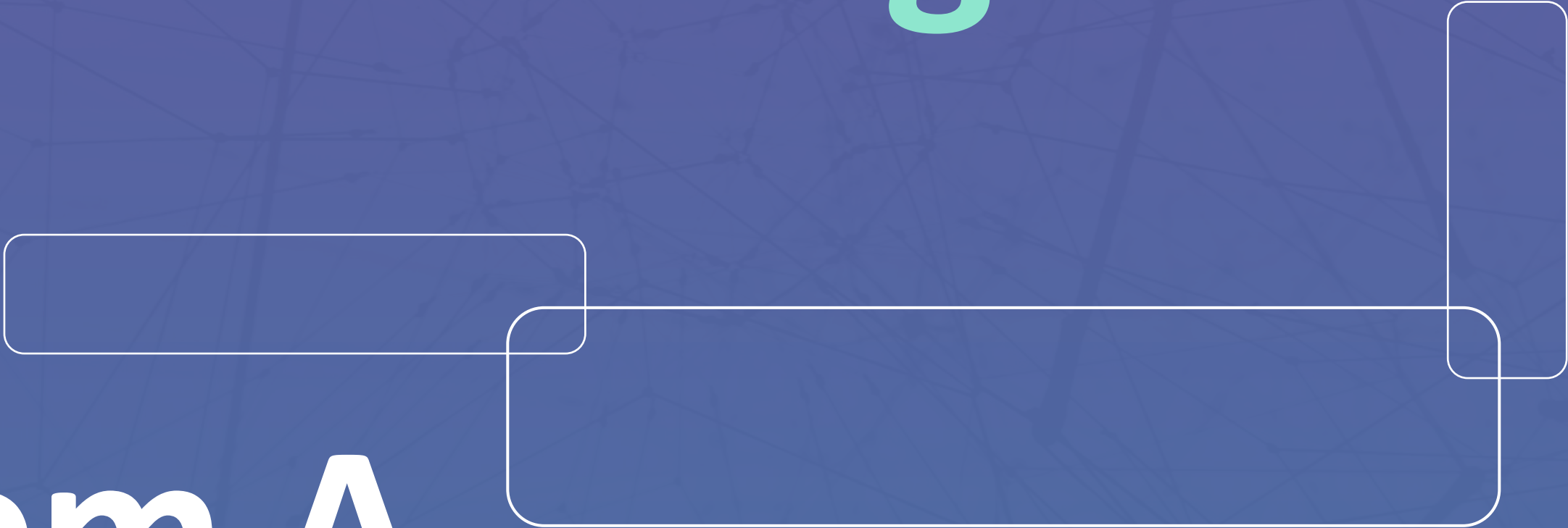


Managing Overthinking



From A
Recovering
Overthinker

Tammi Smith, M Ed, CVT, RVT,
VTS (Dentistry)

Why We Get Stuck – And How To Break Free

Understanding Anxiety, Decision Fatigue, and
Purposeful Action



Learning Objectives

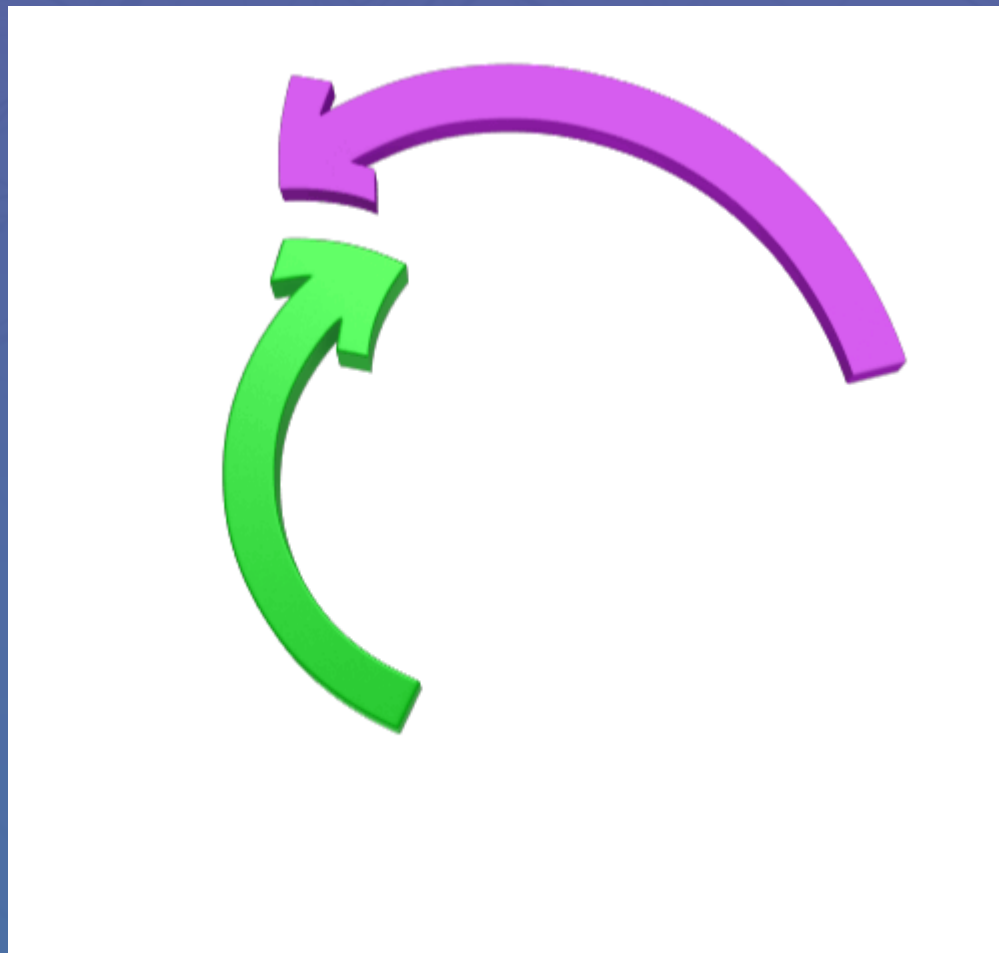
- Define overthinking and why it occurs
- Explain the relationship between stress and anxiety
- Recognize the impact of chronic overthinking on the brain and body
 - Identify common cognitive distortions
 - Apply practical CBT tools to interrupt rumination
- Develop strategies that replace overthinking with action

What is Overthinking?

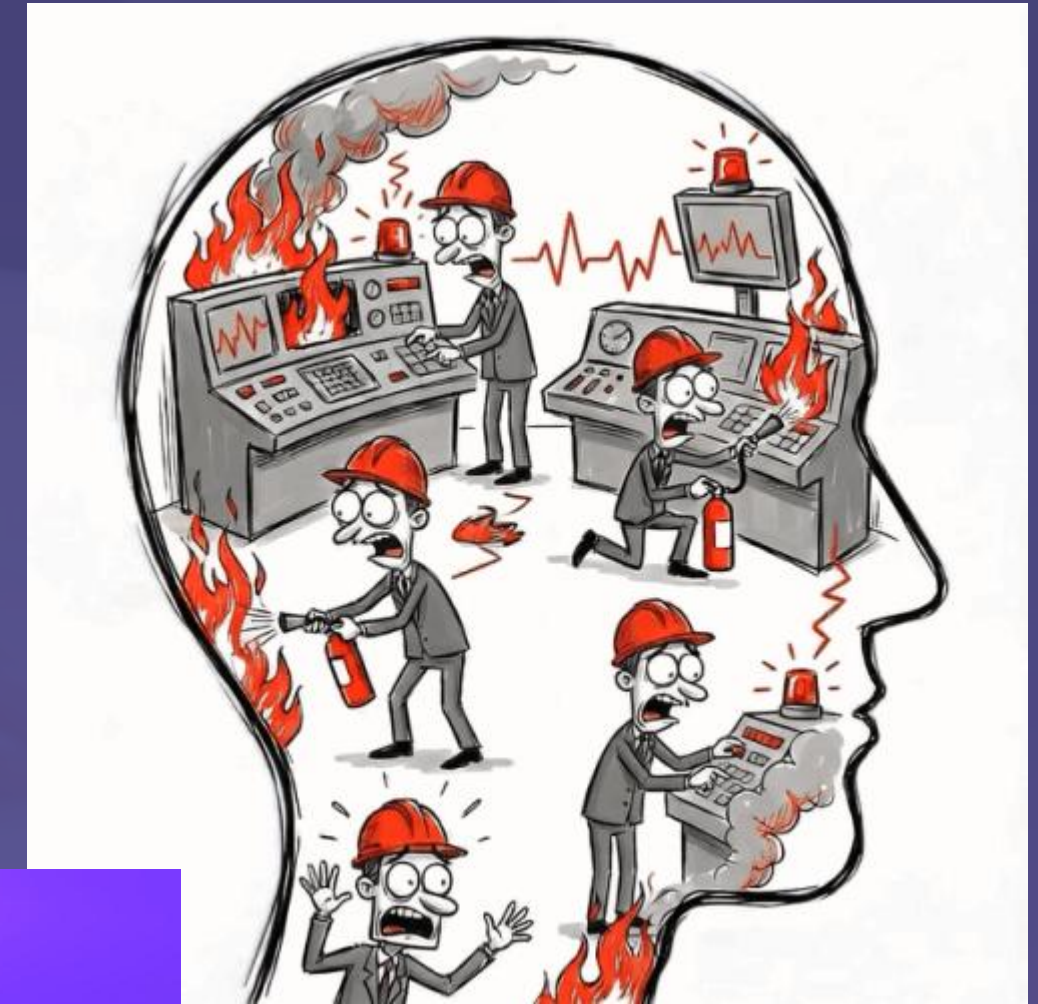
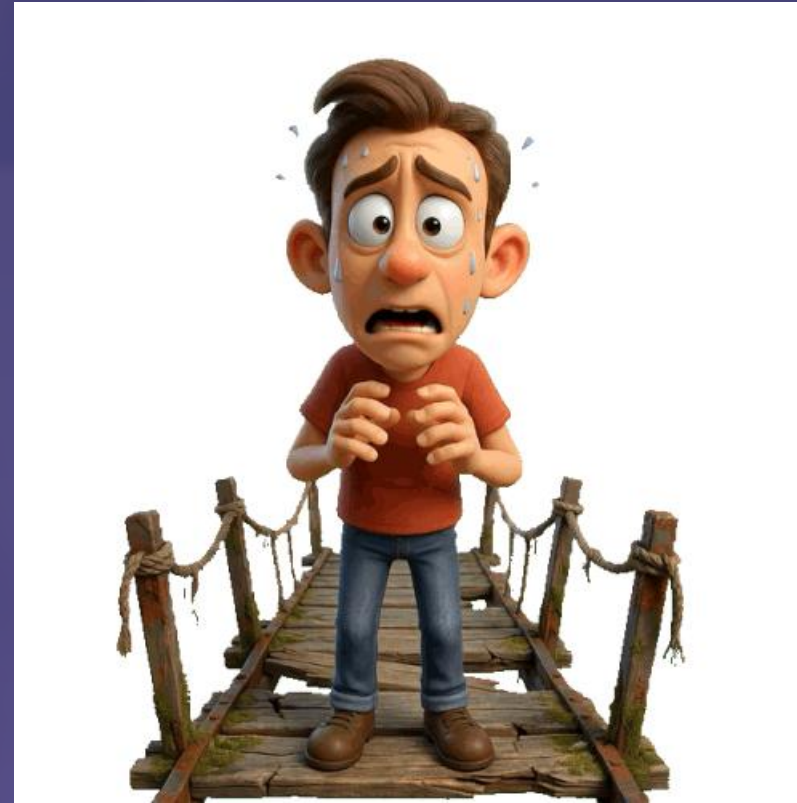
Is it just thinking too much?

Overthinking is:

- Excessive Analysis
 - Rumination
 - Worry
 - Self-evaluation
- Mental loops without progress



Why Do We Overthink?



What is the reality of this?

Our brain mistakes thinking for problem solving.

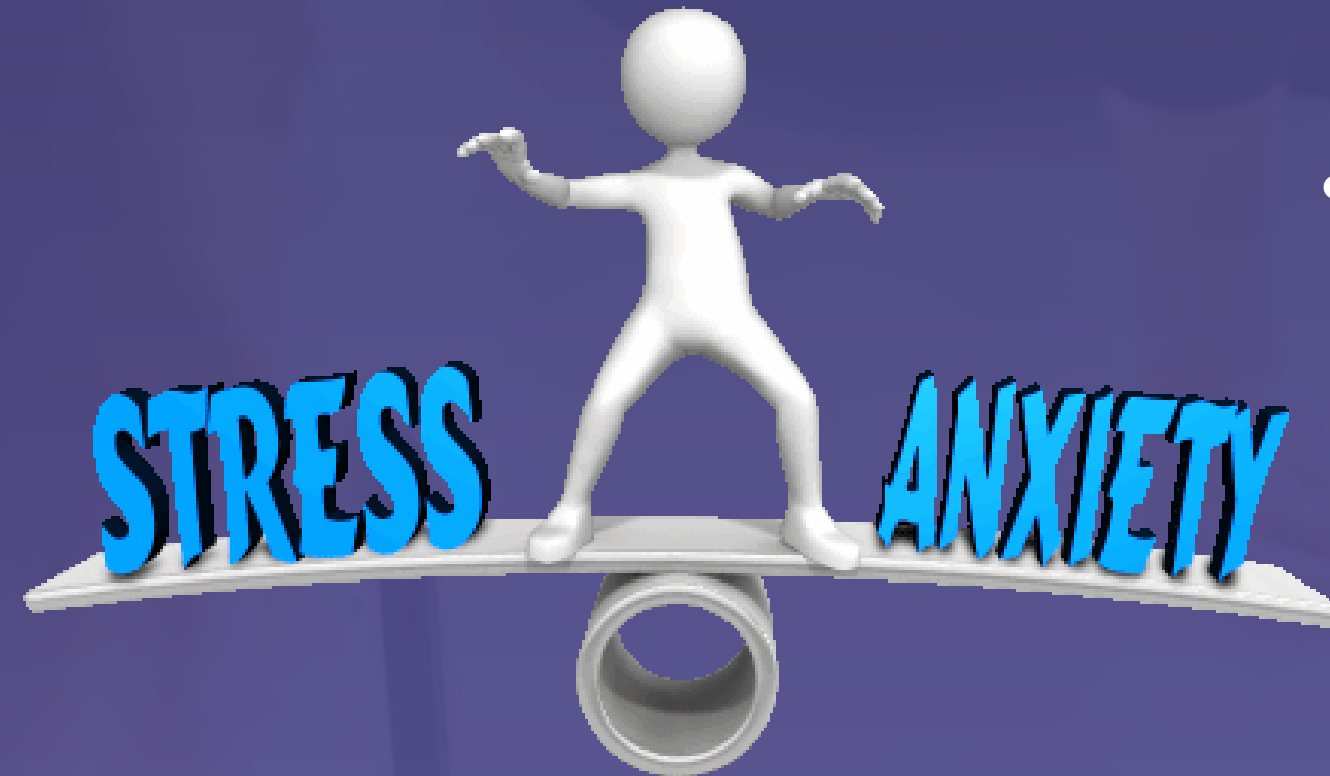
Instead of protecting us . . .

We are stuck



Stress vs Anxiety

- External Event
- Temporary



- Internal Response
 - Can Persist

Two people can experience the same event . . .

And yet respond completely differently

Where does anxiety come from:



Genetics

**Childhood
Experiences**

Trauma

Daily Habits

**Personal
Beliefs**

Fight or Flight Response



Designed for:

Short-term Danger

NOT

Constant Activation

Chronic activation increases:

- **Mental Fatigue**
- **Cortisol**
- **Adrenaline**

Physical Effects of Chronic Stress:

Fatigue

Muscle Tension

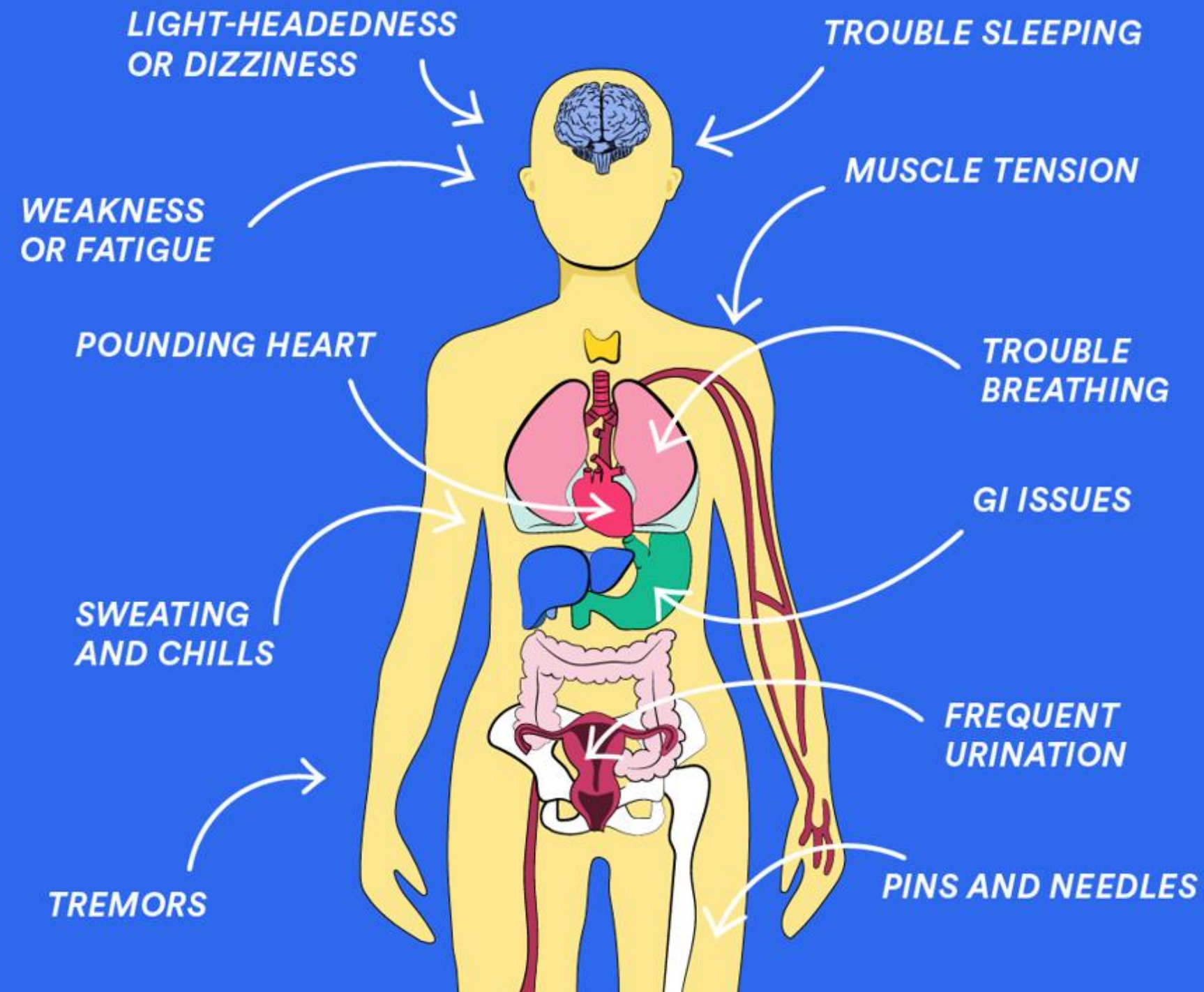
Headaches

**Sleep
Disruption**

**Digestive
Problems**

HOW YOUR BODY DEALS WITH ANXIETY

GREATIST



Mental Effects of Chronic Stress:



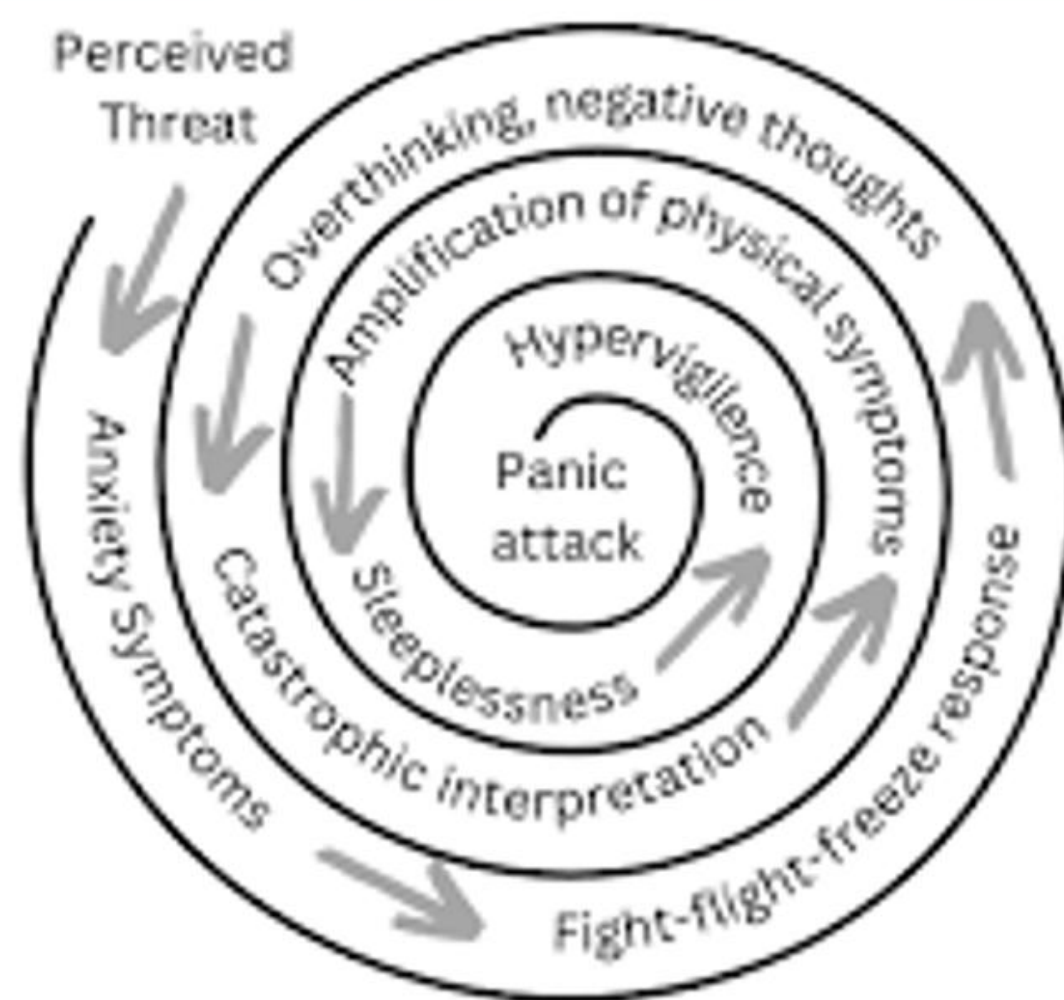
**Poor
Concentration**

**Reduced
Resilience**

Anxiety

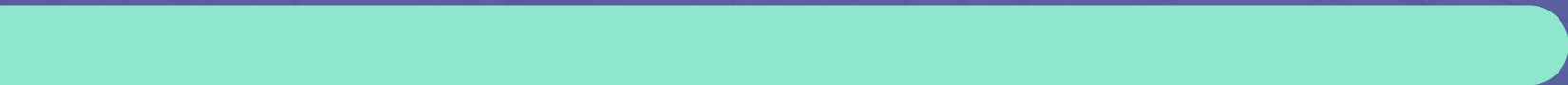
**Distorted
Thinking**

THE SPIRAL OF ANXIETY



EVELYNLIM.COM
@evelynlimcoach

What is decision fatigue?



Mental exhaustion from having too many choices

Cognitive load is the amount of information that can be handled at once

Decision Fatigue



35,000 Decisions a Day!!



Studies

- Earlier parole appointments are more likely to receive parole
- 33 percent less likely to be scheduled for surgery at the end of the shift
- In 1976 a grocery store contained 9,000 items; the estimate for today is 40,000

Lauren B. (2021). Decision Fatigue. The Decision Lab. Retrieved September 21, 2025, from <https://thedecisionlab.com/biases/decision-fatigue>

DECISION FATIGUE

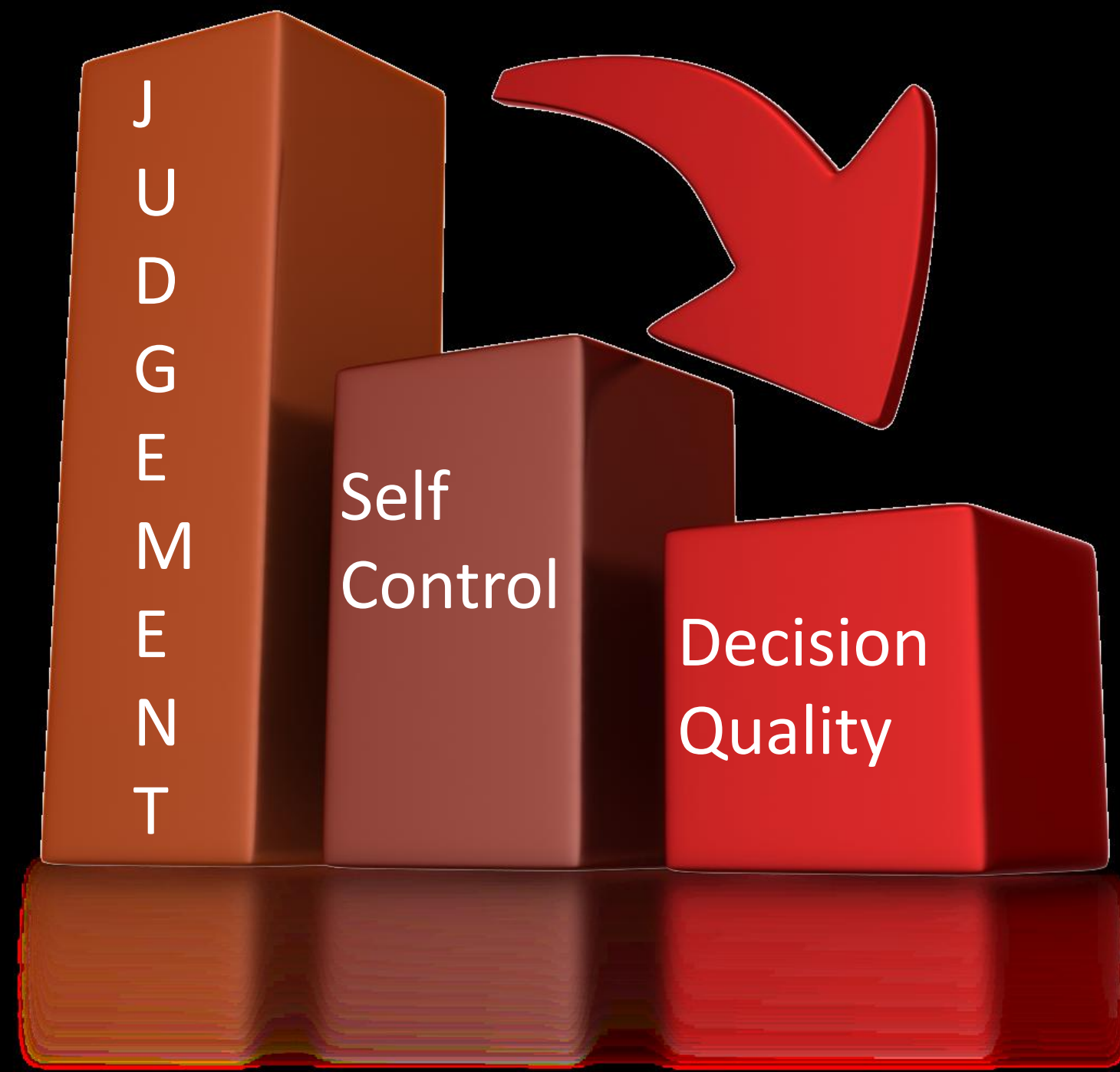
having to make too many choices causes stress



ways to defeat decision fatigue:



As cognitive load increases:





What is the result:

Procrastination

Indecision

Perfectionism

Impulsive Choices

The Prefrontal Cortex Is Responsible For:

Planning

Reasoning

Judgment

Self
Control

Stress Makes
This System
Less
Efficient



How Do We Protect Our Mental Energy?



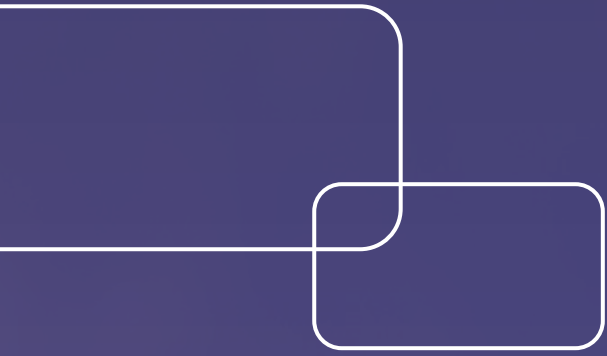
UNIFORMS



MEAL PLANNING



ESTABLISH
ROUTINES



Anything else?

Calendar Blocking

Limit notifications

Prioritize important decisions early

**Don't waste mental energy on
decisions that don't matter!**



Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT):



Awareness Creates Change:

FIRST STEP



makeameme.org

Don't believe every thought!

Learn to observe.

Practice:

- Thought Logs
- Trigger Journals
- Thinking vs. Doing Audits

Rumination vs Problem Solving

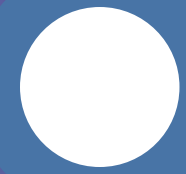
- Repeats
- Focuses on “Why?”
- No progress



- Produces action
- Focuses on “What now?”
 - Forward movement

Am I solving this – or just replaying it?

The Antidote is Action



Action



Experience

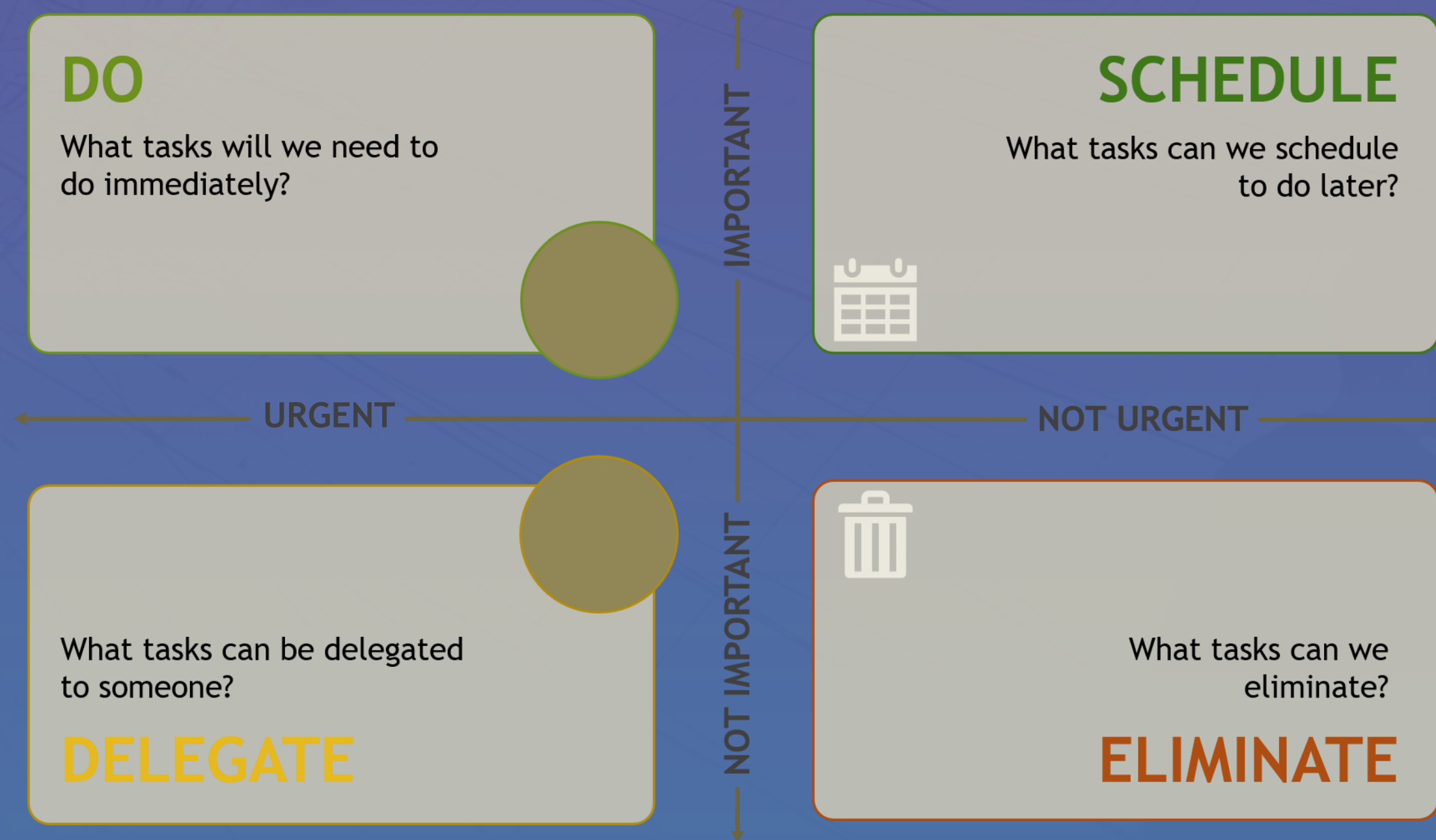


Confidence

Waiting for certainty . . .

Keeps anxiety alive

Eisenhower Matrix



Build Better Mental Habits

Practice:

- Gratitude
- Self-compassion
- Present-moment awareness or grounding
- Healthy routines
- Technology boundaries



Grounding

The 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Technique

Ease your state of mind in stressful moments.



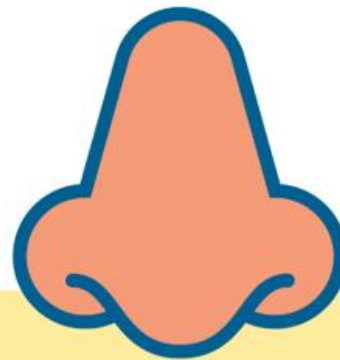
Acknowledge **5** things
that you can see
around you.



Acknowledge **4** things
that you can touch
around you.



Acknowledge **3** things
that you can hear
around you.

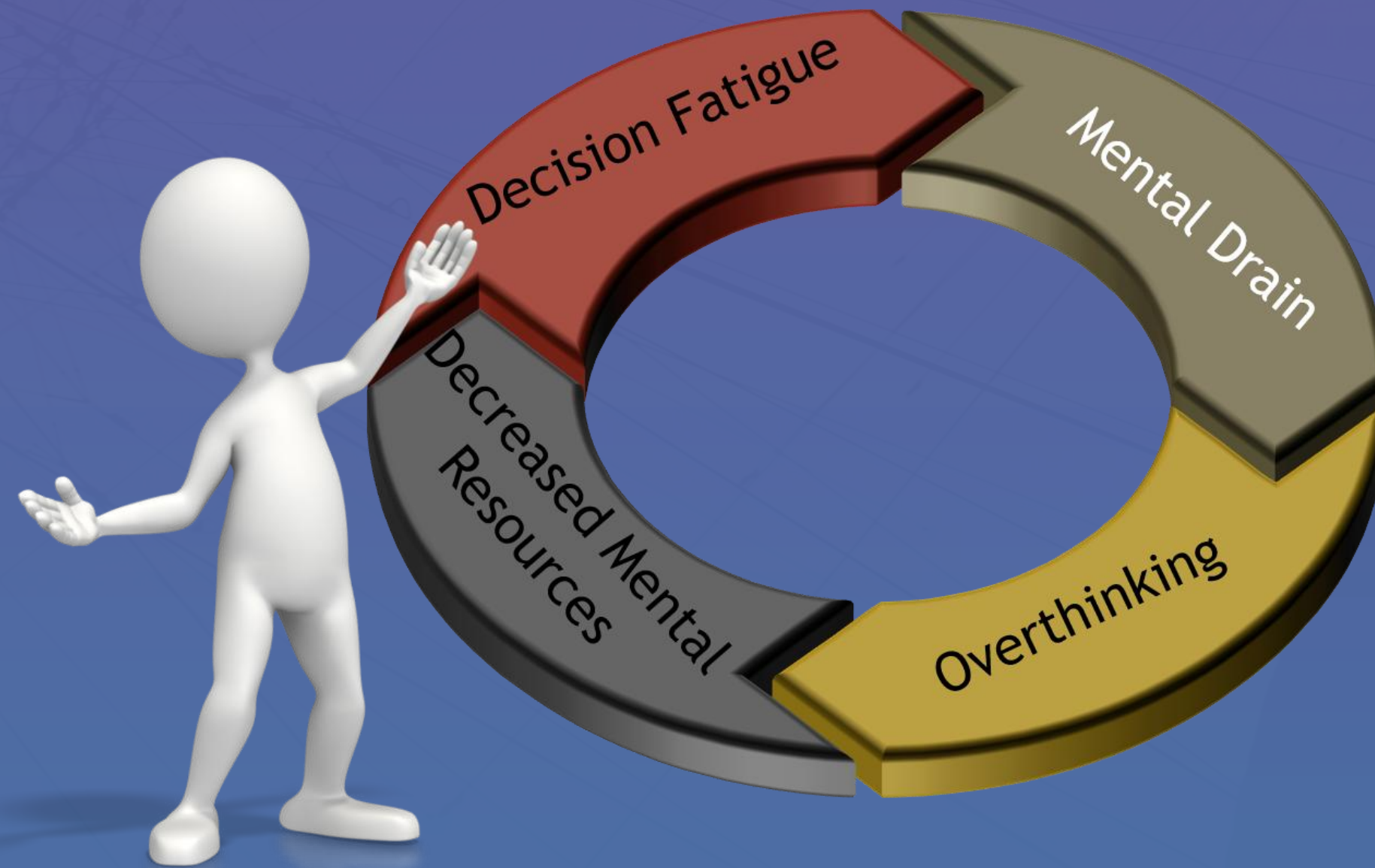


Acknowledge **2** things
that you can smell
around you.



Acknowledge **1** thing
that you can taste
around you.

HEALTHY M©NDAY



Key Takeaways

One brick a day builds what
waiting never will.



Small daily action is greater than
perfect delayed plan.

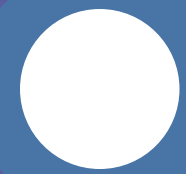
Key Takeaways



Perfection is not
attainable, but if we
chase perfection we
can catch excellence.

Vince Lombardi

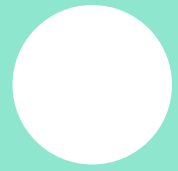
BrainyQuote



Action



Clarity



Uncertainty cannot
be eliminated

Clarity is the result of action

Questions?



Tammi Smith
tsmithcvtvtsd@gmail.com