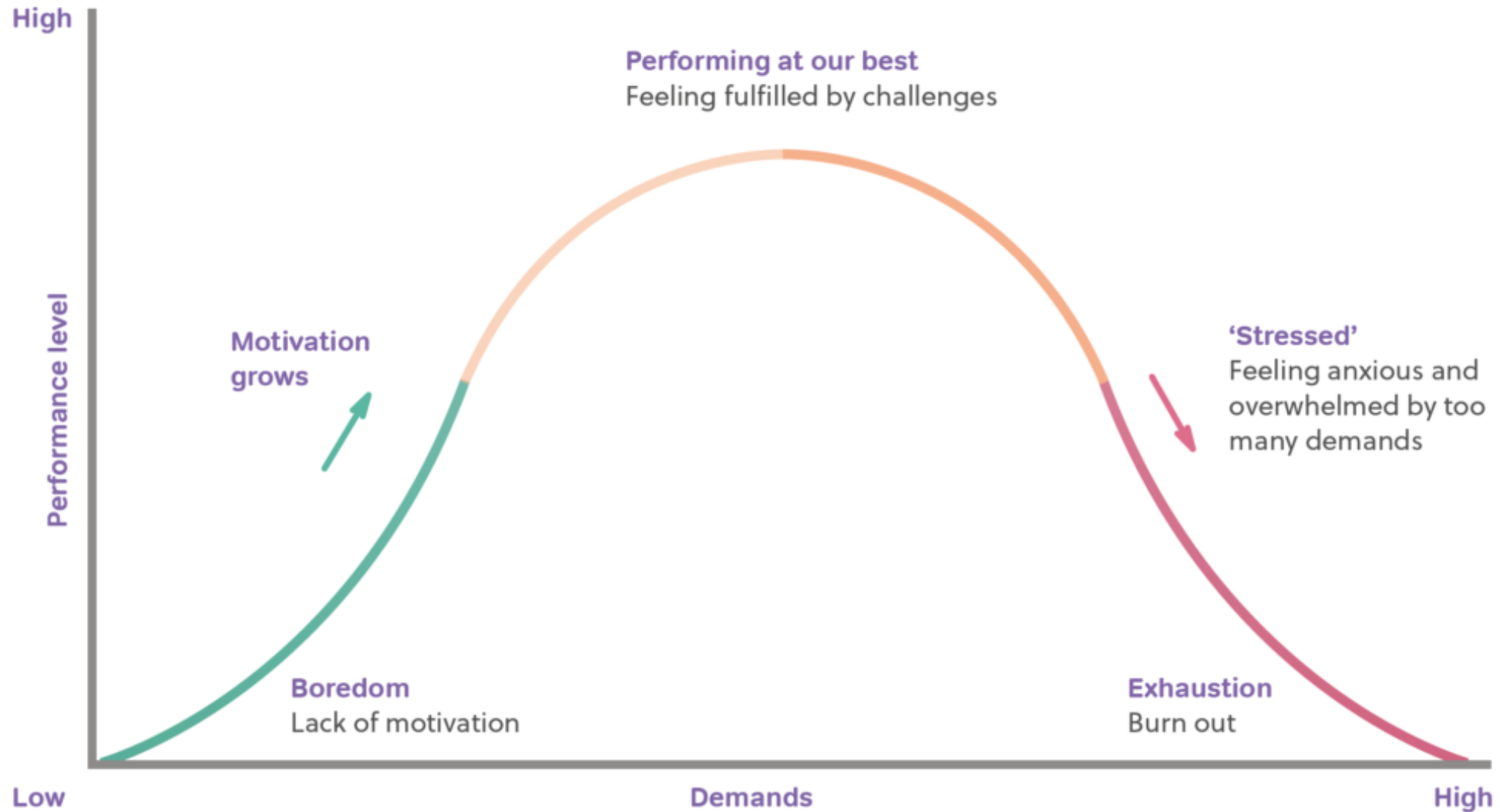


Thriving as an In-House Lawyer

with Jane Davis

- 1. Impact of chronic stress**
Burnout - Definition, symptoms, levels, causes
- 2. Most useful recovery strategies and deep rest**
- 3. Healthy thinking habits**
 - Choose where to focus your attention
 - Keep perspective
 - Practice acceptance
- 4. Clarity of meaning and purpose**

Pressure vs Stress



The Threat Response

When your brain perceives a threat (real or imagined) it triggers:

- Amygdala (in emotional centre of brain)
- Hypothalamus
- Pituitary (master gland)
- Adrenals

Release of stress hormones:

- Adrenaline
- Noradrenaline
- Cortisol + 47 others

Safety is the brain's #1 priority!



Sympathetic Nervous System Dominance

Physical symptoms:

- High heart rate/blood pressure/blood sugar
- Digestion and immune system shut down
- Tense muscles
- Shortness of breath
- Narrow vision



Behavioural Symptoms:

- Difficulty thinking clearly
- Rigidity
- Self focus
- Withdrawal from others
- Difficulty sleeping

Short-term energy boost, focus increase, high energy

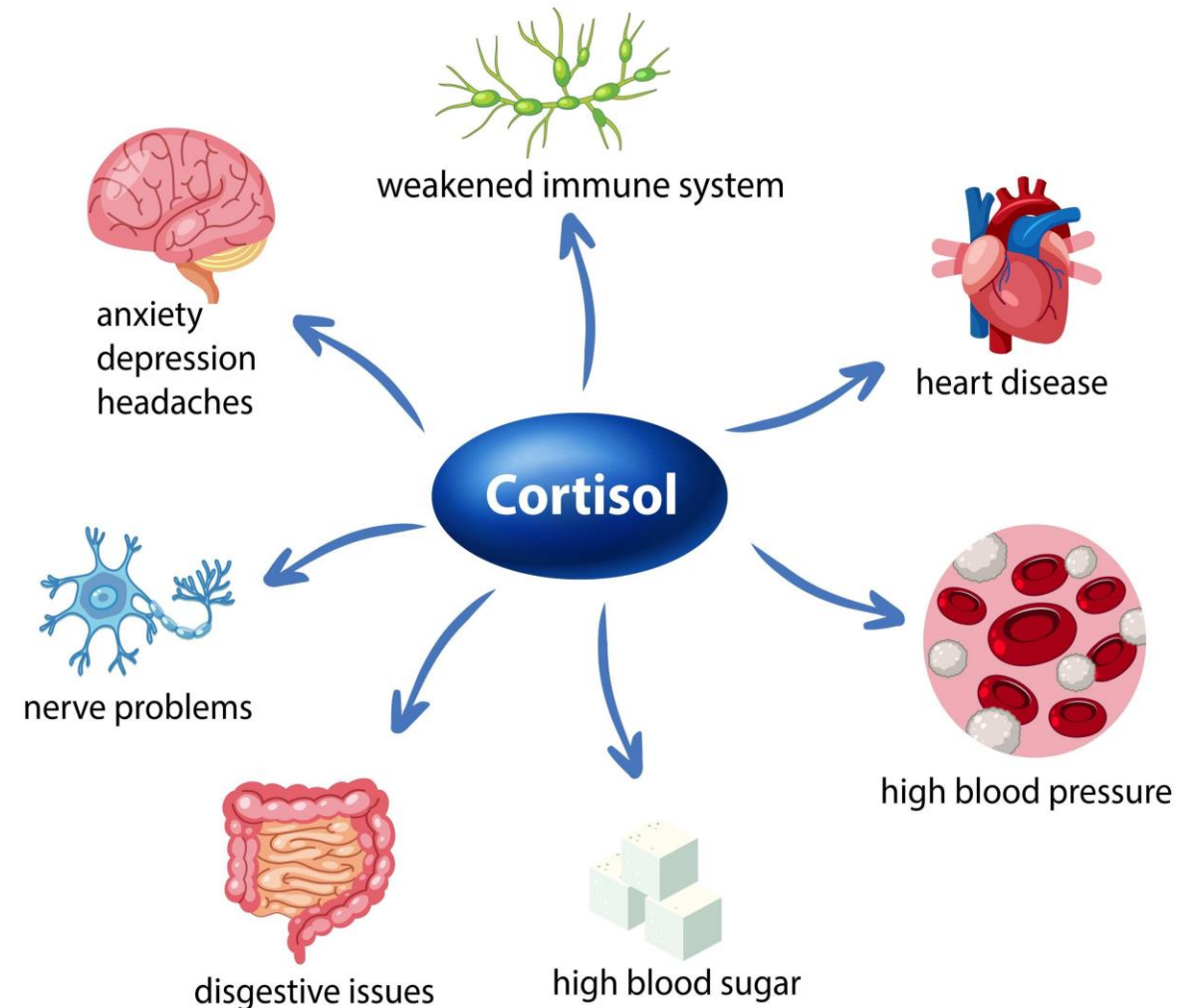
Impact of Sympathetic Nervous System Dominance Over Time

High levels of adrenaline: Cardiovascular issues, fatigue

Impact of high levels of cortisol:

- Immune system impact (within 2 months)
- Inflammation
- Weight gain around middle
- Memory (linked to dementia and alzheimers)
- Can lead to burnout

Don't marinate in stress hormones!



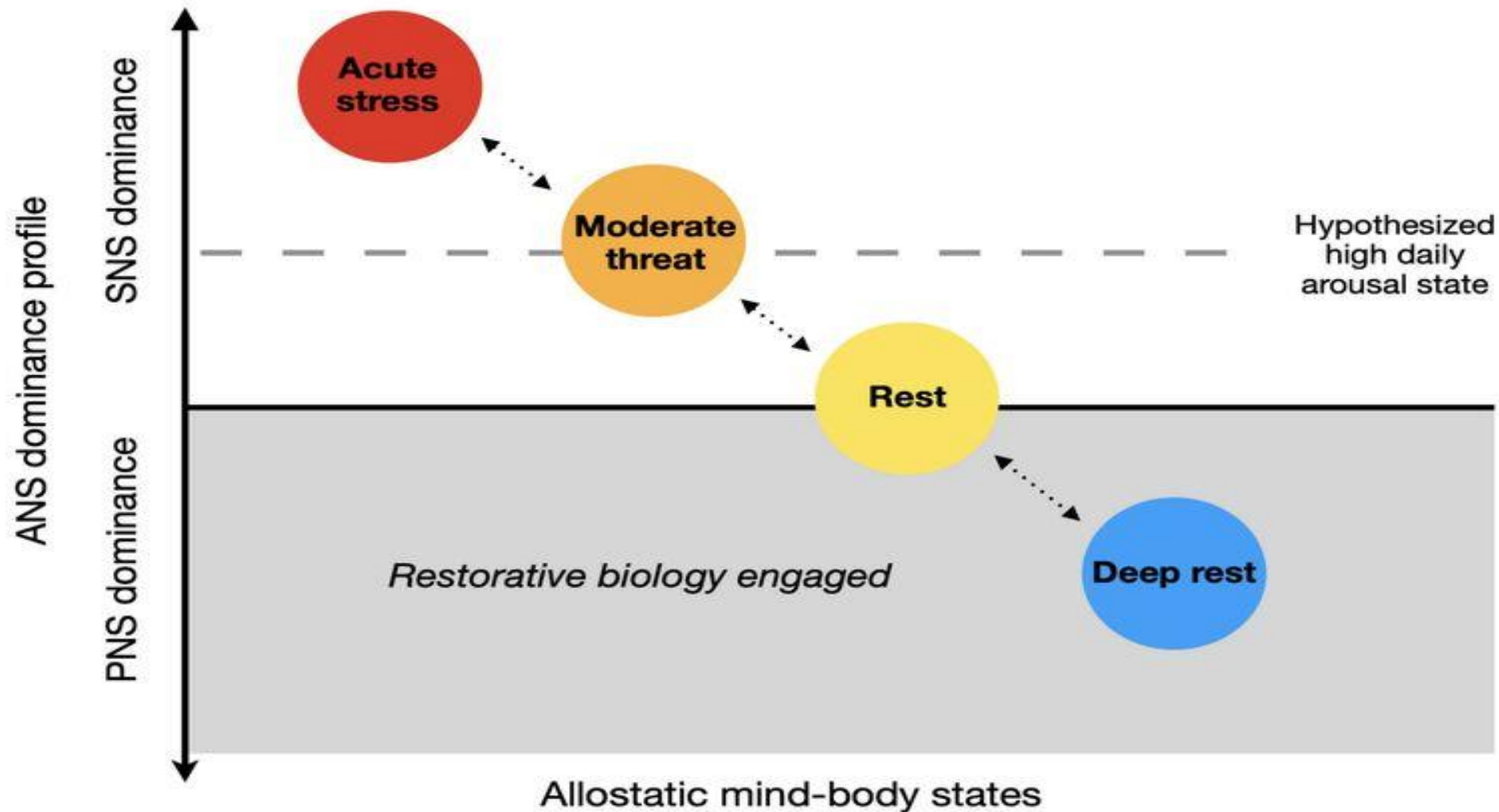
Parasympathetic Nervous System Dominance

'Rest and digest' or relaxation mode

Place of all healing and recovery

- Lower heart rate/blood pressure/blood sugar
- Reduced muscle tension and breathing rate
- Increased immunity and digestion
- Increased empathy, caring and desire to connect
- increased ability to see broader perspective
- Increased cognitive flexibility, creativity and enhanced ability to problem solve

Mind States Create Physiological Stress or Restoration (Dr Elissa Eppel)



Burnout: Definition

Definition: World Health Organisation 2018

A negative psychological syndrome that develops in response to chronic workplace demands:

Three key symptoms:

1. Energy depletion and exhaustion
2. Increased mental distance from one's job or increased feelings of negativity and cynicism
3. Reduced personal effectiveness

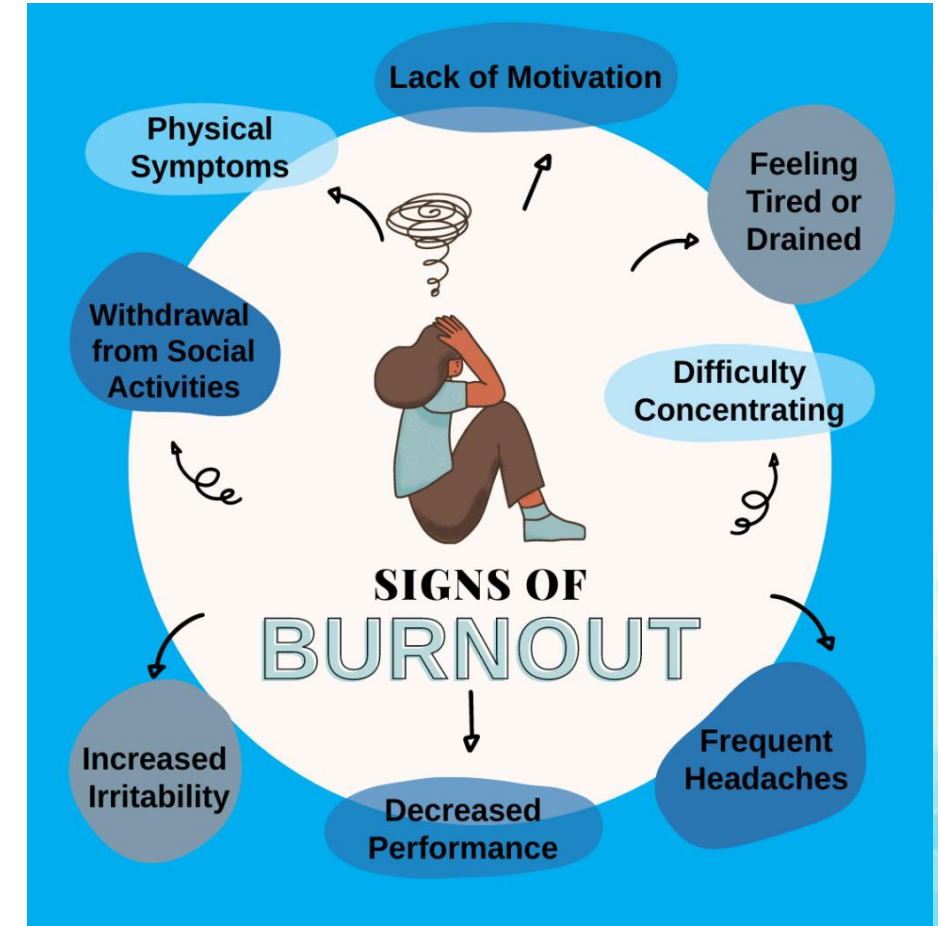


Burnout: Definition

Uni of NSW study (over 1000 people experiencing burnout)

9 additional symptoms:

1. Anxiety (unable to switch off)
2. Depression
3. Irritability and anger
4. Sleep disturbance
5. Lack of motivation or passion
6. Cognitive problems (memory, attention)
7. Becoming asocial
8. Physical symptoms (aches, headaches, appetite changes)
9. Emotional fragility (increased sensitivity)



Burnout: Levels of Burnout (Nick Petrie)

How do you know if you are starting to burnout?

Level 1: Heavy period of pressure

- Feelings of overwhelm, continuing to work effectively

Level 2: Chronic stress

- Feelings of fatigue
- Decreasing motivation and effectiveness
- Moving into 'survival mode'

Level 3: Moving into full burnout

- Mind and body start to shut down
- Simple tasks are unmanageable
- Emotions are unpredictable and hard to control
- Need to stop work for an extended period and work on individual wellbeing and resilience



Burnout: Work Causes (Nick Petrie Research)

There is no one cause of burnout

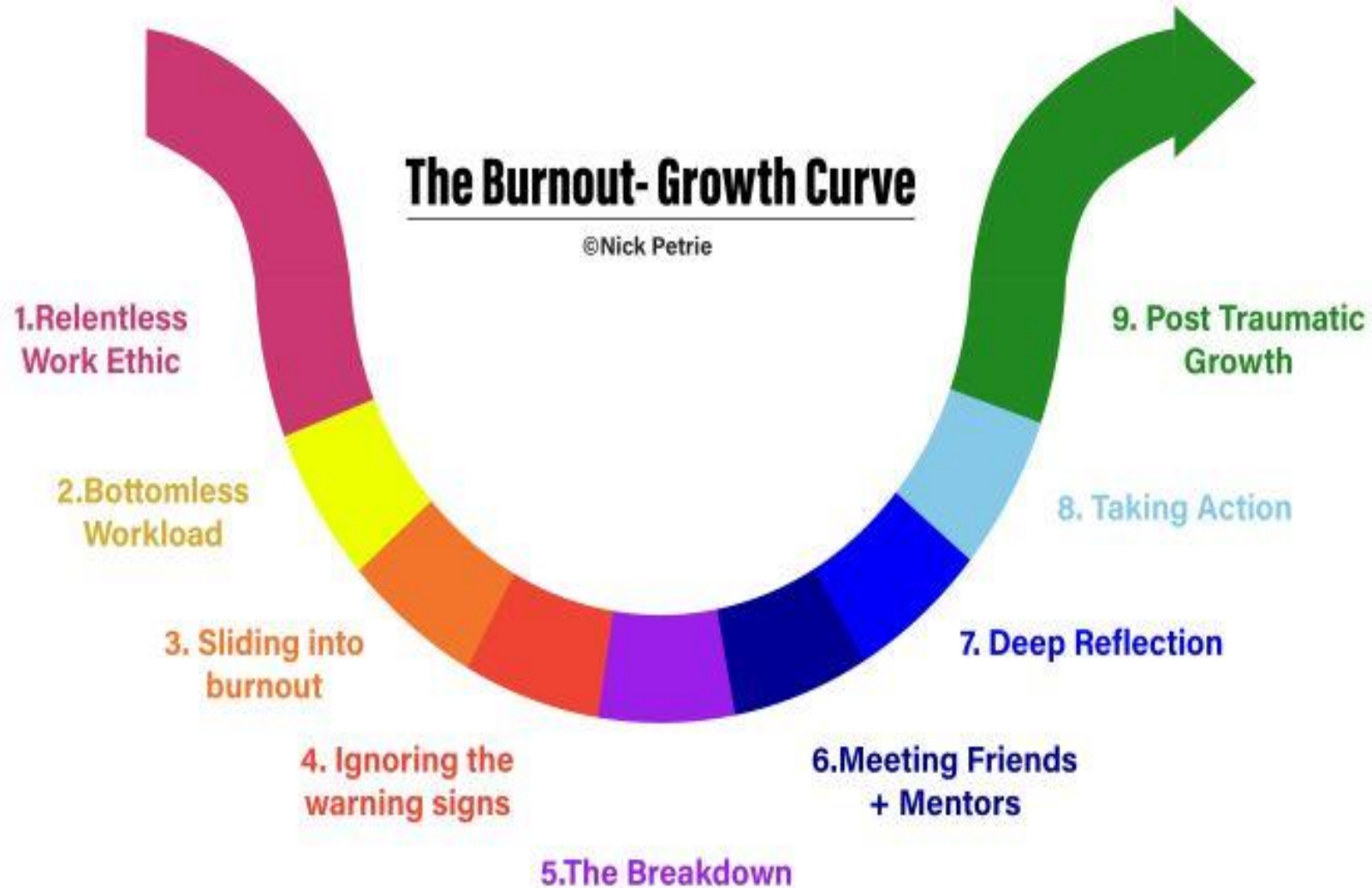
Organisational Level Causes
(from most commonly cited to least):

1. Unsupportive/bad boss/ bullying
2. Unrealistic workload
3. Toxic culture/ bullying colleagues
4. Lack of resources
5. Feeling unvalued by the company
6. Lack of autonomy or control
7. Lack of psychological safety
8. Uncaring work environment

Individual Level Causes (from most commonly cited to least):

1. Beliefs
2. Values misaligned with organisation/role
3. Identity fused with work
4. Lack of boundaries/putting self last
5. High anxiety and worry about work
6. Feeling of deep responsibility - give 100%
7. Perfectionism
8. Personal issues

Burnout – Growth Curve (Nick Petrie)



Part 2: Most Useful Recovery Strategies and Deep Rest

Highest Impact Calming Strategies - Focus on Daily Rituals and Routines



Highest Impact Self Care Strategies: Deep Rest Through Contemplative Practices



A large, irregular blue watercolor splash or blotch that serves as a background for the title text. It has various shades of blue and a soft, painterly texture.

Part 3: Healthy Thinking Techniques

1. Choose Where To Focus Your Attention

Our brains have evolved to pay attention to the bad

We give more weight to what's gone wrong rather than right

What do you naturally pay more attention to – the good or bad?

This may be soft-wired into your brain (it also depends on your training)



Beware of emotional contagion – you infect others with your negativity bias



1: Choose Where to Focus Your Attention

Asset Based Focus: Asks: What is present that you can build on (Gain framing)	Deficit Based Focus: Asks: What is missing that we must go find (Loss framing)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What you want or have • What is possible • What is working • Who is with you • What is moving you forward • What you stand to gain • Focus on opportunities, possibilities, solutions, improvements, potential (we can if...), what is going right <p>Outcome: May lead to new and unexpected responses and ideas. It is energising</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What you don't want • What you can't do • What isn't working • Who is against you • What is holding you back • What is going wrong • What you stand to lose • Focus on problems, challenges, obstacles, deficit gaps, dangers, issues, complications <p>Outcome: May lead to a downward spiral of inaction/stagnation/burnout. It is de-energising</p>

1. Choose Where to Focus Your Attention

Intentionally hunt the good things every day

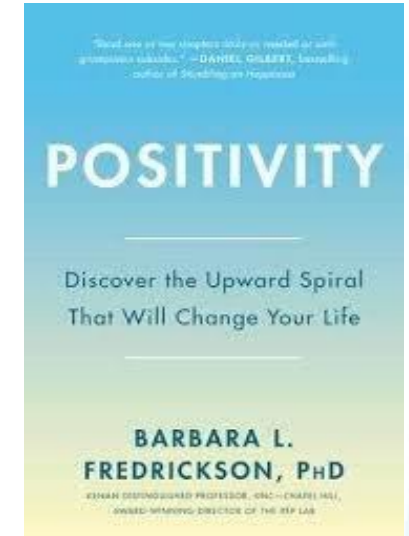
You can rewire the brain to focus on the good, by **boosting positive emotions**. These increase feelings of joy. They also calm the threat response, broaden perspective and increase connection

(See research by Barbara Fredrickson)

Examples of Positive Emotions:

1. Gratitude and Appreciation
2. Kindness
3. Savouring

Use 'micro acts' to boost feelings of joy every day



1. Choose Where to Focus Your Attention

Gratitude



Kindness



Savouring



1. Choose Where to Focus Your Attention

Use Micro Acts of Gratitude and Appreciation

Take one minute and deliberately pay attention to the good things that have happened over the last 24 hours

Focus on:

- Who has helped you
- Acts of kindness
- Small wins
- Funny moments
- Positive events in your day

At work:

- Say thank you more often
- Notice who has helped you or had success and comment on it
- Look for the good in other people
- Take care with what you focus on in team meetings (share the highlights, what you are most proud of, the best customer stories, highlight people's strengths and what is going well)



2. Keep Perspective

Our minds love stories and constantly create them

Don't treat your inner monologue as fact - it's easy to create a story around what's going on, and that may or may not be based in fact

Ask: "What is Jane thinking?"...

Technique 1: Check Your Mental Story

Focus on the facts and ask yourself:

- What are the facts here?
- How do I know this story is true?
- Is there evidence against this story?
- Is there a different way of viewing this situation?
- How might a good friend interpret this?



2. Keep Perspective

Technique 2: What's the best that can happen?

When you face a difficult problem, ask this series of questions (in this order):

- What is the best that can happen here?
- What is most likely to happen?
- What's the worst that can happen?
- If it does happen, why might it be a good thing?



2. Keep Perspective

Technique 3: Use mental time travel

Pause and ask the question “Will this issue or challenge still matter in the near future (a week, a month or a year) from now?”

Evaluate the Impact: Think about the long-term consequences. If the issue is minor or temporary, allow yourself to let go of unnecessary stress or frustration

Reframe Your Mindset: Shift your focus to what truly deserves your energy and attention

This technique reduces emotional overwhelm and allows you to prioritise what truly matters



2. Keep Perspective

Remember it's temporary

If you are feeling very uncomfortable, remember all situations and emotions are temporary, not permanent

Say: "This too shall pass"

Technique 4: Turn Your Attention Outward

Be where your feet are

- Feel the contact of your feet on the ground
- Take a couple of long, low slow breaths out
- Say **"Right, what's next?"** or **"What do I need to be doing right now?"**

Fully focus on this task. And then the next one



3. Practice Acceptance

You can't change what happens to you but you can change how you think about it

If you have a setback or face a situation that you don't welcome, use a 5 second reframe

1. See the setback as an **opportunity** - "What good can come from this?"
2. Remind yourself of how you've **succeeded in similar situations in the past** – this is another opportunity to build your resilience
3. **Use phrases:** "I don't mind what happens", "It's all happening perfectly", "I'm exactly where I'm meant to be right now"
4. Use **curiosity**. Ask "I wonder what might happen here?" or instead of saying "Oh no!", say "Oh, this is interesting, I wonder what might happen"



Part 4: Clarity of Meaning and Purpose

4. Clarity of Meaning and Purpose

Why it's important:

Psychological and practical foundation for motivation, resilience, and direction Connecting work to something meaningful leads to greater life and job satisfaction

Direction and Focus

- Helps prioritise what matters
- Acts as a compass when making decisions
- Simplifies communication and aligns teams toward shared goals, builds trust

Motivation and Engagement

- Knowing *why* you're doing something fuels intrinsic motivation
- Work harder and more persistently when believe actions are meaningful
- More likely to stay engaged in their work and overcome setbacks

Resilience and Wellbeing

- Gives psychological strength during adversity or change
- Lower levels of stress and better mental health

4. Clarity of Meaning and Purpose

Big P Purpose – Your overarching reason for being

Definition: A life-defining, deeply held belief about your ultimate contribution or impact

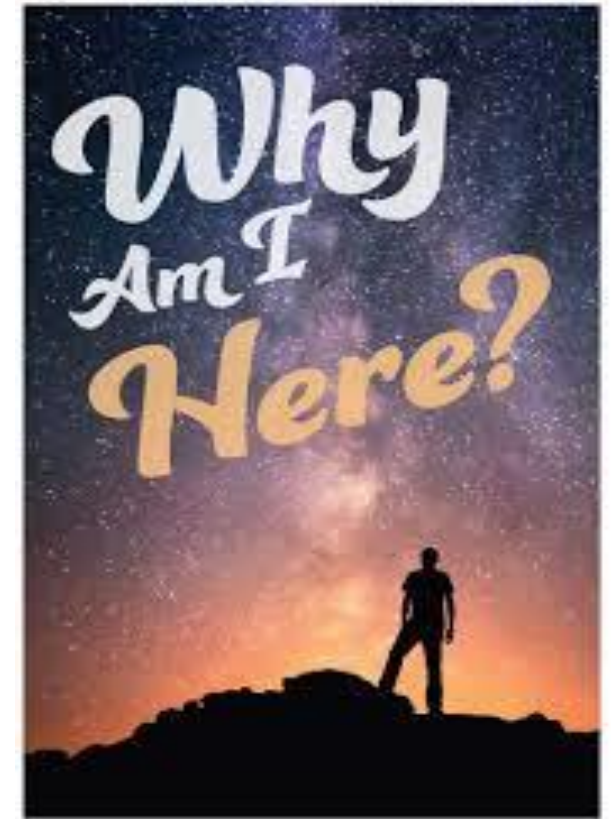
Big P Purpose answers:

“Why am I here?” or “What difference do I want to make in the world?”

Broad, aspirational, and often tied to **values, identity, strengths or legacy**

- **Examples:**

- “To help others reach their potential”
- “To protect the natural world for future generations”
- “To advocate for justice and equity in society”



4. Clarity of Meaning and Purpose

Exercise: Discover Your Ikigai

Japanese concept that translates to "reason for being" or why I get up in the morning

Finding a balance between passion, mission, vocation, and profession—a sweet spot where what you love, what you're good at, what the world needs, and what you can be paid for come together

Encourages mindfulness and intentional living by focusing on what brings you joy and purpose, both big and small, in daily life



4. Clarity of Meaning and Purpose

Examples of Ikigai (approx 5 words)

- Fostering curiosity in the next generation
- Connecting with others through artwork
- Working in harmony with nature
- Making a difference in others' lives
- Crafting dishes that bring people joy
- Sharing my love of food with others
- Discovering new cultures
- Expanding my understanding of the world
- To help others be their best



4. Clarity of Meaning and Purpose

Little p Purpose – Everyday meaning and motivation

The **day-to-day sense of intention or meaning** in tasks, roles, or relationships – a sense of connection to something bigger

- **At work:** Helping a colleague with a project, mentoring someone
- **Creativity:** Making something with your own hands
- **Nurturing connections:** Supporting a friend through a tough time, planning a catch-up coffee, checking in on someone's day
- **Personal growth:** Picking up a new hobby, learning a new skill, reading a fascinating article, or solving a puzzle
- **Caring for something:** Tending to a garden or taking care of a pet
- **Being present:** Watching the sunrise, listening to your favourite song, or enjoying a peaceful walk



Summary

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