

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 Naomi Wilson, Consultant Clinical Psychologist – Head of Psychological Therapies, and Jolandi du Preez, Head of Occupational Therapy.*
- *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?*

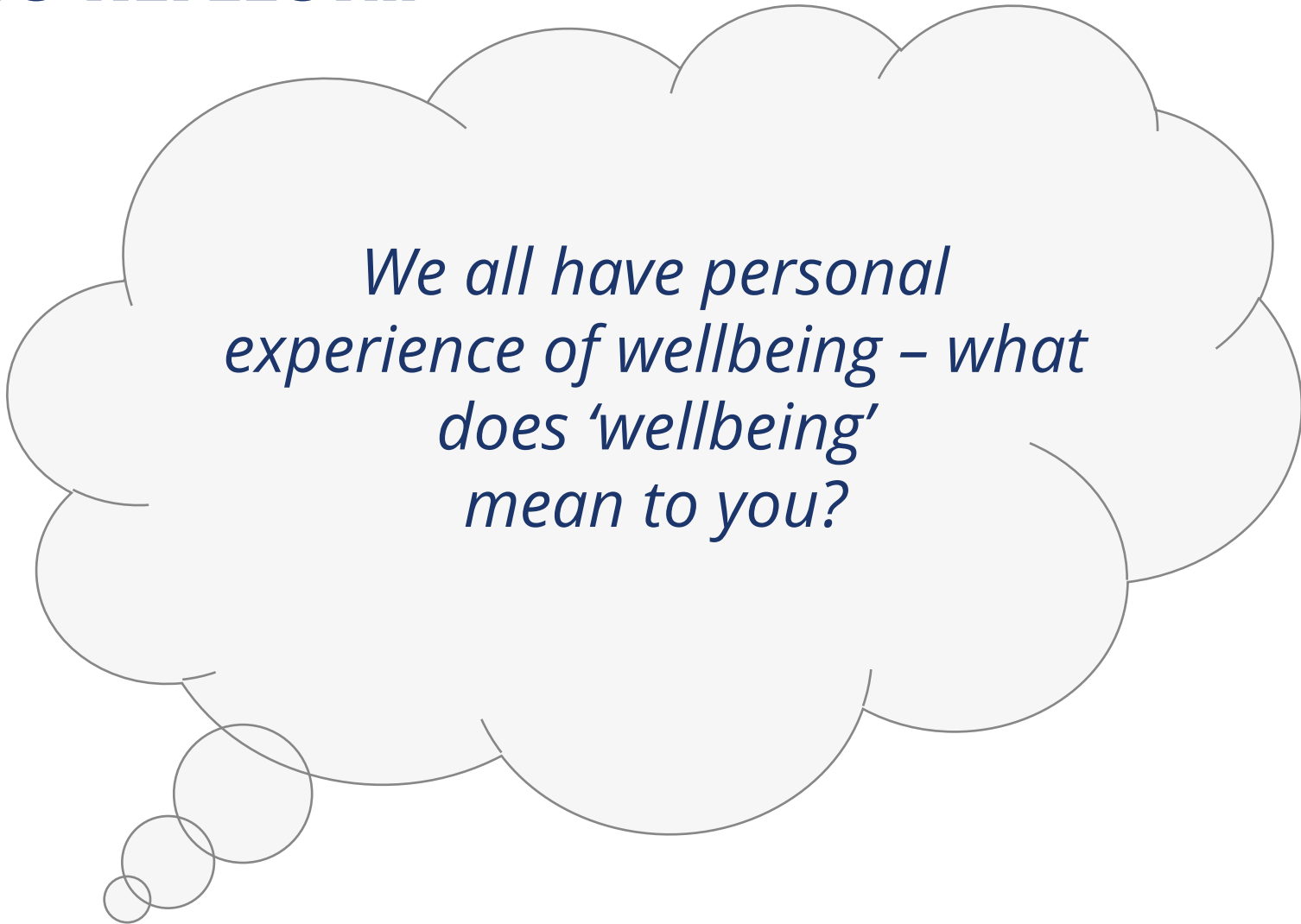
2. *What promotes wellbeing and resilience?*

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...

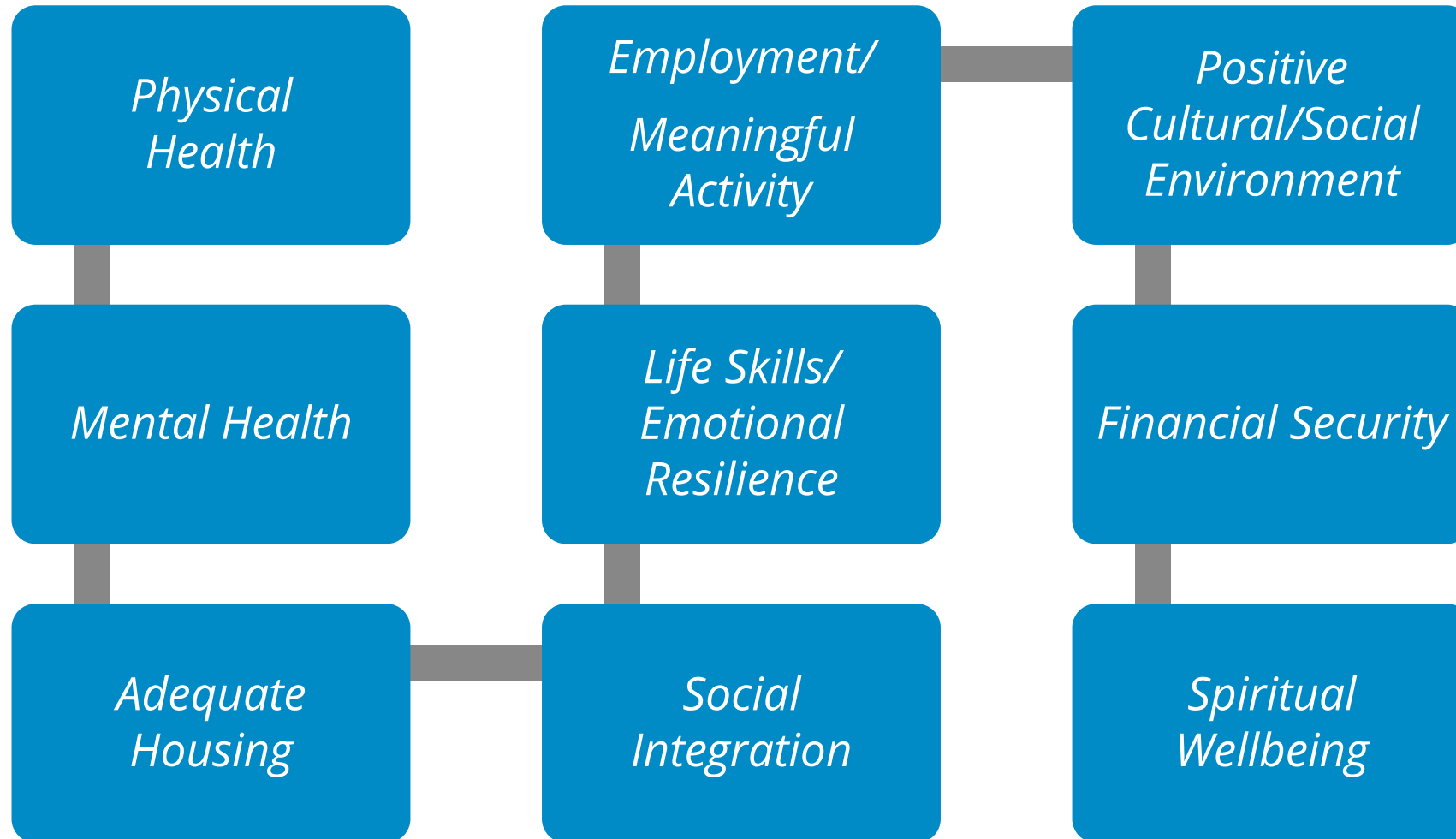
DEFINITIONS OF WELLBEING

“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?

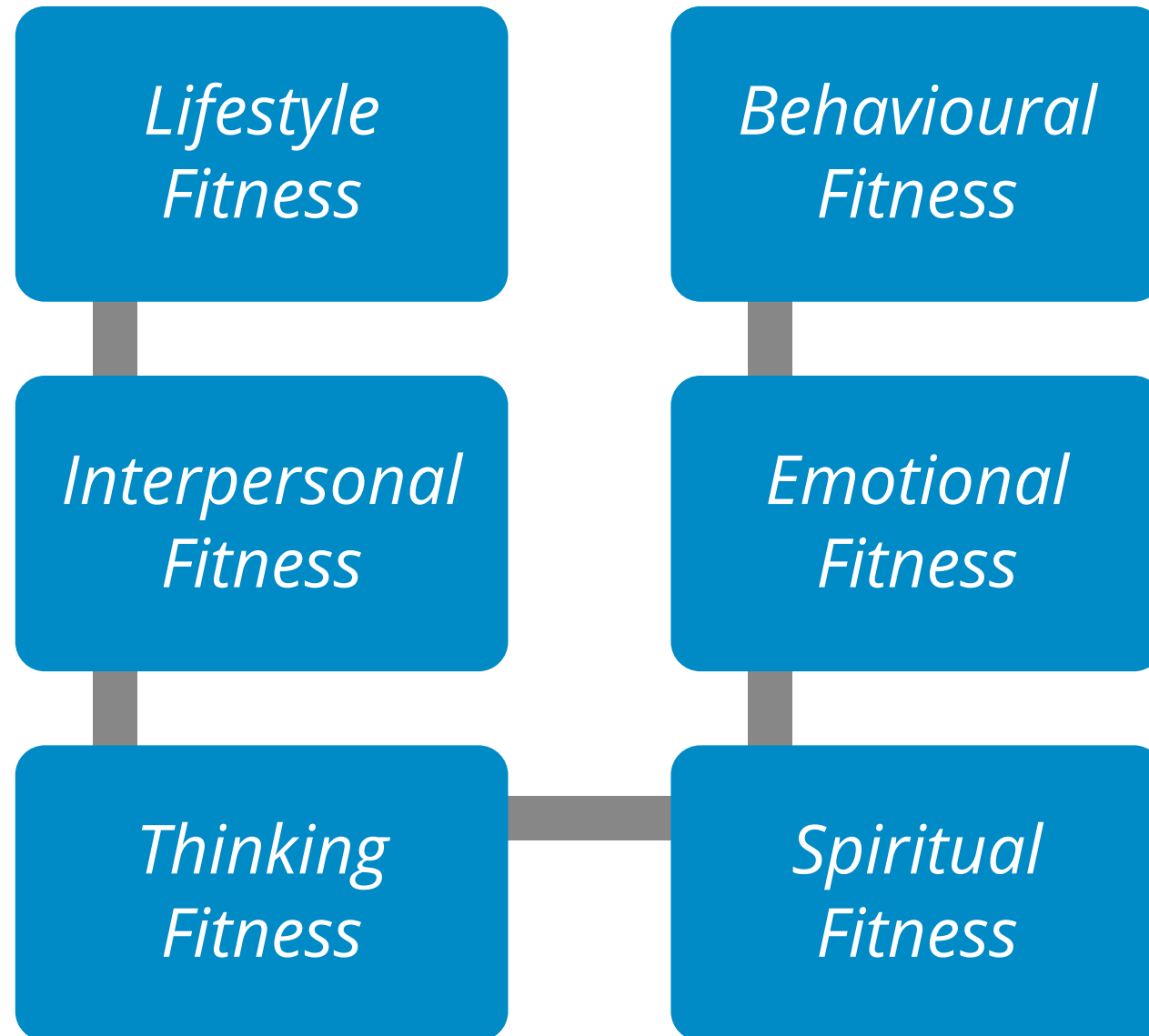
“The capacity to recover quickly from difficulties”

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

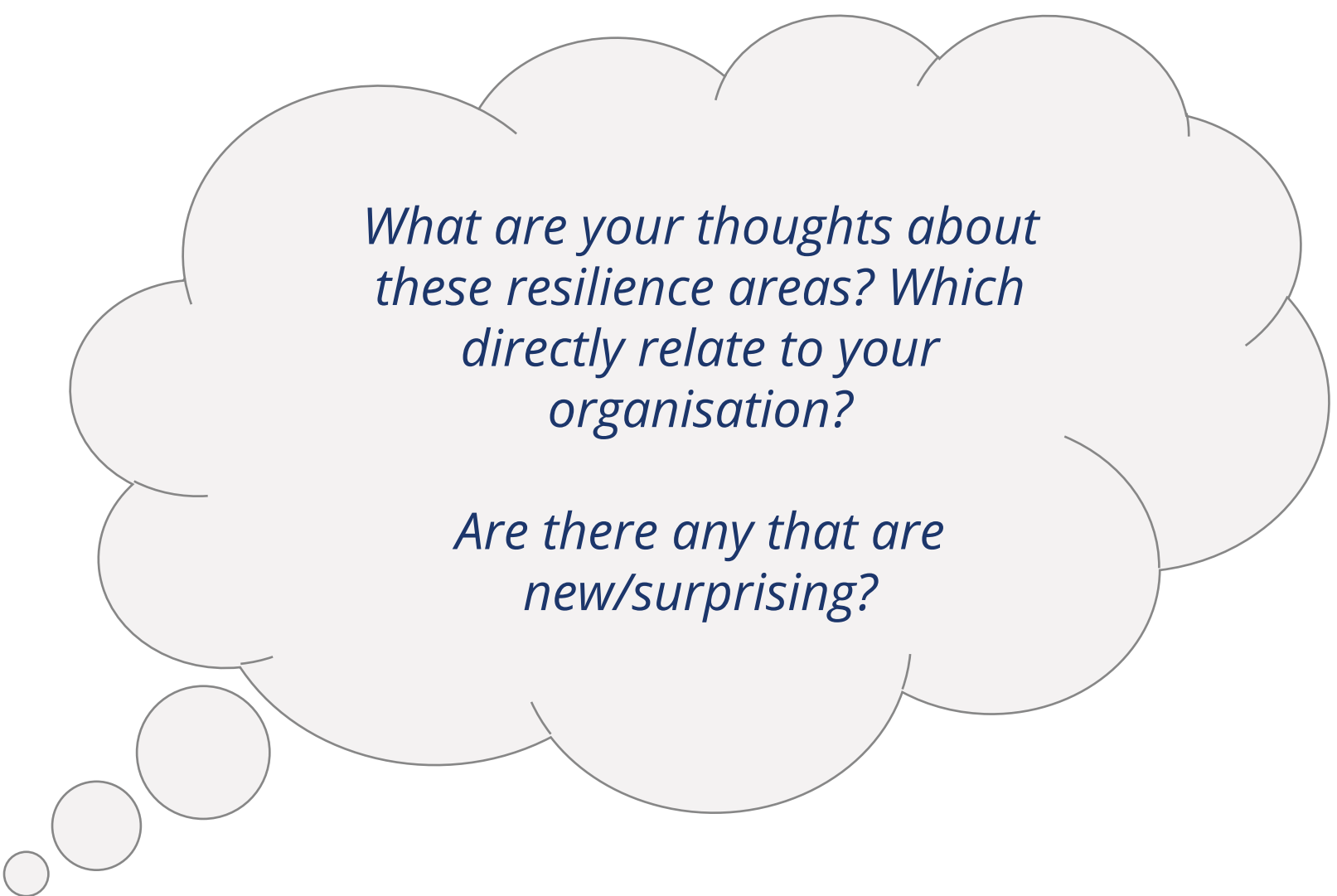


KEY AREAS OF RESILIENCE

Meichenbaum (2012)



TAKE A MOMENT TO REFLECT...



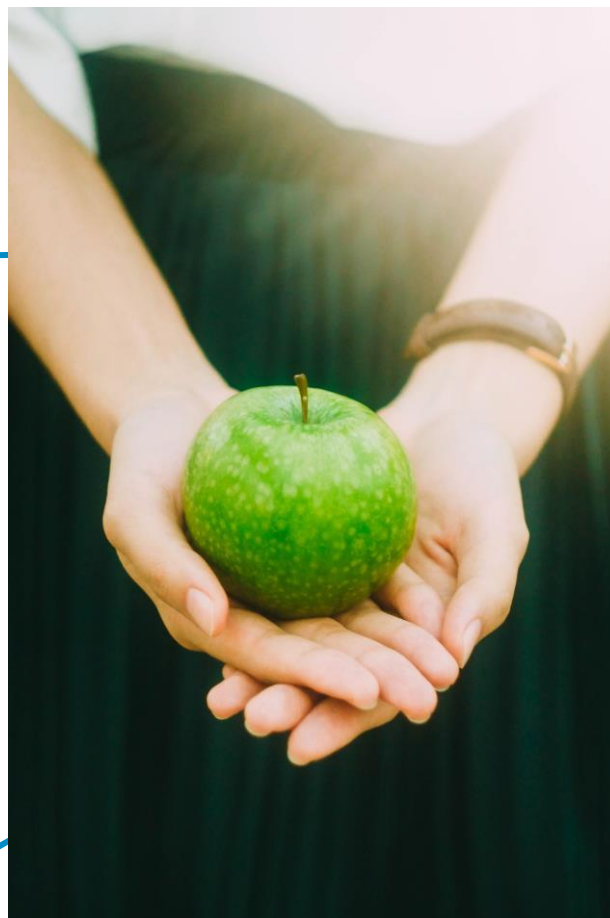
*What are your thoughts about
these resilience areas? Which
directly relate to your
organisation?*

*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

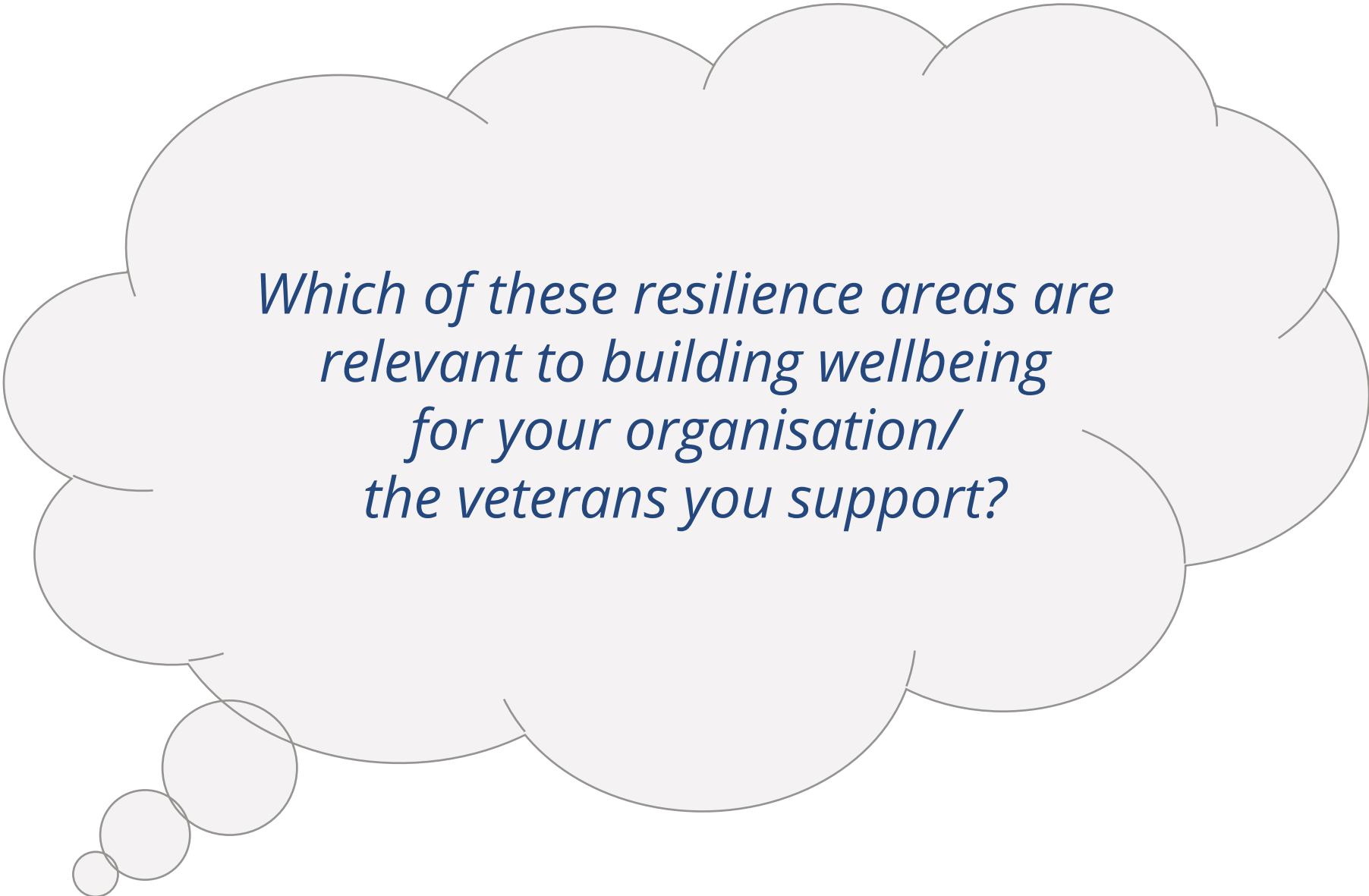


Participation in a spiritual or religious group

Spirituality helps individuals put their core values into action

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

A MOMENT TO REFLECT...



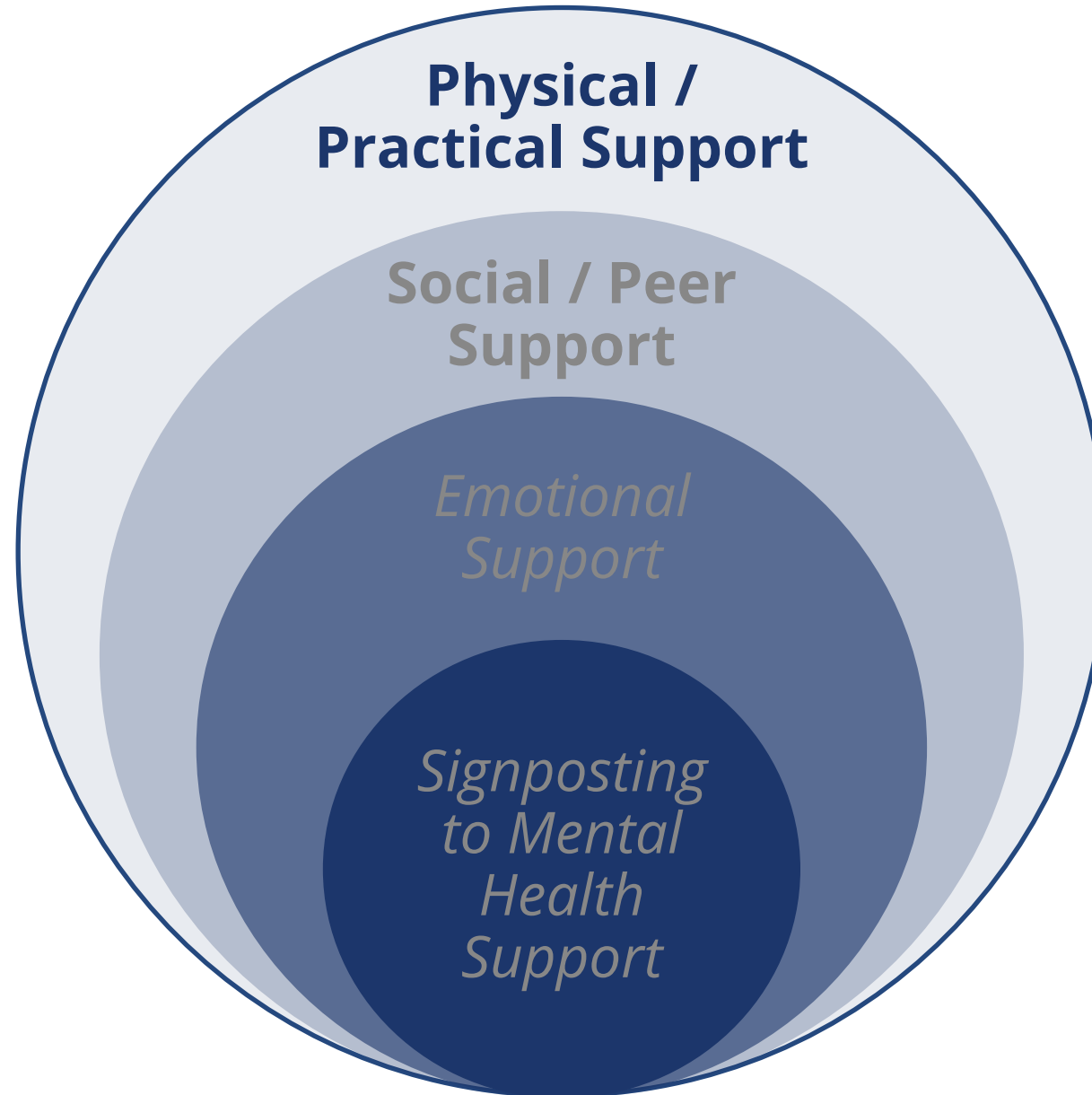
*Which of these resilience areas are
relevant to building wellbeing
for your organisation/
the veterans you support?*

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*

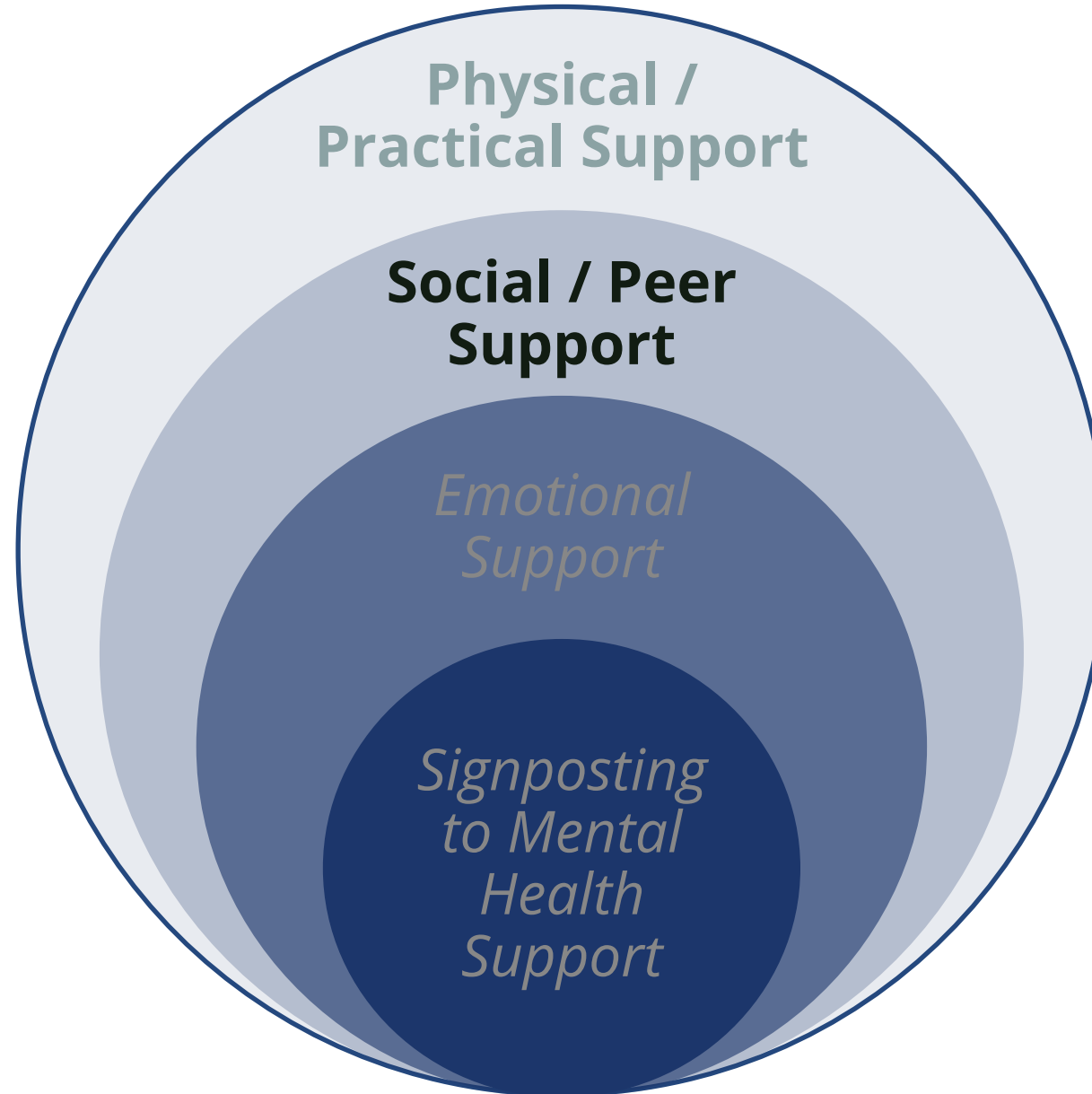
*Offer regular shifts
in activities
(for rest or movement)*

*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*

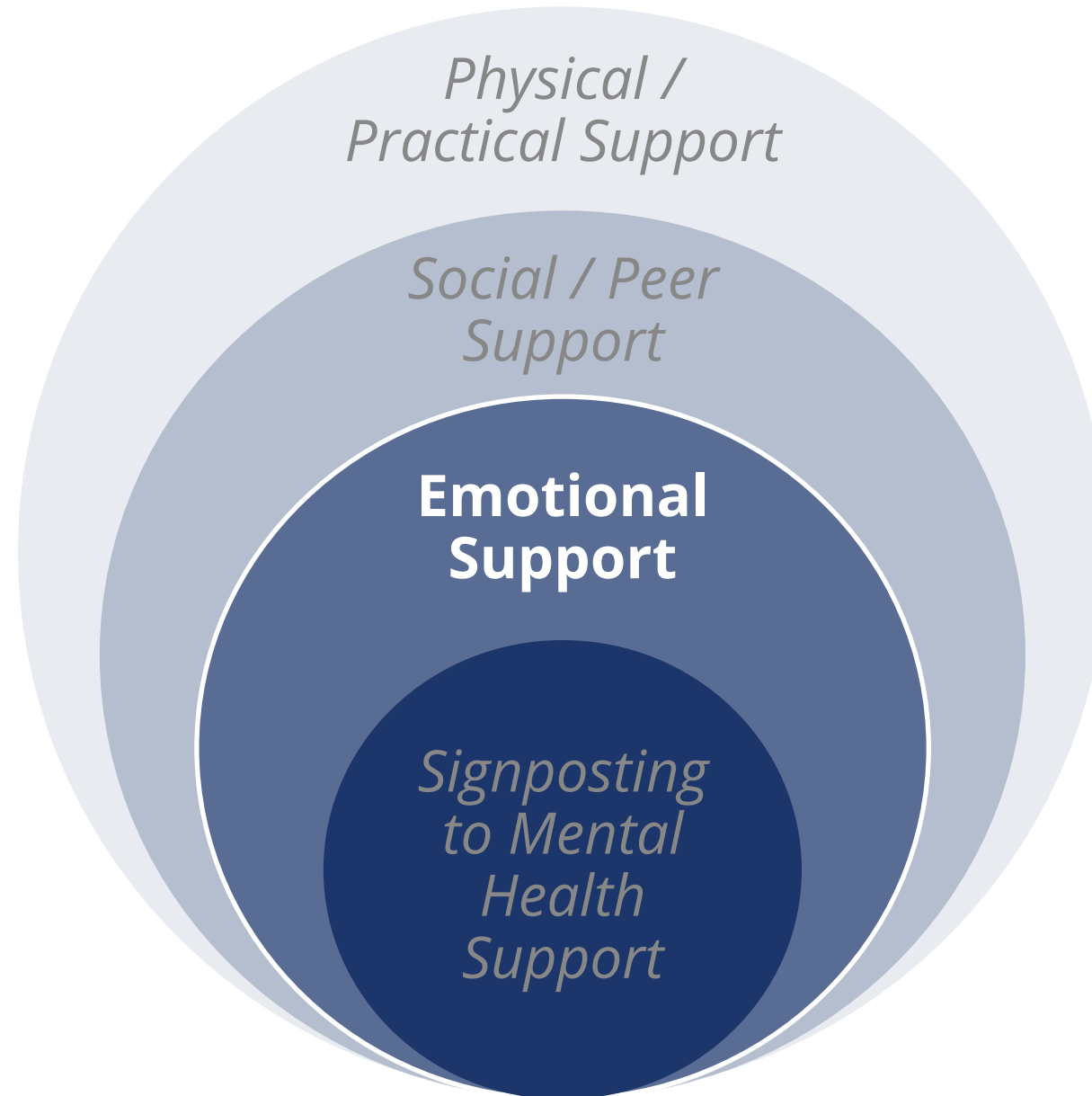
*Are there any
adaptations to the
project / task
that would be helpful?*

*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*

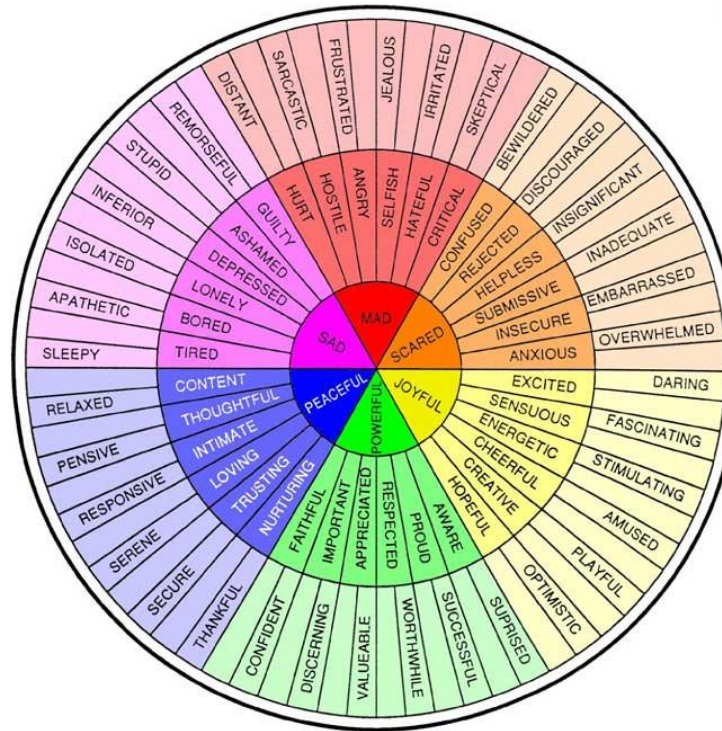
FOSTERING WELLBEING, AREAS TO CONSIDER...



COVID19: THE RANGE OF EMOTIONS & RESPONSES

*Emotions provide
important information*

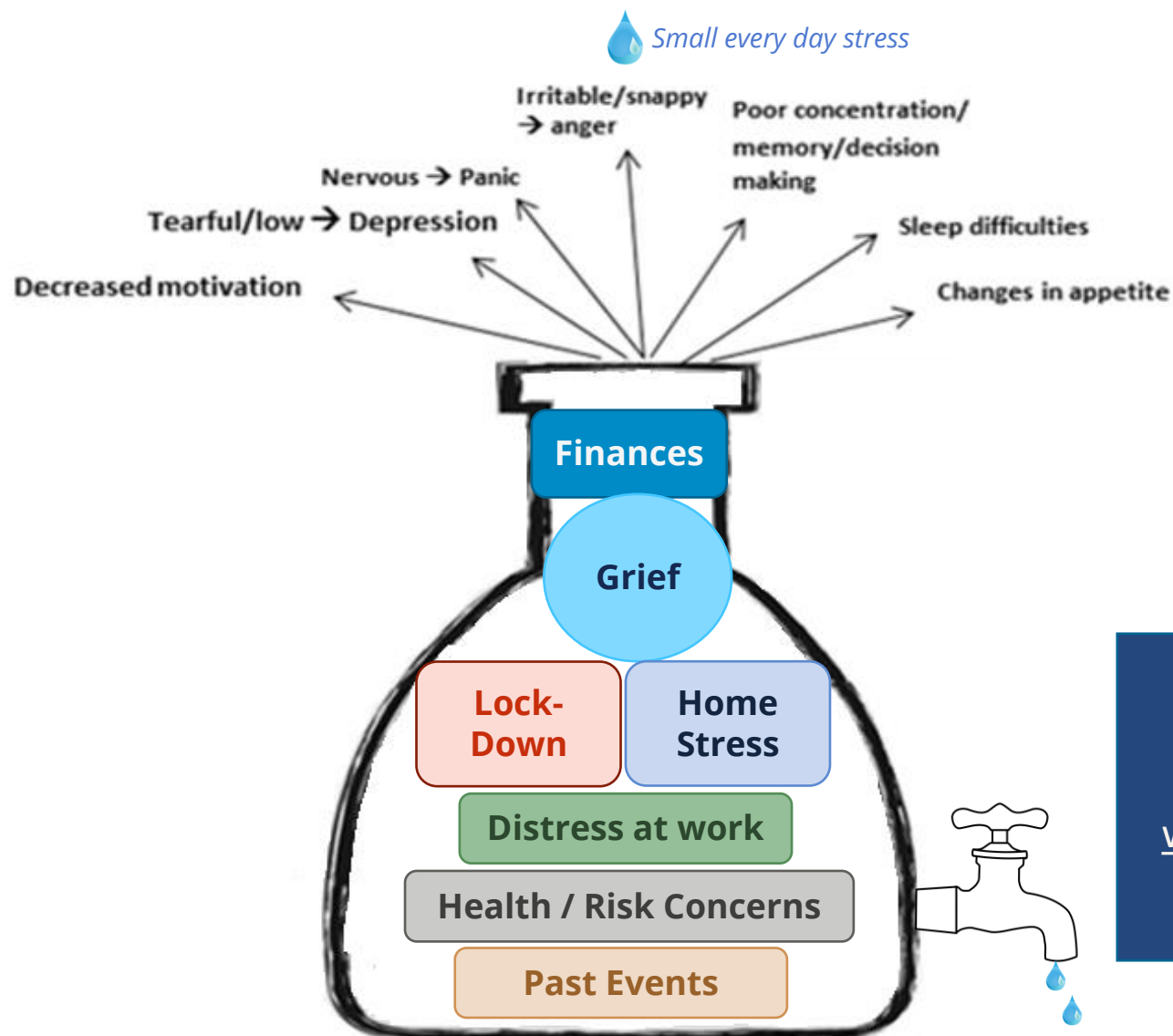
*It's usual to experience
a range of emotions;
feelings ebb and flow*



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

*It is okay to
not be okay*

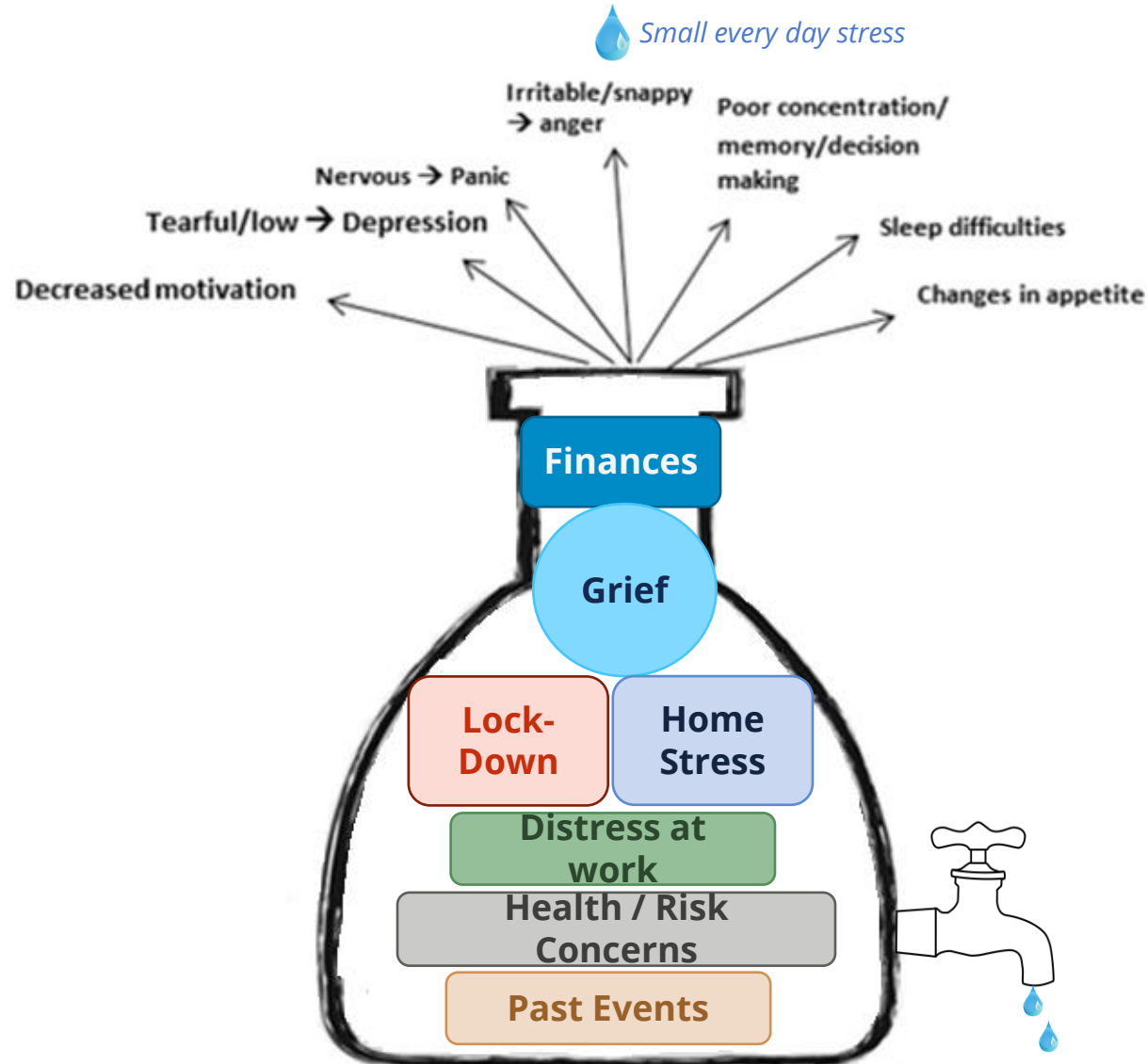
THE STRESS BOTTLE



**Combat Stress Online
Self-Help Materials:**

www.combatstress.org.uk/mental-health-support-during-covid-19

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...



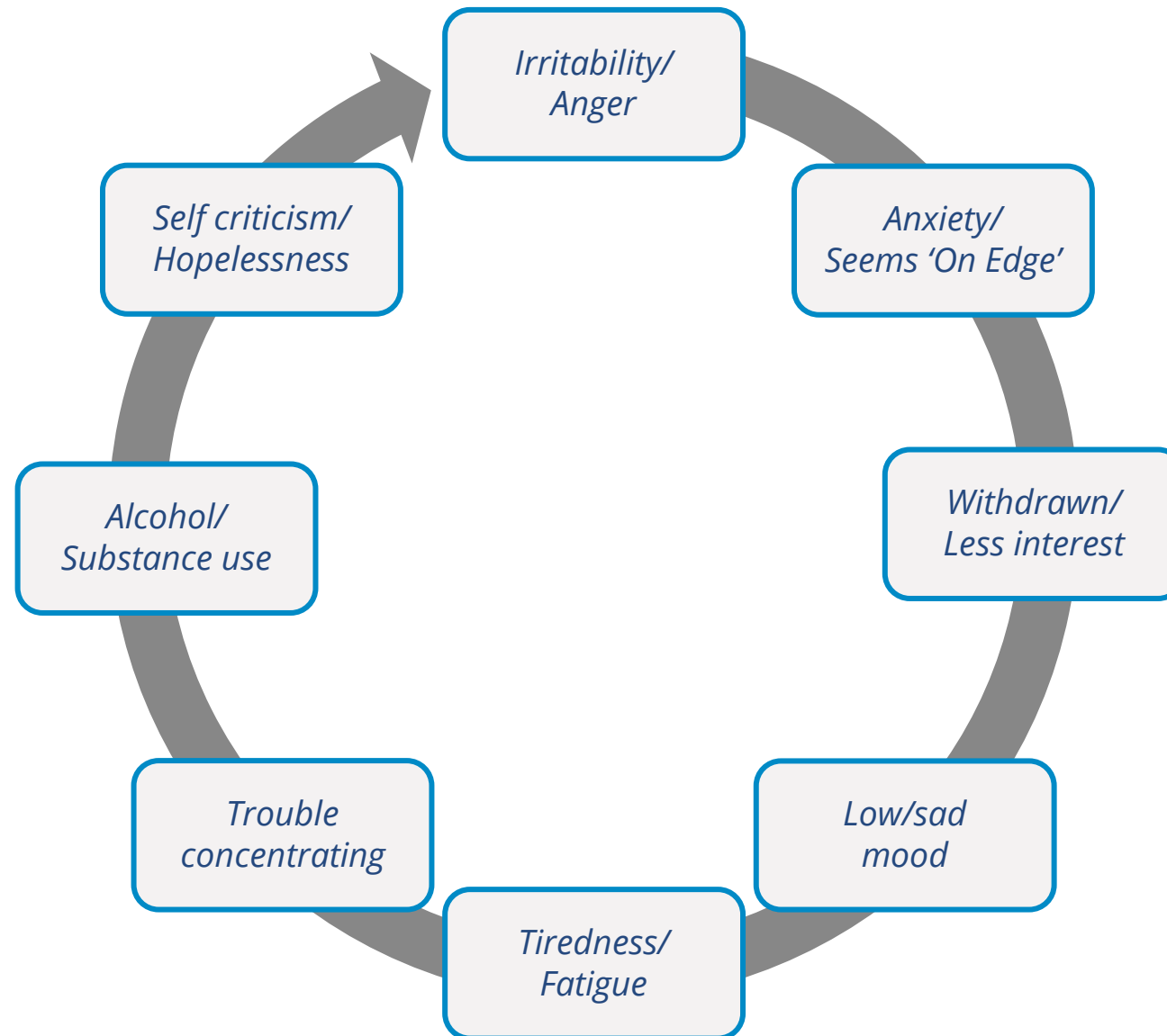
"It was after my tour in Bosnia that I felt like I had turned to stone inside – I didn't care about anyone else's problems. It used to drive me mad when people moaned or whinged about their lives.

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?"*

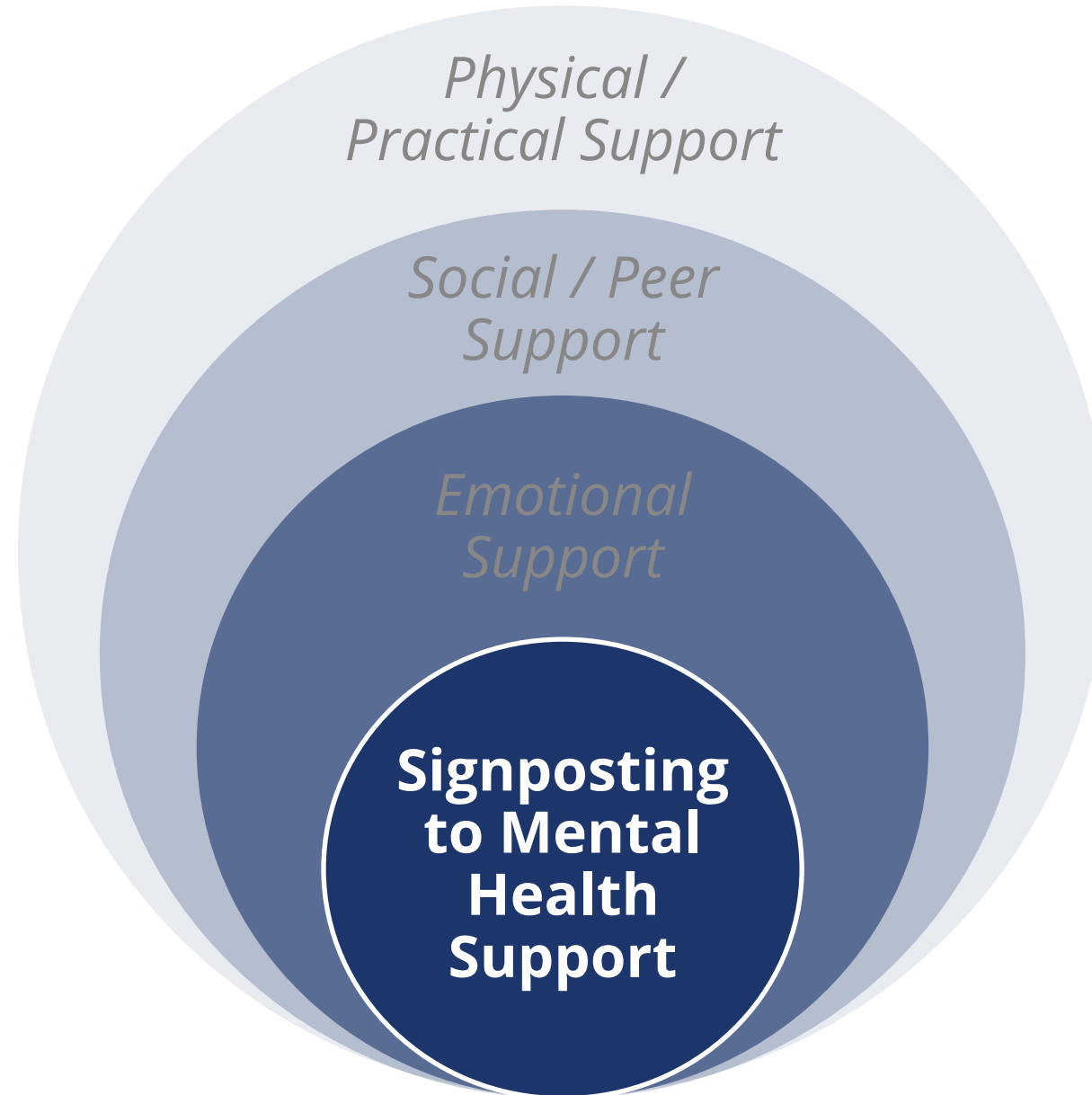
*"Can I check in
with you, are you ok?
How are things going for
you? "*

*"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?*

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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.

*

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

*

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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?