



**Mental Health
Training**
for Health Professionals
Drought & Bushfire Affected Areas



Mental Health and Wellbeing Training Support for health professionals



Effects of Trauma and Prolonged Stress: Strategies to help self and others

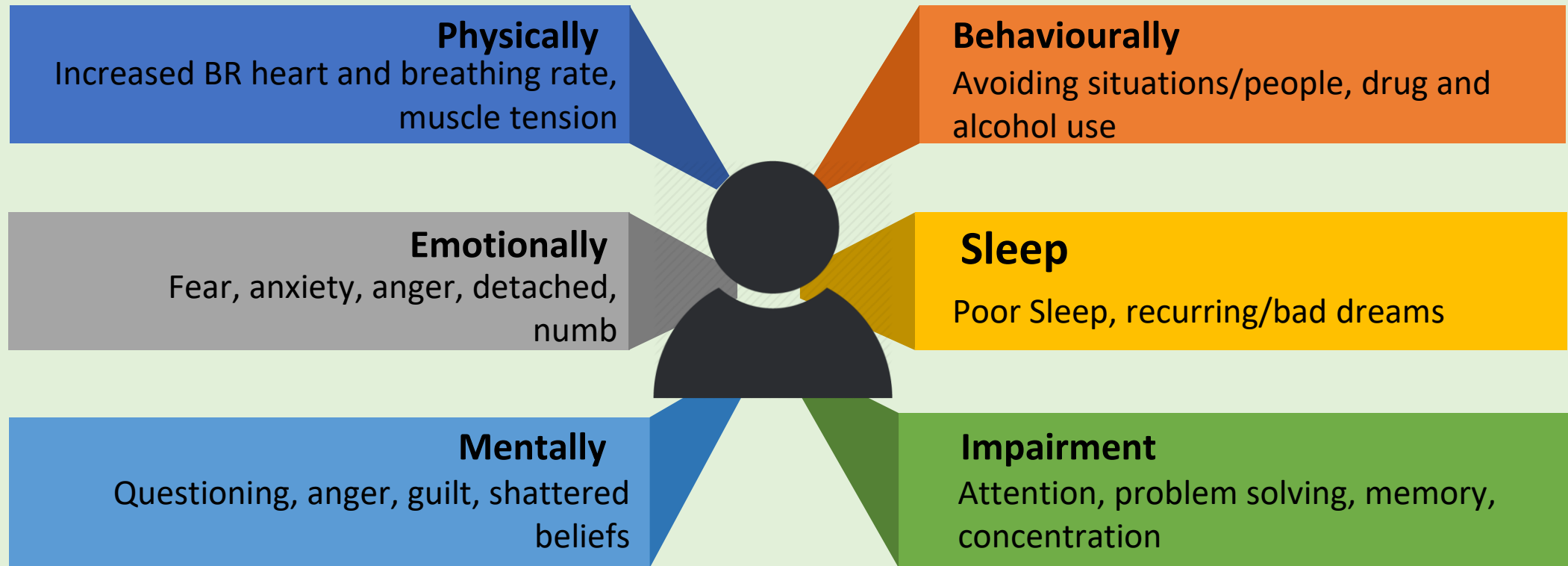
Aims

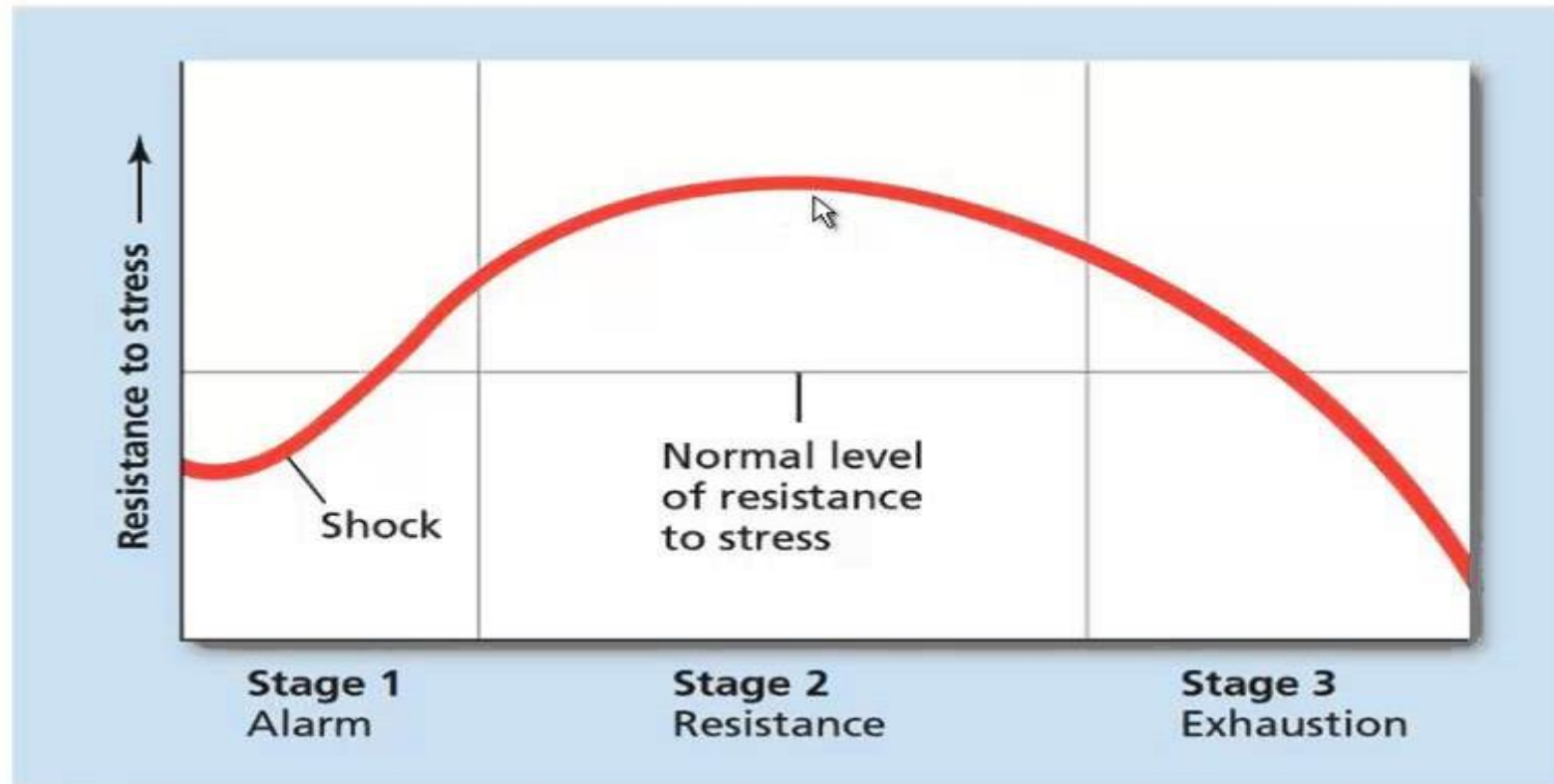
- How to detect prolonged, acute stress and related effects
- Learn practical strategies to lessen the impact
- Increase confidence in talking with someone of concern
- Problem solve and plan management of own wellbeing

Response to threat



Common Reactions post trauma



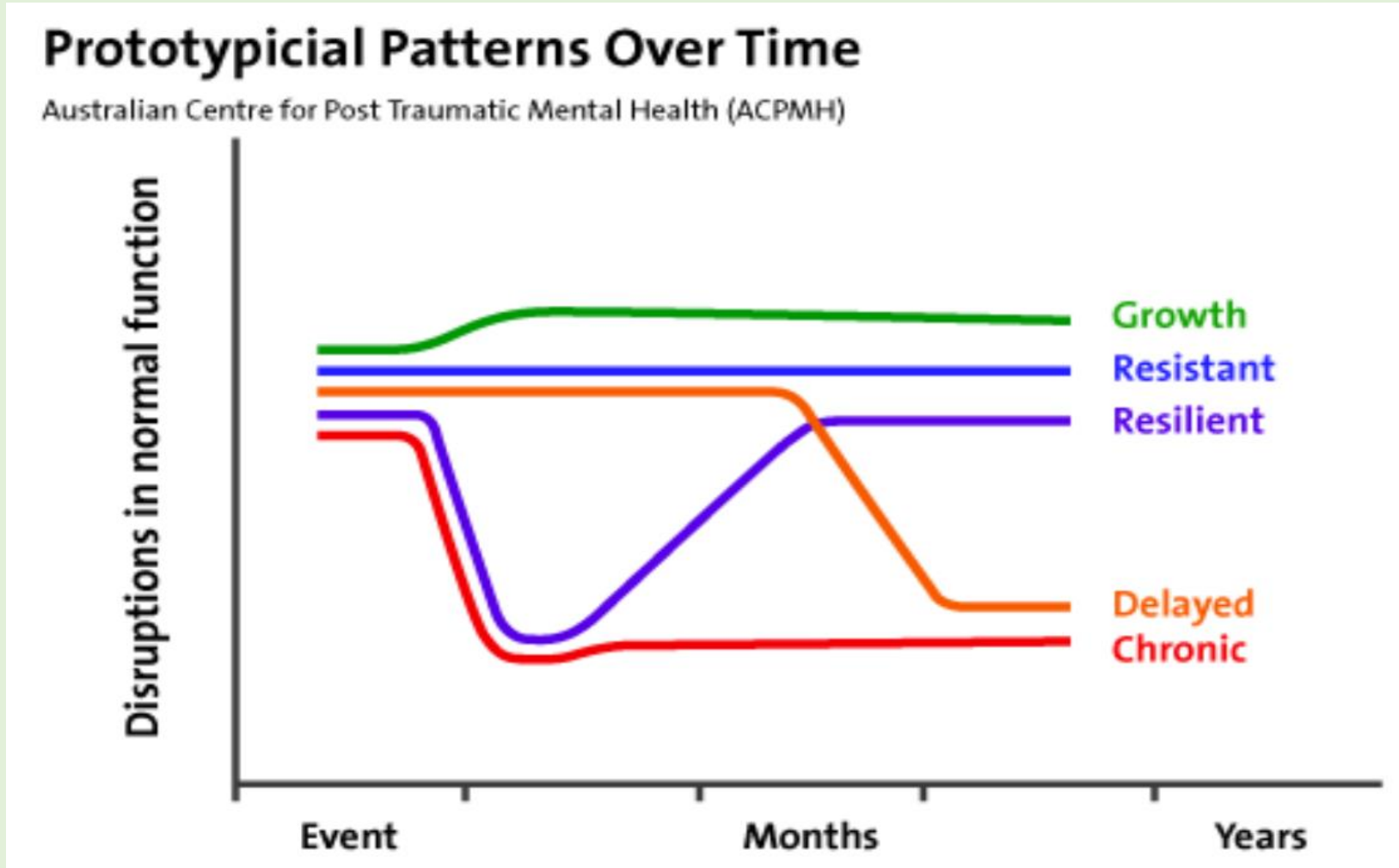


From "Psychology: An Exploration" by Ciccarelli and White (2013)

Reaction to trauma, disaster

- Disruption: physically, psychologically, community, relationships, lifestyle
- Shock and disbelief may be overwhelming
- Most experience temporary distress but bounce back
- Most recover with friend/family/social support

Different Responses to Abnormal Events



Australian Centre for Post Traumatic Mental Health (2017). The recovery journey showing disruption in normal functioning over time in those impacted by emergencies.



Stress response is normal

- Trauma and stress are part of the human experience
- Responses are programmed by evolution for survival
- Stress is not 'a specific thing' and depends on thoughts, perceptions and internal resources of the individual
- It occurs when the demands of your internal and external environment exceed your perceived ability to cope

Psychological First Aid

- Safety – basic needs
- Calming – listening, accurate information
- Promote self-efficacy – assist to meet own needs
- Connectedness – friends, family, community
- Hope – enhancing own resilience

Take a moment to recognize
that you are here, you are
recognized for what you are
doing for yourself and within
your community

Risks to carers during prolonged stress

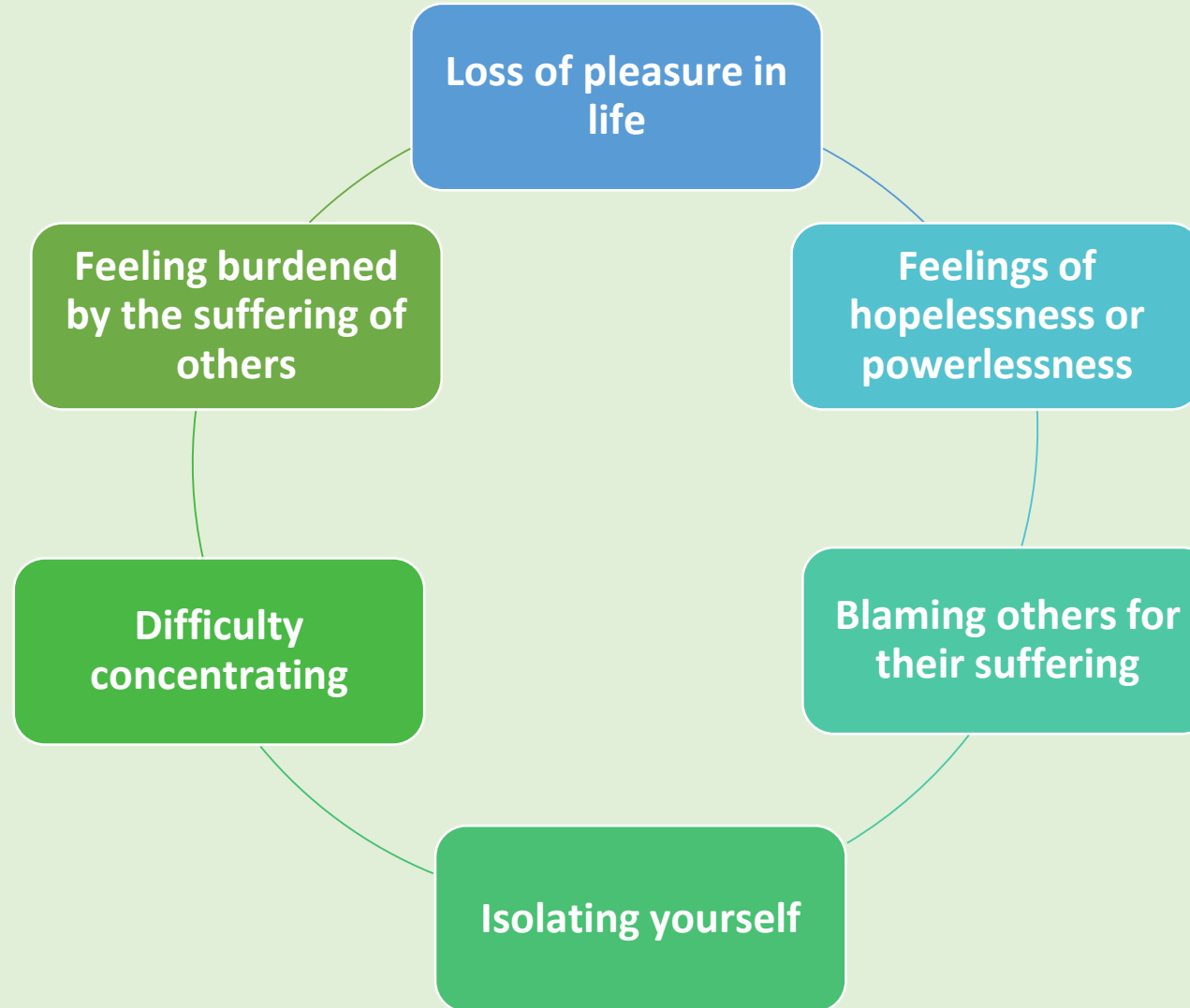
- The body is denied chance to rest and recover, replenish reserves
- Living in the area, being invested in the community
- This caring connection we establish with others can make us vulnerable to our own distress

Ongoing Stress- health effects

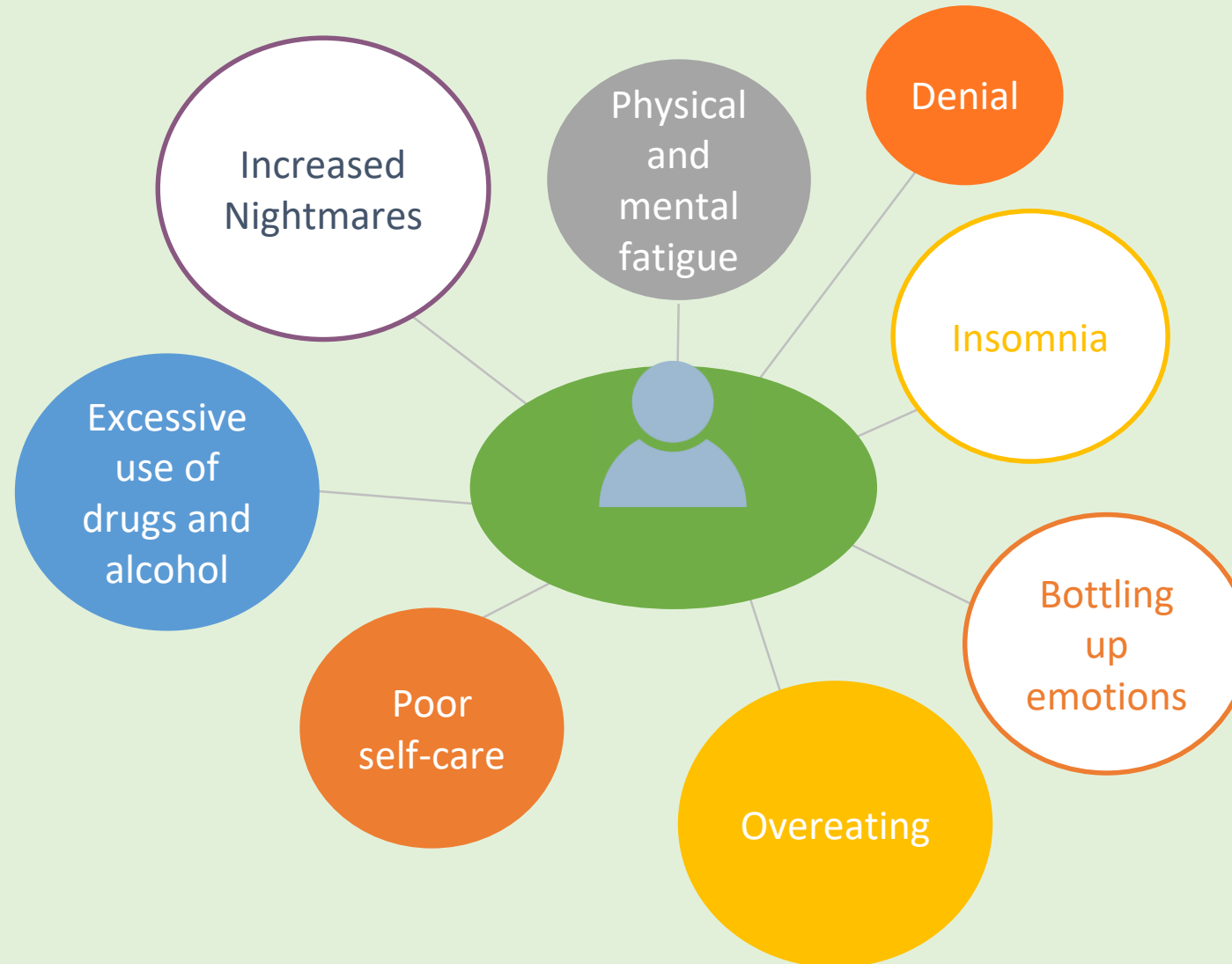
- **Physically:** unwell, low energy, headaches, muscle pain, GIT problems, High BP, Insomnia
- **Psychologically:** Irritable, angry, feeling helpless, hopeless, loss of control, numb, anxious, loss of interest or ability to feel pleasure
- **Cognitively:** Difficulty concentrating, remembering, problem solving, making decisions

- Helpers of those who have experienced trauma can develop secondary trauma and this can happen suddenly
- Vicarious trauma is a cumulative response to exposure to other people's trauma

Compassion fatigue – the cost of caring



Effects of compassion fatigue



Broad signs of trouble readjusting

- Not starting to improve
- Persistent reactions to the event interfering with daily life and affecting ability to function
- Isolation from friends, family
- Sense of ongoing hopelessness, lack of pleasure

Trouble readjusting

- Risk taking, thoughts of self harm
- Hyperalert – on edge (anticipating danger recurring)
irritable, sleep problems
- Flash backs – recurring memory or nightmares
- Avoidance- not talking about the event or reminders,
suppressing memories



Distress can look like many things

- Anger, anxiety sadness or grief
- More tired than usual,
- Making uncharacteristic mistakes,
- Lack of motivation
- Timekeeping slips

Practical help and reassurance

- Practical assistance, problem solving
- Social support – trusted people
- Listening, talking
- Exercise, Relaxation, Nutrition, Sleep
- Enjoyable activity
- Normal routine
- Avoiding major decisions
- Avoiding alcohol and other drugs

Have a conversation

- Have a conversation if you're concerned, if you notice changes
- Think about time, place, safety
- Listen – supportive value in itself
- Ask – don't ignore (fear of offence)
- Keep it simple How can I help ?
- Offer but don't press
- Avoid a question and answer

If the conversation is difficult

- Ask yourself what would you do if it were a physical concern or illness.
- Don't make assumptions about people or diagnose.
- Focus on health concerns – what you've noticed.
- Don't ignore symptoms and hope or assume they will go away.
- Give the message that you are willing to help and help is available.
- “You don't seem yourself lately, how can I help?”
- Ask if they need assistance or professional help

When to Encourage professional help

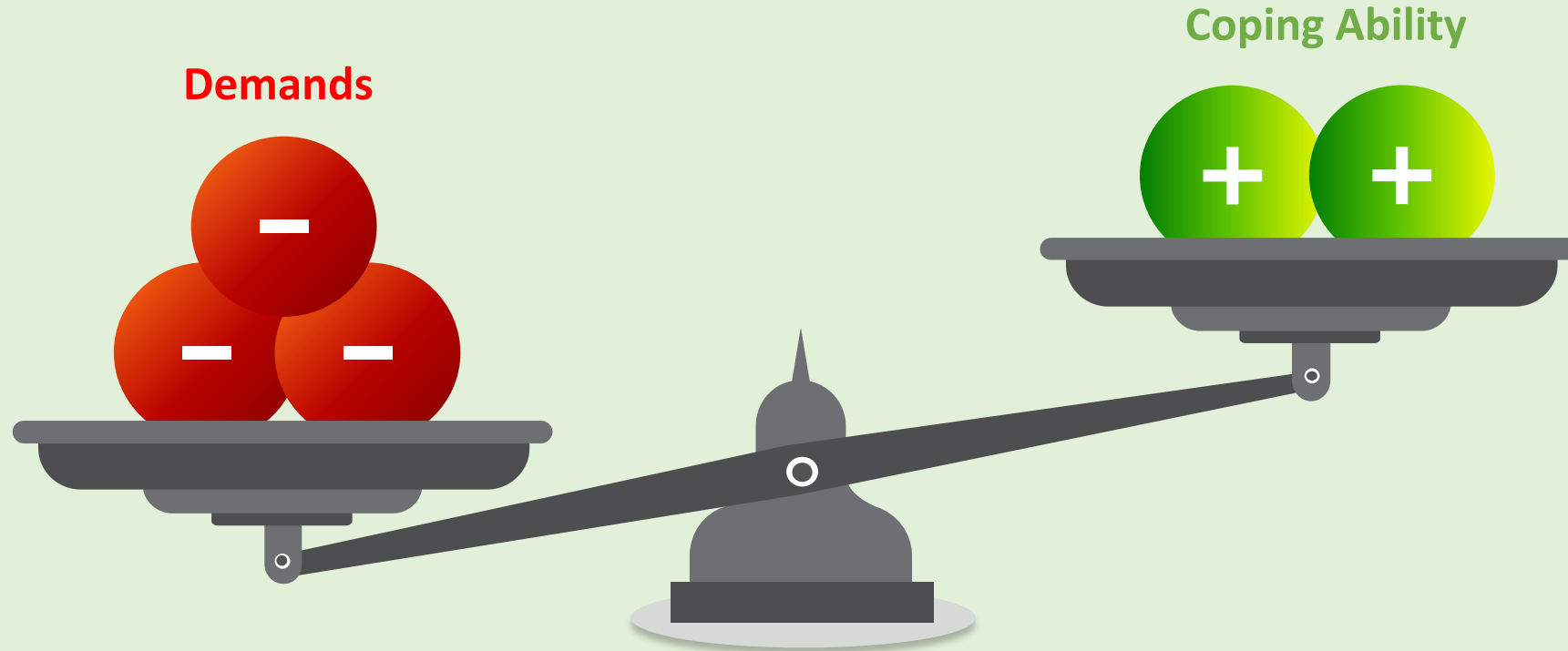
- Some need reassurance that they 'are not going crazy'
- Reactions to stress and trauma normal but professional assistance may decrease intensity of distressing symptoms
- Not improving: unable to get on with life
- Impacting on others
- Ongoing effect on mood
- Suicidal thoughts



Ask directly

- Are you thinking of suicide?
- If they say yes, do not leave them alone
- Link them with emergency services, their GP, mental health crisis service and other professional help

Recovery is about balance





What are barriers to self care

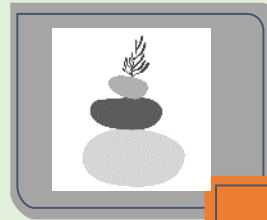
- Unaware of own distress
- Stigma
- Exhaustion/work stress
- 'No time '
- 'Everyone else is doing it worse'

Problem solving – barriers to self care

- Feeling overwhelmed major descriptor of 'being stressed'
- Cue to noticing own stress response or triggers
- Break problems into smaller bits
- Look at what's within your control
- Can you do anything about the stressor?
- Can you change your response or coping style?

Self-care for prevention and recovery

RELAXATION



SOCIAL

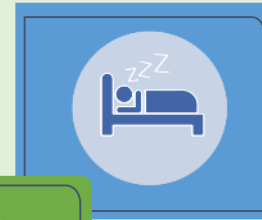
In addition to
friends/family/colleagues
Meaningful connection may be
through groups, hobbies,
interests



EXERCISE



EATING AND NUTRITION



SLEEP

Not the hours but
how you feel during
the day

Self care needed all day

- What's the strategy for the start of the day ?
- Check in with self each morning and after work
- Consider strategies for prevention or escalation of fight and flight for example relaxation
- Strategies for the moment for example when someone is distressed – breathe in and out
- Post stressor- listen, debrief, reflection, letting go
- Establish work life balance as a life goal

Practise and Plan own self care

- Support- supervision, mentor, trusted person
- Services like EAP, CRANAplus, Lifeline
- Breaks from work, outside interests
- Work life balance- breaks and outside interest
- Pleasure - enjoyable activities
- Healthy balance meals and exercise
- Rest and relaxation
- Challenging thoughts, remembering successes
- Humour, Hope

Further Information

Members Assistance Program through AccessEAP:
Currently provide 3 free counselling sessions for Practice
Staff, including GPs, in the HNECCPHN region.
Phone: 1800 818728 or visit accesseap.com.au

Beyondblue – 1300 22 4636

My LifeLine (12-20y/o) – 1800 695 463

Headspace (12-25y/o) – 1800 650 890

Phoenix Trauma related information, training, programs
- 03 9035 5599

CRANAplus
Bush Support
Services

1800 805 391
toll free 'every day of the year'



Lifeline
13 11 14



CRANA

improving
remote
health

plus



Toll Free

24/7

1800 805 391

Bush Support Service



CRANAplus Bush Support Services

Our qualified psychologists are experienced in the remote & isolated sector and understand the challenges that face remote health workers in their day to day lives. Our toll free, 24/7 personalised care is available for all remote health workers and their families.

For confidential psychological support just call
1800 805 391.

Additional Support Resources are available on the CRANAplus website. Print version available.

<https://crana.org.au/workforce-support/mental-health-training/resources-1>

or your local Employee Assistance Program