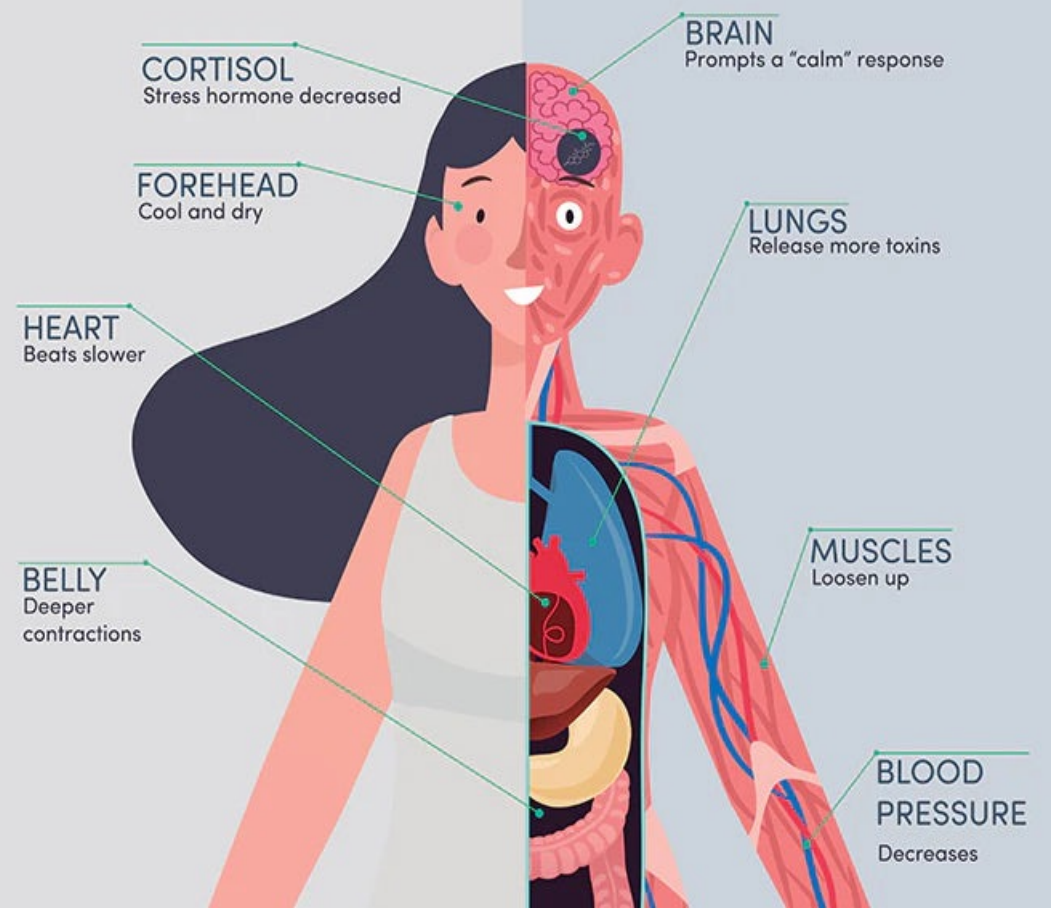
THE SCIENCE OF STRESS

Stress makes your breath shallow:



THE SCIENCE OF THE SHIFT

The Shift causes a longer exhale:



Question to ponder

- What types of challenges are you facing in Law School?
- How are you coping?



Definitions of Imposter Syndrome

- Imposter syndrome (IS) refers to an internal experience of BELEIVING that you are not as competent as others **perceive** you to be. While this definition is usually narrowly applied to intelligence and achievement, it has links to perfectionism and the social context.
- The term that was first used by psychologists Suzanna Imes and Pauline Rose Clance in the 1970s.
- When the concept of IS was introduced, it was originally thought to apply mostly to high-achieving women. Since then, it has been recognized that people of all genders and backgrounds can suffer from IS.

How common is Imposter Syndrome?

- According to the International Journal of Behavioral Science, it is estimated that 70% of the population will experience Imposter Syndrome at some point.
- Anna Weigand Parkman of The Ohio State University states in her publication “The Imposter Phenomenon in Higher Education: Incidence and Impact” that graduate students are at an even higher risk of developing imposter-syndrome, particularly amongst those of the first-generation college graduates.

You are not alone!!!



Sakulku, J. "The Impostor Phenomenon". The Journal of Behavioral Science, Vol. 6, no. 1, 1, pp. 75-97

Parkman, Anna. (2016). The Imposter Phenomenon in Higher Education: Incidence and Impact. Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice.

Potential Precipitants of Imposter Syndrome

Family that highly
valued
achievement

Social context that
alternates between
high praise and
critical judgments

Significantly
different new role
or responsibilities

Imposter Syndrome Types

The Perfectionist: Perfectionists are rarely satisfied with their work, and is shadowed by a consistent feeling that it is not up to par. Rather than focusing on their strengths and capabilities, they hone in on any mistakes or compare their own work to that of others.

The Superhero: Because these individuals battle with feelings of inadequacy, they feel compelled to push themselves beyond healthy boundaries to perform as best as possible.

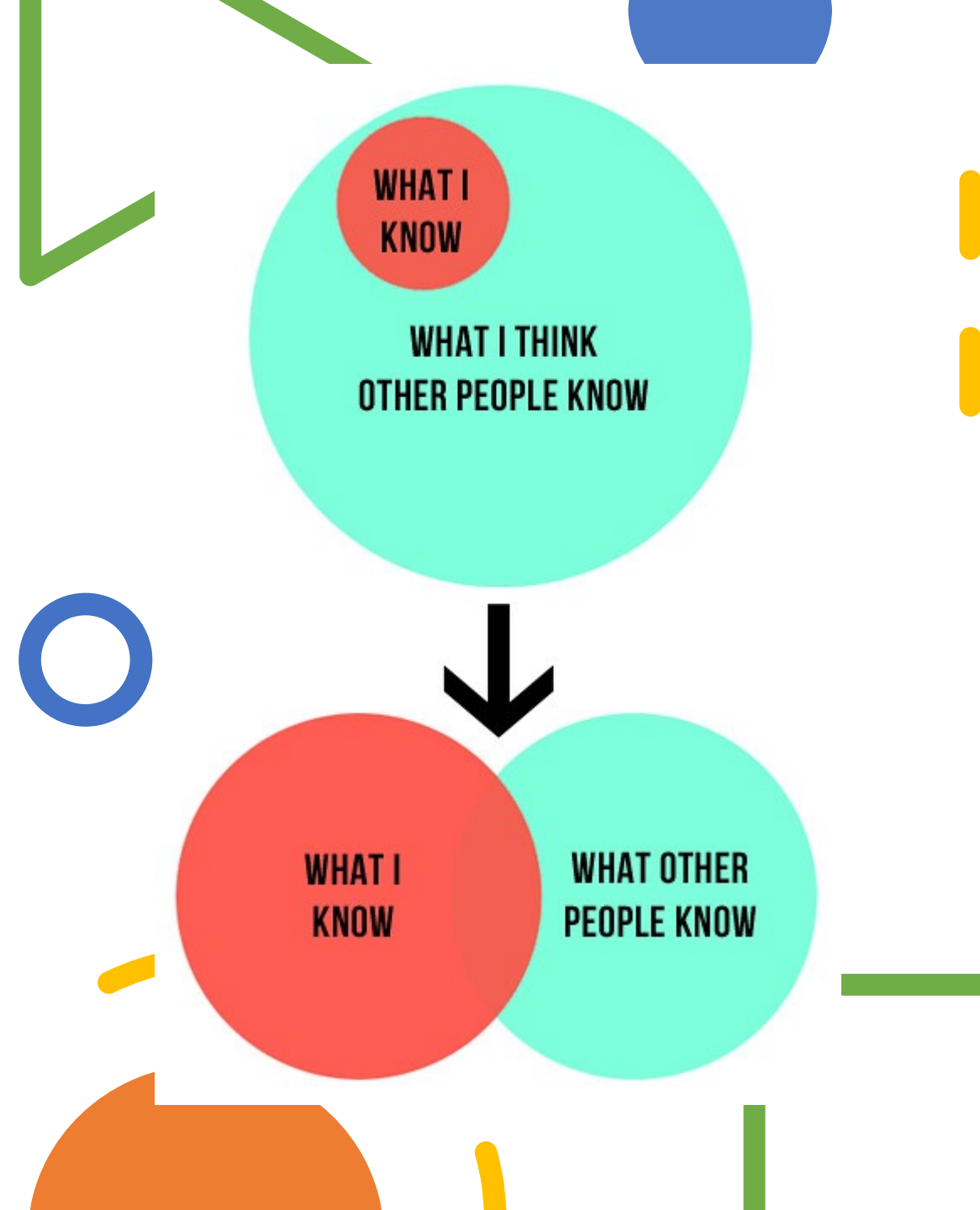
The Expert: These individuals have a persistent feeling of not knowing enough, so they consistently aim to learn more and are never satisfied with their level of understanding, even if they are often highly-skilled and underrate their own expertise.

The Soloist: These people tend to reject group work and prefer to work individually. Often, their self-worth is stemmed from their productivity, so they often reject assistance as they see asking for help as a weakness that could “unmask” themselves as imposters to their discipline.

The Natural Genius: These types of imposters set their internal bar impossibly high, just like perfectionists. But natural genius types don't just judge themselves based on ridiculous expectations, they also judge themselves based on getting things right on the first try. When they're not able to do something quickly or fluently, their alarm sounds.

Common side-effects of Imposter Syndrome

- Extreme lack of self-confidence
- Feelings of inadequacy
- Constant comparison to other people
- Anxiety
- Self-doubt
- Distrust in one's own intuition and capabilities
- Negative self-talk
- Dwelling on the past



Key Questions to Assess Beliefs You Have About Yourself

Am I worthy of love ?

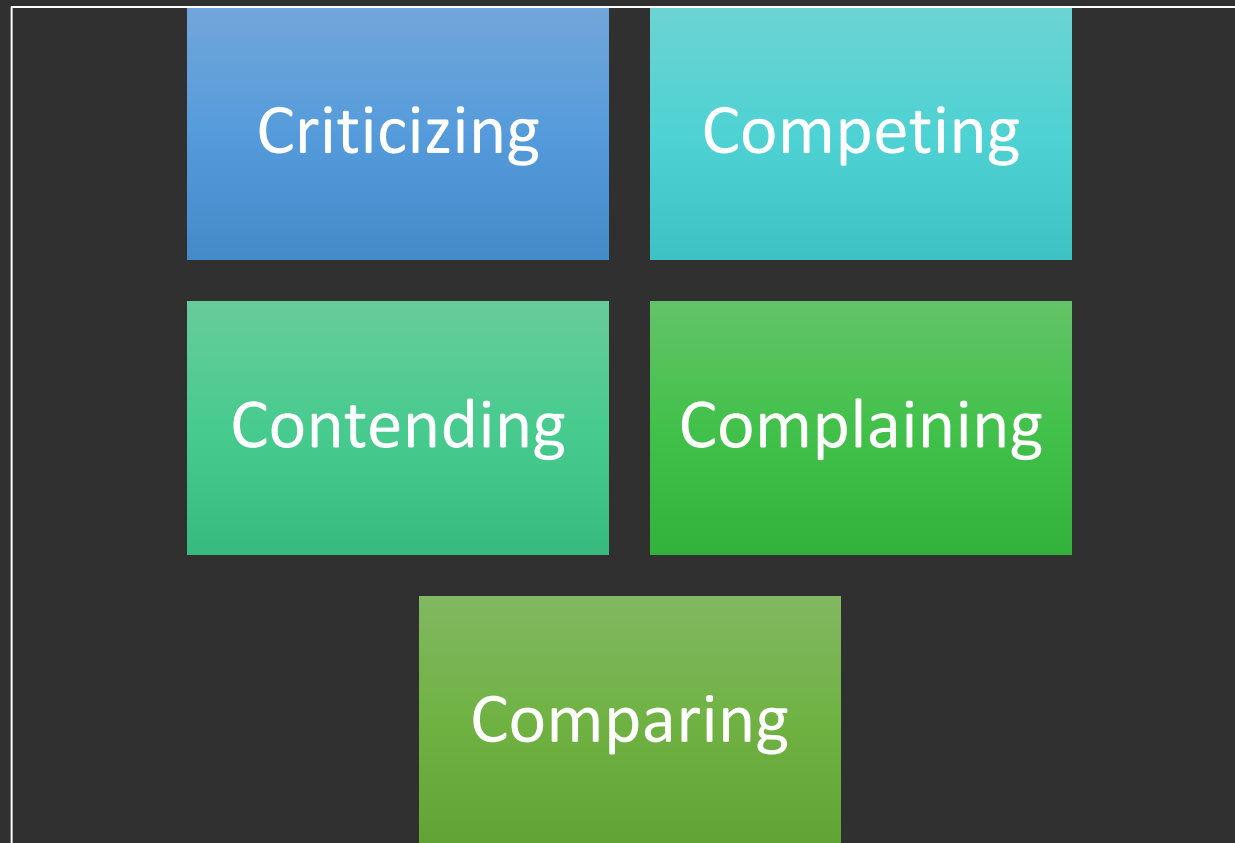
Must I be perfect for others to approve of me ?

What do you know to be true about yourself ?

How do I define success in my life ?

What do I believe about my coping ability in
adverse situations ?

Attitudes That Can Promote Imposter Syndrome, Burnout and Demoralization

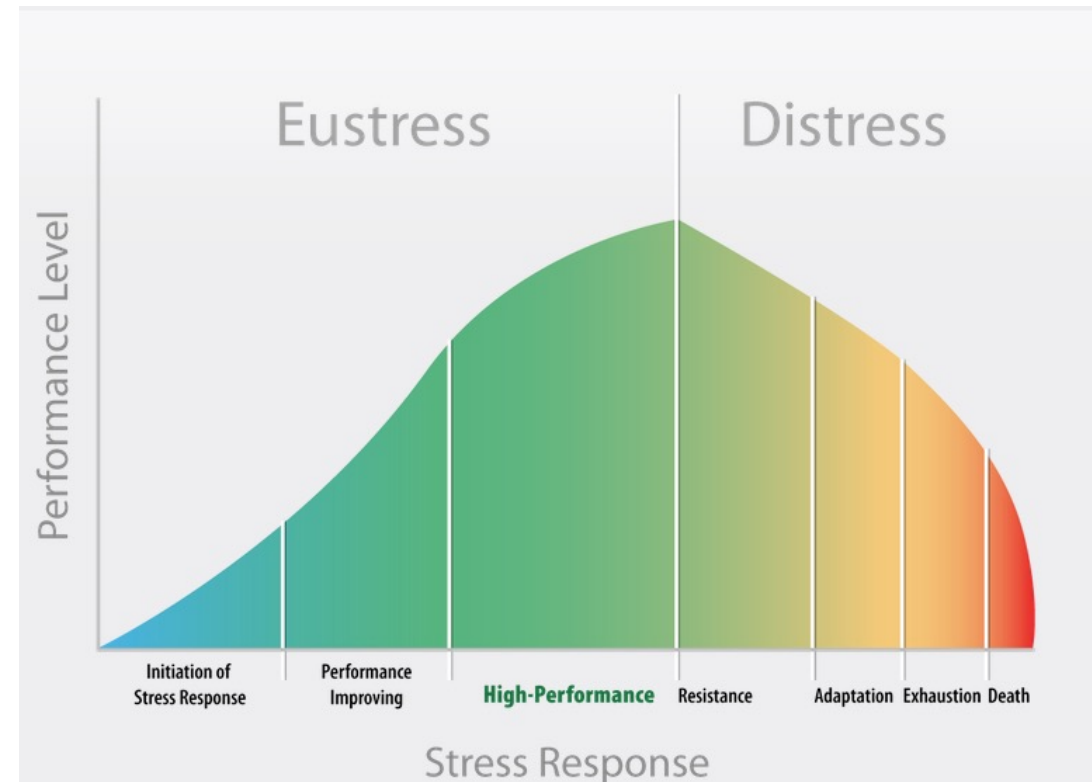


These "emotional cancers" are huge drains on energy reserves and activate fight or flight responses.

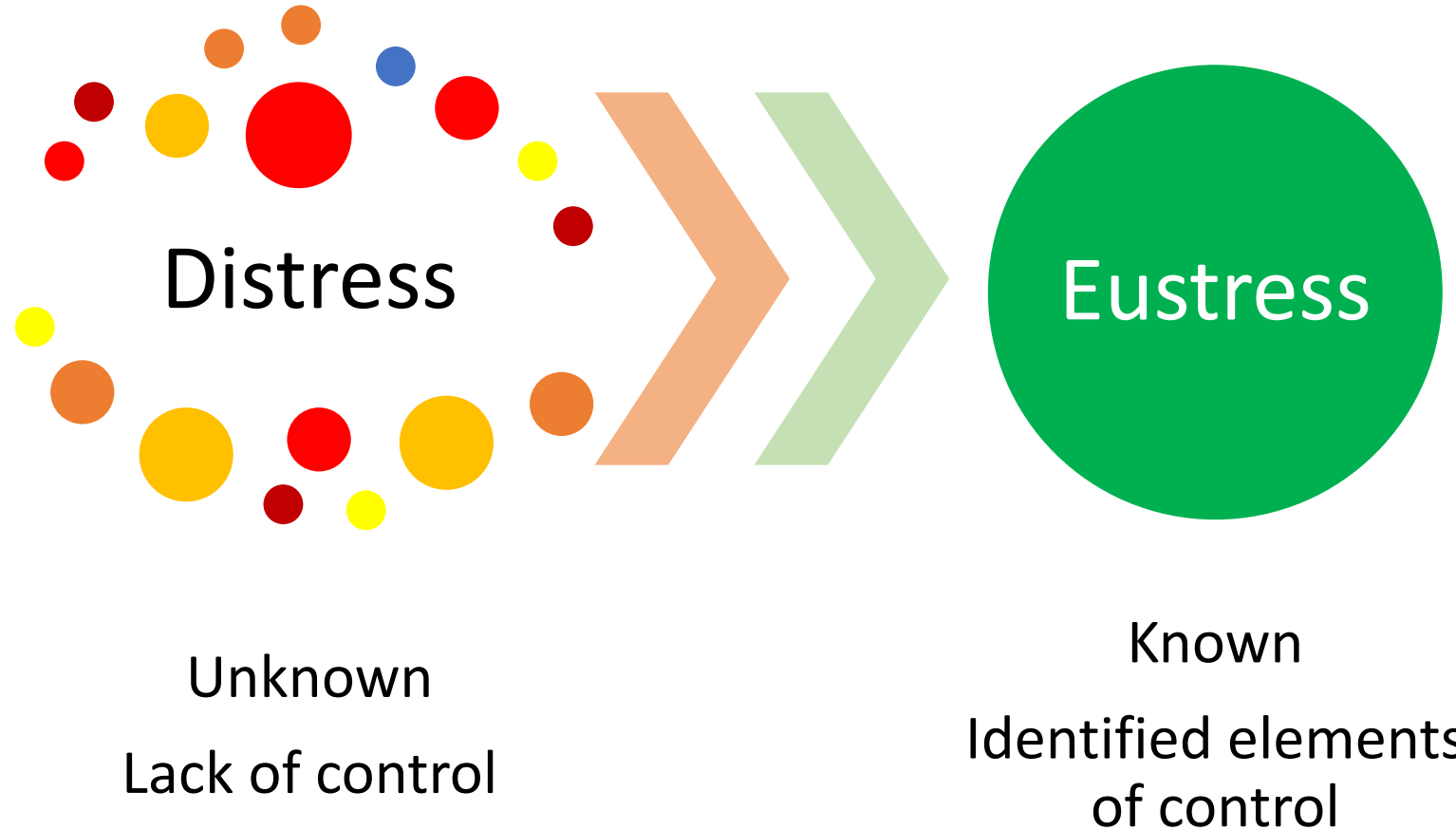
Stress Response & Function Curve

Are there certain situations & thoughts that put me in orange/red zone of distress ?

- **Comparing** self-performance to peers,
- **Consequences** of failure,
- **Confidence** in performance,
- **Judgement** of others
- Letting others down
- **Feeling** unprepared and out of control
- **Loss** of self-worth



Moving From Distress to Eustress



Interventions for Imposter Syndrome

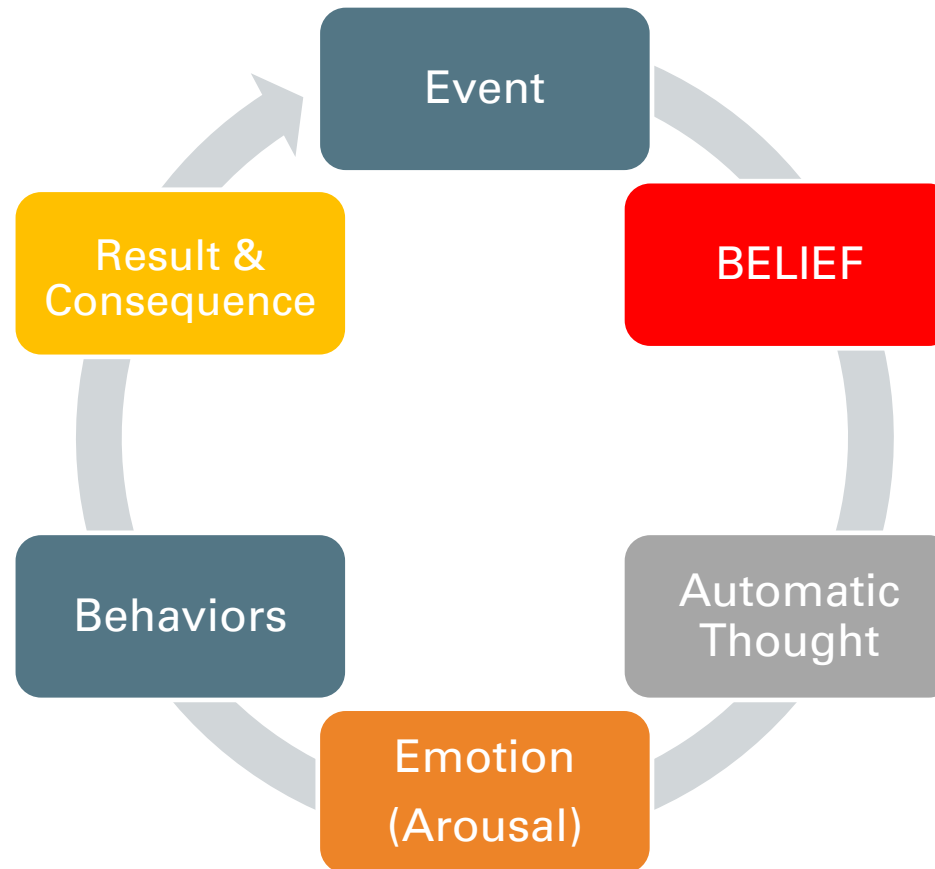
Behavioral Interventions

Don't take on	Don't take on more activities that don't add value
Discover and engage in	Discover and engage in activities that don't have a score attached and add positive value to your day.
Learn	Learn to recognize your strengths and build on it. Step away from the bubble of law school to gain perspective. Find spaces where you can share your feelings.

Cognitive Interventions

Reframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cognitive Restructuring• Rely on facts, not assumptions• Seek clear feedback from trusted sources
Stop Comparing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dispute automatic thoughts• Stop comparing your insides with other people's outside• Limit social media
Radical Acceptance & Self-Compassion	R.A.I.N. model – Recognize, Assess, Investigate, Nurture

COGNITIVE RESTRUCTURING: CBT MODEL OVERVIEW: FOCUS ON BELIEF AND SCHEMA



To intervene in IS we must go a level deeper and focus on beliefs which can structure our perception of reality.

EXAMPLES OF COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS

Selective abstraction



Drawing conclusions on the basis of just one of many elements of a situation.

Minimisation



Downplaying the importance of a positive thought, emotion or event.

Personalisation

"this is my fault"

Attributing personal responsibility for events which aren't under a person's control.

Arbitrary inference



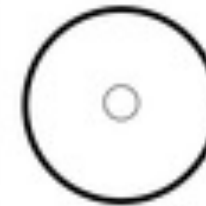
Drawing conclusions when there is little or no evidence

Magnification



"Making a mountain out of a molehill" - blowing things out of proportion.

Overgeneralisation



Making sweeping conclusions based on a single event.

COGNITIVE RESTRUCTURING

THE STORY WE TELL OURSELVES IS THE MOST POWERFUL

Formal Techniques

- Recognizing Mood Shifts
- Recognizing Cognitive Errors
- Reattribution/ Reframe
- Use Motivational Statements or Mantras
 - It's all practice up until the test/presentation/interview
 - Just go down your list
 - Greatest ability is frequently your availability
- What are some of your favorite mantra or motivational statements?



Practice radical self-acceptance and self-compassion

R

Recognize

What is happening right now?

Thought / Feeling / Memory

What am I feeling in my body?



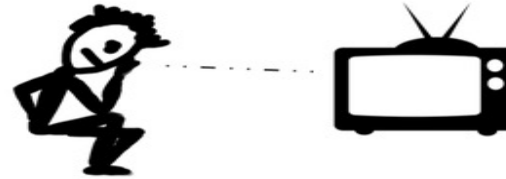
Name it

A

Assess

Am I saying Yes or No to this?

Sit and simply observe for 15 seconds



I

Investigate

What am I longing for?

What is the function of this experience?

Where is this experience trying to lead me?

What is this experience trying to tell me?

N

Nurture

What is the kind thing I can do in this moment?

Words: _____

Actions: _____



Tips for managing Imposter Syndrome...

- **Name the Voice/Feeling:** Sometimes simply recognizing the feeling or voice in your head that is feeding you anxiety, feelings of inadequacy, etc. can be better managed when you name that feeling for what it is and take control of it.
- **Tally your successes:** Too often we are quick to celebrate other's for their achievements, but don't extend that affirmation to ourselves. What would you say to your friend? Take a moment to truly reflect when you have achievement, big or small!
- **Utilize resources:** GW offers resources on managing anxiety and stressors, as well as individual therapy through CAPS to help you explore your feeling about Imposter Syndrome and can give feedback on how to cope.
- **Be transparent:** Imposter Syndrome feeds off situations where everyone feels the need to pretend like they aren't feeling inadequate. Name those feeling and be honest when you feel like you are struggling with a project/concept. Chances are, others feel the same and can create a safe and transparent space.

**“Believe you
can and you're
halfway there.”**

THEODORE ROOSEVELT

Tips for managing Imposter Syndrome...

- Find your support - family, partners, peers, online communities.
- Ask the question even if you think it's "dumb". Chances are someone else has the same one.
- Take things one step at a time. Focus on small, manageable goals to avoid being overwhelmed. Use a list system so you can have the pleasure of checking something as completed.
- Revisit your "why" to keep you motivated. What made you want to go to the Law School in the first place?

Resources



Within the GW School of Medicine and Health Sciences, GW Medical Faculty Associates, the GW University Hospital, and the university at large, there is a broad scope of robust wellness programs that support a cross-

COVID-19

Anxiety

Burnout Syndrome

SMHS & MFA Well-being & Employee Assistance Programs

Self-care

Stress Management

Suicide Prevention

Women's Well-being

Other Resources

Feedback/Comments

RESOURCES

■ CAPS - Counseling and Psychological Services

<https://healthcenter.gwu.edu/counseling-and-psychological-services>

■ Office of Student Life

<https://studentlife.gwu.edu/student-support-resources>

■ Office of Integrative Medicine & Health

<https://smhs.gwu.edu/oimh/>

- A Mindfulness Experience
- Calming Breath
- Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction Program

■ Resiliency and Well-Being Center

<https://rwc.smhs.gwu.edu>

- Lifestyle Modification Groups
- Care for the Caregiver Program
- Talkpace – teletherapy
- Headspace – mindfulness app

Meditation Exercise

Leaves on the stream



<https://www.therapistaid.com/interactive-therapy-tool/leaves-on-a-stream>

Scan this code to let
us know how we can
serve you better

