

# Stress Management

Finding the middle ground between Negative  
Nancy (Ned) and Pollyanna

**Cancer Connections - November 3, 2018**

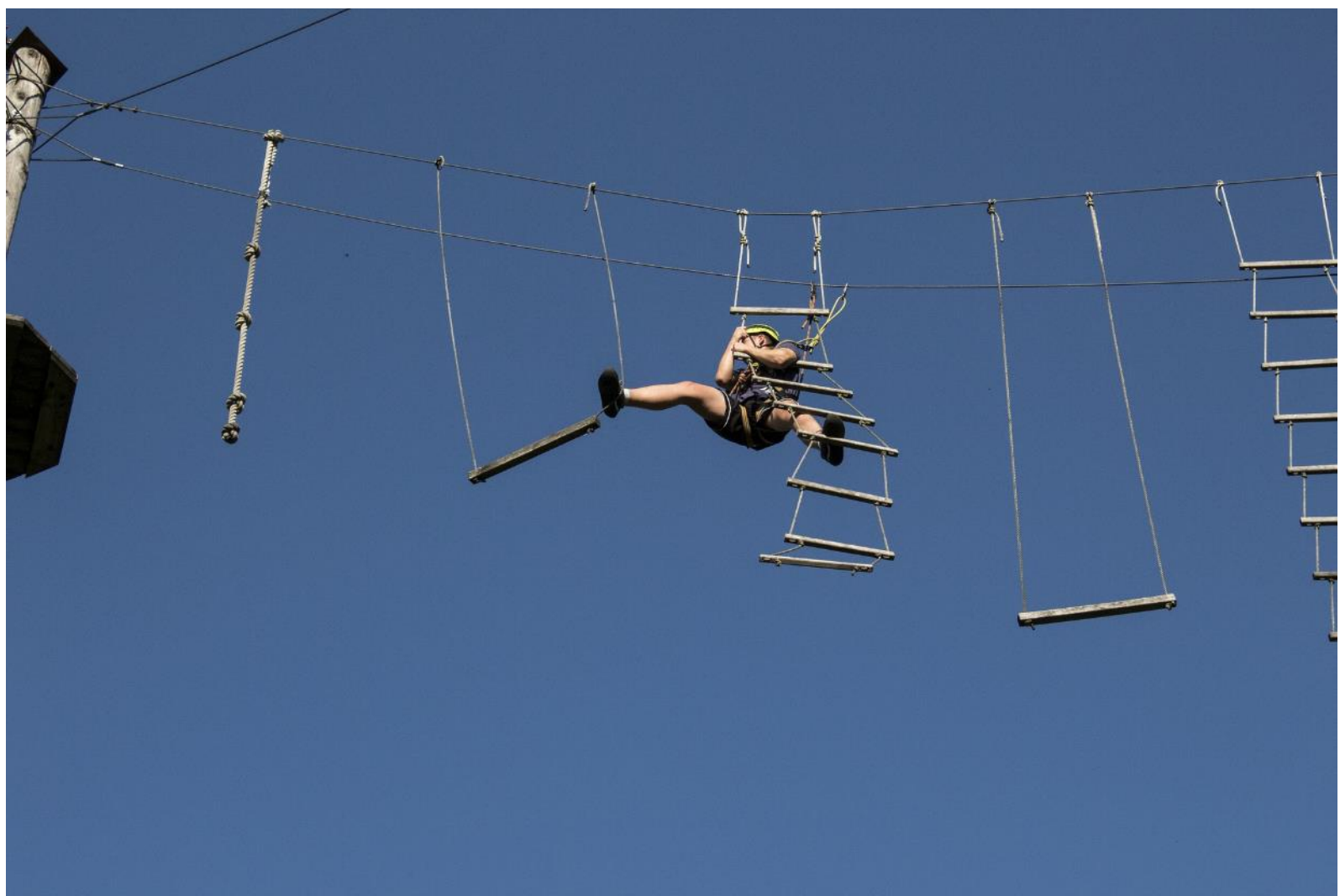
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# Increasing Positive Emotions



## Increasing Positive Emotions



# Making Space for the Positive alongside the Negative

- **Not** about denying stress or replacing negative emotion with positive
- Learning to **make space** for positive emotion alongside the negative





# Positive Emotions in the midst of Stress

- Even when faced with serious life stress, positive emotions tend to co-occur with negative emotions
- People who are able to continue experiencing positive emotions during stressful times show better physical and psychological recovery.



# How do positive emotions help?

- **Respite** - Provide a momentary break from stress
- **Restore** - Help your body's stress responses get back to normal when they're stuck in high gear
- **Refocus or expand** your attention - Interrupt you when you're caught up mulling over worrisome or depressing thoughts, so you can switch your focus
- **Sustain** - Encourage you to explore, learn, or make contact with other people



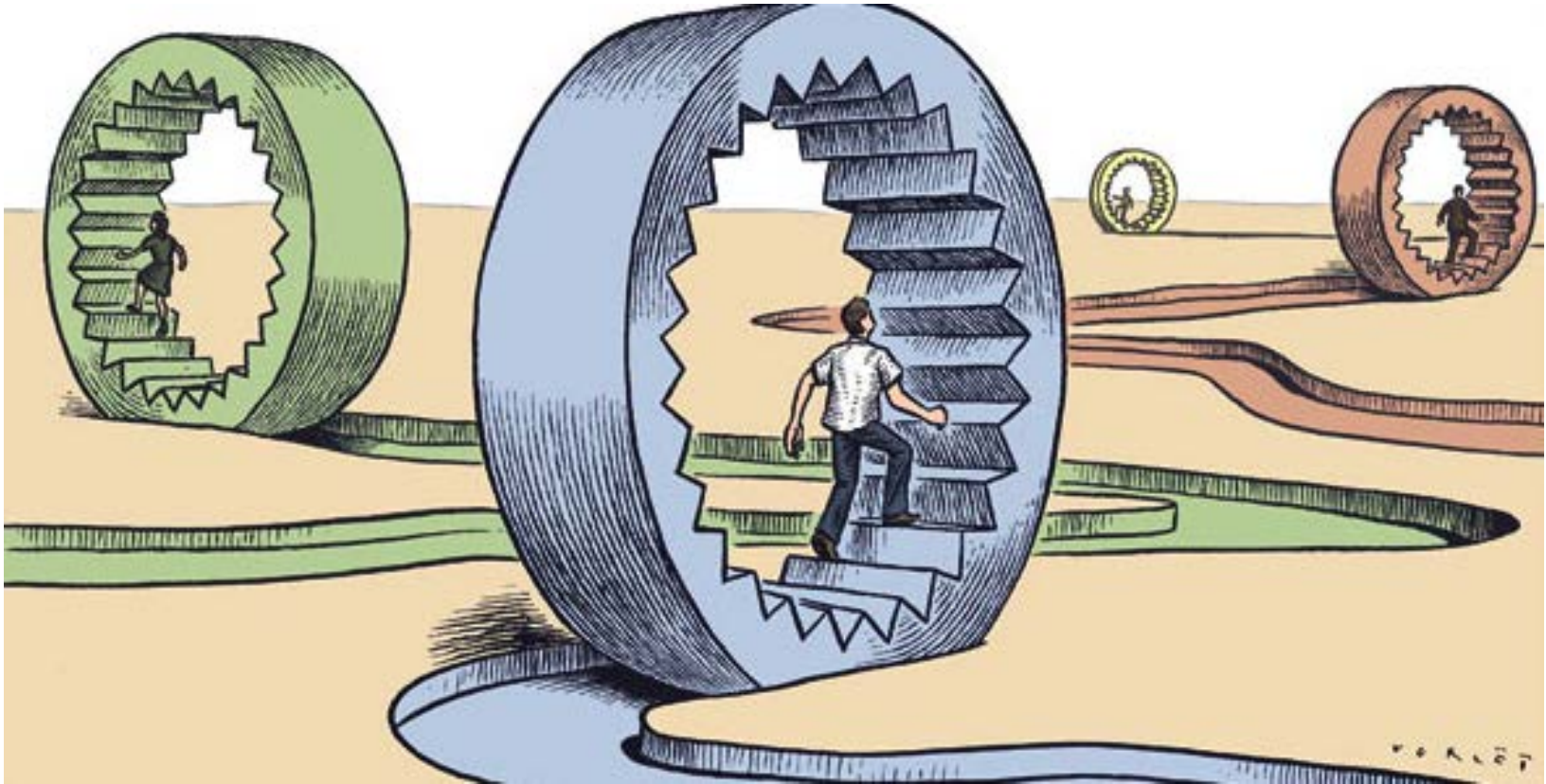
# Positive Emotion Skills

- Skills have been tested in many populations with serious life stress
  - Metastatic breast cancer
  - Recent HIV diagnosis
  - Depression
  - Diabetes
  - Caregivers of people with dementia



(Addington et al., 2018; Cheung et al., 2017;  
Cohn et al., 2014; Moskowitz et al., 2017)

# Noticing Positive Events and Savoring



# Negativity Bias

- Tendency for humans to pay more attention to and give more weight to negative information, instead of positive



# Negativity Bias



# Noticing and Savoring Positive Events

- Even when things are difficult, there are always positive things happening
- The key is to notice and appreciate them





# Savor, capitalize

- Noticing is just the first step.
- Common responses to positive events:
  - Dismiss the positive experience
  - Move on to the next worry, goal, etc.
- Instead, take a moment to savor and enjoy the moment



# How to Savor – In the moment

- Goal is to maximize your focus on the current experience
- Try to focus on each specific aspect of the experience



# How to Savor – Beyond the moment

- Engage in behaviors that help extend the positive experience, making it more vivid or longer lasting
  - Write about it
  - Think back on it later and re-experience the emotion
  - Share with friends or family
  - Use mementos to remind you, like a photo or souvenir



## 3 good things activity

- Step 1: Write down 3 good things that happened to you yesterday
  - Things that went well or things you enjoyed
  - \*Remember, these things are likely small and seemingly mundane, like someone making you laugh, something at work going well, or even enjoying a good meal.
- Step 2: Savor
  - Turn to the person next to you and share one of the 3 good things

# Benefits of Noticing and Savoring Positive Events

- Free
- Require only a short amount of time (seconds, minutes)
- Don't have to change anything about your life

# Mindfulness

# Mindfulness

- Can help us manage stress and find the middle ground:
  - Make sure we don't miss the good things happening around us
  - Better respond to difficult situations, instead of overreacting or knee-jerk reactions



# Mindfulness

- Paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, with an accepting, non-judgmental attitude

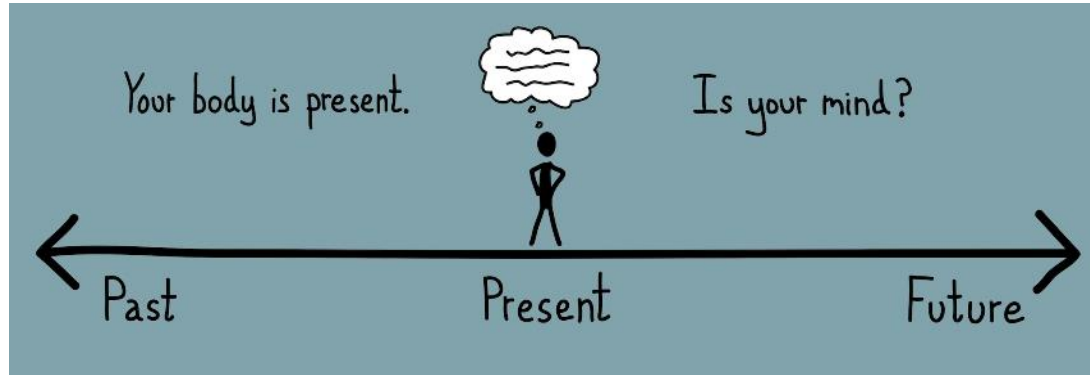


# Paying Attention

- Noticing and attending to:
  - Internal experiences
    - Thoughts
    - Feelings
    - Physical sensations
  - External World
    - Sights
    - Sounds

# Being in the Present Moment

- Focus our attention on the present moment, instead of dwelling on the past or planning/worrying about the future
- Being present allows us to make choices and respond, rather than react to situations



# Non-judging and Accepting Attitude

- Being aware of your thoughts/feelings
  - Without evaluation or critique
  - Without trying to change/manipulate the situation or your experience
- Helps distinguish between the experience itself and the thoughts we have about it



# Benefits of Mindfulness

- More positive emotion and less negative emotion
- Increased awareness can help you appreciate the good things you might have missed or overlooked
- Stops repetitive/ruminative thinking

# Practicing Mindfulness

- Mindful moments in daily life (informal practice)
- Meditation (formal practice)



# Informal Practice: Incorporating Mindfulness in Daily Life

# Mindful Moments in Everyday Life

- Brushing teeth
  - Eating
  - Chores – e.g., washing dishes, folding laundry
  - Walking
- 
- As you go through these activities
    - Slow down
    - Engage your senses
    - Pay attention to the task





# Formal Practice: Mindfulness Meditation



# Positive Emotions: Continued Practice

# Continued practice: Mindfulness

- Each day, do 1 everyday activity mindfully
- Start with 5 minutes a day of meditation
  - Apps:
    - Headspace
    - 10% happier
    - Cleveland Clinic Wellness, Stress Free Now
  - Guided meditations online:
    - [mindful.org/meditation/mindfulness-getting-started/](https://mindful.org/meditation/mindfulness-getting-started/)
    - [nytimes.com/well/guides/how-to-meditate](https://nytimes.com/well/guides/how-to-meditate)
    - [contemplativemind.wordpress.com/how-to-meditate-links-for-guided-meditation-practice/](https://contemplativemind.wordpress.com/how-to-meditate-links-for-guided-meditation-practice/)

# Continued practice: Mindfulness

- Free Class – here!
  - 675 N. St. Clair St. (Galter Pavilion), 21<sup>st</sup> floor, conference room
- Usually\* 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Mondays, 5-6pm
  - Nov. 19, Dec. 3 & 17, Jan. 7 & 28\*
- Anyone affected by cancer is welcome, ages 15 and up
- Drop-in

# Continued Practice: Noticing and Savoring

- 3 good things
  - Write about them each day
- Once a day, make it your goal to look out for something positive
  - On your commute, in the waiting room
- Savor in the moment
  - Pause, engage the senses
- Share one good thing a day
  - Post a photo of it
  - Text a friend
  - Tell someone in person or by phone





Thank you

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