

# UNDERSTANDING WELLBEING & RESILIENCE AND HOW TO FOSTER IT

Combat Stress Training Programme for  
Organisations to Improve Veterans' Wellbeing

Module 1 of 4



# WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

- *Your facilitators are Dr Jen Bateman, Lead Clinical Psychologist and Jolandi du Preez, Lead Occupational Therapist.*
- *The webinar will be recorded and the recording shared on our 'on-demand' training page, Module 1 materials will be available at the end of this month.*
- *We will be taking questions, please do submit these in the Q&A box and we will have a Q& A session at the end of the webinar.*

# THE COMBAT STRESS TRAINING PROGRAMME FOR VETERANS' WELLBEING

## **Module 4:**

*Building Trauma Informed Organisations*

## **Module 3:**

*Understanding & Responding To Veterans  
Who May Be Struggling With Poor Mental  
Health*

## **Module 2:**

*Understanding Why Veterans  
May Be More Vulnerable to  
Poor Mental Health*

## **Module 1:**

*Understanding Wellbeing & Resilience  
And How to Foster It*

# OUTLINE OF TODAY'S TRAINING

## Module 1: Understanding Wellbeing & Resilience & How to Foster It

1. *What is wellbeing?*

2. *What promotes wellbeing and resilience?*

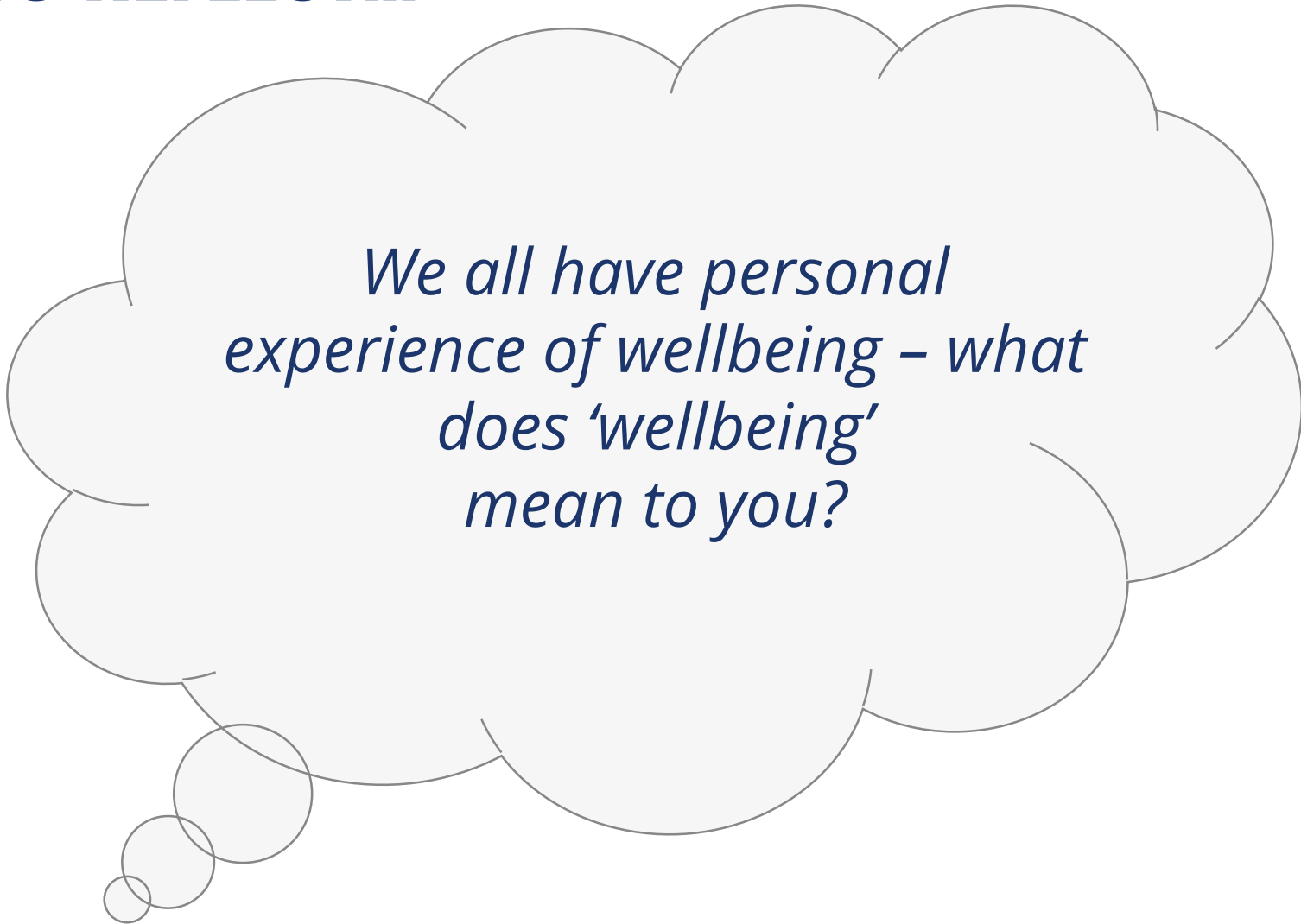
3. *How do we foster wellbeing in the veterans in our projects?*

# **PART 1:**

# **WHAT IS WELLBEING?**

- Definitions of wellbeing
- Key components of wellbeing

# A MOMENT TO REFLECT...



*We all have personal  
experience of wellbeing – what  
does 'wellbeing'  
mean to you?*

# DAVINA SHARES HER STORY...

Davina, who is now 43, grew up in Northern Ireland and joined the Army Air Corps aged 23. She served for four and half years as a regular and a further two and a half as a reserve.



*"When I came back from a tour to Oman, the Army base seemed like a different world to when I'd left it. I didn't feel like I belonged in the Army anymore.*

*I decided to leave but it wasn't easy on civvy street. My mum had died just before I left the Army, my dad died soon afterwards and then my husband left me. That was a lot to deal with.*

*However, I got a new flat, my job was going well and then I met Matt who became my second husband. All seemed to be great in my life but then we went to visit my sister-in-law in Majorca. It was dark when we arrived but, in the morning, when I looked out of the window into the neighbour's garden, I absolutely thought I was in Bosnia. I felt totally shell shocked, I couldn't communicate or explain anything.*

*It was then my sleeping became awful. I started having a terrible dream, but I could never remember what it was. I became totally exhausted..."*

***We'll catch up with Davina's story a bit later...***

# DEFINITIONS OF WELLBEING

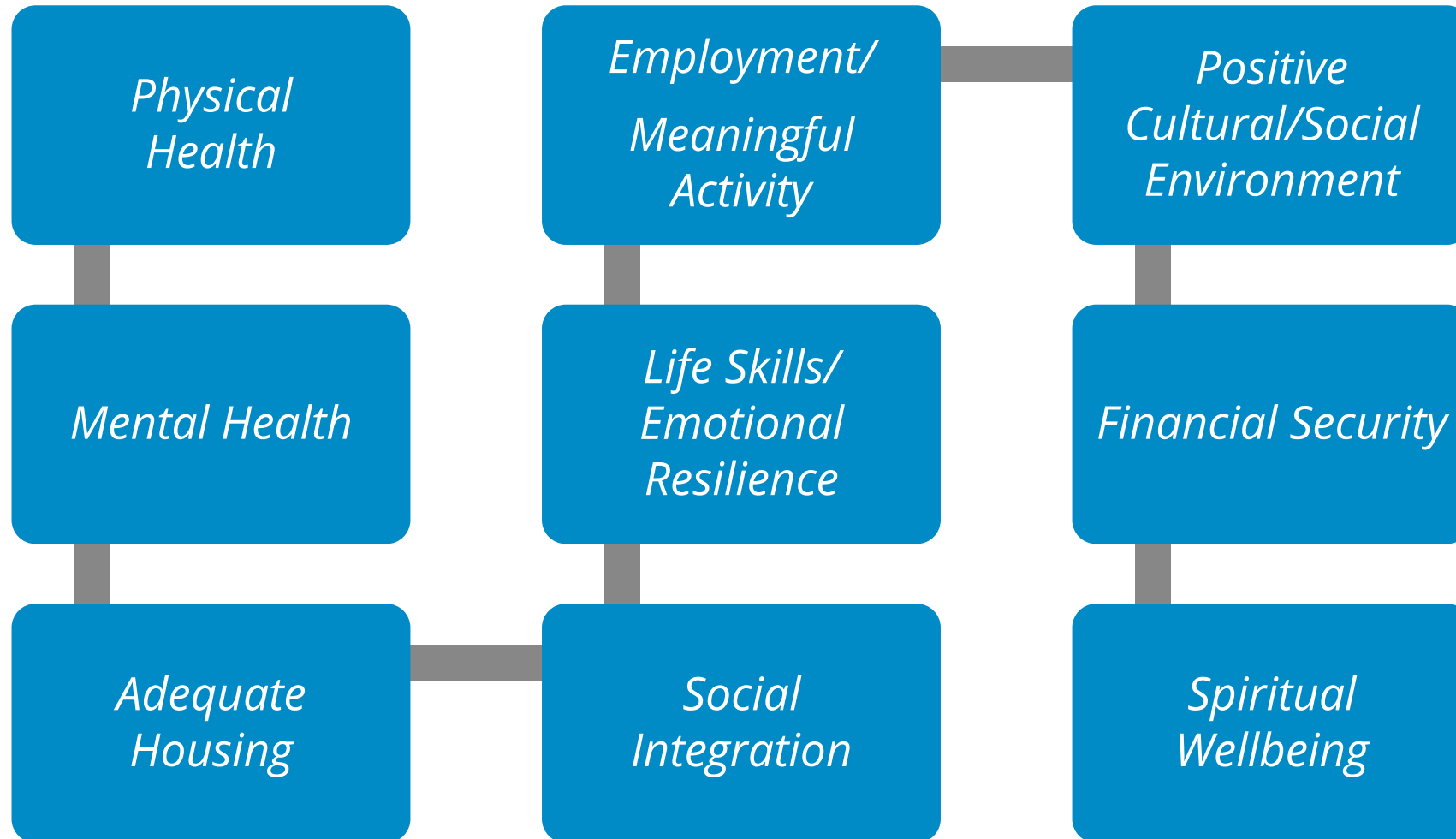
*“The state of being comfortable, healthy, or happy.”*



*Deci, E.L. and Ryan, R.M. (2008)*



# THE KEY AREAS OF WELLBEING:



# **PART 2:**

# **WHAT PROMOTES WELLBEING?**

- Strengths Fostered Through Military Experience
- Increasing Resilience

# STRENGTHS THAT MILITARY SERVICE MAY FOSTER



*There are  
many more...  
what strengths  
would you add  
to this list?*

# WHAT IS RESILIENCE?

“The capacity to recover quickly from difficulties”

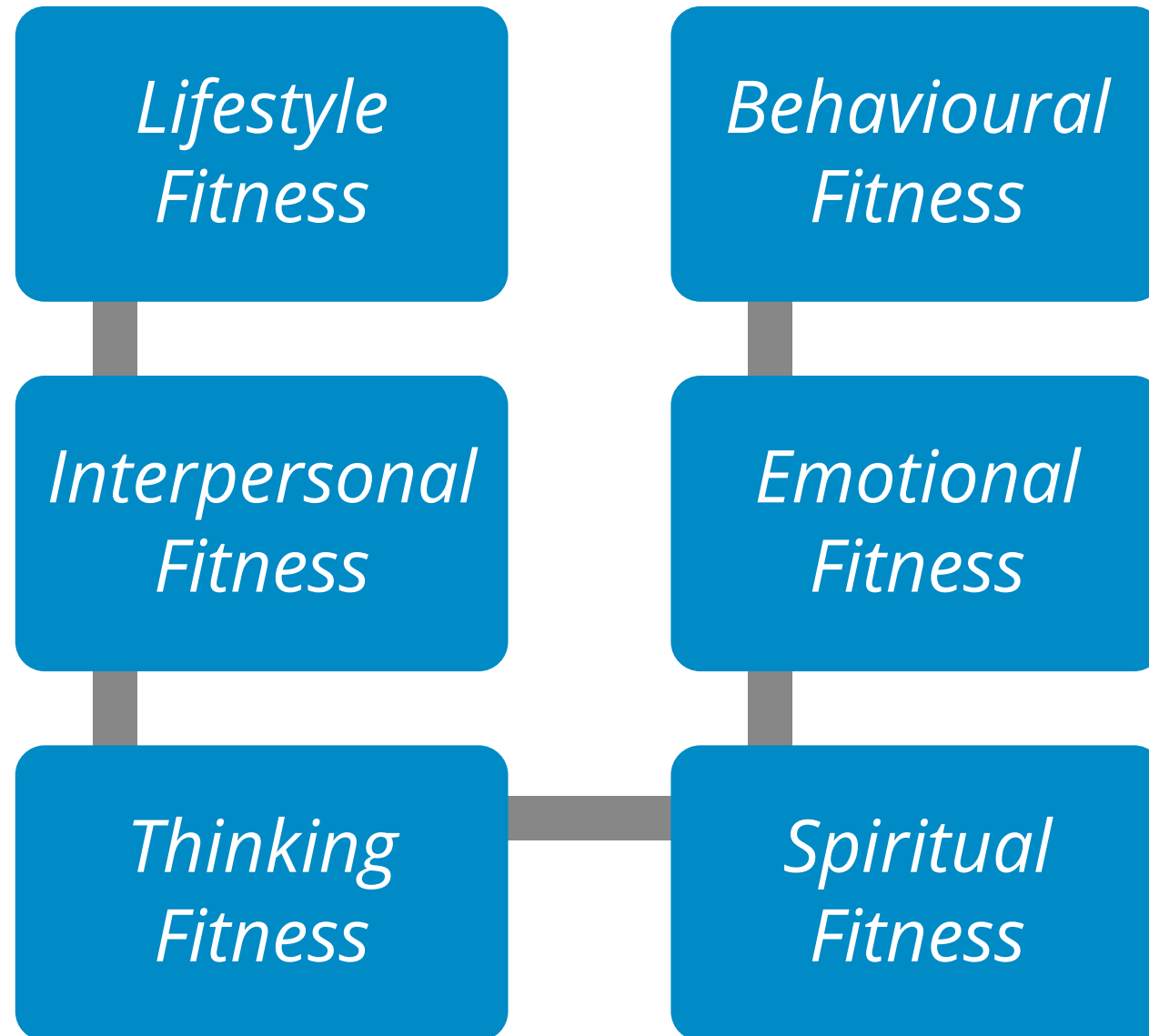
- *The ability to ‘bounce back’*
- *Thriving despite (or because of) challenges*
- *Adapting well under pressure*
- *Growing: being strengthened and improved by adversity.*



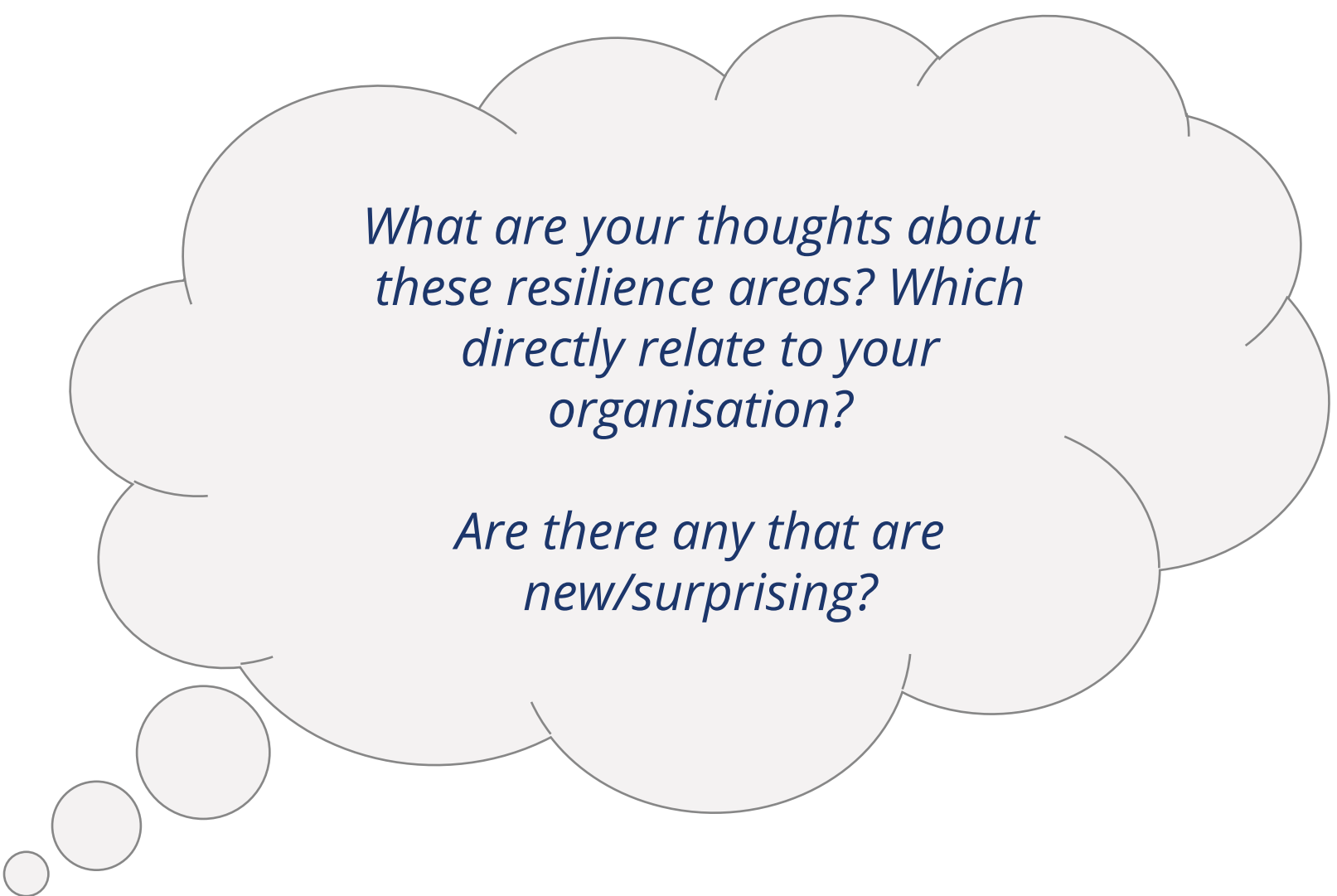
“Notice that the stiffest tree is most easily cracked, while the bamboo or willow survives by bending with the wind.”

# KEY AREAS OF RESILIENCE

Meichenbaum (2012)



# TAKE A MOMENT TO REFLECT...



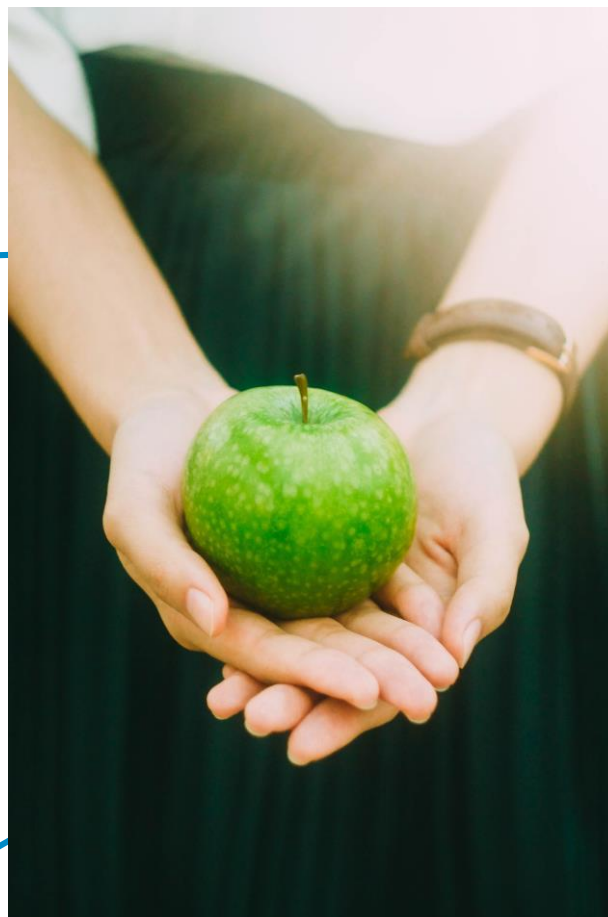
*What are your thoughts about  
these resilience areas? Which  
directly relate to your  
organisation?*

*Are there any that are  
new/surprising?*

# PHYSICAL FITNESS

*Healthy eating,  
balanced food  
choices, eating  
three meals a day*

*Be mindful of  
caffeine and alcohol  
intake*



*Exercise regularly;  
structured exercise  
as well as movement*

*Sleep  
hygiene and  
regular rest*

# BEHAVIOURAL FITNESS:

*Being flexible and adaptable in the face of change by making use of abilities and resources.*

*Avoid avoidance: can help with coping in the short term but in the long term leads to withdrawal and other problems*

*Break tasks into manageable chunks*

*Willingness to try out new ways of doing things and learning from setbacks.*



*Develop a regular routine that includes enjoyable relaxing activities.*



# EMOTIONAL FITNESS:

*Having the ability to accept emotions; enhance 'positive' feelings and understand 'negative/unwanted' emotions*

*Identifying and labeling emotions is helpful; anxious, depressed, sad, angry?*

*Link between activity, emotions, health and well-being*

*Sharing feelings and concerns with a trusted other*

*Emotional self-care boosts resilience.*

*Positive self-talk in place of 'automatic thoughts' that may occur when feeling stressed or anxious.*



# INTERPERSONAL FITNESS:

*Having positive relationships to help manage in difficult times*

*Participate in a social community, group connection over a shared interest or sport*



*Give back and help others – generates a feeling of wellbeing, supports self-esteem*

*A resilient person can both ask for help and offer help; building mutually caring relationships.*

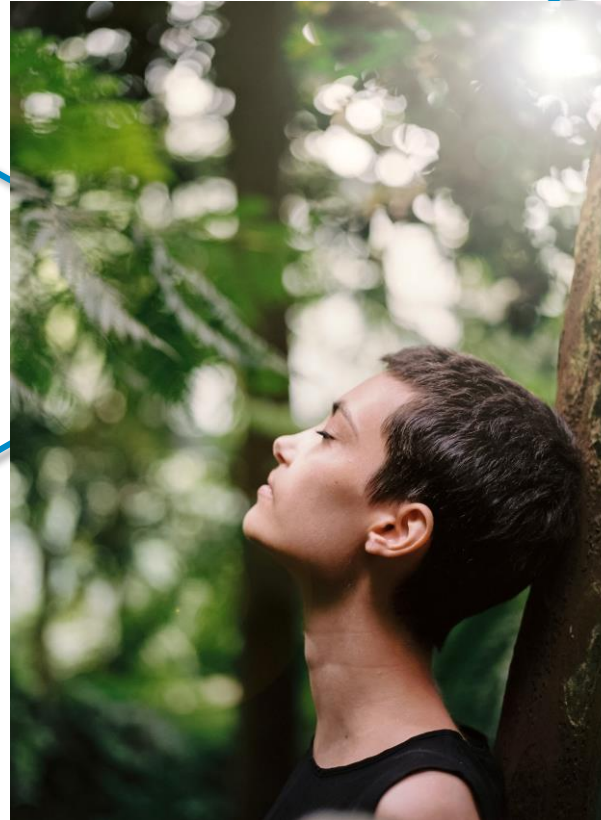
*Be mindful of communication, differences between in military and 'civvies' styles*

# THINKING FITNESS:

*Being flexible and mentally supple. It involves noticing and avoiding 'thinking traps'*

*Using problem-solving skills and maintaining optimism.*

*Resilience is as much about the 'mindset' as the actions.*



*Set concrete measurable goals, write /share with someone to increase commitment*

*Keep problem-solving; capacity to view problems as a 'challenge' with many alternative solutions.*

*Keep learning - keeps the brain active and stimulated which promotes resilience*

# SPIRITUAL FITNESS:

*Having meaning and purpose in life, a 'why' for life; may or may not include religious beliefs*

*Variety of ways of practicing spirituality:*

- Creative
- Practical
- Meditation

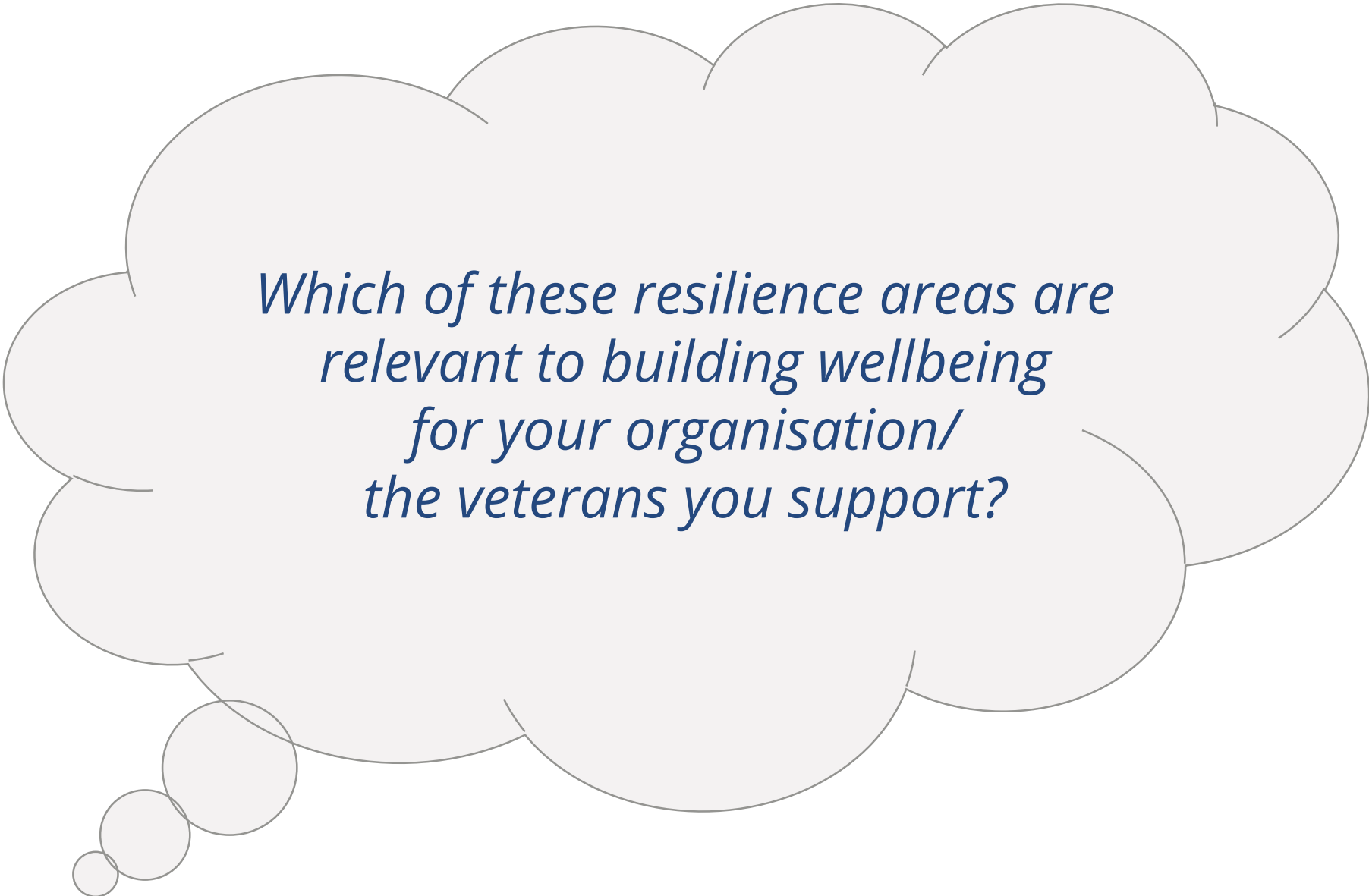


*Participation in a spiritual or religious group*

*Spirituality helps individuals put their core values into action*

*Finding a passion, following energy and interests; sharing and inspiring others*

# A MOMENT TO REFLECT...



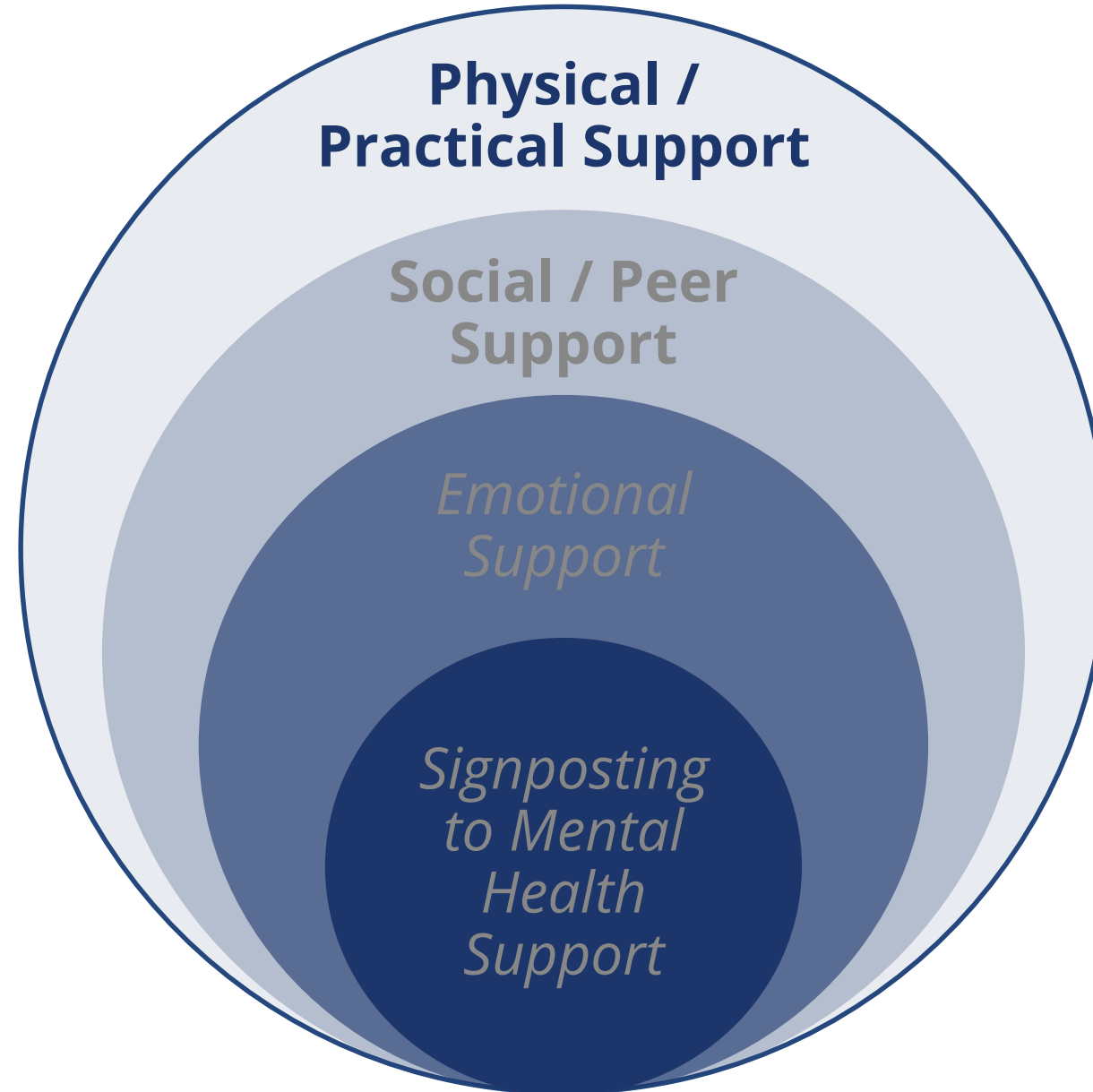
*Which of these resilience areas are  
relevant to building wellbeing  
for your organisation/  
the veterans you support?*

# **PART 3:**

# **HOW TO FOSTER VETERAN**

# **WELLBEING IN OUR PROJECTS**

# FOSTERING WELLBEING, AREAS TO CONSIDER...



# BUILDING PHYSICAL & PRACTICAL SUPPORT WITHIN YOUR PROJECT:

*Attend to physical  
needs; food, water,  
regular breaks,  
appropriate equipment,  
limiting alcohol/smoking*

*Aim for a balance  
of activities –  
social/team-building*

*Offer regular shifts  
in activities  
(for rest or movement)*

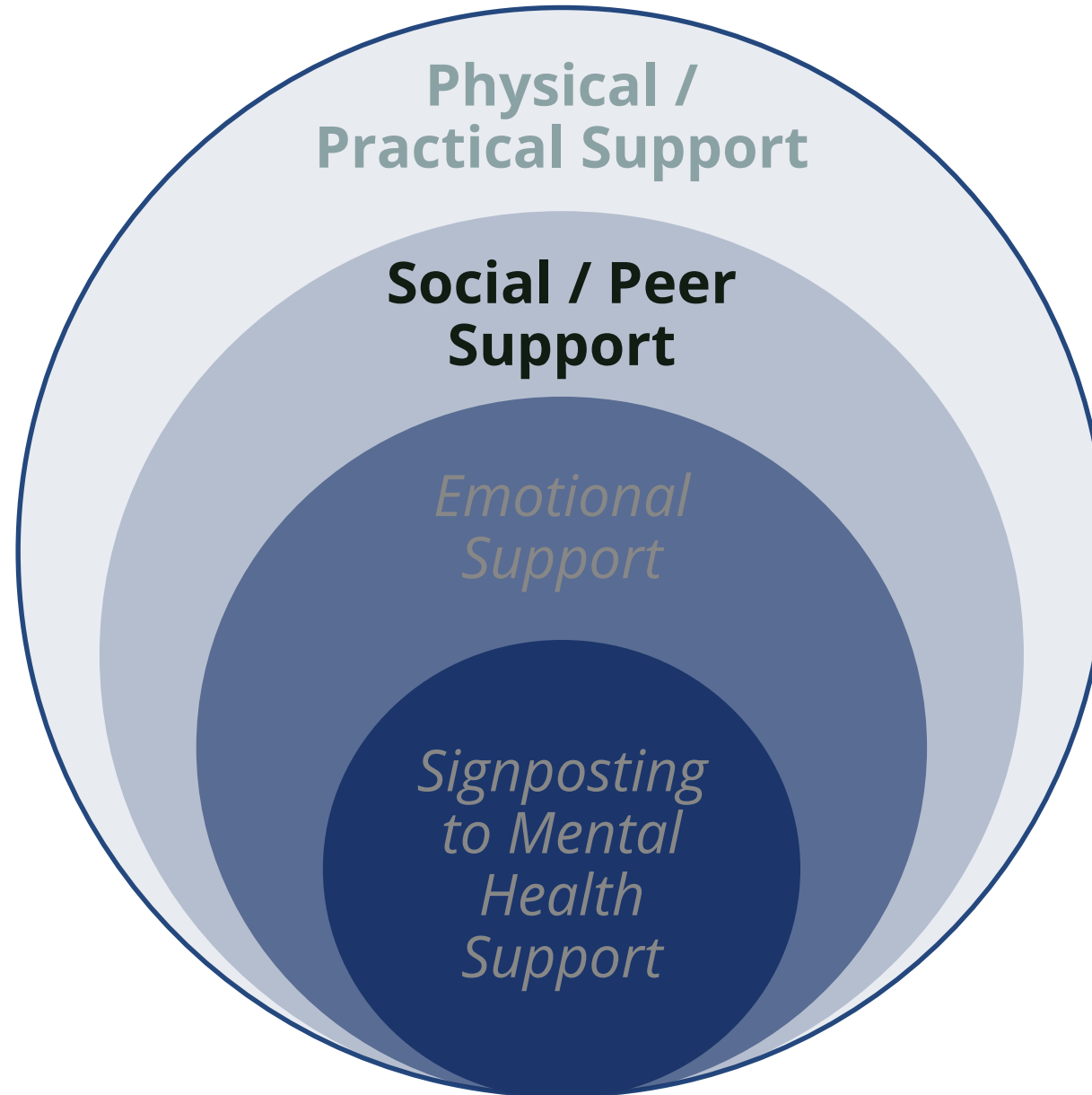
*Breaking tasks  
down to bite  
size chunks*

*Including encouragement  
and rewards for  
involvement*

*Assist with practical concerns  
e.g. housing, finances.  
Signposting to relevant  
organisations*



# FOSTERING WELLBEING, AREAS TO CONSIDER...



# BUILDING SOCIAL/PEER SUPPORT WITHIN YOUR PROJECT:

*Consider a  
buddy system,  
support camaraderie*

*Involvement in decision  
making and provide  
options and choices*

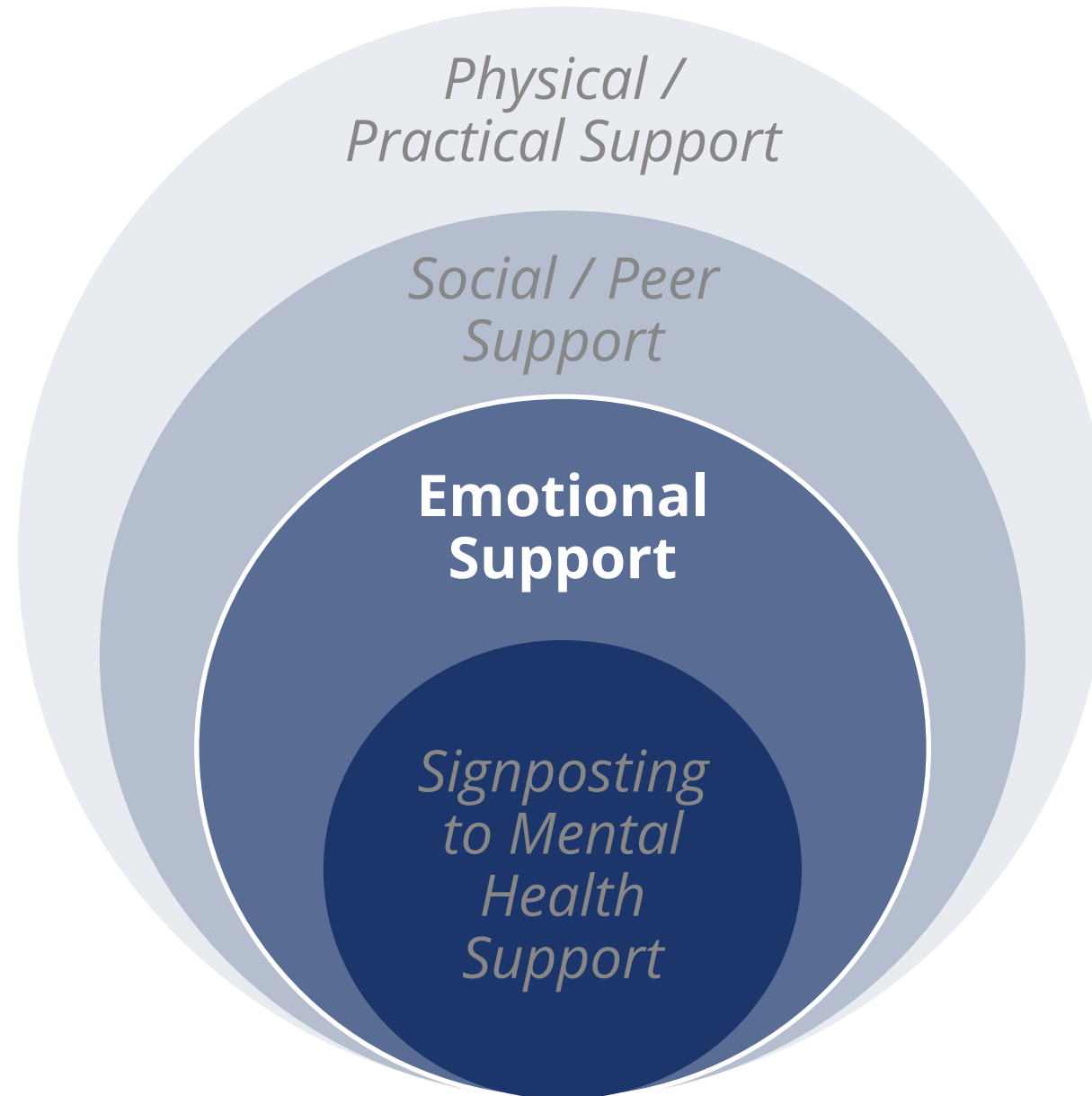
*Are there any  
adaptations to the  
project / task  
that would be helpful?*

*Consider ways  
participants  
can help each other  
in a task, to foster  
wellbeing & self-esteem*

*Make it easy to ask for  
help, get it 'wrong'  
without fear / judgement*

*Signpost to  
other projects/  
community groups to  
widen social network*

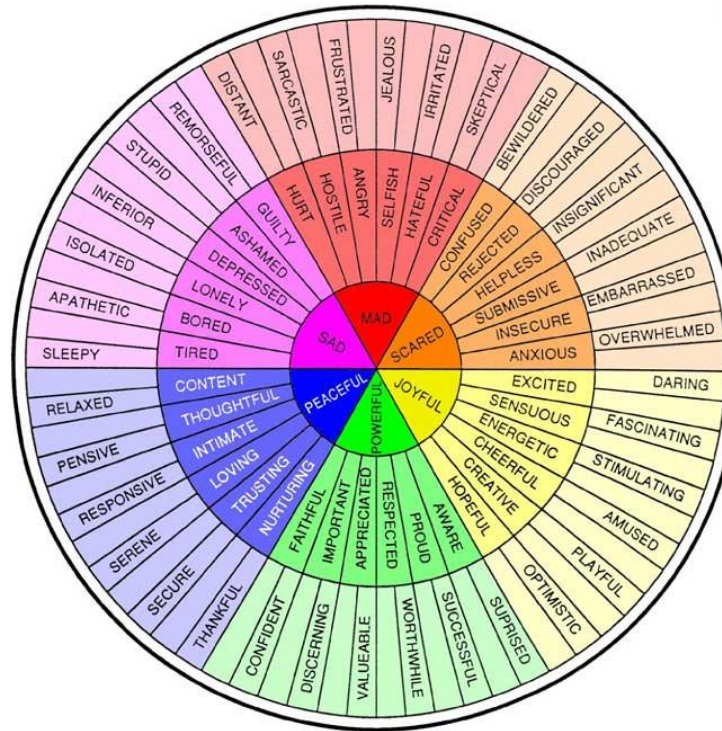
# FOSTERING WELLBEING, AREAS TO CONSIDER...



# COVID19: THE RANGE OF EMOTIONS & RESPONSES

*Emotions provide  
important information*

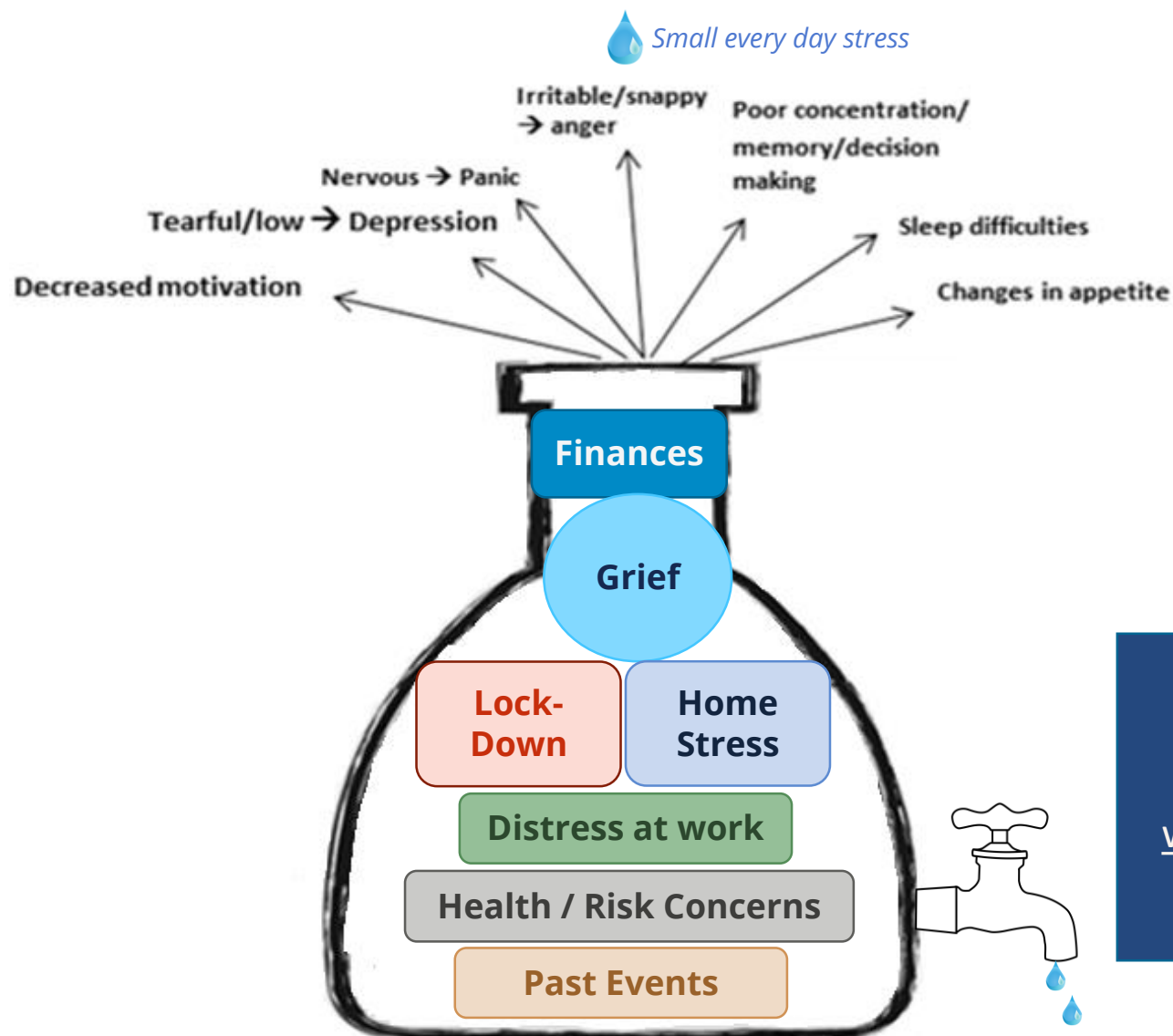
*It's usual to experience  
a range of emotions;  
feelings ebb and flow*



*All emotions are  
important; feelings  
provide us with  
valuable information*

*It is okay to  
not be okay*

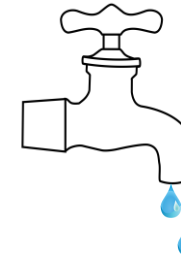
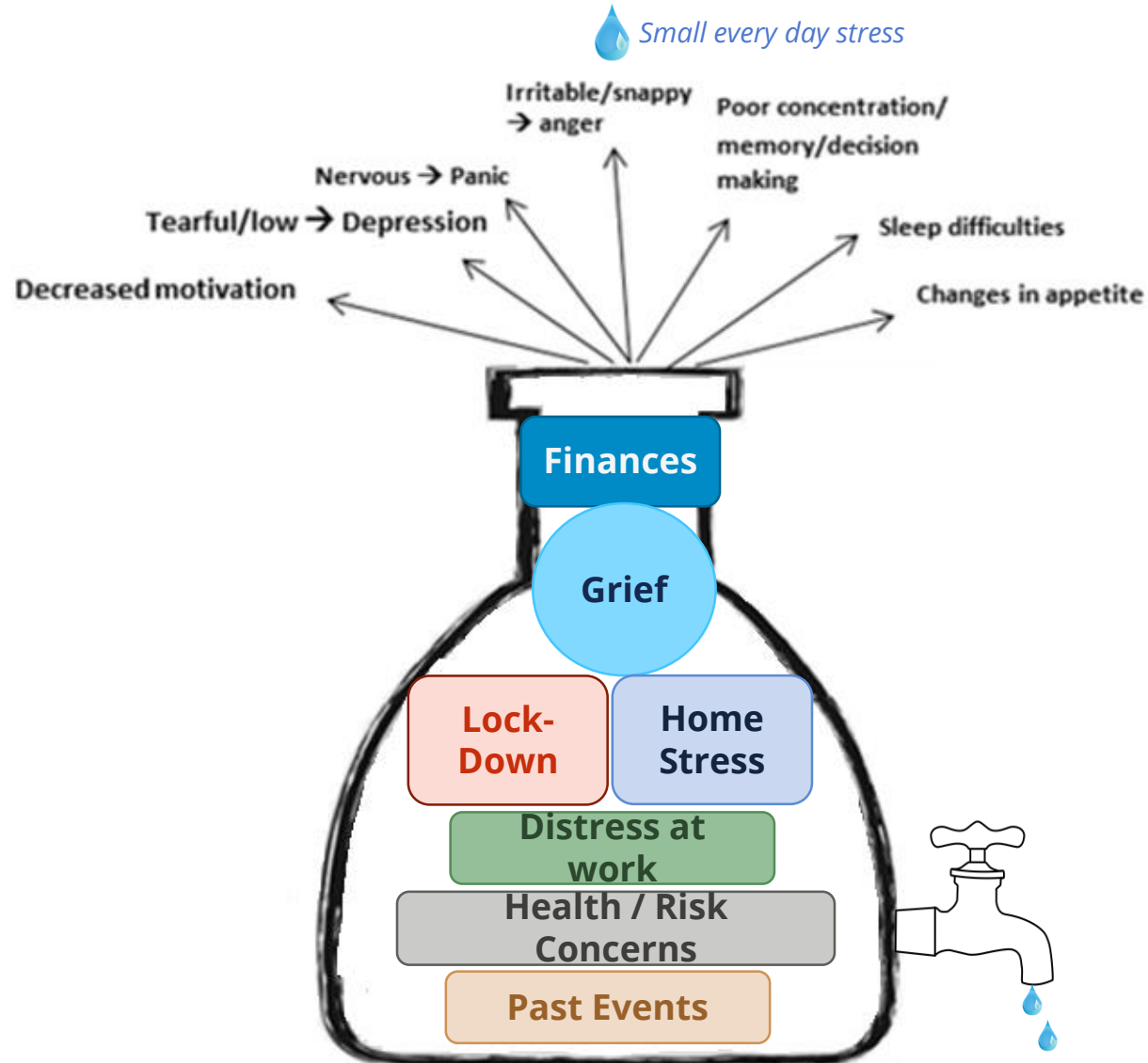
# THE STRESS BOTTLE



Combat Stress Online  
Self-Help Materials:

[www.combatstress.org.uk/mental-health-support-during-covid-19](http://www.combatstress.org.uk/mental-health-support-during-covid-19)

# PRACTICAL STRATEGIES TO MANAGE STRESS



- Eat, drink and sleep properly
- Maintain a routine
- Regular breaks during shifts
- Time out between shifts
- Engage in physical activity
- Plan regular, feel good activities
- Stay in touch with friends/family
- Avoid unhelpful coping strategies
- Limit time engaging with news
- Engage with activities that takes mind away from current crisis.

# DAVINA SHARES HER STORY...



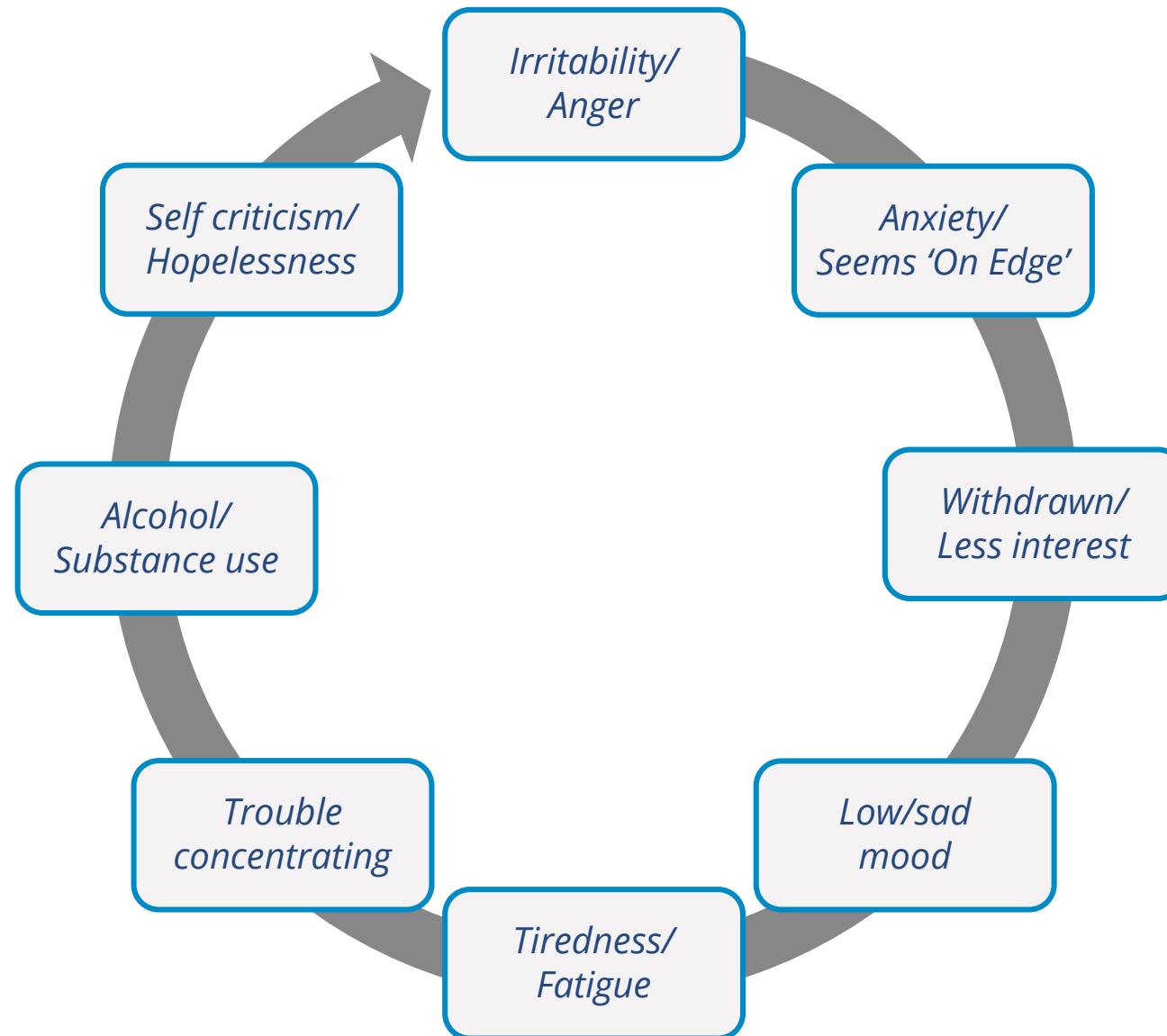
*"It was after my tour in Bosnia that I felt like I had turned to stone inside – I didn't care about anyone else's problems. It used to drive me mad when people moaned or whinged about their lives.*

*But... my therapist made me see that from what I'd seen, I couldn't take in anything else - my cup was full as it were.*

*I've seen the cruelty that humans can do and the devastating effects. And this has affected how I see life today. I know now I just need to walk away if someone's daily moaning is getting to me, rather than getting angry and upset."*

***We'll catch up with Davina's story a bit later...***

# SPOTTING THE SIGNS OF EMOTIONAL DISTRESS:





# CONVERSATION STARTERS...

*"Would you  
like to talk?"*

*"May I ask about  
how you're  
feeling?"*

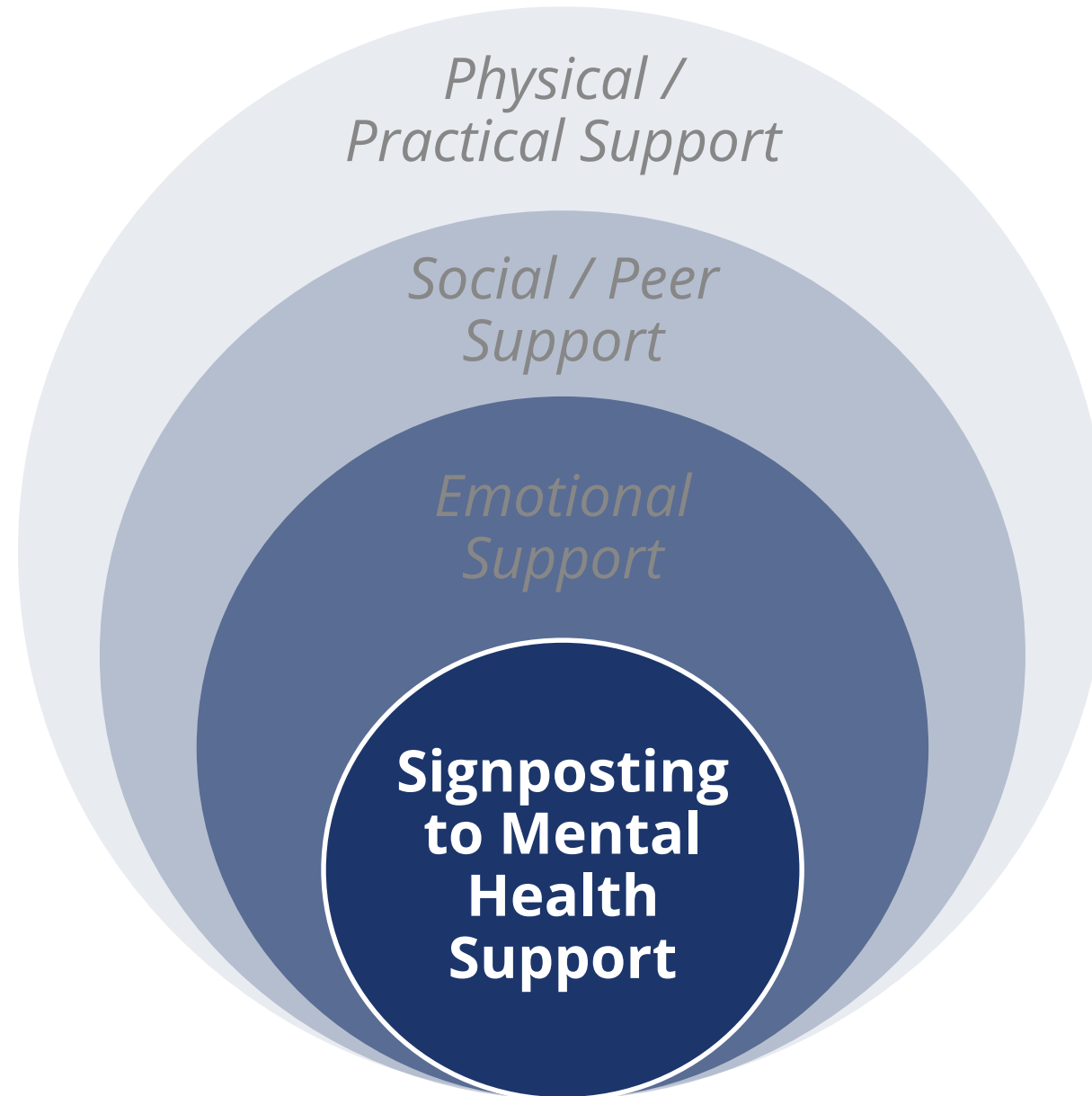
*"Can I check in  
with you, are you ok?  
How are things going for  
you? "*

*"I notice you seem  
[e.g. more frustrated  
than usual], how are  
you doing? "*

*"The power of a brew..."*



# FOSTERING WELLBEING, AREAS TO CONSIDER...



# SERVICES THAT COMBAT STRESS PROVIDE:

## **24/7 Helpline:**

*Assessment of mental  
health and wellbeing*

**0800 138 1619**

## **Interdisciplinary support across the UK:**

*(Occupational Therapy,  
Nursing, Psychology,  
Psychiatry)*

## **Psychological Therapy:**

*Online / phone*

## **Digital and online support & education service:**

[www.combatstress.org.uk/  
mental-health-support-  
during-covid-19](http://www.combatstress.org.uk/mental-health-support-during-covid-19)

## **Peer / Buddy Support Service**

## **Support for partners and family members**

**Combat Stress 24/7 Helpline: 0800 138 1619**

# Be Aware of Issues of Risk (A.C.E):

If a veteran shares they are having thoughts of hurting themselves/others

ASK: Ask directly, "Are you thinking about harming yourself?"

CARE: Actively listen, calmly share you are concerned and have a duty of care to keep him/her safe. Remove means of injury if safe to do so.

ESCORT: To their GP / A&E department of local hospital. Wait with them until assessed by a health professional. Accessing help via NHS 111 or via phone is also a safe option. Call 999 if immediate risk to self or others.

# DAVINA SHARES HER STORY...



*"It's the hardest thing to say you need help ... I used to feel like I didn't deserve help – I still had all my limbs after all ...but I learnt that I was there because I needed to be. My body might be intact, but my mind got damaged.*

*I'm so much more relaxed today. I've even done an aromatherapy course. It's a hobby but I love it – especially when I'm able to use it to help someone else."*

***Many thanks to Davina for sharing her story with us.***

# A MOMENT TO REFLECT...

*What is your top take-away  
for yourself / your organisation?*

*What are your  
1-3 actions/next steps for  
yourself / your organisation?*

# THE COMBAT STRESS TRAINING PROGRAMME FOR VETERANS' WELLBEING

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*Understanding Wellbeing & Resilience  
And How to Foster It*

# SUMMARY, QUESTIONS & NEXT STEPS

- 1 *We are living in difficult times, a focus on wellbeing is more important than ever*
- 2 *What's one takeaway or action step for yourself / your project?*
- 3 *This is module 1 of 4, we will build on these ideas in future modules*
- 4 *Self-assessment quiz and certificate of completion*
- 5 *Evaluation and Feedback: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/CSTandE>*

*Thank you for your time, attention & commitment to support veterans in your organisation*



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

\*

*Special thanks to our co-authors: Jolandi du Preez (Lead Occupational Therapist), Naomi Wilson (Consultant Clinical Psychologist and Head of Psychological Therapies), Walter Busuttil (Consultant Psychiatrist and Medical Director) Jen Bateman (Clinical Psychologist) and all contributors from the Veteran's Voice Network.*

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*Thank you to all Combat Stress colleagues who contributed to the development of this training.*

\*

*Sincere thanks to the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust for their generous funding of this programme and to the Strategic Partners for all their support*

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*Maslow, A. H. (1962). Toward a psychology of being. Princeton: D. Van Nostrand Company.*

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# REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1

*We all have personal experience of wellbeing – what does 'wellbeing' mean to you?*

2

*What are your thoughts about the 8 resilience areas? Which directly relate to your organisation? Are there any that are new/surprising?*

3

*Which of these resilience areas are relevant to building wellbeing for your organisation/ the veterans you support?*

4

*What is your top take-away for yourself / your organisation? What are your 1-3 actions/next steps for yourself / your organisation?*