MENTAL HEALTH FOR YOUNG ATHLETES

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North and West Vancouver
Mental health for all

WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH?

- Mental Health is an important part of your physical health – that's because your brain is attached to your body!

- When we are mentally healthy we think and feel and behave differently than when we are mentally unhealthy.

HOW DO WE DECIDE IF SOMEONE HAS A MENTAL ILLNESS?

“feeling low” vs. **depressed**

“shy” vs. having a **social anxiety disorder**

a “collector” or has **hoarding disorder**

a “neat freak” or has **Obsessive Compulsive Disorder**

(OCD)

No “us” and “them”

- Notice that *we all* experience some of these characteristics to some degree
- They become “disorders” when they interfere with functioning and/or cause significant distress
- Because of this, most mental health disorders are considered to be on a spectrum (mild, moderate, severe) instead of “you have it” or “you don’t”

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The TWO Mental Health issues I'm focusing on today

TOO MUCH PRESSURE (ANXIETY)

NOT ENOUGH JOY (DEPRESSION)

ANXIETY

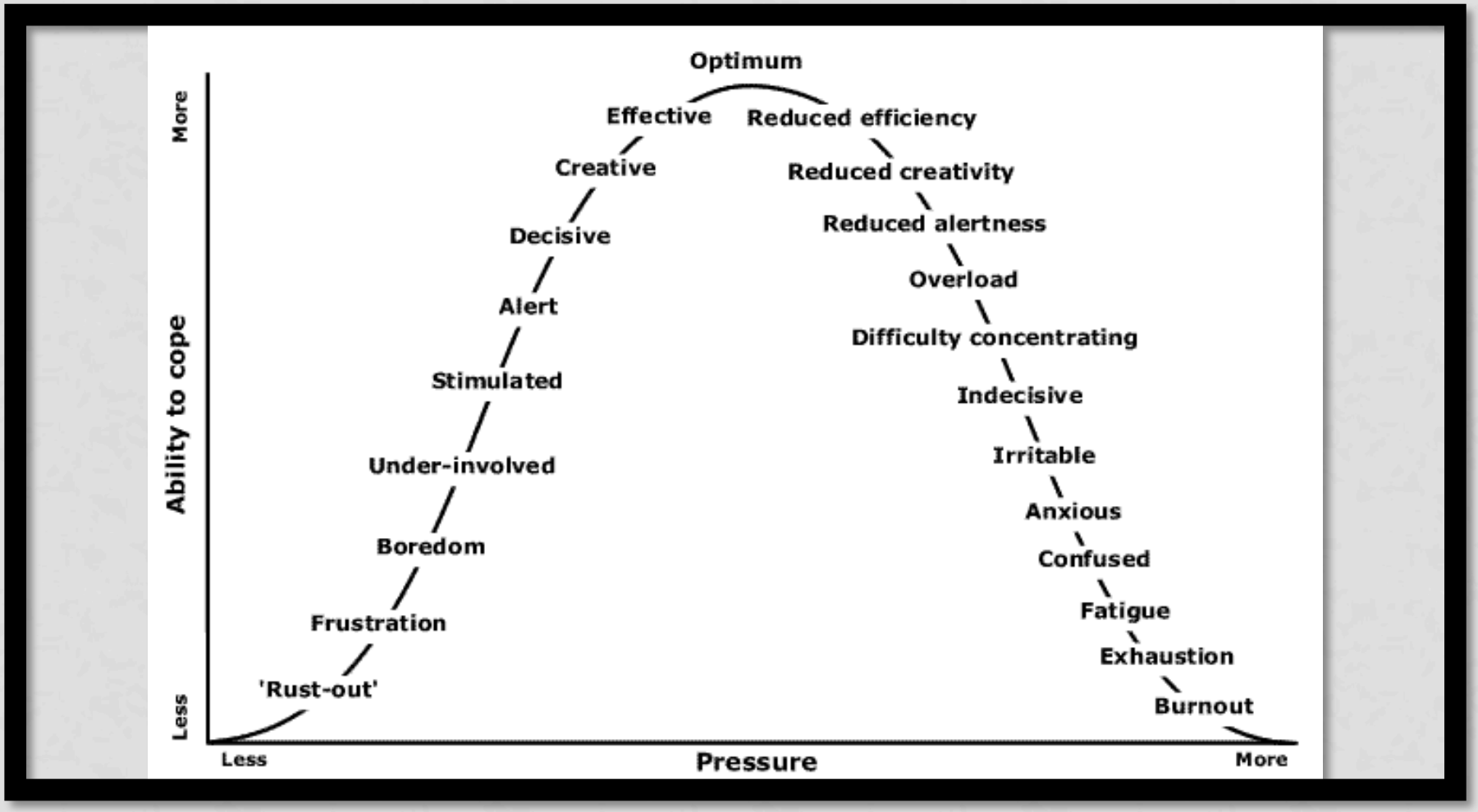
What is it?

A state of worry and fear about the future.

Is anxiety good or bad?

Without anxiety you'd be dead

SOME STRESS/ANXIETY = GOOD
TOO MUCH STRESS/ANXIETY = BAD

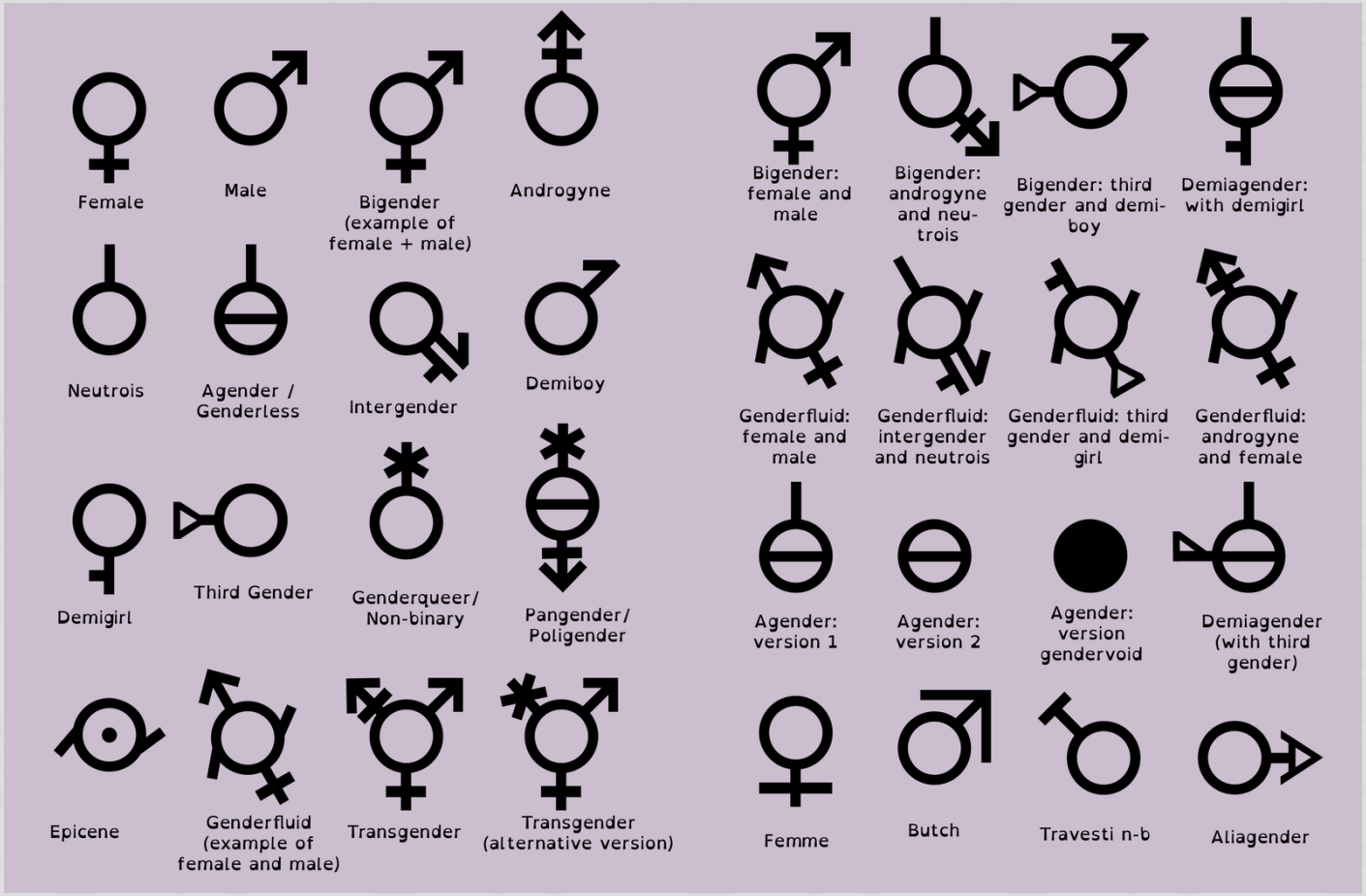


WHAT CAUSES STRESS?

- One of the most stressful times of your life is during high school because there are so many changes happening and because there is so much uncertainty!

- What are some of the things that are changing in your life or that you are unsure about?

GENDER IDENTITY SYMBOLS



TEENAGE BRAINS

- In addition to normal life stressors teens are dealing with a brain that is undergoing significant reorganization (as much as the brain of an infant!)
- Compared to adult brains, teen brains have:

Increased pleasure from risk taking behaviours

Heightened response to emotional situations

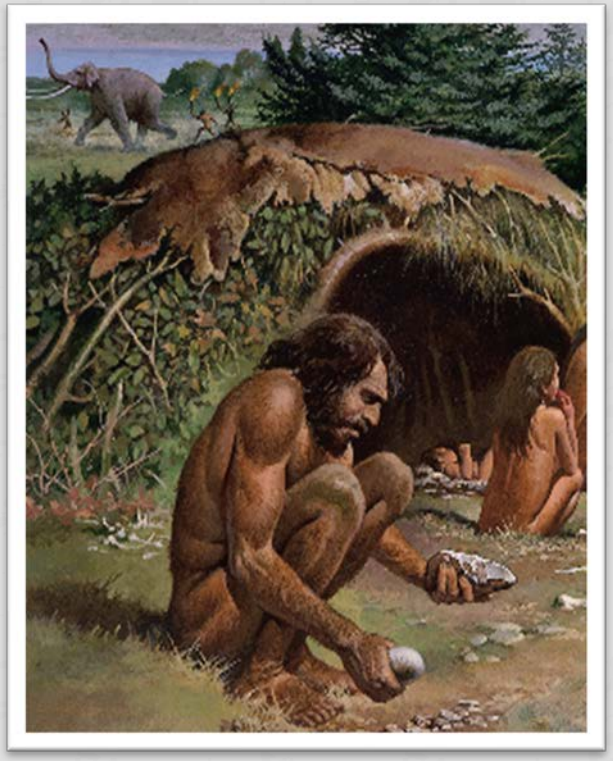
Decreased ability to plan ahead

Decreased ability to control impulses

Decreased ability to see someone else's point of view

MAYBE ANXIETY IS A NORMAL REACTION TO AN ABNORMAL ENVIRONMENT?

- For 99% of our evolutionary history we were on a 10 million year camping trip
- The human body/brain didn't evolve to sit at a desk for 10 hours a day, eat processed food, be connected and on the go 24/7, and to deal with chronic stress



Panic Attack: When a "False Alarm" goes off

They are NOT DANGEROUS

But they can be very scary

SOCIAL ANXIETY

The Focus of the Fear:

being judged negatively or criticized

Often results in:

Avoidance of social situations

Self-medicating to reduce the anxiety

GENERALIZED ANXIETY DISORDER (GAD)

Focus of the Fear:

Uncontrollable worries about many different topics (health, money, future, friends and family, school, environment, small stuff like being late). Lots of "what if's?"

People with GAD hate **uncertainty**, so they plan and double check everything, and don't like surprises! This is very exhausting because life is uncertain, and their work never ends.

WORRY

PERFECTIONISM

Focus of fear: failure or criticism

Perfect doesn't exist –

Everything can be improved: every person, every experience, every assignment.

All or nothing thinking: "If it's not perfect it's pointless"

Aim for "excellent" instead of "perfect"

FOUNDAT

Face Your Fears

When you do something over and over again it gets easier!

Where the magic happens
Your Comfort Zone

Lower the bar

TOOLS

Change Your Thinking

Challenging your beliefs can help change how you feel.

e.g. Instead of 2 categories:

“Failed”	“Perfect”
☑	☐

Think on a continuum:

[----------]

“Failed” “Perfect”

Tools

Good Coach vs. Bad Coach

How you talk to yourself affects not just how you ***feel*** but how you ***perform***

Talk to yourself like a good coach talks to you

Make Mistakes

Make more!
Allow yourself a quota of mistakes. If you rarely make mistakes, practice making them, so you know that you can cope

Whenever you do something you risk making a mistake - but if you do nothing you are making the biggest mistake of all

TOOLS

Exercise

Aerobic exercise (2-3x /week 20 minutes)

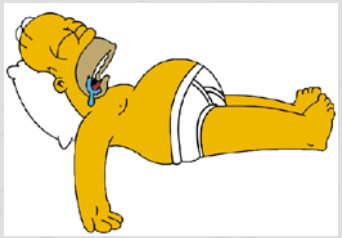
- increases blood flow to brain
- Improves cognitive function in all ages
- Effect is clear within 4 months; gains are lost within 6 weeks

Exercise is as effective at reducing anxiety and some depression as medication (SSRI's)

We were meant to move (walked approx.12-20 kms a day in ancestral times)!

TOOLS

Sleep



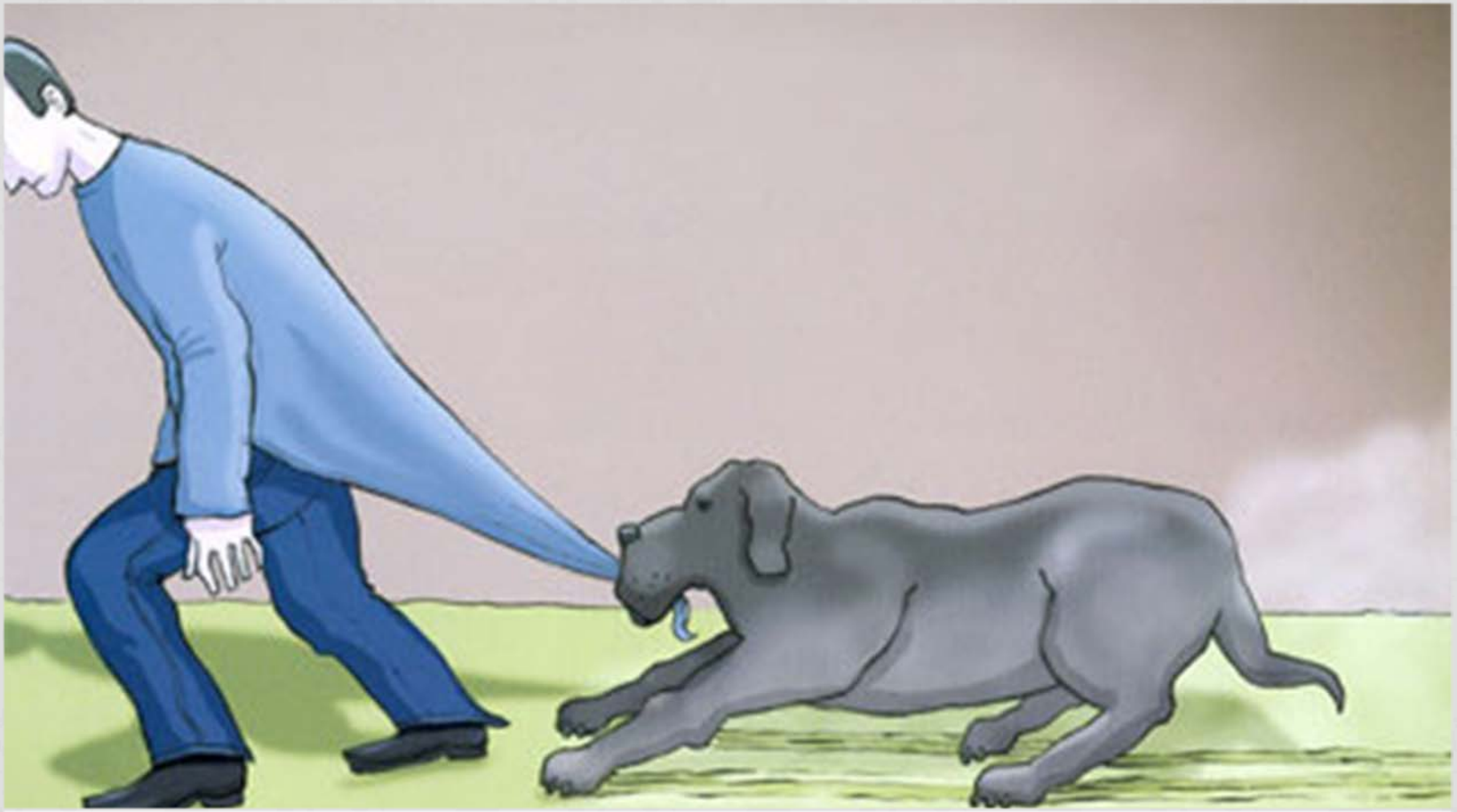
How much sleep do you need? We don't know

- Sleep needs change with age, gender, whether you are going through puberty etc.

Sleep loss = brain drain

- decreased ability for: attention problem solving mood memory quantitative skills logical reasoning motor dexterity

- Increased anxiety and depression symptoms!



DEPRESSION IN TEENS

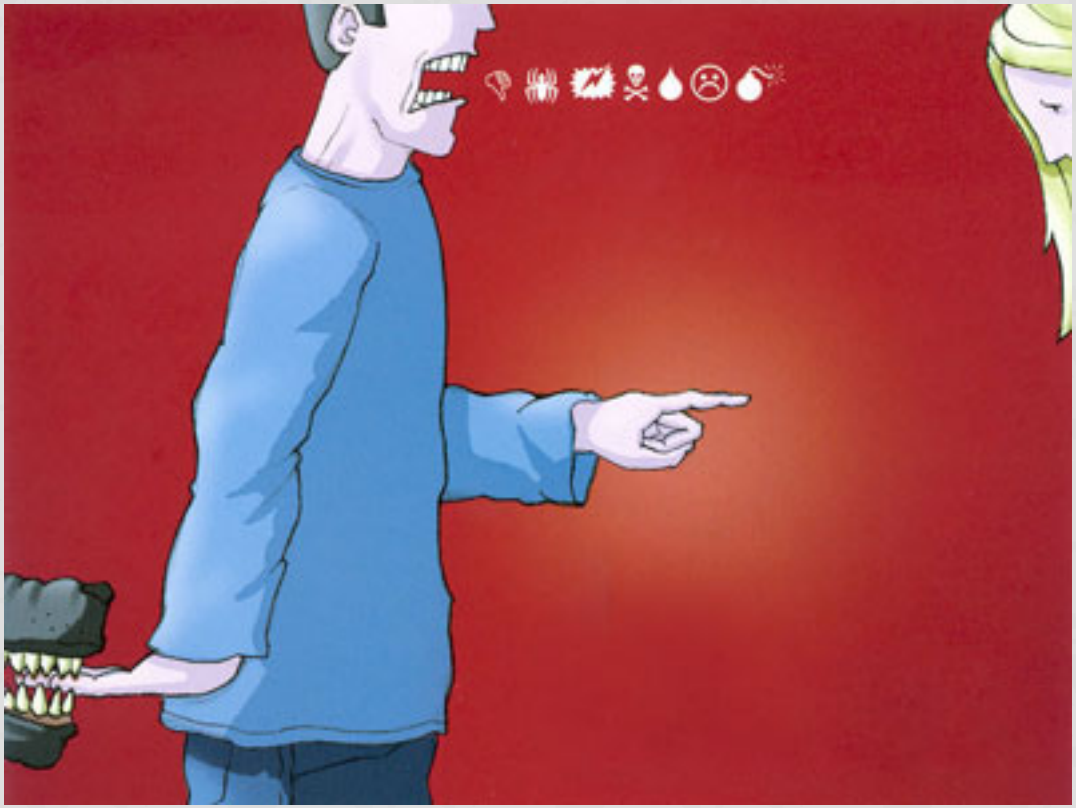
DEPRESSION IN CANADIAN KIDS

- As many as 1 in 8 teens struggle with depression
- Depression in childhood affects as many boys as girls, but twice as many girls during adolescence.[1]

See more at: http://www.kidsnewtocanada.ca/mental-health/depression#comorbidities-and-when-to-refer

SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION IN TEENS

- An irritable, sad, empty or cranky mood and belief that life is meaningless.



SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION IN TEENS

- Loss of interest in sports or activities you used to enjoy

- withdrawal from friends and family, and trouble in relationships

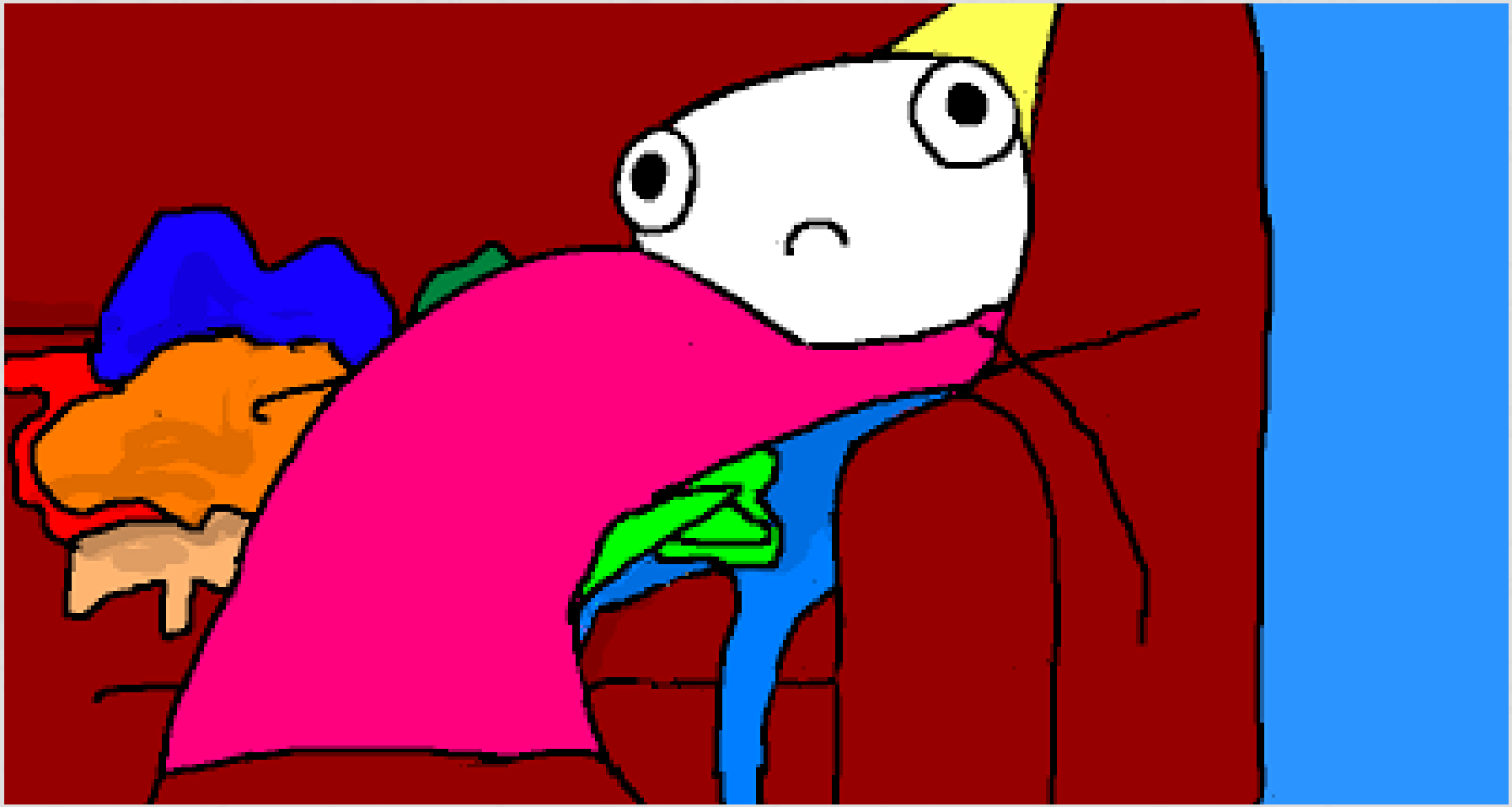
SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION IN TEENS

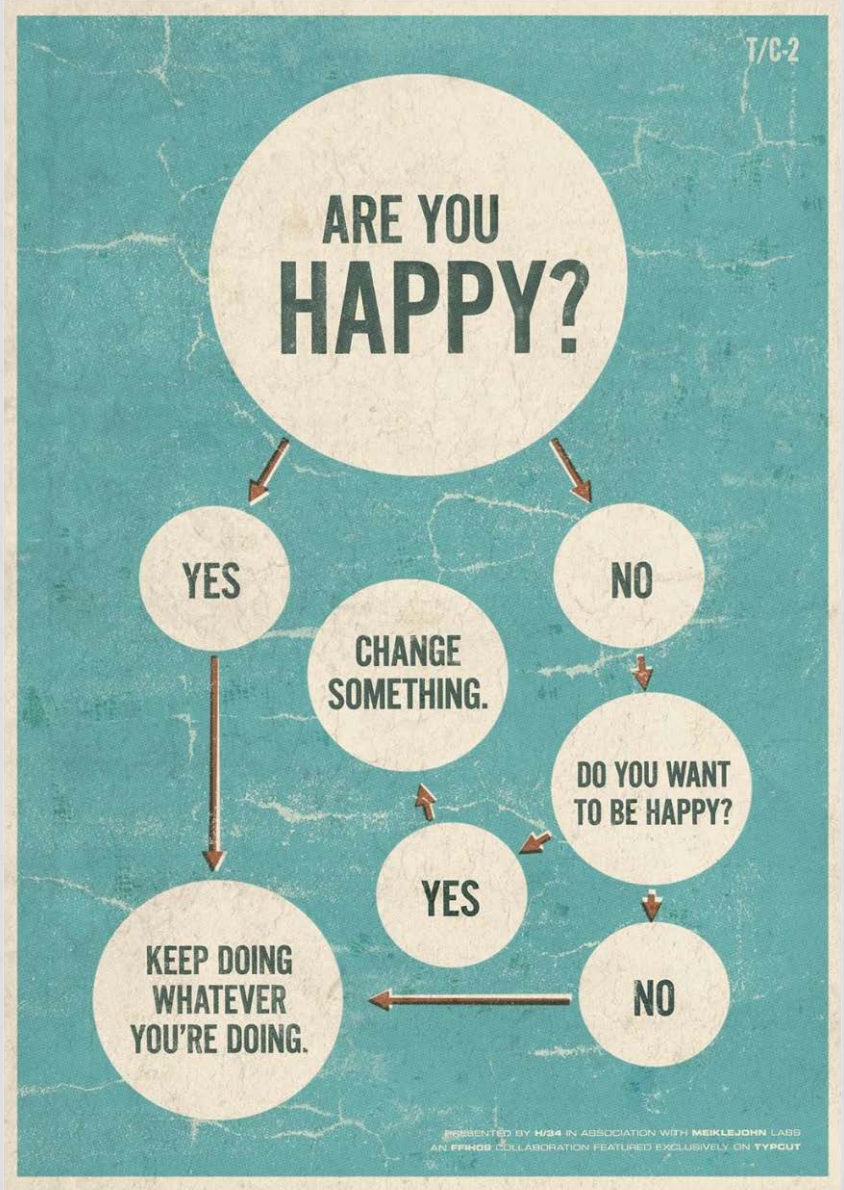
- Changes in appetite, significant weight gain or loss.
- Excessive late-night activities, too much or too little sleep. Trouble getting up in the morning. Often late for school.
- Physical agitation or slowness, pacing back and forth and/or excessive, or repetitive behaviors.
- Loss of energy

SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION IN TEENS

- Making critical comments about yourself, behavior problems at school or at home, overly sensitive to rejection
- Poor performance in school, a drop in grades, or frequent absences
- Frequent complaints of physical pain (headaches, stomach), frequent visits to school nurse
- Writing about death, giving away favorite belongings, comments like “You’d be better off without me.”

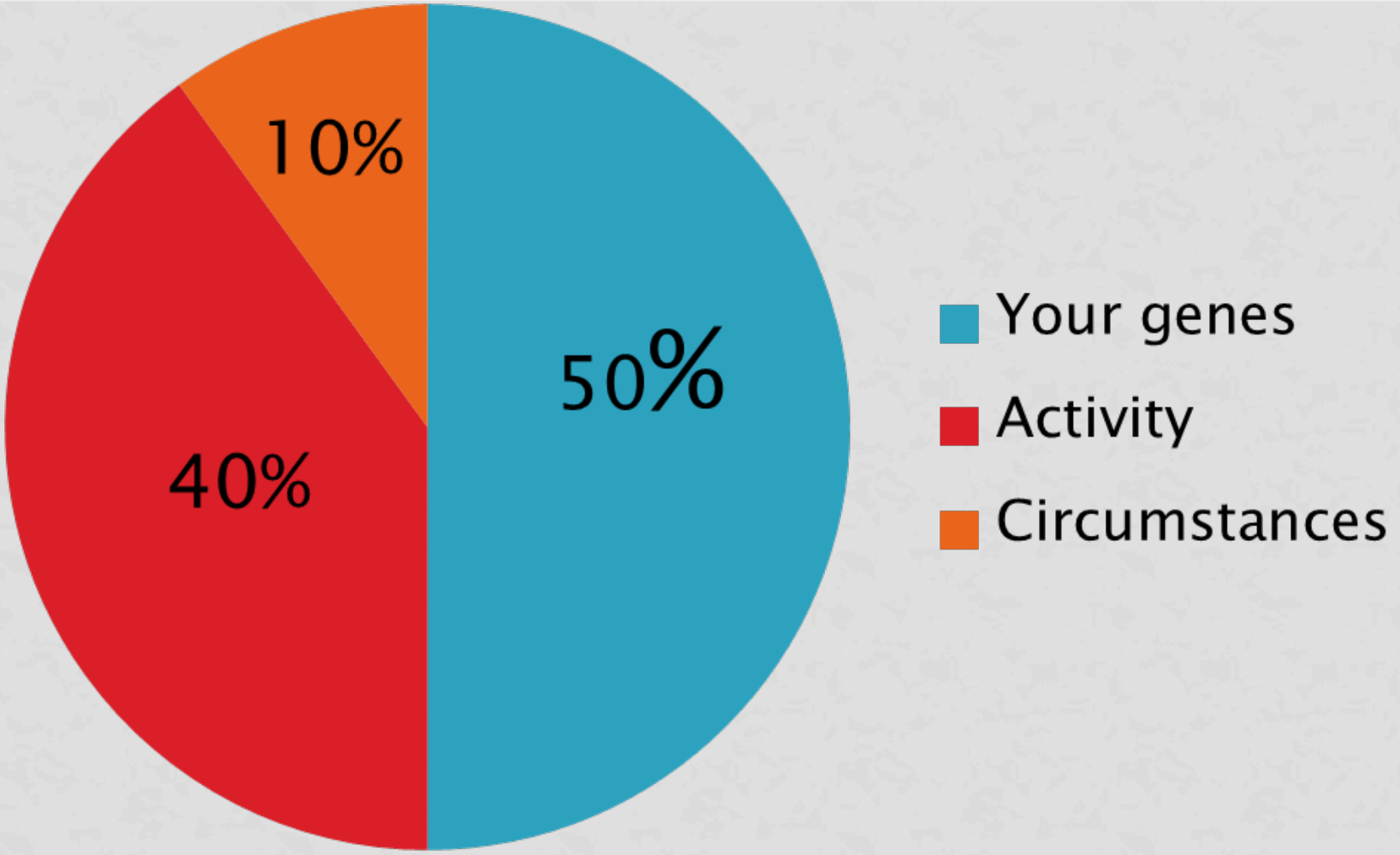
HTTP://HYPERBOLEANDAHALF.BLOGSPOT.CA/2011/10/ADVENTURES-IN-DEPRESSION.HTML

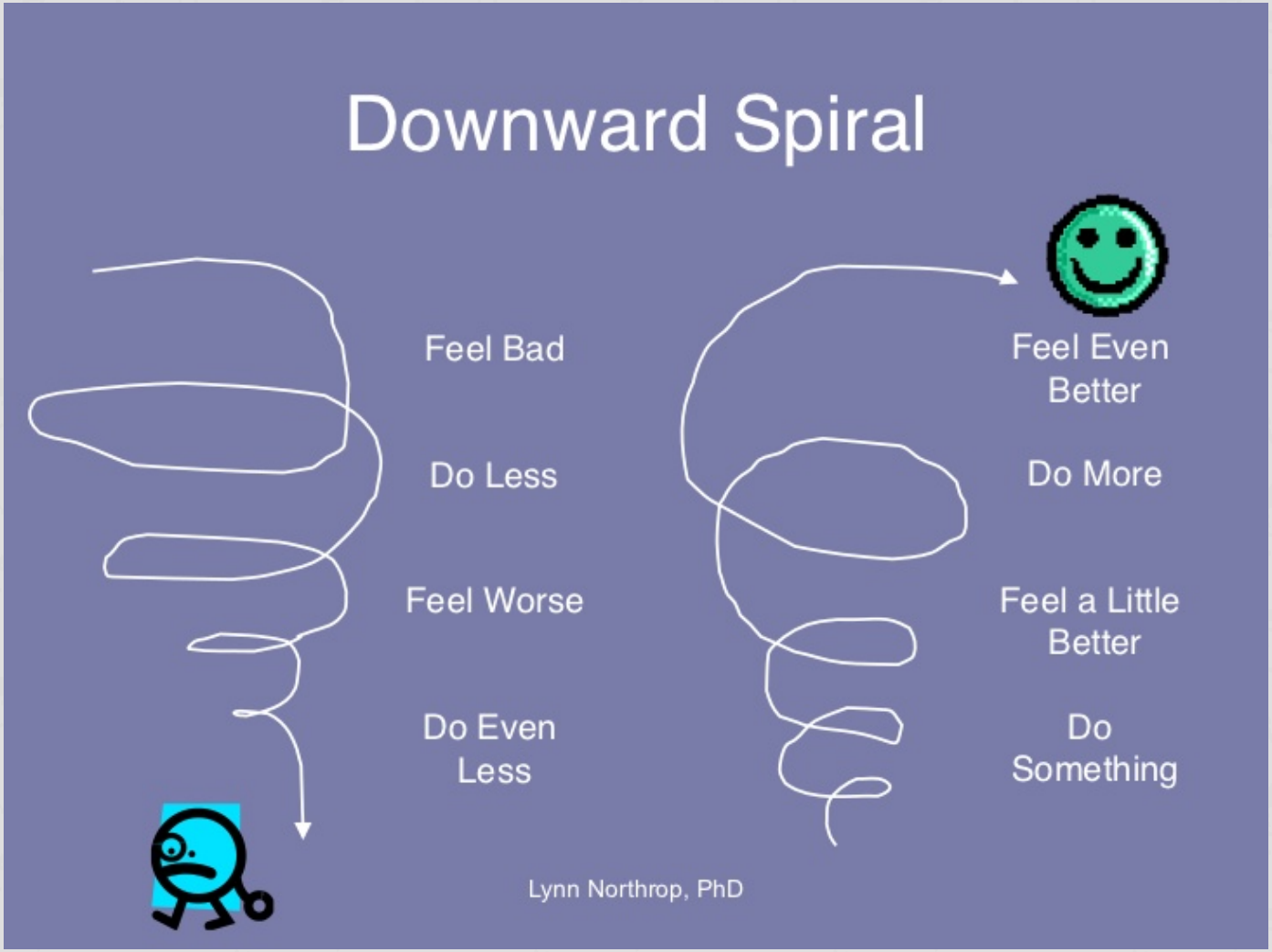




www.get.gg Kopies & Meiklejohn www.h34duo.com www.getselfhelp.co.uk

HAPPINESS IS NOT SET IN STONE





DEPRESSION AND BEHAVIOUR

"Motivation Follows Action"

SUGGESTIONS FOR BEHAVIOURS

- Gratitude diary (list one thing a day that you are grateful for)
- go for a walk
- Listen to music
- Do something NEW (different route to or from school, eat a new food, download new music, learn a new hobby)
- Call a friend
- Exercise
- Fix sleep pattern

FUEL TANK EXERCISE

LOCAL RESOURCES HANDOUT AND QUESTIONS