



Mercury Systems

# Supporting Mental Well Being Skill Building and Resources

November 20, 2020

Disclaimer: The information in this slide deck is not medical or legal advice. Mercer is not a medical or legal advisor. Rather, this guidance is assimilated from the information available from the CDC and other public resources as noted below as of October 2020.

Sources used for this slide deck:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

World Health Organization (WHO) <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

welcome to brighter

# Today's Speaker

## Dan Harrah, LCSW



**Dan is a licensed clinical social worker joining us today from Mercer's Behavioral Health Consulting Group Specialty Practice.**

Dan began his clinical practice in the inpatient psychiatric setting, working directly with individuals and families with a wide range of severe behavioral health needs.

In addition to clinical practice, Dan also has significant experience in clinical staff training, group facilitation, and health care service delivery.

He graduated from the University of Michigan with a degree in Psychology, followed by a Master of Social Work degree, also from the University of Michigan.

Dan lives in Chicago with his wife, rambunctious 4-year-old daughter, and an 80-pound mastiff mix named Porcia. Dan loves to cook, being outdoors, watching sports, and spending time with friends and family (mostly virtually these days).

# Being intentional in our approach to manage our stress response

## Explore and fill your toolbox

It is **NORMAL** and **EXPECTED** to feel anxiety, powerlessness, confusion and stress right now

Between the COVID-19 pandemic, presidential election, and upcoming holidays **WE'RE ALL STRESSED BUT DOING OUR BEST**

### Today we will:



Learn about the impact of stress on the brain and body



Discuss tools to manage stress and build resiliency



Participate in a brief mindfulness exercise



Review available supports at Mercury Systems

# Defining stress

## What's the difference between acute and chronic stress?

### Acute

Stress resulting from **specific events or situations** that involve novelty, unpredictability, potential threats, and leave us with a poor sense of control

This is a normal part of everyday life and helps your stress response system stay on the ball

### Chronic

Stress resulting from **repeated exposure** to situations that lead to the release of stress hormones

When you are **repeatedly exposed** to the same stressor or multiple different stressors for an **extended period of time**, including prolonged **periods of uncertainty**, you may experience the effects of chronic stress

**Given the uncertainty of the current environment, constant chronic stress is more of a concern than ever**

Source: Centre for Studies on Human Stress (CSHS) (2019). *Understand Your Stress*.

# Typical responses to severe acute or chronic stress



## Physical

Changes in appetite /stomach upset  
Changes in sleep patterns  
Lowered immune system  
Headaches/Back/Neck Pain



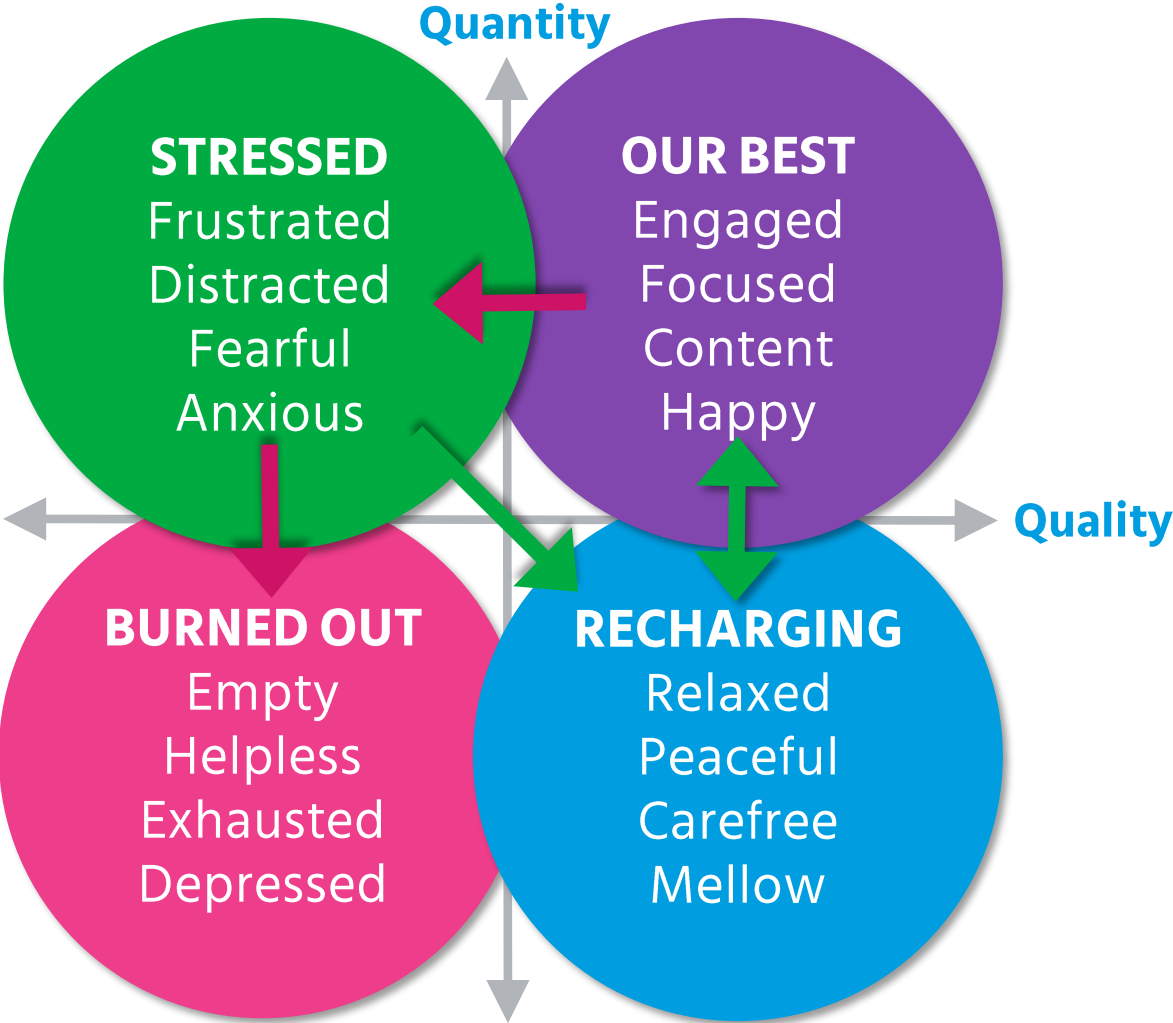
## Emotional

Difficulty focusing, concentrating  
Moodiness  
Irritability  
Anxiety/worry/panic  
Sadness/depression

# Reminder: Use your resources



# Fostering our personal resilience



## BE ACTIVE

Exercise  
Movement

## EAT RIGHT

Healthy Content  
Right Frequency

Being intentional  
about maintaining our  
***personal resilience***

## RECHARGE

Sleep  
Relax  
Stress Management

# Exercise and mental health

## Exercise increases your overall health and your sense of well-being

### It pumps up your endorphins

Physical activity helps bump up the production of your brain's feel-good neurotransmitters, called endorphins

### It's meditation in motion

After physical activity, you'll often find that you've forgotten the day's irritations and concentrated only on your body's movements

### Focus on a single task

The resulting energy and optimism can help you remain calm and clear in everything you do

### It improves your mood

It can lower the symptoms associated with mild depression and anxiety. Exercise can also improve your sleep, which is often disrupted by stress

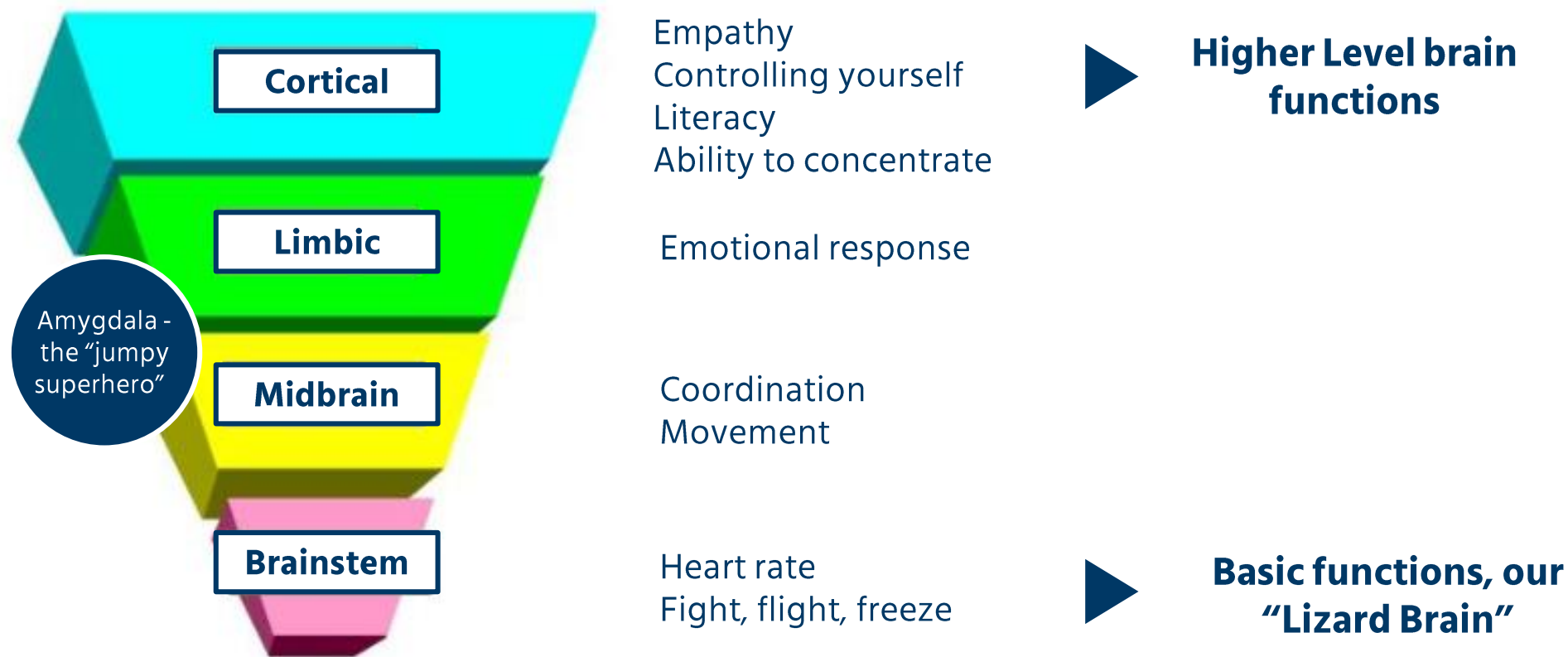
**While gyms have been closed in certain areas due to safety concerns, there are still options available, including Aaptiv!**



# How Mindfulness Impacts Your Mind and Body

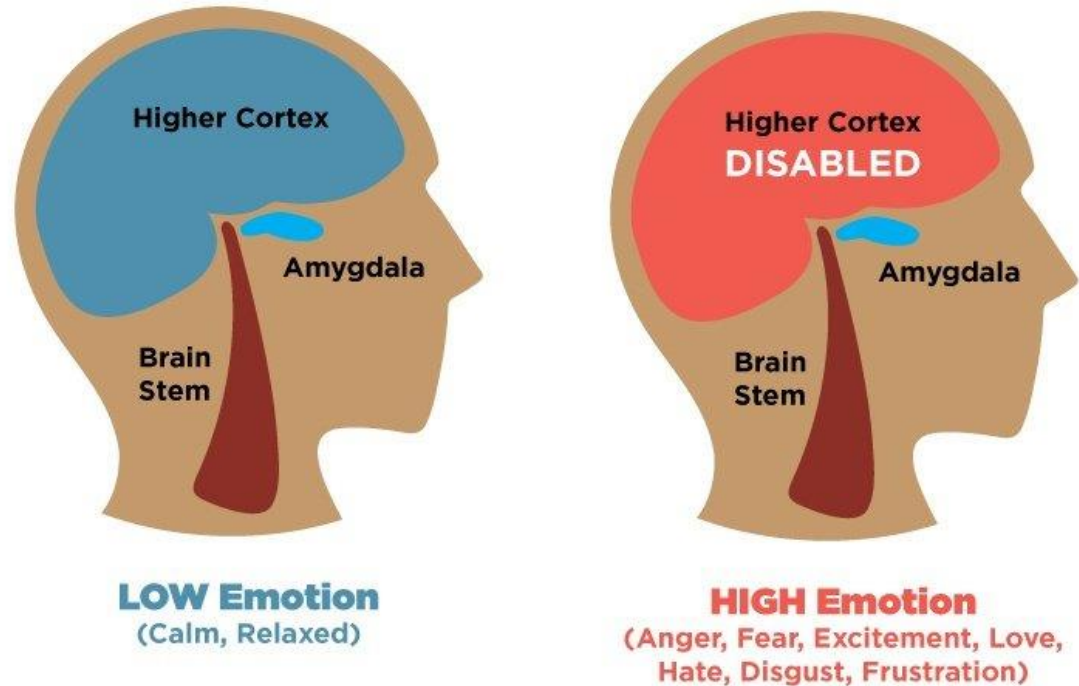
# Understanding brain functioning

## Perry's Neurosequential Model



Perry, B.D. (2002). *Brain Structure and Function I: Basics of Organisation*. Adapted in part from "Maltreated Children: Experience, Brain Development and the Next Generation (W.W. Norton & Company).

# The Amygdala

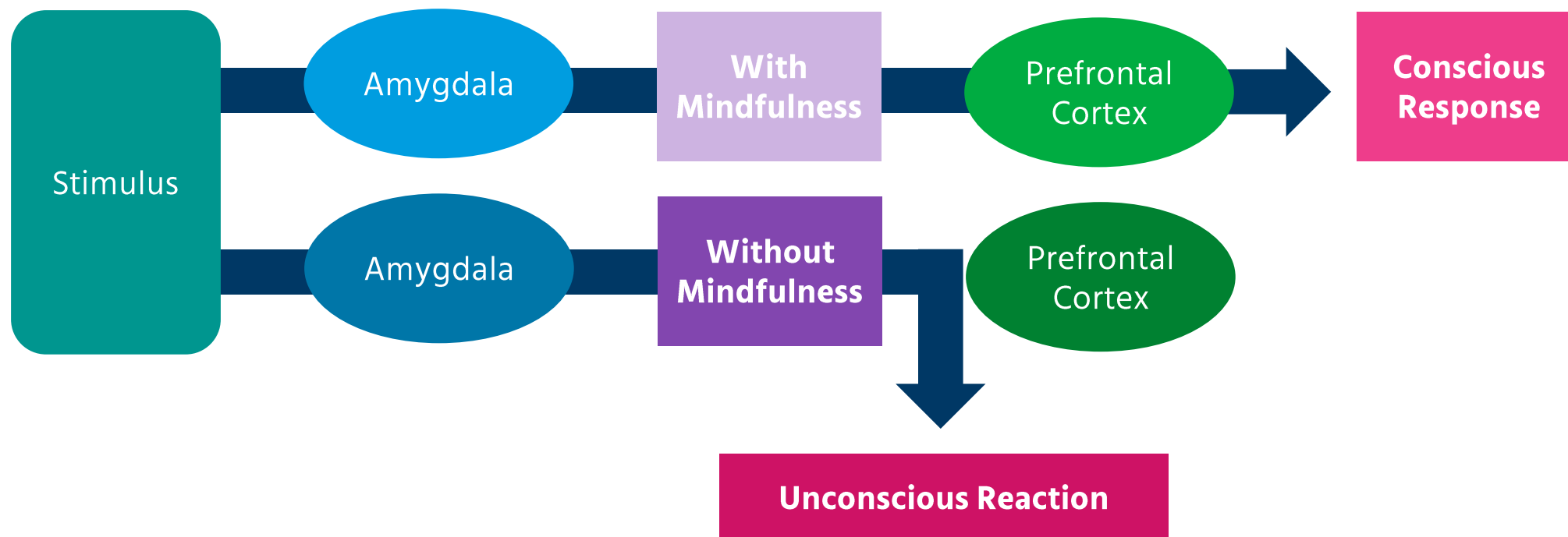


The **amygdala** is like the brain's super hero, protecting us from threats. It helps us to react quickly when there is danger. **Sometimes it's good to react quickly**—when there's a true physical threat, like when a car swerves into your lane.

But when you experience frequent or repeated stress and periods of intense emotional response, you might start seeing the impacts on your **physical health** – such as elevated blood pressure and cardiovascular health issues – and your **emotional health** – with higher likelihood of mood swings and irritability

TTI Success Insights (2017). *Reduce Emotional Hijacking with Emotional Intelligence*

# Mindfulness impact on brain functioning



**Mindfulness creates space, shifting brain activity from the reactive amygdala to the thoughtful prefrontal cortex**

## Key Takeaway:

Encouraging relaxation responses can reduce our stress response

Participate in yoga or muscle relaxation

Take walks and **exercise**

Practice breathing / meditation / **mindfulness**

Turn off the news

Building camaraderie to the situation

**Stay informed** from trusted resources

Take time for **hobbies**, such as music or reading

Create new routines for the time being

Eat healthy

**Reduce your risk** of exposure

**These techniques work for adults and children**

*Remember that not everyone experiences stress the same way!*

# Signs and symptoms to look out for

## Impact on caregivers and children

### Building personal resiliency is not just for adults

Children are experiencing stressors in the current environment, similar to adults

Lack of ability to socialize may cause children to turn more to “screen time” in the short term and that’s okay – **we’re all doing our best to manage**

### Tips for caregivers

- **Remember you’re not alone** - seek support from your personal network
- **Talk with your family** about what’s happening and how they are feeling-and discuss how you are feeling (in age appropriate ways)
- Do your best to **model healthy techniques** for managing stress and difficult times
- Don’t hesitate to seek care for yourself and your family if struggling to manage

### Signs to look out for in your child(ren)

More significant childhood mental health problems are different from the normal “blues” and everyday emotions that occur as a child develops

Every child may present with a unique set of symptoms

#### Signs to look out for include:

- Irritability, anger, or being “on edge”
- Changes in appetite (increased or decreased)
- Changes in sleep (sleeplessness or too much sleep)
- More frequent crying or temper tantrums
- Difficulty concentrating and focusing
- Fatigue and low energy

**If you feel your child may be having significant issues or struggling to self manage-TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS- and don’t hesitate to reach out to your pediatrician or a licensed mental health provider**

# Progressive Muscle Relaxation Exercise

# Q&A



# Mercury Systems resources

Mercury provides a range of wellbeing resources to help you manage stress and build resiliency

**Employee Assistance Program**  
Cigna

Access care by calling 877-622-4327 or visiting the site at [www.my.cigna.com](http://www.my.cigna.com) go to the EAP tab, and end employer ID "mercurysystems"

**Employee Assistance Program**  
GuidanceResources

*Available in 2021 (Additional information on MERC)*

**Caregiver support**  
Care@Work

Visit [mrcy.care.com](http://mrcy.care.com) and enroll using your company e-mail

**Health and Happiness**  
HeadSpace

Visit [work.headspace.com/mercurysystems/member-enroll/verify](http://work.headspace.com/mercurysystems/member-enroll/verify) to register

**Exercise**  
Aaptiv

If you have not yet received a welcome e-mail, e-mail [support@aaptiv.com](mailto:support@aaptiv.com) to get started

# Upcoming events

Week of Well-Being Webinars are starting December 9<sup>th</sup> and will cover topics such as:

- Finding Your Resilience
- Stealth Stressors: Life in the Digital Age
- Stress and Our Perceptions (Spanish)
- Living Lonely: The Power of Connection
- Wellness One Notes: Micro Moves for Better Health
- Retirement Planning

Additional information on these events is coming soon!