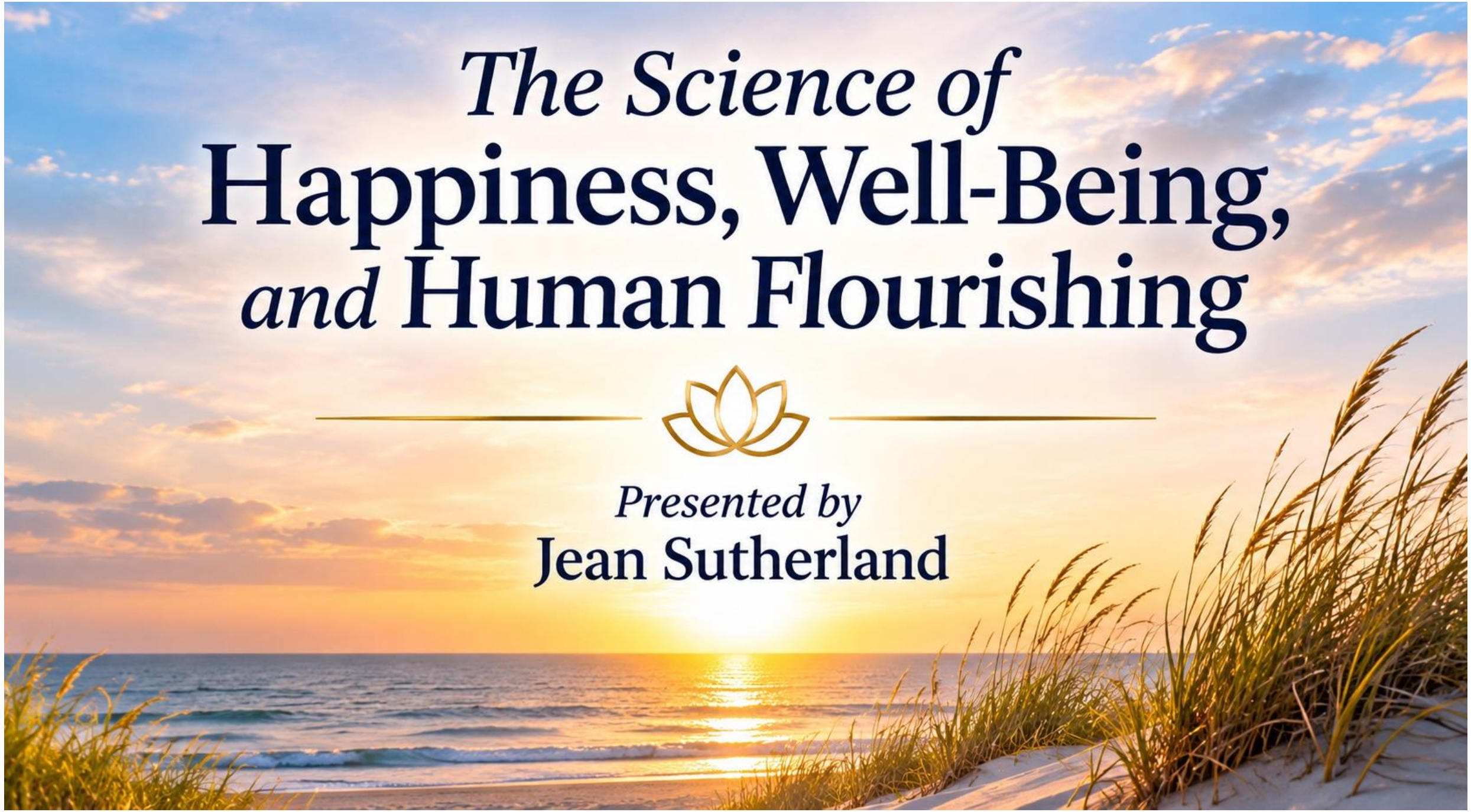

The Science of
Happiness, Well-Being,
and Human Flourishing
Presented by
Jean Sutherland

Happiness

an emotional and mental state characterized by positive feelings and a general sense of satisfaction with life.





A Common Coping Strategy

People often lock away uncomfortable emotions so they feel safer and less vulnerable.

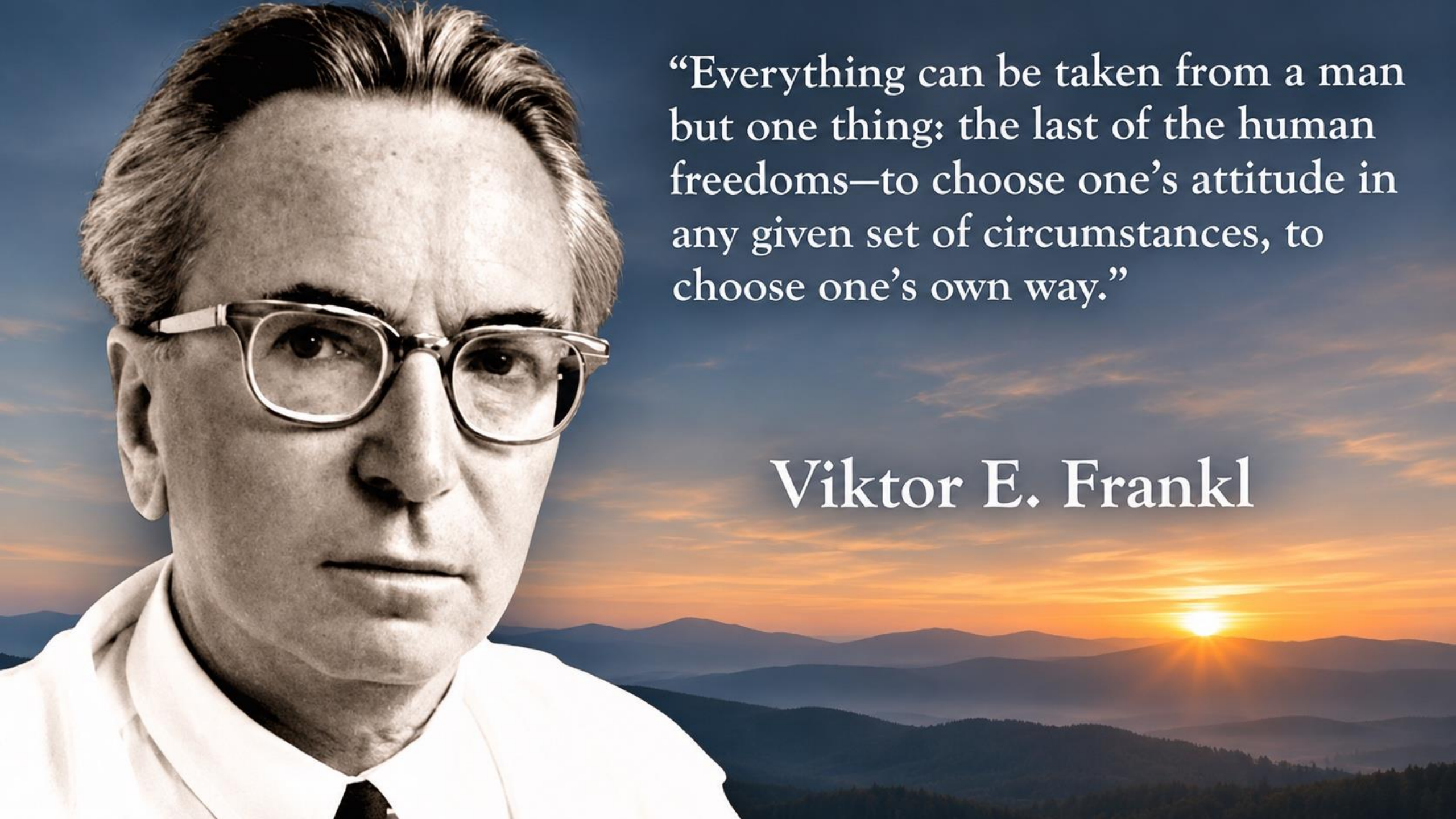
Positivity (Fredrickson, 2009)

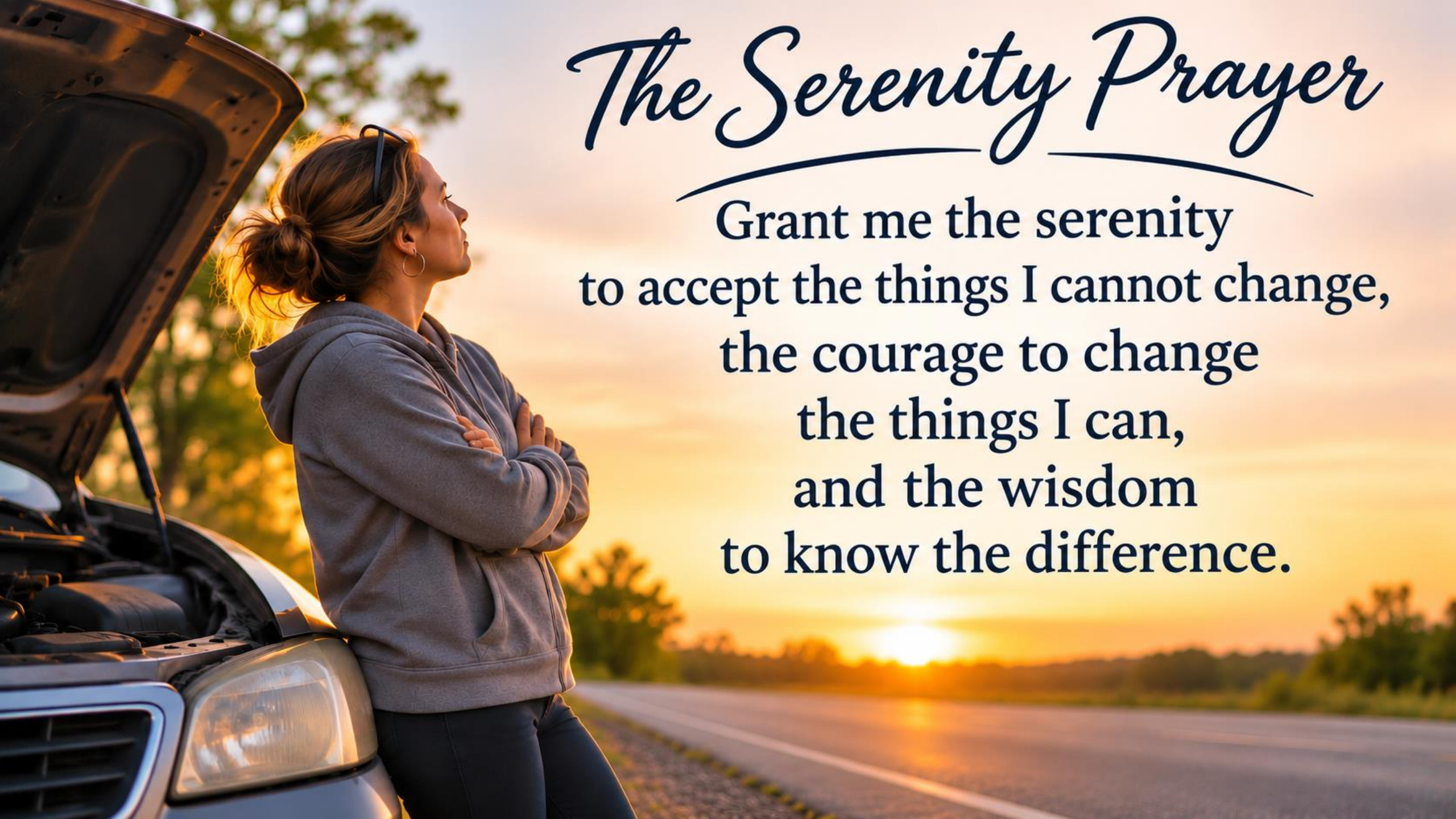
Cognitive Distortions & Automatic Negative Thoughts

1. All-or-Nothing Thinking
2. Overgeneralization
3. Mental Filtering
4. Discounting the Positive
5. Mind Reading
6. Fortune Telling
7. Catastrophizing
8. Emotional Reasoning
9. Should Statements
10. Labeling
11. Personalization
12. Blaming
13. Magnification
14. Minimization
15. Negative Predictions
16. Unfair Comparisons
17. Perfectionism
18. Self-Blame
19. Helplessness Thinking


NEGATIVE THOUGHTS
Self-Criticism
Catastrophizing
Mind Reading
All-or-Nothing
Overgeneralizing
POSITIVE THOUGHTS
Self-Compassion
Balanced Perspective
Evidence-Based Thinking
Flexibility
Hope & Optimism


Joy
Gratitude
Serenity
Interest
Hope
Pride
Amusement
Inspiration
Awe
Love


“Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way.”
Viktor E. Frankl


The Serenity Prayer
Grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change,
the courage to change
the things I can,
and the wisdom
to know the difference.

STRESS RESPONSE

FIGHT OR FLIGHT

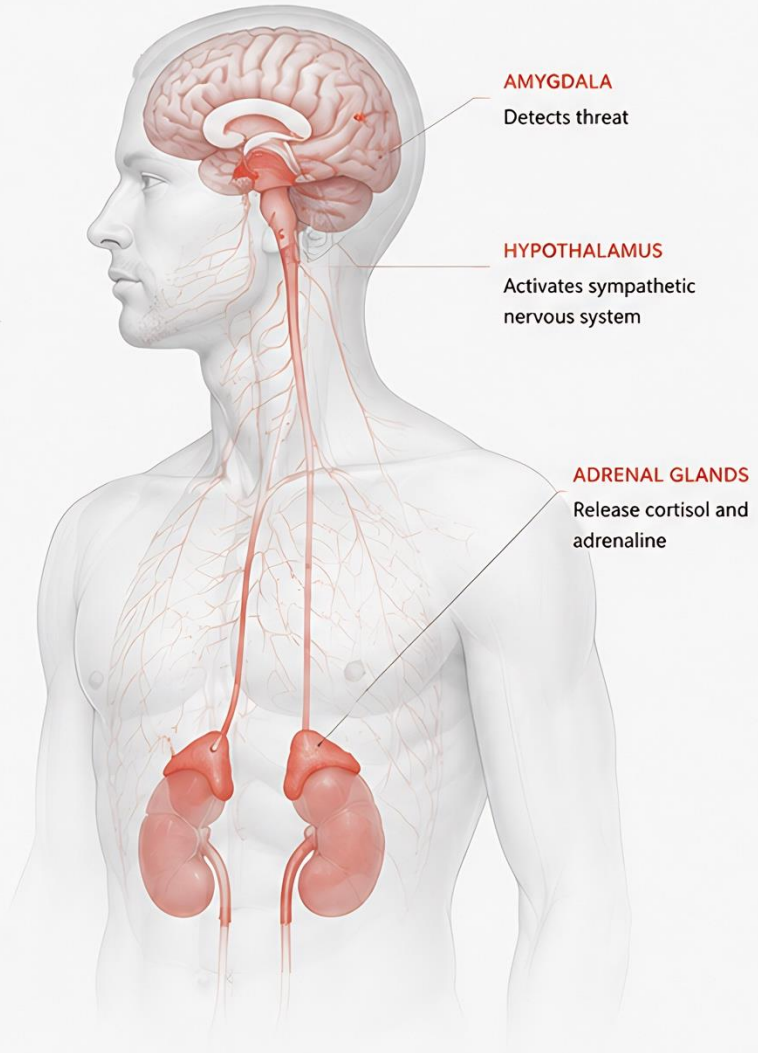
The stress response is a survival mechanism that prepares the body to react to perceived threats or danger.

SYMPTOMS

- Increased Heart Rate
- Rapid Breathing
- Muscle Tension
- Tunnel Vision
- Heightened Alertness
- Digestive Inhibition

PHYSIOLOGICAL EFFECTS

- ↑ Blood Pressure
- ↑ Heart Rate
- ↑ Cortisol Production
- ↑ Blood Glucose
- ↓ Digestive Activity
- ↓ Immune Function



THREAT DETECTED → SYMPATHETIC ACTIVATION → FIGHT OR FLIGHT
Survival Priority

vs.

RELAXATION RESPONSE

REST AND DIGEST

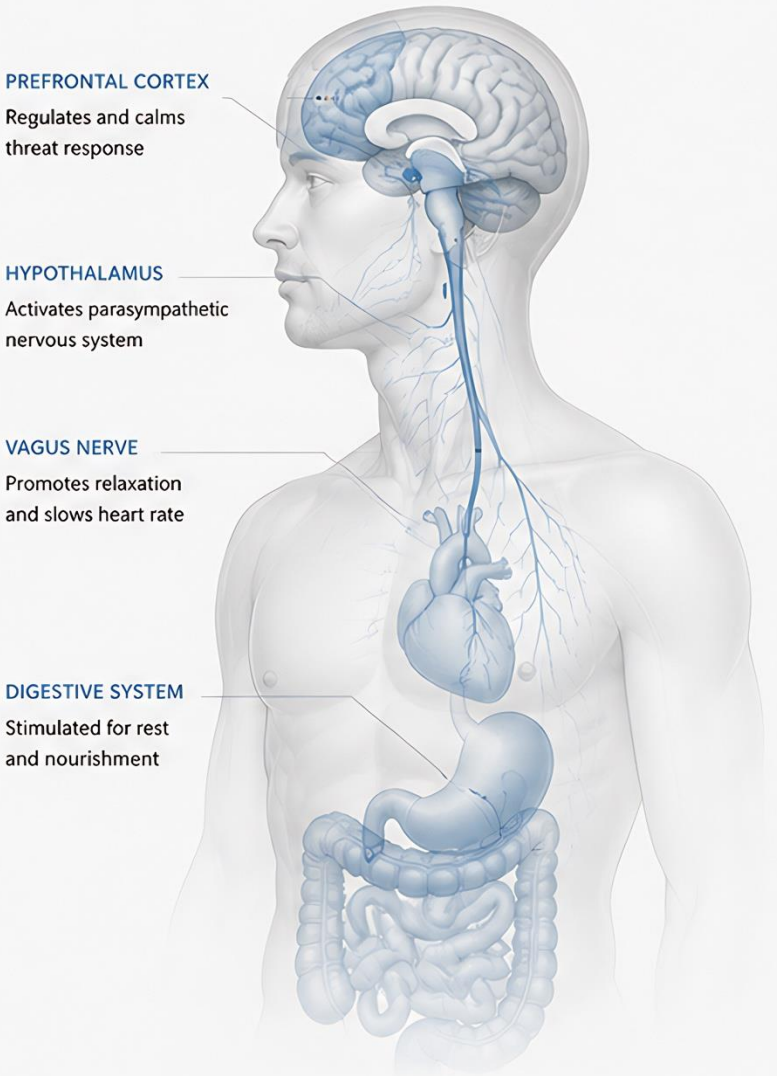
The relaxation response promotes recovery, healing, and optimal function through rest and restoration.

BENEFITS

- Decreased Heart Rate
- Slow, Deep Breathing
- Muscle Relaxation
- Mental Clarity
- Improved Immunity
- Enhanced Digestion

PHYSIOLOGICAL EFFECTS

- ↓ Blood Pressure
- ↓ Heart Rate
- ↓ Cortisol Production
- ↓ Muscle Tension
- ↑ Digestive Activity
- ↑ Immune Function



SAFETY SIGNALS → PARASYMPATHETIC ACTIVATION → REST AND DIGEST
Restoration Priority

What can you do to support your body and mind?

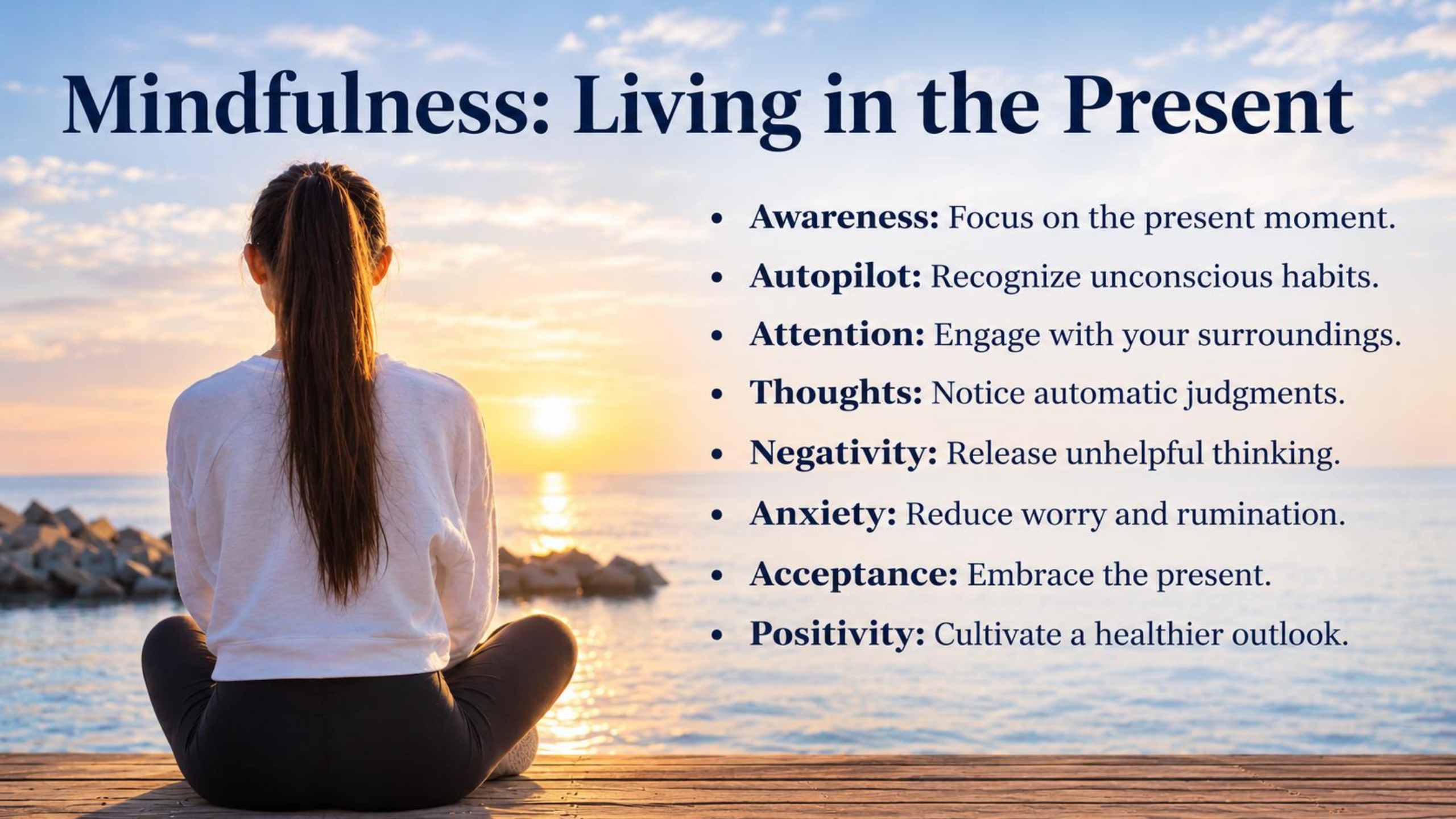
Restorative Sleep: The Foundation of Well-Being

- **7–9 hours:** Restores body and mind.
- **Sleep loss:** Impairs health and cognition.
- **Stress:** Disrupts sleep patterns.
- **Consistency:** Keep a regular sleep schedule.
- **Sunlight:** Regulates circadian rhythm.
- **Exercise:** Enhances sleep quality.
- **Avoid:** Caffeine, alcohol, and late meals.
- **Environment:** Cool, dark, and screen-free.
- **Sleeplessness:** Relax until sleepy.



Walker, M. (2017). Why we sleep

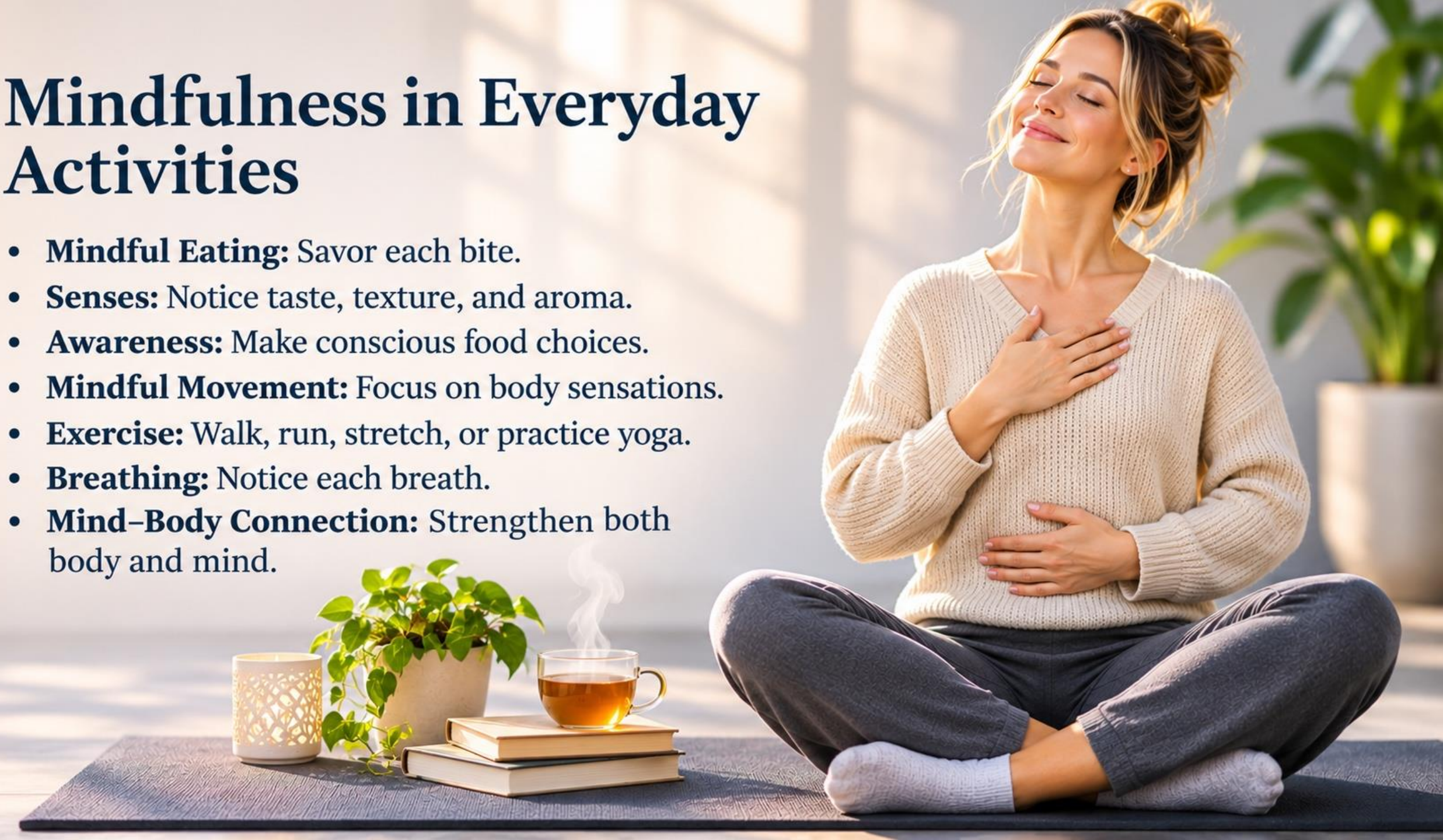
Mindfulness: Living in the Present



- **Awareness:** Focus on the present moment.
- **Autopilot:** Recognize unconscious habits.
- **Attention:** Engage with your surroundings.
- **Thoughts:** Notice automatic judgments.
- **Negativity:** Release unhelpful thinking.
- **Anxiety:** Reduce worry and rumination.
- **Acceptance:** Embrace the present.
- **Positivity:** Cultivate a healthier outlook.

Mindfulness in Everyday Activities

- **Mindful Eating:** Savor each bite.
- **Senses:** Notice taste, texture, and aroma.
- **Awareness:** Make conscious food choices.
- **Mindful Movement:** Focus on body sensations.
- **Exercise:** Walk, run, stretch, or practice yoga.
- **Breathing:** Notice each breath.
- **Mind–Body Connection:** Strengthen both body and mind.

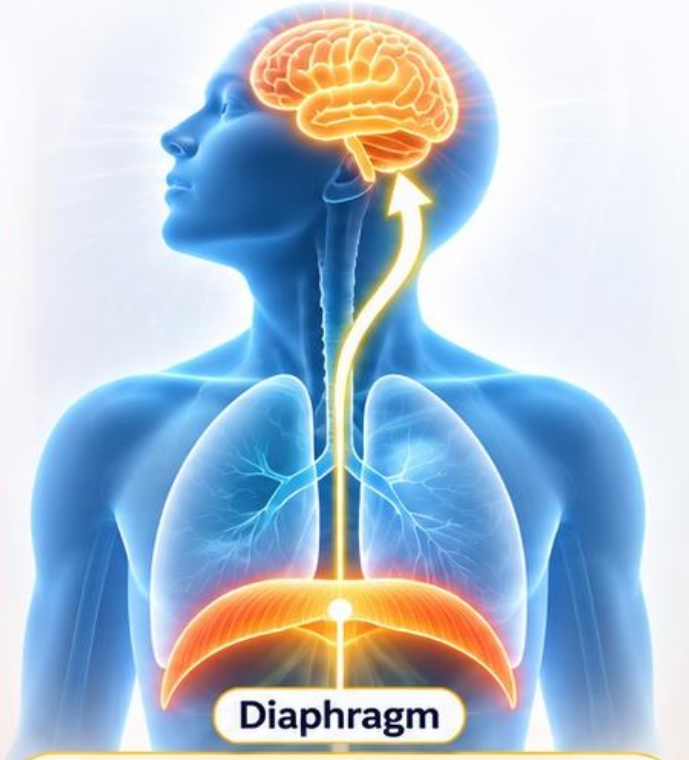


The Power of Mindful Breathing

Stress Breathing
(Chest Breathing)



- Shallow and irregular
- May hold your breath
- Incomplete exhale
- Increases stress and tension
- Limits oxygenation over time



Deep diaphragmatic breathing stretches the diaphragm and sends a relaxing signal to the brain.

Mindful Breathing
(Diaphragmatic Breathing)



- Deep and full breaths
- Moves the diaphragm
- Improves oxygen circulation
- Promotes relaxation and emotional control
- Enhances focus and mental clarity

Supports Brain Health | Increases Oxygenation | Improves Circulation | Stimulates the Lymphatic System | Reduces Stress & Tension | Enhances Focus & Clarity

Deep Breath Mini Breathing



Social Support



Emotional Support

Informational Support

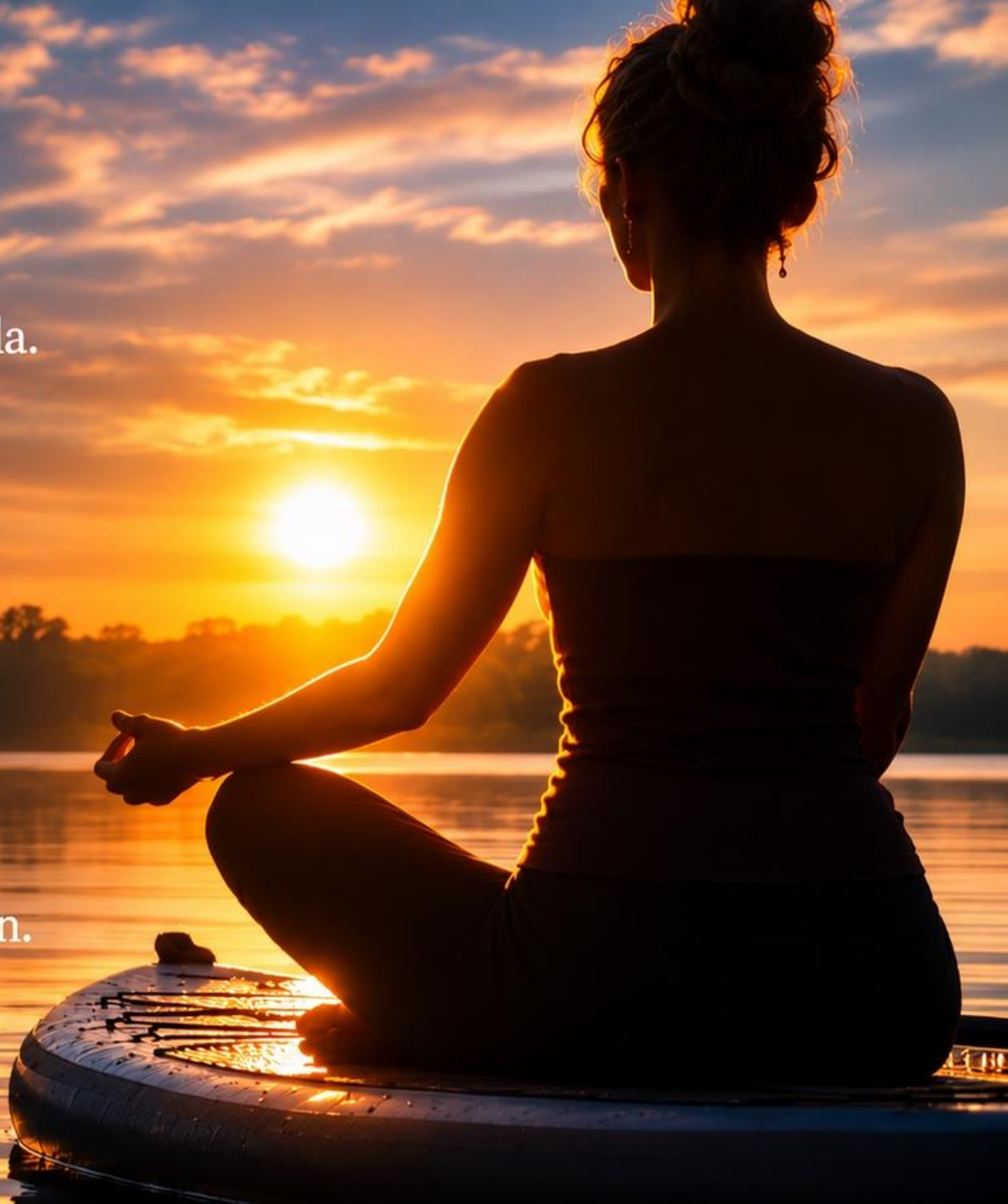
Tangible Support

Affirmational Support

Belonging Support

Meditation

- **Stress:** May lower cortisol and calm the amygdala.
- **Focus:** Improves attention and concentration.
- **Brain Health:** Supports emotional regulation.
- **Thoughts:** Reduces negative thinking.
- **Immunity:** May reduce inflammation.
- **Healthy Aging:** May support cellular health.
- **Breathing:** Begin with brief, mindful breaths.
- **Practice:** Try meditation, prayer, or visualization.



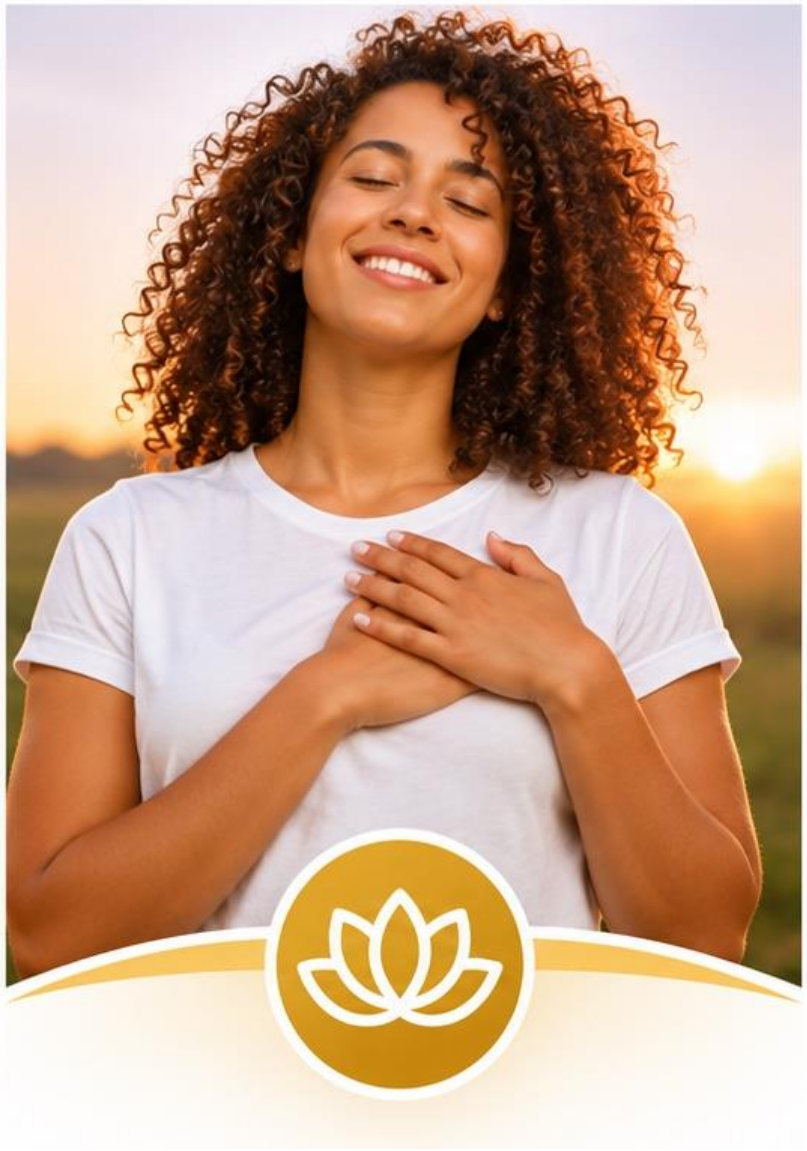


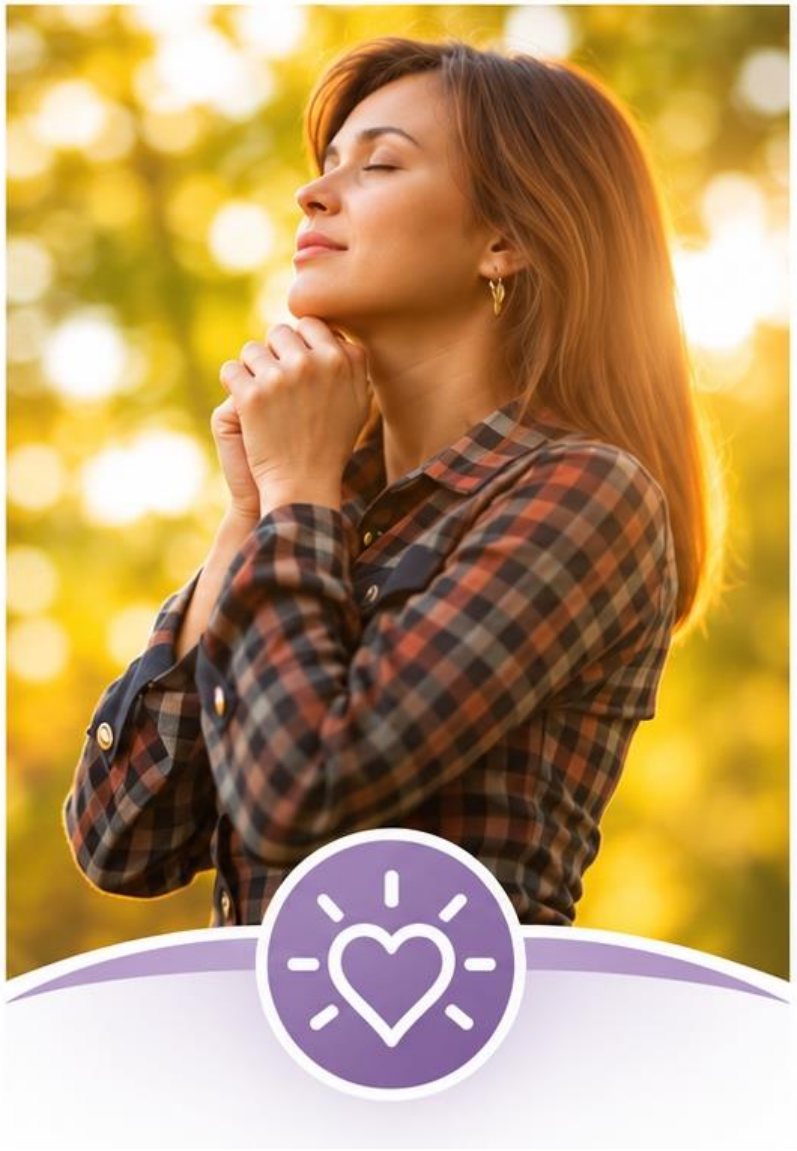
Laughter: A Natural Stress Reliever

- Strengthens social bonds.
- Promotes physical relaxation.
- May reduce pain and discomfort.
- Builds resilience.
- Eases tension and defensiveness.
- Reframes stressful situations.
- Find humor in everyday life.

Compassion, Appreciation, Gratitude








Final Thoughts