

gtc  
SCOTLAND

# Dealing With Uncertainty

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Supporting Educators, Transforming Lives

# What Are We Facing Right NOW?



Italy and Spain's daily death tolls are plateauing, but in the US every day brings more new deaths than the last

Daily coronavirus deaths, by number of days since 3 daily deaths first recorded  
Stars represent national lockdowns ★



FT graphic: John Burn-Murdoch / @burnmurdoch  
Source: FT analysis of European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, Worldometers; FT research. Data updated April 07, 19:00 GMT  
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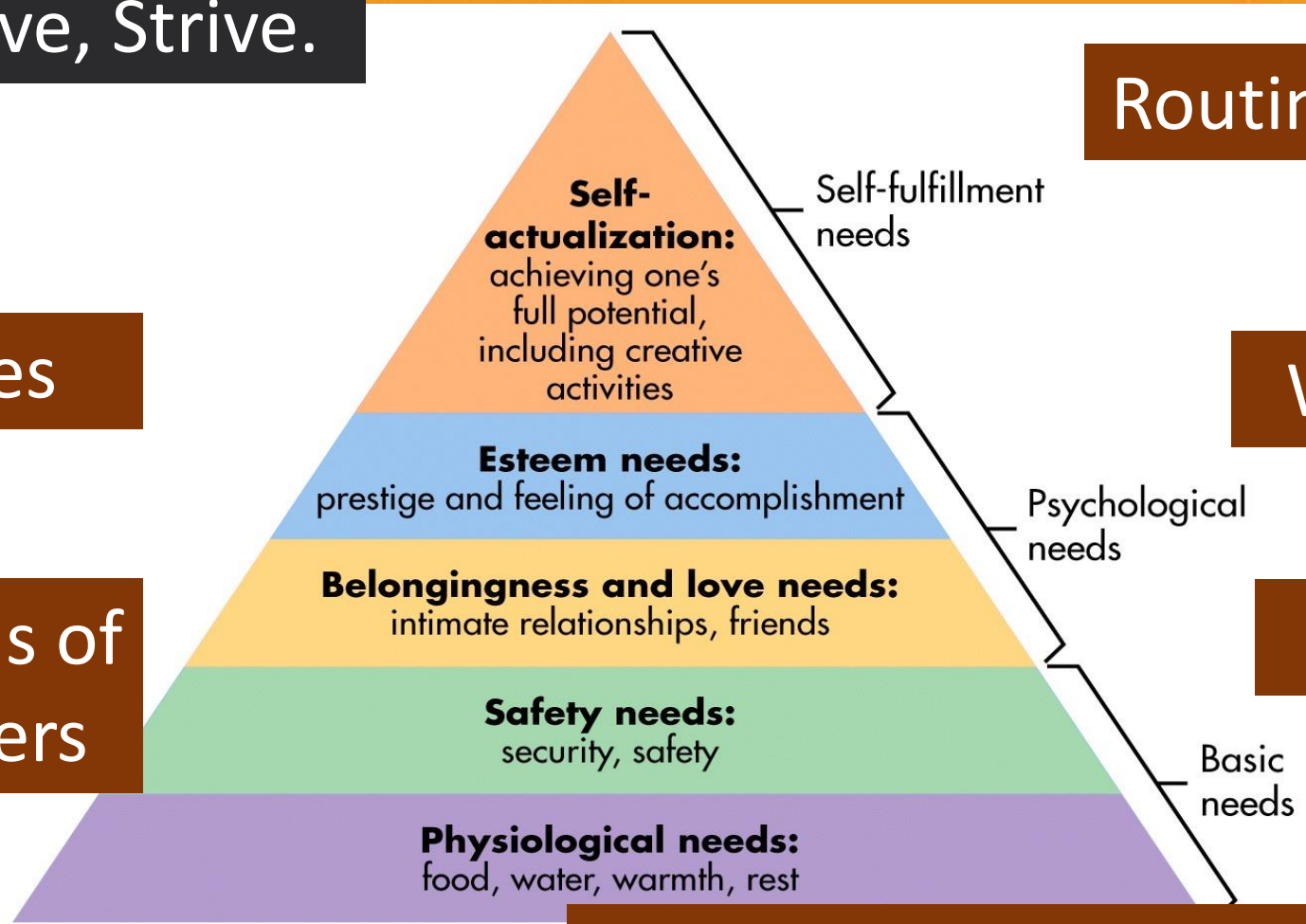
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# How are you supporting yourself in meeting your needs?



Survive, Thrive, Strive.



Routines/Rhythms

Boundaries

Work-related

Expectations of Self & Others

Uncertainties??

What does "being productive" mean??



# Being Human and Staying Human at Work and at Home



What we need:

- Food and drink
- Rest
- Connection/Belongingness
- Comfort/Trusting relationships
- Purpose/Meaning
- Movement/Exercise
- Hobbies/Distractions
- Laughter



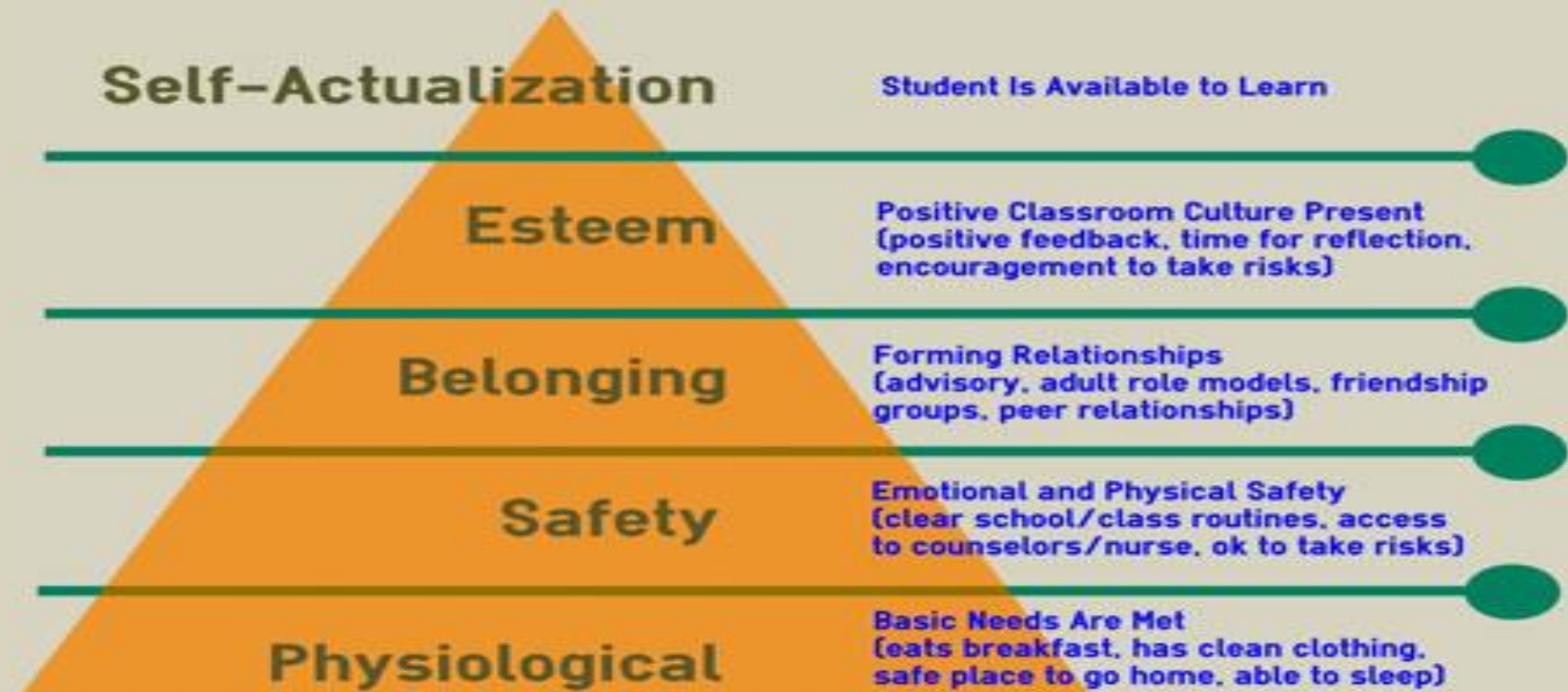
How can we move from an “embattled” mindset to one of “empowerment” and “freedom”?

e.g. I am not **STUCK** inside; I am **SAFE** inside.

How realistic is it to meet these with online learning?  
How are we feeling about what needs might not be being met?



## Maslow's Hierarchy of School Needs



@sguditus / Steve Guditus

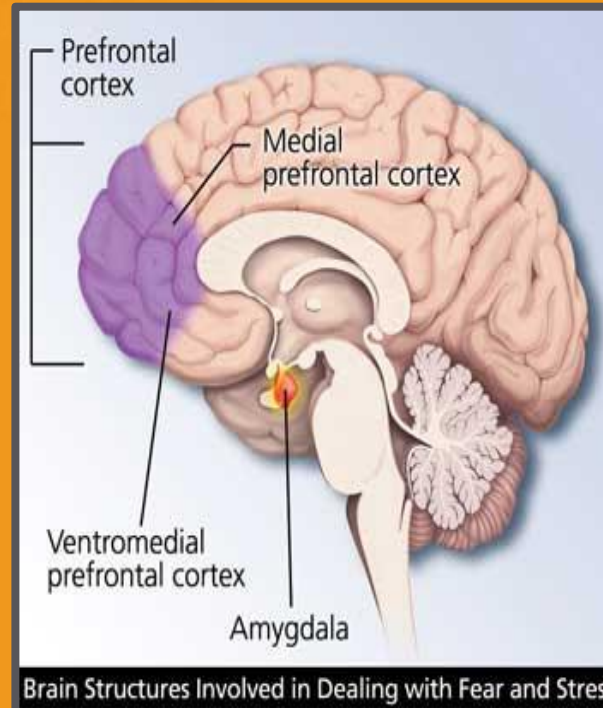
# Noticing Anxiety and Stress – The Anxiety Centres

## Amygdala:

- Unconscious associations made in environment
- Stores memories
- Reactions not understood – pounding heart, sweating, dry mouth,
- Fight/Flight/Freeze responses
- Releases adrenaline
- Activates muscles
- Enacts the sympathetic nervous system

Some strategies to SOOTHE the Amygdala and push resources to the front of our rational brain:

- Deep breathing
- Meditation
- Laughing
- Exercise
- Relaxation focused on muscles



## Pre-frontal Cortex:

- Conscious thoughts
- Worries can seem logical
- Left hemisphere – thoughts/words/verbalise
- Right hemisphere – holistic/imagery associations
- If threat consciously perceived, messages sent to the amygdala

Some strategies to SOOTHE the Pre-frontal Cortex and push resources to the front of our rational brain:

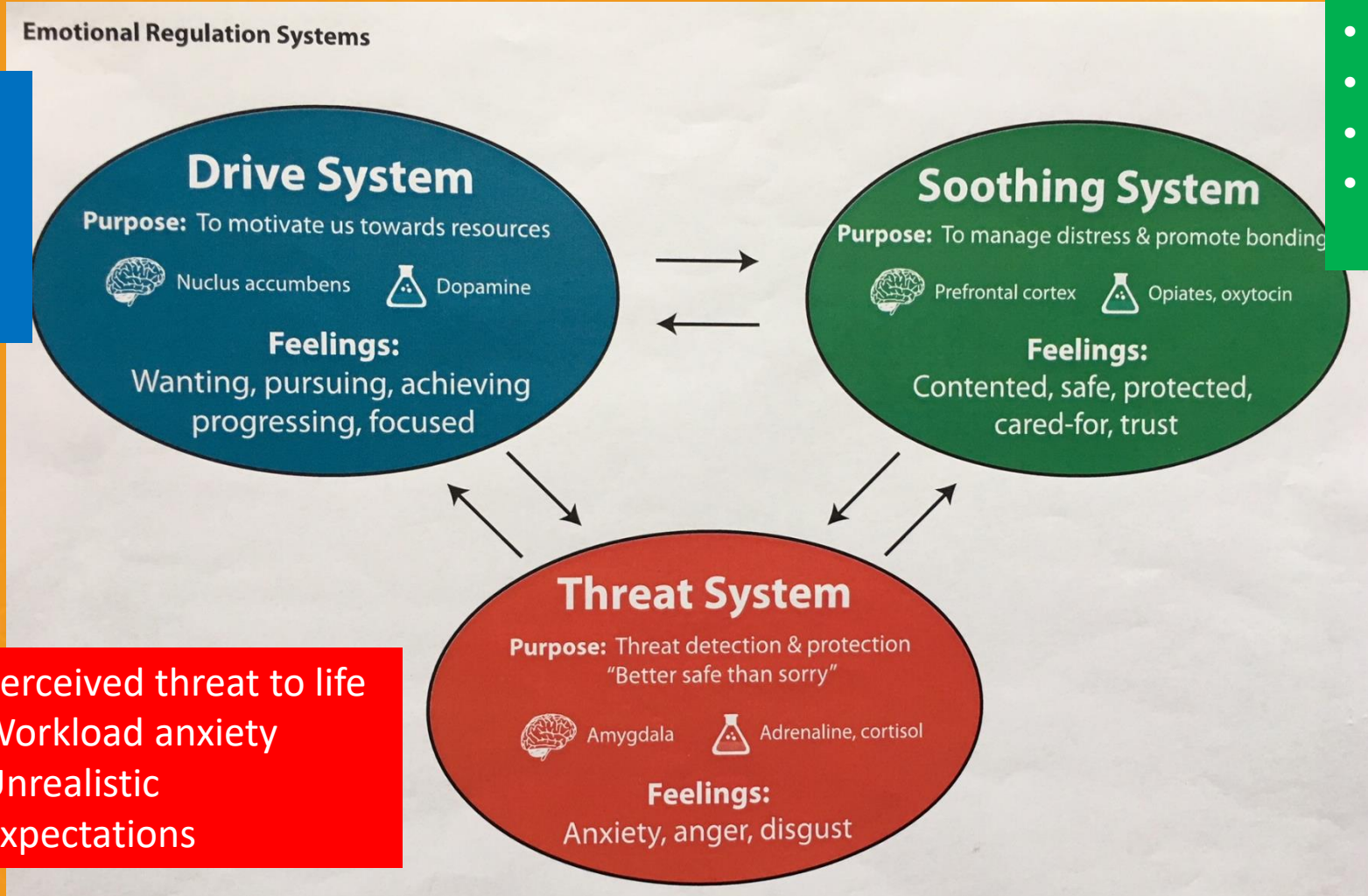
- Listening to or Playing Music
- Cognitive behaviour therapy
- Guided imagery meditation
- Mindfulness body scan



# Professor Paul Gilbert – Compassion & Self-Compassion



- Keep focus on goals
- Workload
- Expectations
- Achievements



- Self-Compassion
- Deep breathing
- Meditation
- Connection with others

- Perceived threat to life
- Workload anxiety
- Unrealistic Expectations



# Dealing with Stress and Soothing Oneself



- What do you do to “soothe” yourself when you are feeling overwhelmed?
- In what ways do you use your mind *and* body to address any stress?
- What do you find effective in addressing “stress points” and relieving stress?





# POLL 1 – Questions to reflect on...



**Which statement is a best fit for how you are feeling at this time?**

- I feel that I am not doing enough for my pupils.
- I feel that I am not doing enough for my pupils, but I know that I always feel this.
- I feel that I am doing enough for my pupils under the circumstances.
- I feel that I was in a good place with work before lockdown and now I feel uncertain that I am doing anything well for my pupils.
- I feel out of control with everything to do with work and especially my routine.

# Where My Attention Goes, My Energy Flows!



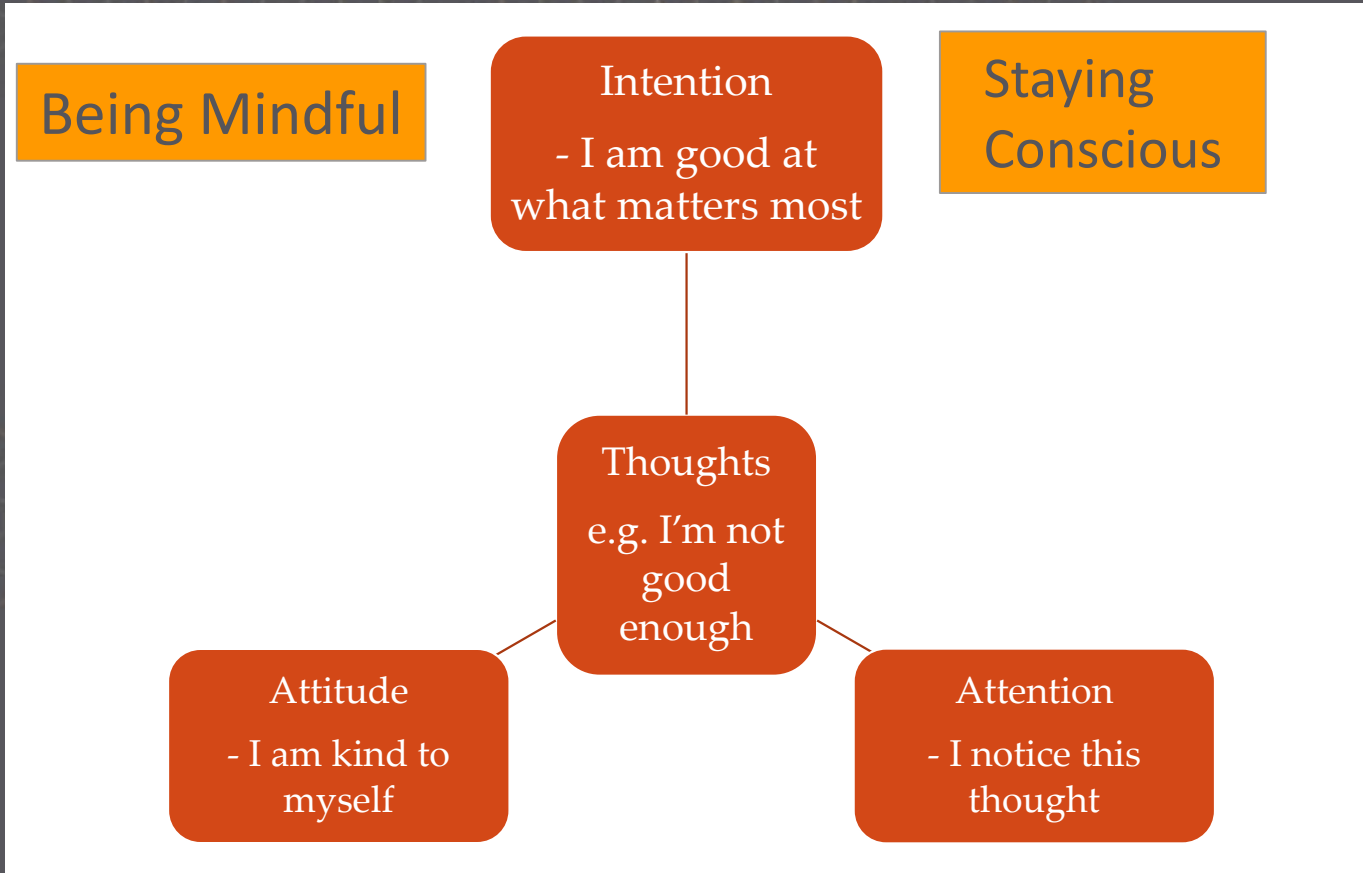
Our Reticular Activating System can be found in our “reptilian” brain and is used to scan our environment for danger and then inform our amygdala to prepare for “fight, flight or freeze” whenever necessary.

It works as an attentional tool – it focuses our attention, quite unconsciously, on cues or aspects in our environment that we might have put some conscious attention on earlier. It reinforces this and like these bouncers (photo), only allows more of this into our conscious attention, e.g. the experience of buying a car and then seeing more instances of such a car in the environment when we had not noticed these before.

## Reticular Activating System



# “What We Practise Grows”



Habits of Thought – Noticing as a helpful strategy...





# “Diet of The Mind” – What is supporting you?



Social Media is NOT bad! It allows us to connect in ways that are essential right now!

Just remember that YOU are in control of what you allow in and what you connect with.

Ask yourself:

1. What do I need to feel right now?
2. How am I feeling as I read this article or scroll through these comments?
3. What do I need to do to make me feel supported/better right now?



# Positivity – Dr Barbara Fredrickson



- Positivity as a means not an end
- Positive emotion as a way to “broaden and build” success
- Flourishing rather than Languishing

To take a new direction and go a new way:

- Recognise and notice what supports me; not focus on fixing what doesn't
- Decide on what to put my attention on and build on
- Decide how I will support myself to sustain this new direction of travel
- 3:1 Positivity Ratio – 3 things a day that I have done well:1 thing to work on tomorrow or this week.

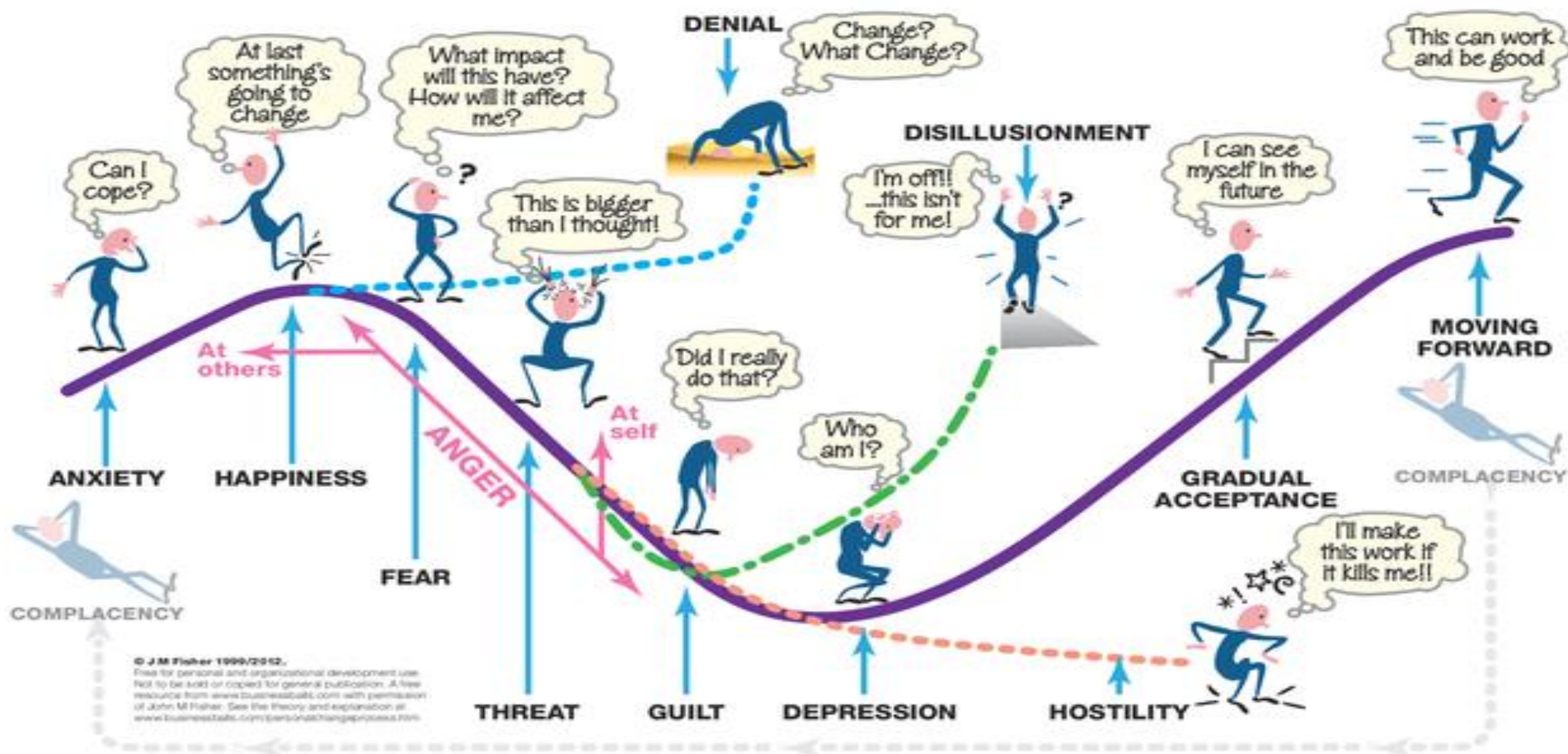
Doing It Differently:

- How am I feeling about my work right now?
- How do I see my work and my mission, purpose right now?
- Where am I putting my attention? - On what I am doing or on what I am NOT doing?



# The Process of Transition - John Fisher, 2012

(Fisher's Personal Transition Curve)





Fisher focused on organisations going through changes. Whether they were small or bigger, he knew that they always had an impact on how individuals were feeling. We can experience grief in any change, but now with the current crisis, the changes can bring about a range of emotions, in our relationships at work or at home. In asking ourselves these questions and answering them, we can gain some insight into our own experiences and resourcefulness when facing changes which are beyond our control.



What are your past experiences of change?

How do you cope with change?

What do you lose from change?

What do you gain from change?

# Managing Reality – Role of Acceptance



## What Acceptance Is:

- Acknowledging that “this is the way things are... for now!”
- A practice
- Supporting us to understand ourselves and others
- Finding new ways to work
- Change our attitudes and allow us to be kinder
- Respond to others differently

## What Acceptance Is Not:

- Putting up with things, especially unethical and immoral behaviour e.g. prejudice, abuse, violence, poverty etc
- Suppressing our emotions
- Passive
- Belief that the situation will never improve.

So what can be done?

How have our perceptions of life and work changed in accepting this situation?

# Your Mission, Your WHY, Right Now.



- What is your purpose at work right now? What is your mission NOW? What is possible?
- How does this relate to a deeper sense of who you are?
- What is supporting you to fulfil this mission?
- How might you continually bring yourself greater soothing and self-compassion every day as part of your mission?





# Our Stories of “What We Do” Tell Us About “Who We Are” and Connect Us ALL



Once Upon  
a Time

The End



“Doctors wear photos of themselves smiling to ease patients.”

Stories.  
Connect.  
People.

What stories do you notice that you are telling yourself at this time?

What do you notice about how these “stories” are making you or others feel?

# Kindness, Compassion and Self-Compassion



Kindness  
is the most important  
superpower

## Loving Kindness Meditation

- May I be filled with Loving Kindness
- May I be peaceful and at ease
- May I be safe
- May I be free from all suffering

Then for:

A Loved One

A Neutral Person

A Challenging Person

All Sentient Beings

*“To put it in a nutshell, love is the momentary upwelling of three tightly interwoven events: first, a sharing of one or more positive emotions between you and another; second, a synchrony between your and the other person’s biochemistry and behaviors; and third, a reflected motive to invest in each other’s well-being that brings mutual care.”*

p.17 “Love2.0” - Dr Barbara Fredrickson

# Self-Compassion



Like any new habit, we have to develop consistency and practise to make progress.

We may not have always been so compassionate with ourselves in the past, but self-criticism now may be counter-productive to achieving success.

During this time of great change, we may feel:

- Less productive = useless
- More lethargic = lazy
- Routine is hard to maintain = lack focus and discipline

But these = judgements may not be true. We may need to be kinder to ourselves as we adjust.

Practising self-compassion may be new to us, but it may also be essential for our emotional wellbeing.

There are three key components of developing the practice of self-compassion. When we do something that we feel bad about, we ask ourselves:

1. What would my best friend say about this?
2. Has this happened to others before?
3. Can I be mindful of how I feel and label my thoughts and emotions?

