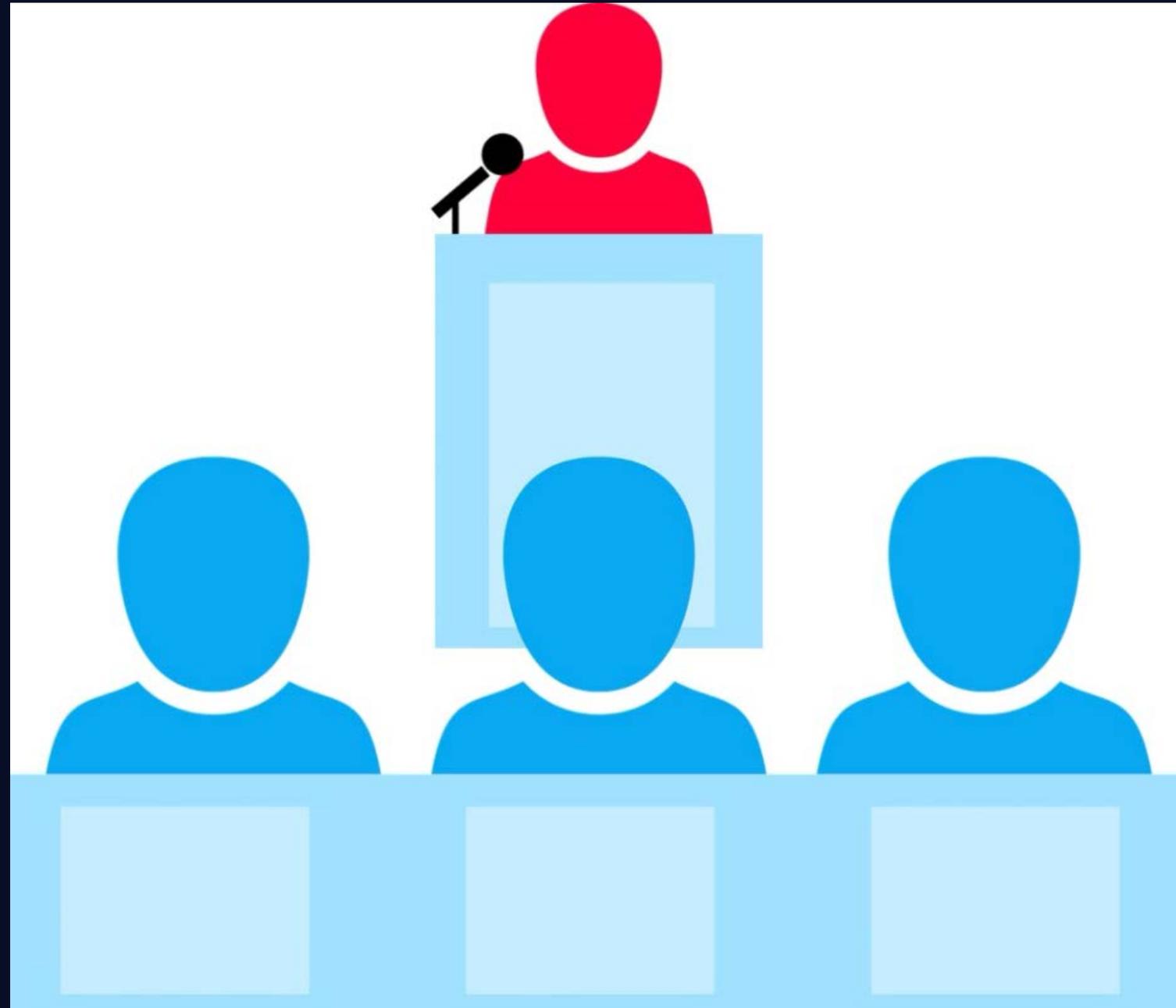


Welcome!
Stress Less
Evidence-Based, Biblical-Rooted Ways
to Lessen Ministry Stress

(© Charles Stone, but feel free to use this material
with your volunteers and staff)

www.charlesstone.com

Who is Charles Stone?



Family



West Park Church, London, Ontario, Canada



Our new home



What I do:

Coach (ACC), consult, write, and speak

WWW.charlesstone.com

I coach and equip leaders to effectively navigate their unique challenges by blending **biblical principles with cutting-edge **brain-based practices**.**

Stress-inducing circumstances in life are inevitable.

Stress need not define you.
Let it refine you.

Big Idea

Grow more Spirit-centered resilience TAPS
to minimize the negative effects from chronic stress.



If handled properly stress is as easy as a walk in the park.

**Jurassic Park,
but a park.**





How to Maximize Learning Today.

1. Write down **ONLY** meaningful insights on the handout.
2. You can download a **free PDF of today's slides** plus lots of other **free resources** by signing up for my blog at this QR code (or at www.charlesstone.com) ...pop-up... if the pop-up doesn't appear, scroll down and you can sign up there. You can always unsubscribe and I don't share emails.
3. Use the idea “parking lot” to Google/AI later to research.
4. Save questions to the end.



Want Free Resources?

Subscribe to receive biblically-sound, brain-based solutions for your life and leadership.

First Name*

Email

SUBMIT →

STRESS

WHAT COMES TO MIND?

"Houston, we have a problem." (Apollo 11, Jack Swigert)

STRESS IN THE UNITED STATES



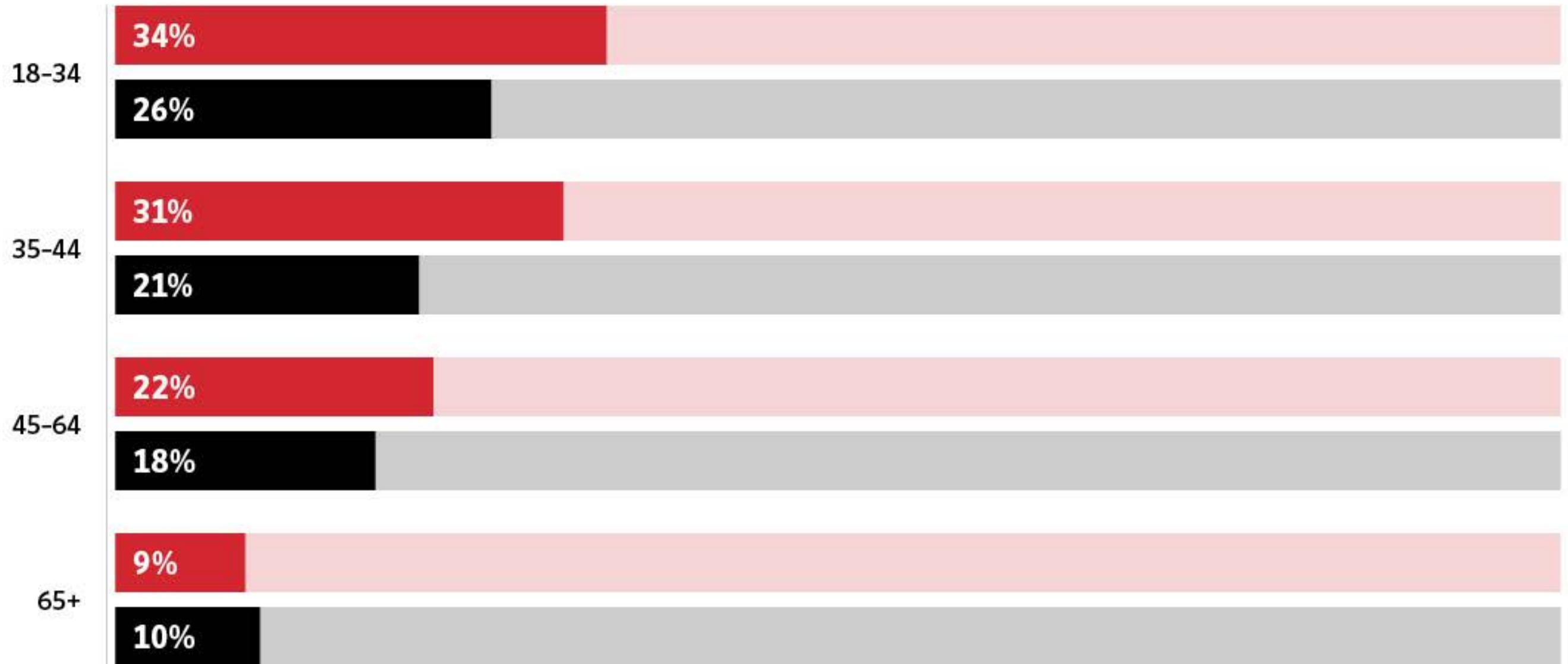
paleostressmanagement.com

PRE- AND POST-PANDEMIC STRESS LEVEL COMPARISON BY AGE

% OF ADULTS WHO RATE THEIR AVERAGE STRESS BETWEEN EIGHT AND TEN*



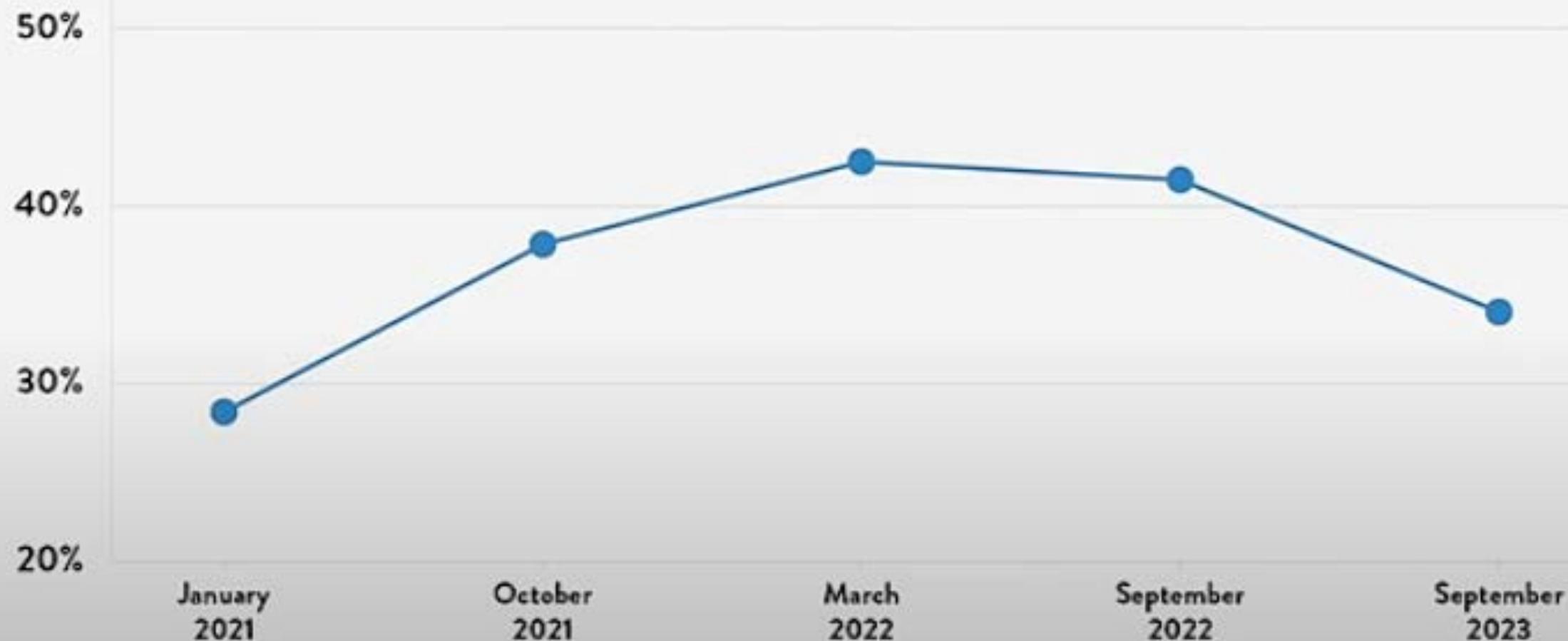
■ 2023 ■ 2019



*Respondents were asked to rate their average level of stress during the past month on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means "little or no stress" and 10 means "a great deal of stress"

PASTORS' IMPULSE TO QUIT MINISTRY HAS PEAKED BUT REMAINS HIGH

Have you given real, serious consideration to quitting being in full-time ministry within the last year?



source: Barna

18% of pastors in the last year considered
suicide or self-harm.

source: Barna

TODAY, PASTORS ARE SIGNIFICANTLY LESS LIKELY TO RECEIVE PERSONAL SPIRITUAL SUPPORT FROM PEERS OR MENTORS.

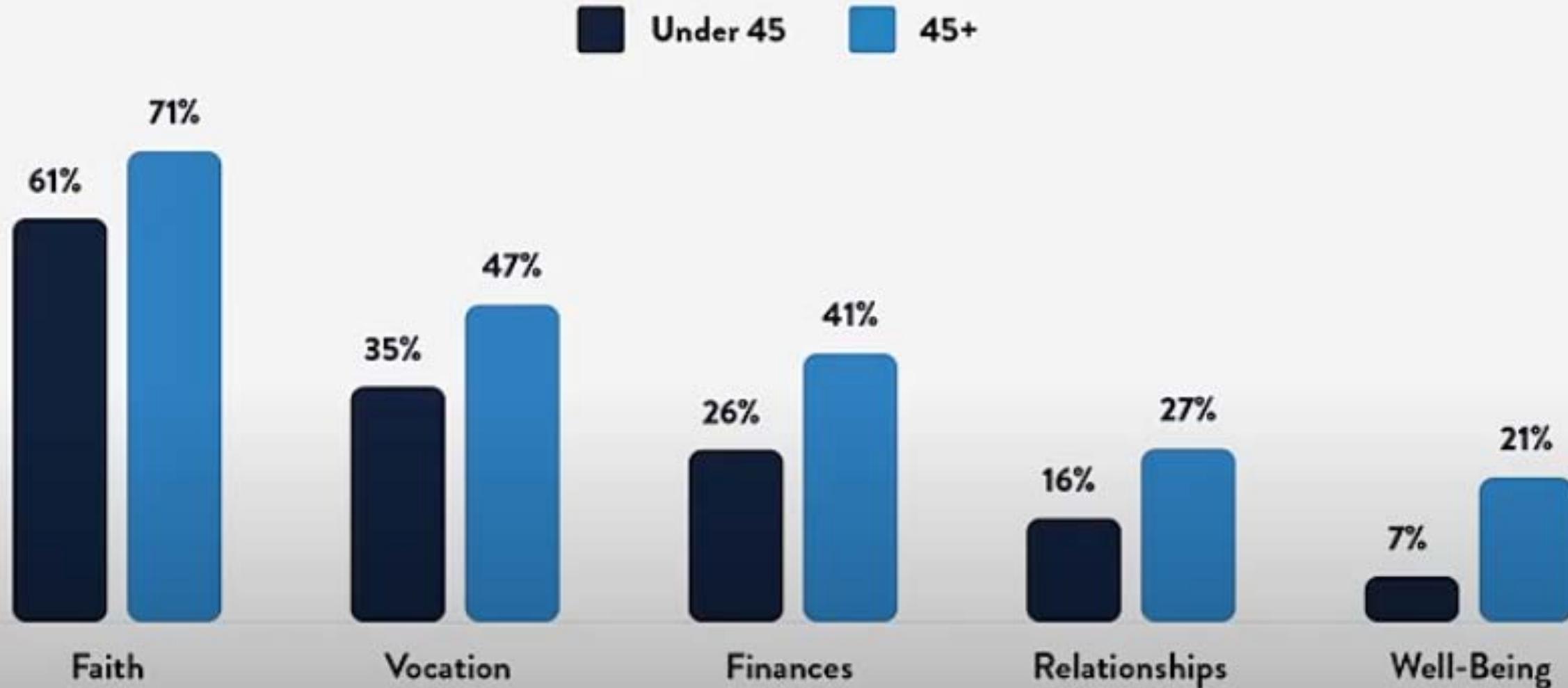
How often, if ever, do you receive personal spiritual support, either from a network of peers or from a mentor?

■ Several times a month or more ■ Once or twice a month ■ Several times a year ■ Not very often ■ Never



source: Barna

PASTORS UNDER 45 ARE LESS LIKELY THAN THEIR OLDER COLLEAGUES TO BE FLOURISHING



source: Barna

3 Learning Goals Today



Biblical Insight on Stress

Understand biblical principles about stress resilience.



Brain Insight on Stress

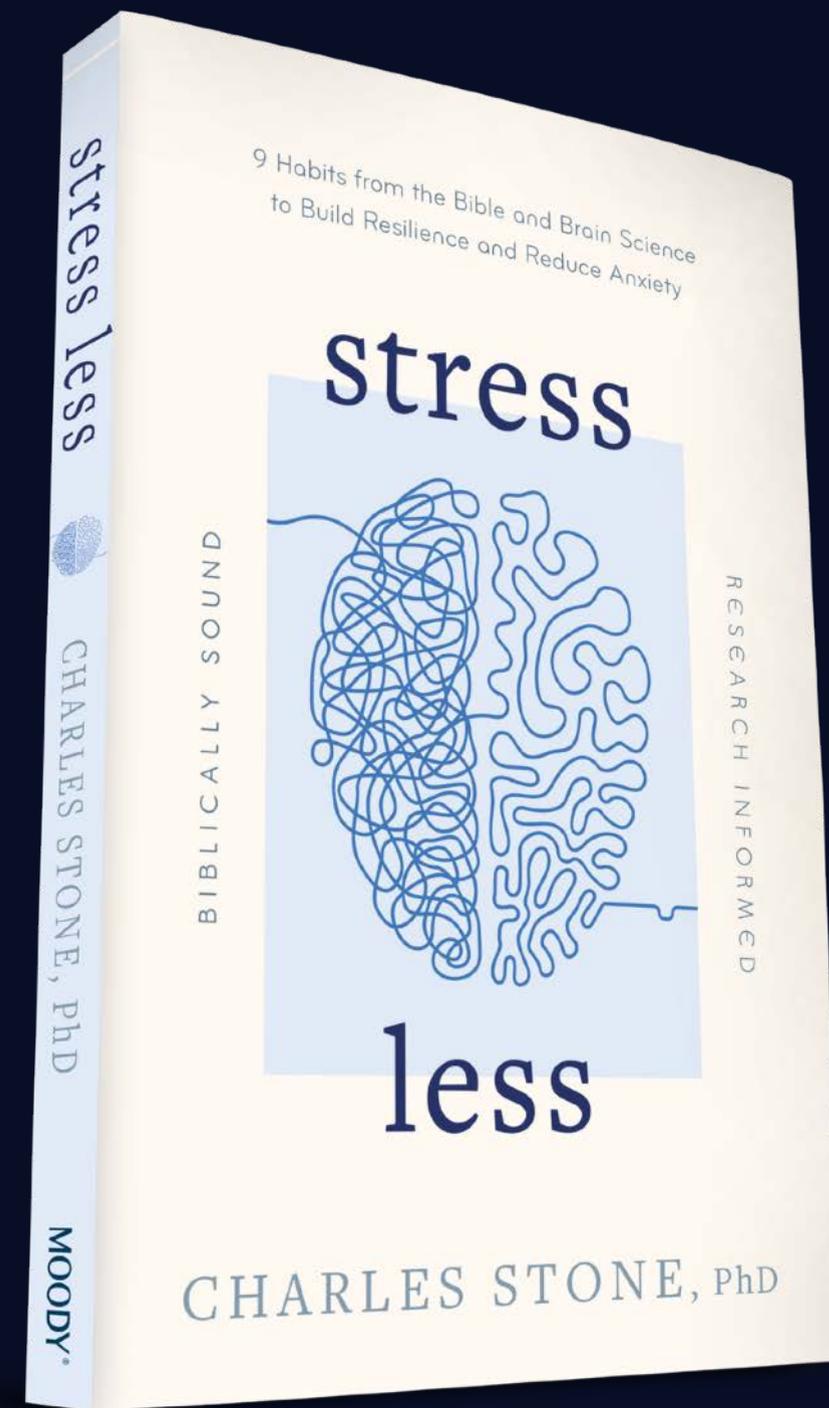
Identify key neuroscience findings about stress resilience.



Best Resilience Practices

Commit to developing a 30-day resilience building plan using the practices that resonate with you (9 total practices).

Source: my newest Moody Press
book (available for purchase at my
table)
Give-away a copy today at the end.



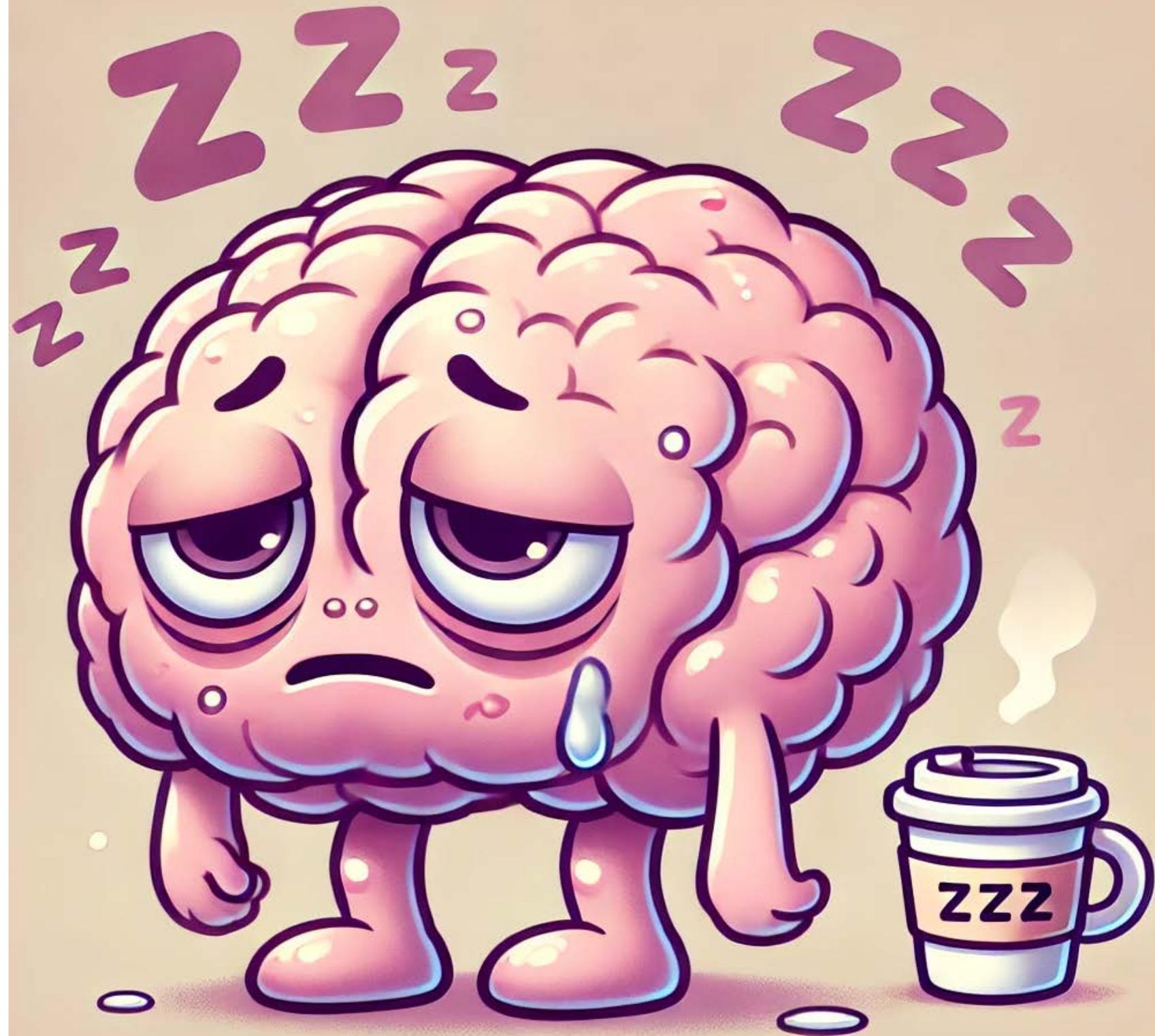


My interest interest in this subject: PhD

Pastors and Stress:
Enhancing their Resilience
and Recovery from Stress
A Mixed-Methods Study of Canadian Pastors

*Learning Goal 1:
Understand a bit about
what the Bible says about
stress resilience*

30 second brain break



The first pastoral thing a pastor must do to manage ministry stress is to...

“put into words a ... carefully examined biblical and theological interpretation of stress.”

(Oates 1986, 574)

Scripture and stress

1. The word stress is not in the Bible (the idea/related words are except in the NLT and The Message. “As pressure and stress bear down on me, I find joy in your commands (Ps 119.143).”
2. Certain concepts and words provide an interpretation of stress.
 - Tribulation/persecution (Matt. 5.10)
 - Faith development (Rom. 5.3-5)
 - Burden (Gal. 6.2)
 - Testing/temptation (1 Cor. 10.13)

Scripture

2 Tim 3.12... In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

1 Pet 3.14 ...But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed.

Matt. 11:28 “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”

James 1:2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because

*I have told you this
so that my joy may be in you and that
your joy may be complete (Jn 15.11) .
(human flourishing).*

Dr. Jonathan Pennington...

God's saving work, his redemptive activity, his goal for humanity and all creation is precisely this: that we flourish fully even as he himself flourishes perfectly, completely, and with overflowing abundance.

We should cease thinking of spirituality and godliness as something that has nothing to do with human well-being and flourishing, including in a physical, economic, psychological, and relational sense.

2 Peter 1.3, His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

“We must put personal stresses into the context of the
...sovereignty of God,
...the redemptive participation of Jesus Christ,
...and the Presence of God in Christ in the Holy Spirit.”

(Oates, Stress Perception and Management in the Pastor's Life and Work, 580).

*Learning Goal 2:
Identify key neuroscience
findings about stress*



STRESS

What Stress is

Our body/brain's natural response to real or perceived threats/demands.

What Stress Does

Unmitigated chronic stress negatively impacts our minds, bodies, brains, relationships, and souls.

Two Flavors

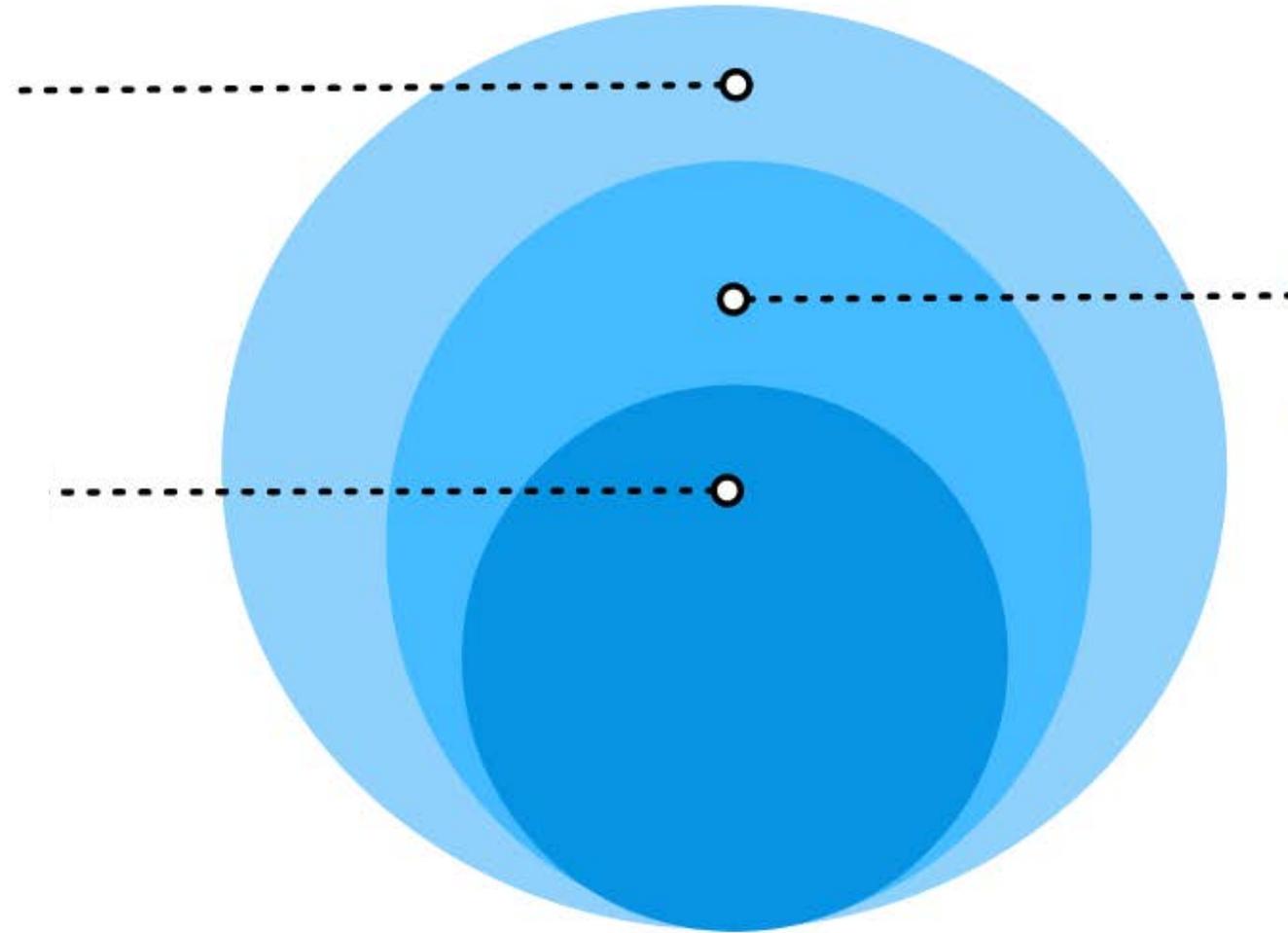
Short-term stress (**acute**) is normal, but long-term stress (**chronic**) is harmful.

Not all stress is bad.

Acute (vs chronic) stress ...

- Motivates us to action to get things done.
- Helps us run for safety when a bear is chasing us.
- Helps us meet deadlines.
- Helps us get focused to prep a sermon.
- Helps us pay attention in a class.
- Chronic stress (high alert for long periods) IS bad!

3 sources of stress



Where does your chronic stress originate?

The Stress Response: 2 Key peripheral nervous system *circuits* involved [autonomic system]

The brain's **emotional/chemical brake**
(Para-sympathetic nervous system)
“rest and digest”...**slow**

The brain's **emotional/chemical accelerator**
(Sympathetic nervous system)
“fight-flight”...**GO!**

**The vagus
nerves**



The stress response

[when real or perceived stress persists]

Dominoe effect in our brain: adrenaline (epinephrine) released first and then cortisol is released.



If we stay in this stress stage several days, that's bad!

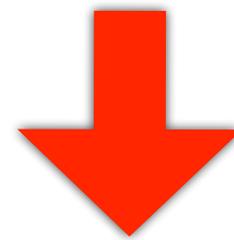
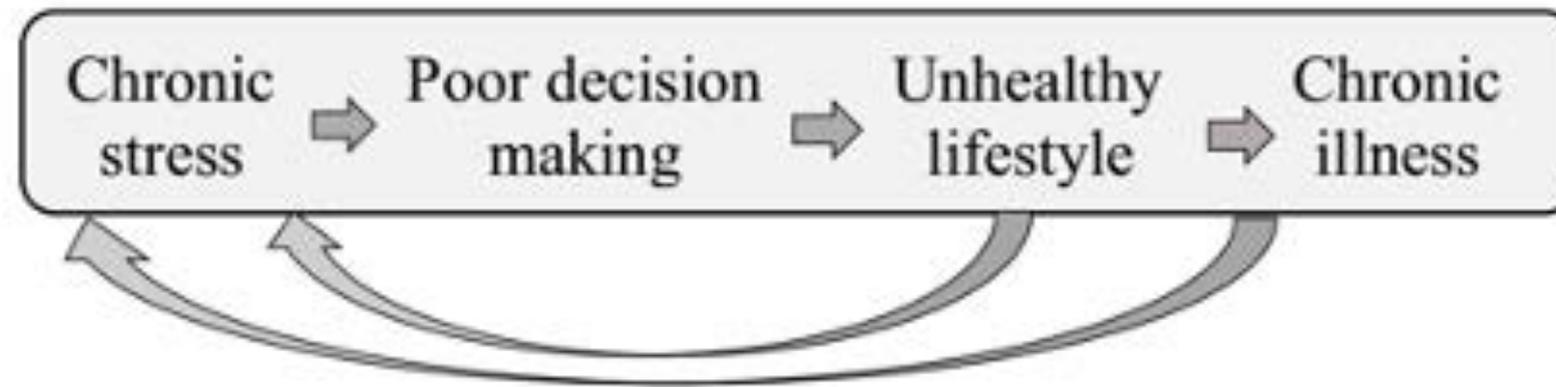
Chronic stress does this...

- Magnifies emotional pain & lowers reactivity threshold (we stay on trigger edge).
- Impairs memory and thinking.
- Reduces motivation.
- Contributes to heart issues (BP, stroke, heart attack).
- Affects blood sugar levels (can lead to diabetes).
- Increases hunger/weight gain (ghrelin increases and leptin decreases).

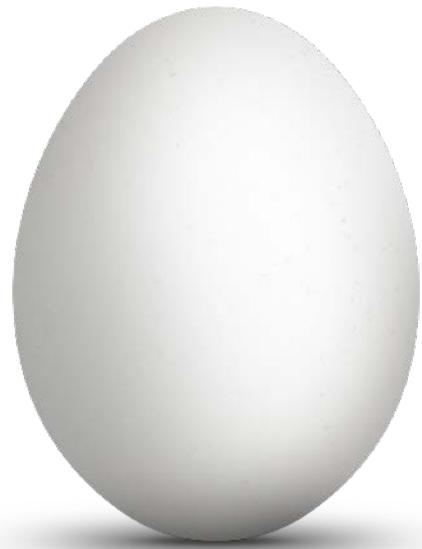
Chronic stress does this...

- Weakens our immune system (we get sicker more easily and recover more slowly).
- Diminishes joy (contributes to depression).
- Disrupts sleep.
- Impairs leadership.
- Saps spiritual vitality.

Chronic stress loop



Burnout





The healthy response to stress: **Resilience**.



What Resilience is

Resilience is the ability to **bounce back** from a stressful circumstance and **adapt/learn** from it.

The oak fought the wind and was broken, the willow bent when it must and survived. Robert Jordan (1948-2007)



Biblical Examples

David, Joseph, Nehemiah, Elijah, Job, Paul, Jesus, etc. illustrate resilience in the midst of hardships.



Benefits of Resilience

- improved mental & physical health
- increased emotional regulation
- more satisfying relationships
- increased productivity
- enhanced spiritual health

Stress management is like looking in the rearview mirror.

(bouncing back)

Resilience is like looking through the windshield.

(adapting)

With stress management you try to recover what you lost, with resilience you grow possibilities that didn't exist (Amit Sood).



Always focus on the front windshield
and not the review mirror.

— *Colin Powell* —

AZ QUOTES

The short definition of resilience.....

Is the ability to bounce back
from life's stressful circumstances
and adapt.



*Learning Goal 3:
Commit to creating and
implementing your own personal
Stress Resilience Growth Plan
(Create more taps)*

9 Resilience-building Practices 🦵



Cease and Breathe

Reveal how you Feel



Broaden and Build

Audit your Thoughts



Soak your Soul

Cultivate Certainty



Grow Gratitude

Safeguard Safety



Sleep Smart



Think about...
So far, what one idea has
stood out the most to you?





Practice 1: Cease and Breathe



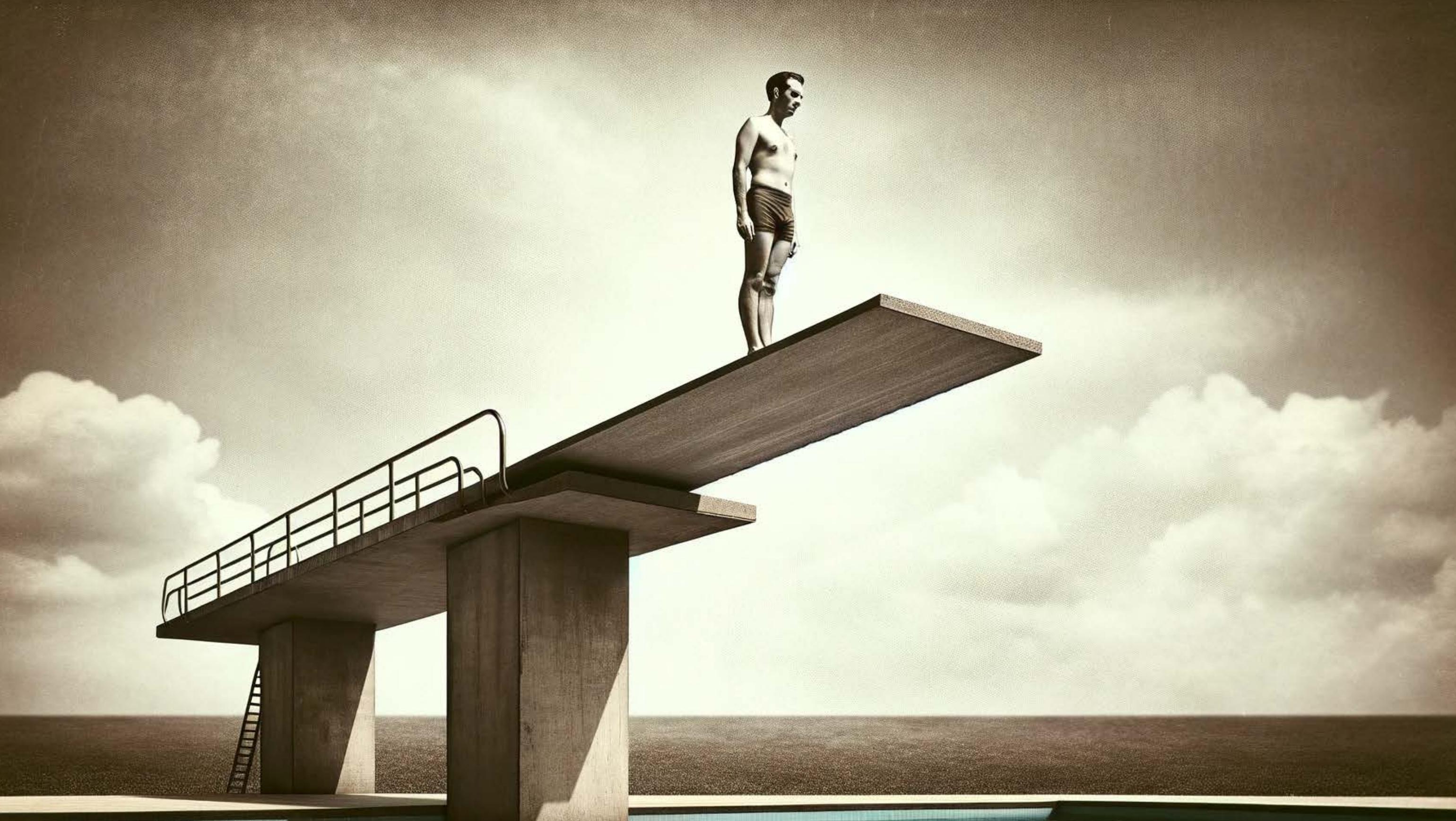
Biblical Insight: breath

*Let everything that has breath
praise the Lord! (Ps 150:6)*



Neuroscience Insight

Deep breathing activates the vagus nerve which slows heart rate and dampens the stress response.



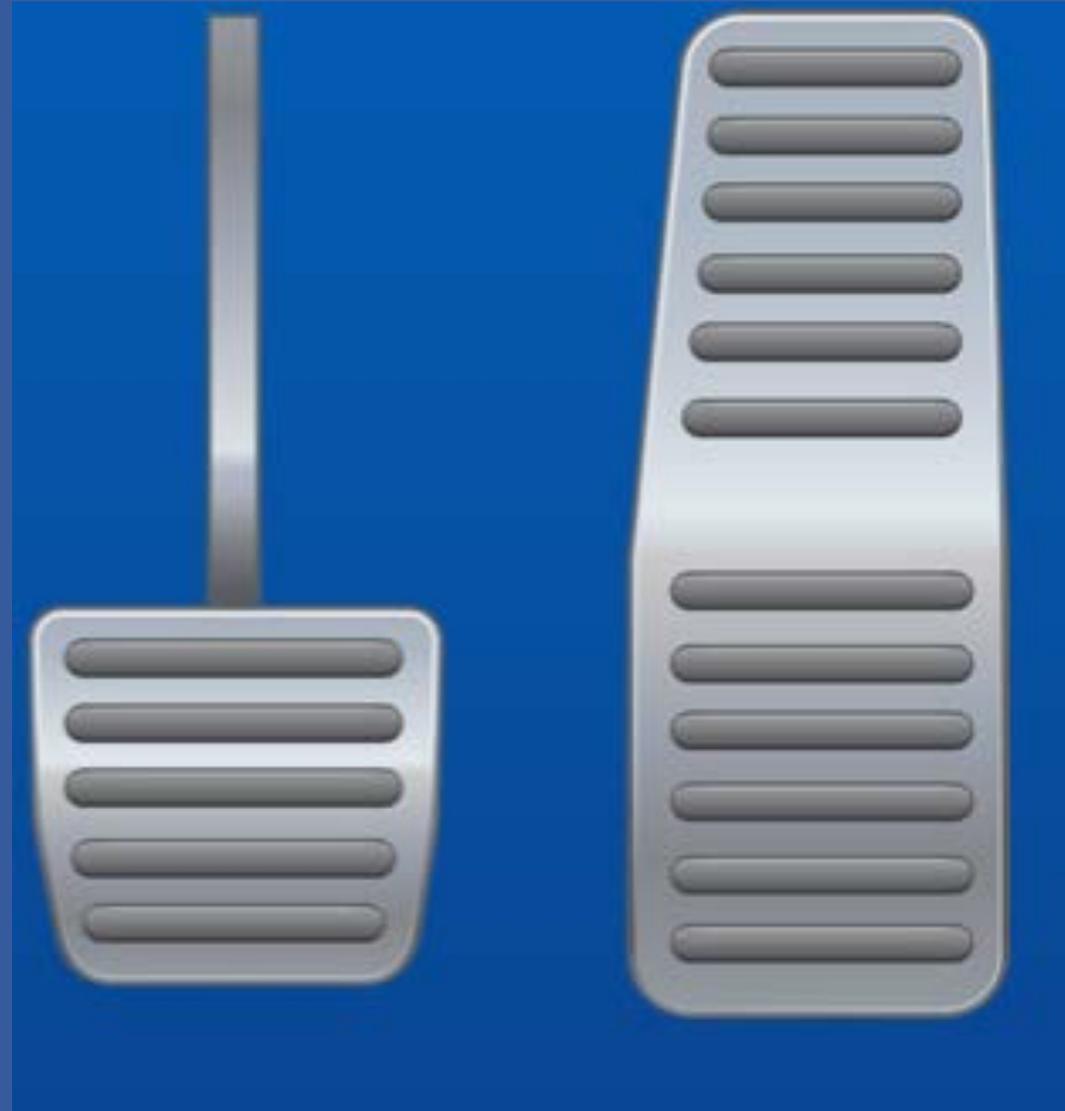
**The Bible mentions the breath
(2 significant places)**

The Jesus Prayer

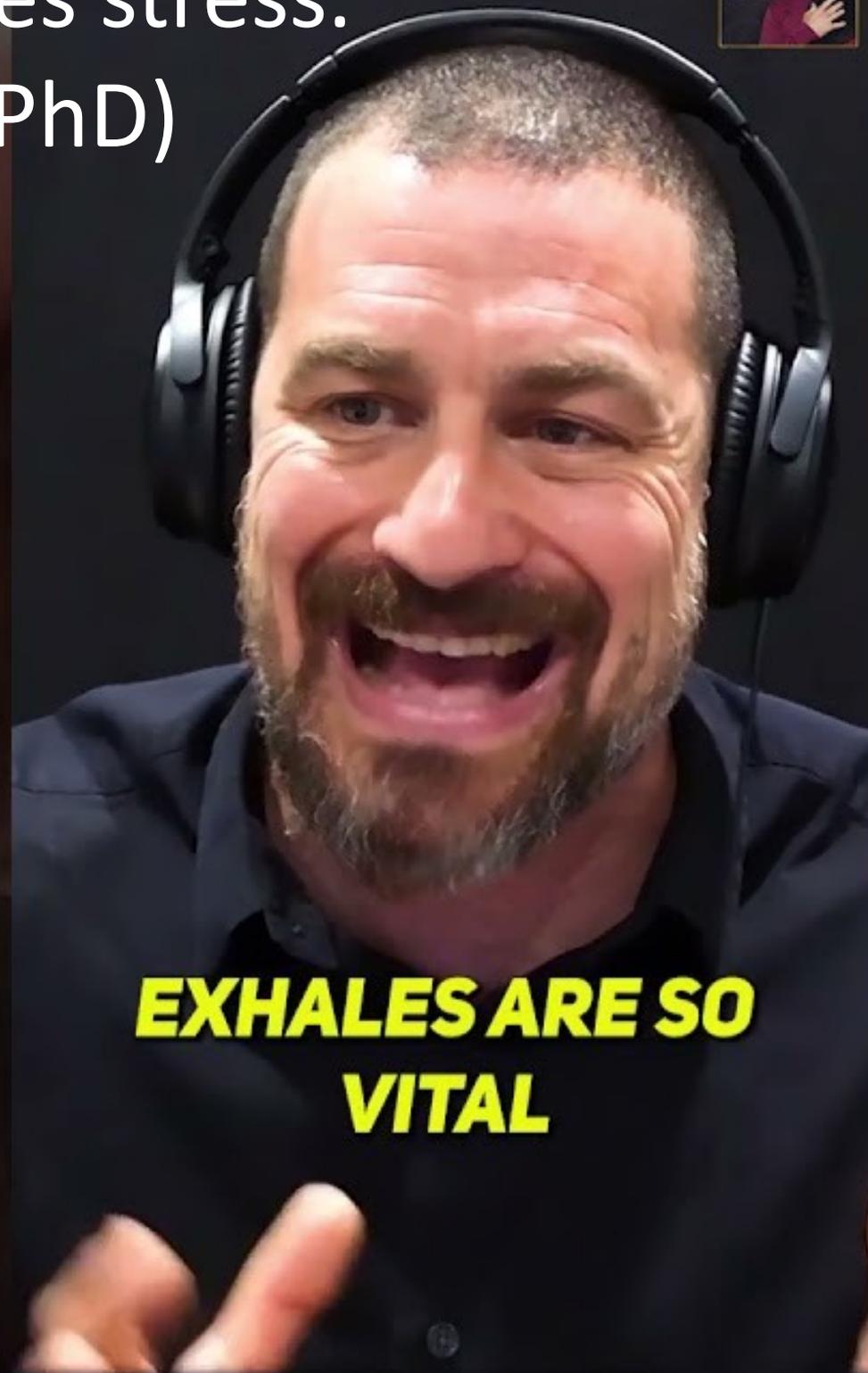
aka the 'Breath prayer'

The stress response: brain's emotional brake and its accelerator

The vagus nerve



How breathing reduces stress.
(Andrew Huberman, PhD)



**EXHALES ARE SO
VITAL**



Practice 1: Cease and Breathe



Biblical Insight: breath

Let everything that has breath praise the Lord! (Ps 150:6)



Neuroscience Insight

Deep breathing activates the vagus nerve which slows heart rate and dampens the stress response.



Application

STOPP:

- Stop
- Take a breath
- Observe
- Pray
- Proceed



Practice 2: Reveal How You Feel

Biblical Insight

David's honest emotions in the Psalms models transparency.

Neuroscience Insight

Naming difficult emotions (affect labeling) turns down their intensity.





Practice 2: Reveal How You Feel

Biblical Insight

David's honest emotions in the Psalms models transparency.

Neuroscience Insight

Naming difficult emotions (affect labeling) turns down their intensity (alexithymia, circumplex).

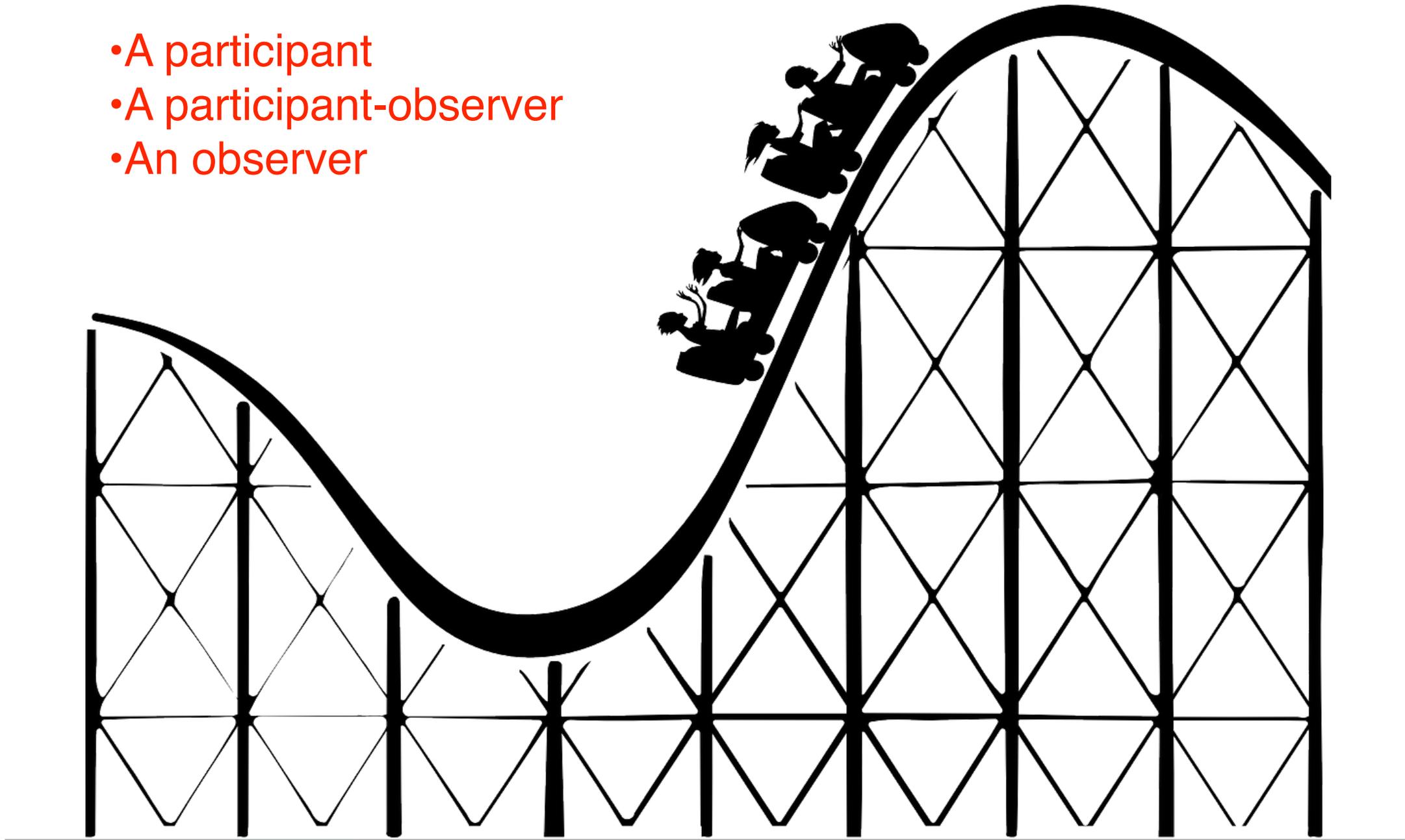
Application

Notice, Name, and Distance

Acknowledge your emotions, label them, and create space between yourself and them:

- 1). Distanced self talk.
- 2). View the issue behind the difficult emotion as a challenge instead of a threat.

- A participant
- A participant-observer
- An observer





Practice 2: Reveal How You Feel

Biblical Insight

David's honest emotions in the Psalms models transparency.

Neuroscience Insight

Naming difficult emotions (affect labeling) turns down their intensity.

Application

Notice, Name, and Distance
(third person perspective) :
Acknowledge your emotions, label them, and create space between yourself and them. View the issue as a challenge instead of a threat, a signal vs noise.

Practice 3: Broaden and Build



Biblical Insight:

Joy...Neh. 8.10



Neuroscience Insight

Positive emotions create an upward spiral toward more positive emotions and helps us see more solutions and ideas when facing difficulty (cognitive flexibility), (-).



Application

Keep a '**Pleasure Piggy Bank**' of positive experiences.



Practice 4: Audit your Thoughts



Biblical Insight

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—**think** about such things (Phil 4.8)



Neuroscience Insight

Reframing negative perceptions can reduce feelings of threat, enhance clear thinking, engage the PNS, and promote positive neurochemicals.



Application

START:

- Stop.
- Take a breath.
- Audit your thoughts (the sponsor?).
- Reappraise/reframe your thoughts (BB vs b'ball, stop any metastasizing).
- Transition your attention (switch or modify your space).

(START)

Reappraise you Thoughts/thinking.

Metacognition





If you change the way you look at things...



...the things you look at will change.

(Storoni 2019, 36)



Reappraise Thinking

How do we do this?

1. Objectively evaluate the stress-inducing situation (peel the thought onion).
2. Maintain perspective in the situation...attention vs perspective.
 - Attention is what to look for.
 - Perspective is how we look at things. Think of what a filter on a camera does to the object of our attention.
3. Re-frame the situation as a challenge instead of a threat.

(START)

Transition your Attention

**Attention is a limited resource and easily tires.
Weakened attention increases the stress response.**

Under threat (stress response engaged/ accelerator is on) attention is configured in 2 ways:

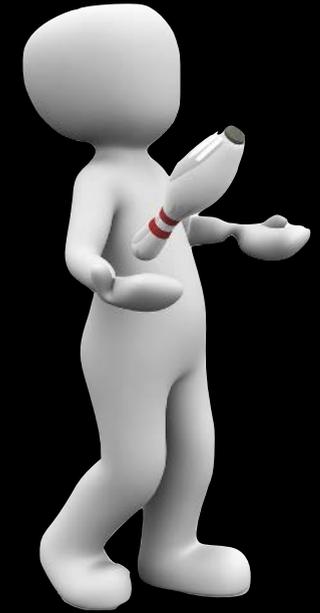
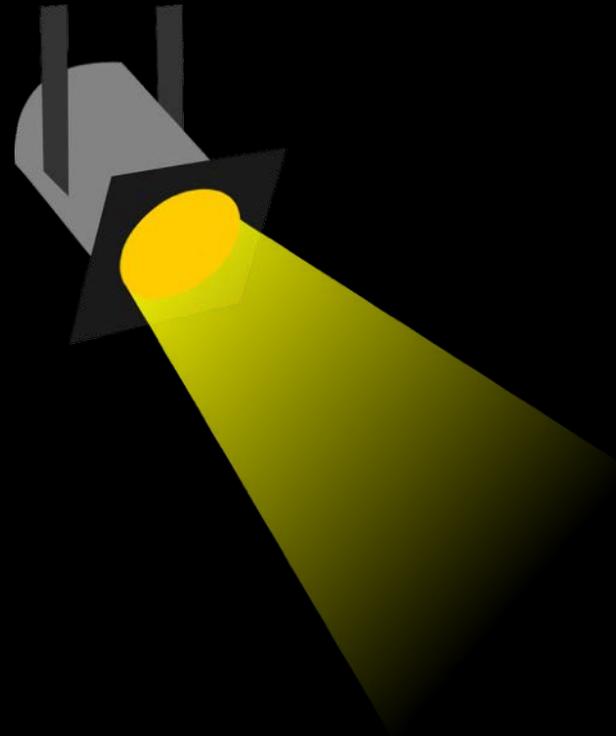
- 1. Threat vigilance increases.**
- 2. Attention becomes stimulus driven.**

4 types of weakened attention

(Amisha Jha, PhD, *Peak Mind*, 2021)

1. Depleted attention (cognitive fog)
2. Hijacked attention (anxious, worried, overwhelmed by emotions)
3. Fragmented attention (can't focus or dive into urgent work)
4. Disconnected attention (out of step and detached from others)

Transition your attention



Tips to improve our control of attention:

- 1. Pay attention to attention/ meta-awareness (find your flashlight).**
- 2. Rest your attention/take breaks.**
- 3. Set the default focus of your attention by starting each day with gratitude (1 Th. 5.16-18).**



Practice 5: Soak Your Soul

1

Biblical Insight

Jesus regularly withdrew to spend time with His Father (Mk 1.35).

2

Neuroscience Insight

Spiritual practices like prayer, meditation, contemplation, silence, etc. promote relaxation and decrease the stress response.

DON'T allow prayer to become a worry/rumination session.

3

Application

CASI:

- **C**ollaboration with God (K. Pargament, Religious coping, The Brief RCOPE)
- **A**we and wonder (worship)
- **S**abbath rest
- Reflection on your **identity** in Christ

Statio
Latin... 'standing'

Time Out App



Research indicates that silence enhances cognition and attention, promotes neurogenesis, and reduces stress.



Practice 6: Cultivate Certainty

1

Biblical Insight

Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever. (Ps 125:1)

2

Neuroscience Insight

The brain's need for certainty impacts our emotional state. When we foster certainty through faith (God and His Word is certain) we feel more secure and less anxious.

3

Application

Surrendering prayer.

Claude de la Colombiere (1641-1682).

- Trust God's infinite wisdom in uncertainty.
- Believe that God always acts for our good, even in uncertainty.
- Believe that God is in total control when we face uncertainty.



5 wonderful
grateful

Practice 7: Grow Gratitude

1

Biblical Insight

Give thanks in all circumstances.
1 Thes. 5:18

2

Neuroscience Insight

Gratitude releases positive brain chemicals such as dopamine and serotonin which in turn can ...

- enhance emotional regulation
- reduce cortisol
- mitigate negative thoughts
- promote overall mental well-being.

3

Application

Three Good Things each day.



Practice 8: Safeguard Safety

1

Biblical Insight

A cord of three strands is not quickly broken. (Ecc 4:12)

2

Neuroscience Insight

Safe relationships (biblical community) increase oxytocin (bonding molecule), lower cortisol, and increase trust.

3

Application

HEART Relationships

- Happy
- Empathetic
- Aware
- Realistic
- Trustworthy



Practice 9: Sleep Smart

1

Biblical Insight

In peace I will lie down and sleep. (Ps 4:8)

2

Neuroscience Insight

Sleep enhances emotional regulation, learning, memory, the immune response, and blood sugar levels.

3

Application

Four-Stage Sleep Box



4 Stage Sleep Box



Sleep Hygiene

1. Good sleep environment (cool, quiet, and dark).
2. Consistent sleep schedule, even on weekends (social jet lag).
3. Exercise 2-3 hours prior to bedtime.



Sleep Clock (circadian rhythm-melatonin)

1. Turn off cell phones and tablets 1-2 hours prior to bedtime.
2. Get morning sunlight outside.
3. Keep a consistent pre-bed downtime routine.



Sleep Drive/pressure (adenosine)

1. Increase daily activity.
2. Limit caffeine to mornings.
3. If needed, take only short naps (< 30 minutes prior to 2 pm/balloon).



Alertness Drive

1. Restrict bed use only for sleep & intimacy.
2. Record negative sleep thoughts and replace with positive sleep thoughts.
3. Use the 30/30 rule if you can't sleep.

The 9 Stress Resilience Practices, part 1



1. Cease and Breath

STOPP (stop, take a breath, observe, pray, proceed)



2. Reveal how You Feel

Notice, Name, and Distance



3. Broaden and Build

Keep a '**Pleasure Piggy Bank**' of positive experiences.

The 9 Stress Resilience Practices, part 2



4. Audit your Thoughts

START

(stop, take a breath, audit thoughts, reappraise, transition attention)



5. Soak Your Soul

CASI

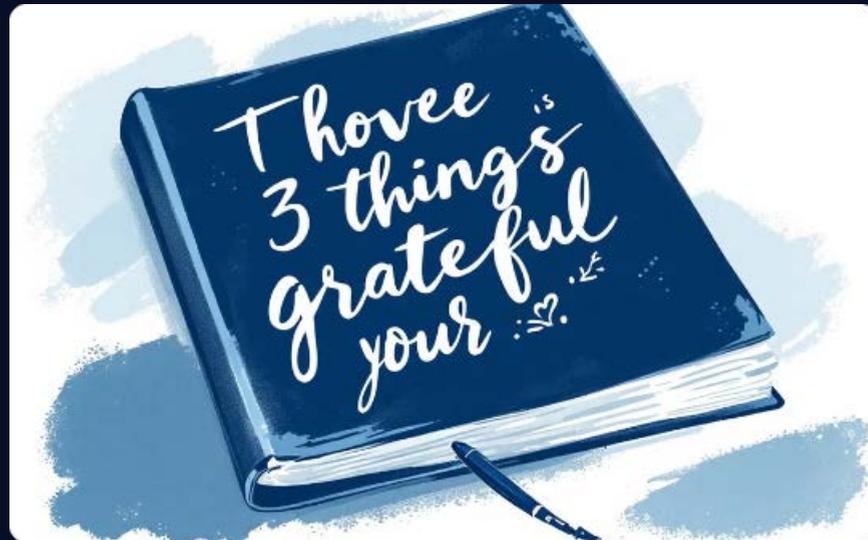
(collaboration, awe, sabbath, identity)



6. Cultivate Certainty

Surrendering Prayer

The 9 Stress Resilience Practices, part 3



7. Grow Gratitude
3 Good Things



8. Safeguard Safety
HEART relationships
(happy, empathetic, aware,
realistic, trustworthy)



9. Sleep Smart
Four-box Sleep Strategy
(sleep hygiene, sleep clock,
sleep drive, alertness drive)

9 Resilience-building Practices 🦵

Cease and Breathe



Reveal how you Feel



Broaden and Build



Audit your Thoughts



Soak your Soul



Cultivate Certainty



Grow Gratitude



Safeguard Safety



Sleep Smart



Quiz



Cease and

Reveal how you



Broaden and

Audit your



Soak your

Cultivate



Grow

Safeguard



Sleep

Ask yourself...

Which one resonates the most with you and why?



Steps to Create your 30-Day stress resilience growth plan

1. Read the book.
2. Set a specific date and time to review what you learned to create a 30-day plan.

Write down below 1-2 new insights you learned from this seminar.

☞ Record the day & time below when you will create your 30-day resilience plan.

☞ Date: _____ Time: _____ Your initials : _____

- Review your notes and the PDF of the slide deck.
 - Clarify who or what is creating the most stress in your life.
 - Apply to that situation 1-3 of the practices each week for 30 days.
3. Ask a safe friend to hold you accountable to your plan.
 4. Commit your plan to the Lord. (HANDOUT as you leave)

30-Day stress resilience growth plan Handout

30 Day Stress Resilience Growth Plan

"I will spend _____ minutes each week on _____ (day of the week)
at _____ (time) to develop my *Stress Resilience Growth Plan*



The Practice	Definition	Tool	Steps: 1. Review the practices weekly. 2. Re-read the related chapter(s) weekly. 3. Try 2-3 new tools weekly for 30 days. 4. Record your insights/experience. 5. Determine the practice(s) most helpful and build those into your routine.
 Cease and Breathe	Pause and breathe to calm your nervous system.	STOPP method: Stop, Take a breath, Observe, Pray, Proceed.	Insight/next step:
 Reveal How You Feel	Acknowledge and name your emotions.	Notice, Name, & Distance.	Insight/next step:

Free PDF of the today's slide deck.

(Pop up to sign up for my blogs)

If you think this subject might help your teams, I deliver it live and over zoom.

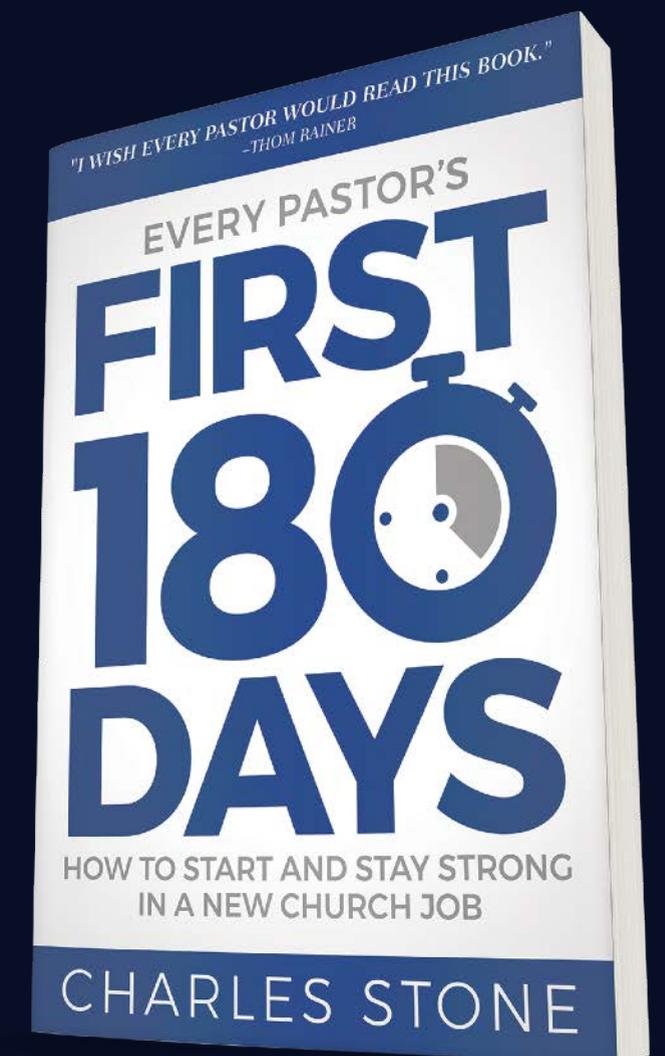
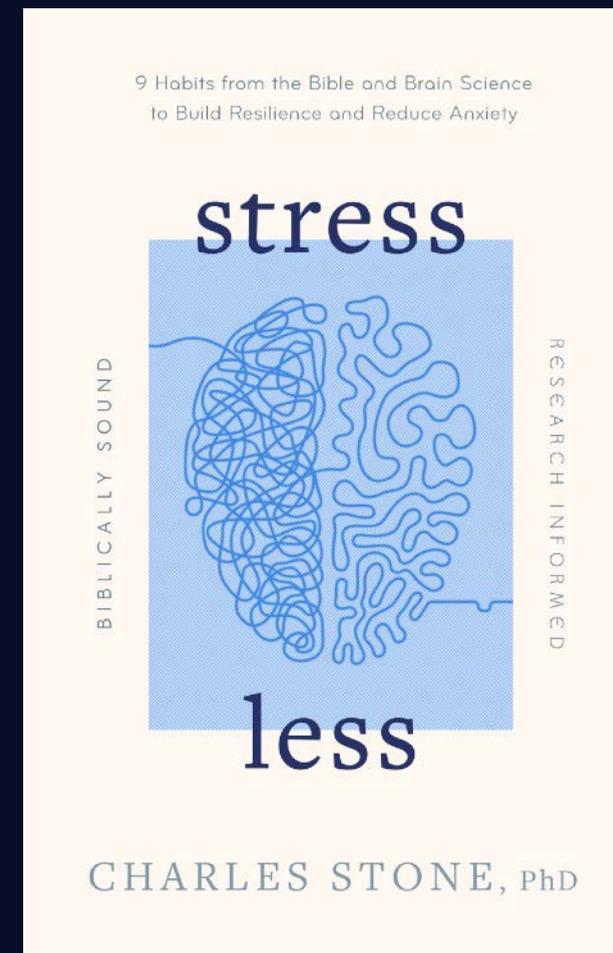
Charles@charlesstone.com



Come visit my book table.

**Look for the table
with these books.**

Give-aways.



What is your biggest take-
away from today?
Take 30 seconds to share with
the person next to you.
Open discussion.

