

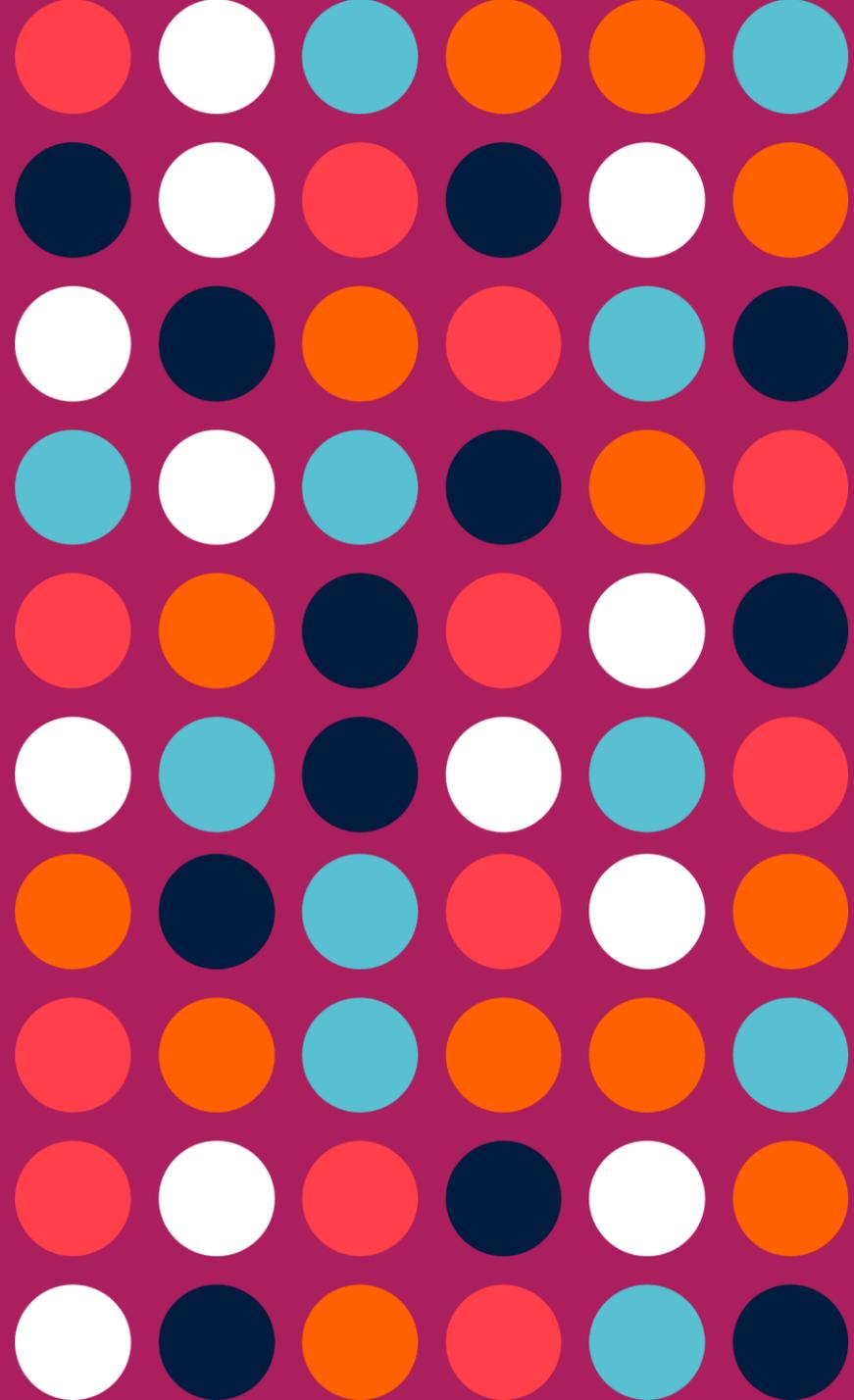
# Building Workforce Resilience: Partnering with Our Staff to Stay Healthy During Challenging Times

**Karen Johnson**

Senior Director, Change in Mind Institute

**Stacy Heltemes**

Director of Human Resources, Pillsbury United  
Communities



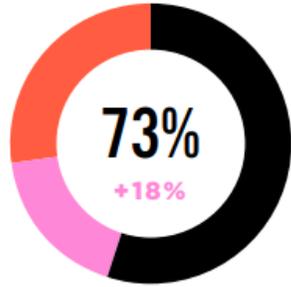
# Today's Team



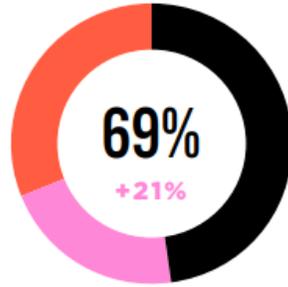
Karen Johnson



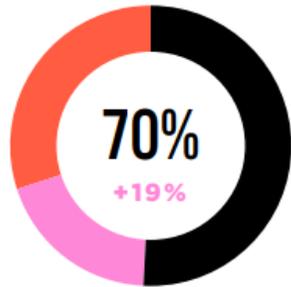
Stacy Heltemes



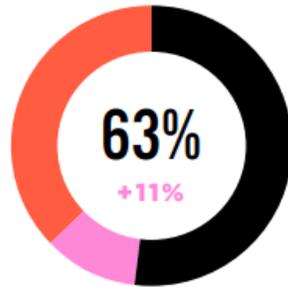
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF PURPOSE



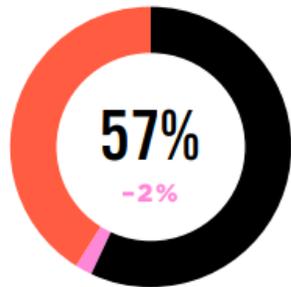
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF OPPORTUNITY



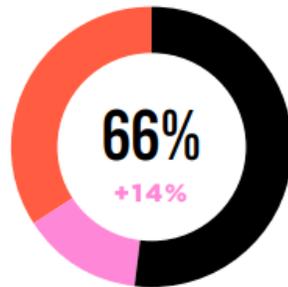
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF SUCCESS



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF APPRECIATION



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF WELLBEING



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF LEADERSHIP

*Organizations continue to deal with change and uncertainty as the pandemic subsides and the possibility of an economic recession looms*

O.C. Tanner Institute, 2023

# Staff expect leaders to ...



support work life balance

build 2 way communication

express genuine gratitude

appreciate staff

listen to challenges

focus on brain science

encourage staff input

build self-confidence

focus on the how

show empathy

teach new skills

# The Need for Community

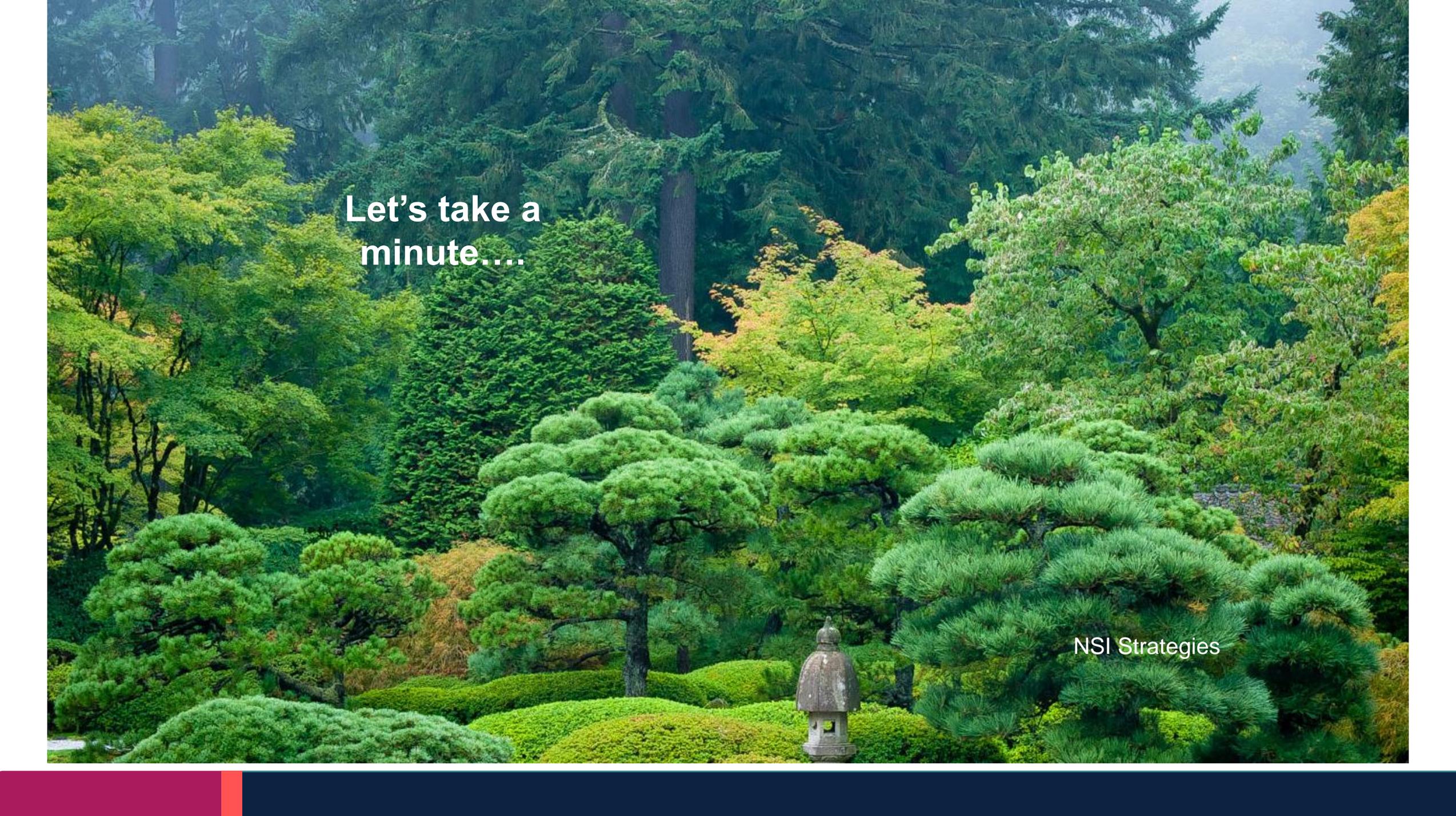


No matter how independent or introverted, humans are inherently social animals.

Organizations can create the stability, identity, and belonging we all crave by providing a stronger sense of community. This is easier said than done. Bridging gaps, repairing holes, and laying new groundwork will require deliberate planning and action.

# Today's Takeaways

- Concepts, strategies and action steps to:
  - Support brain friendly environments at work
  - Build psychological safety
  - Bring to life positive organizational culture
  - Increase connection in the workplace
- On the ground experience from Pillsbury United Communities to strengthen their workforce well-being and resilience

A lush Japanese garden scene. In the foreground, there are several meticulously pruned pine trees with dense, rounded green foliage. A small, traditional stone lantern stands in the center foreground. The middle ground is filled with a variety of trees, including some with bright yellow and orange autumn foliage. The background is dominated by tall, dark green evergreen trees, possibly cedars, under a soft, misty atmosphere. The overall scene is vibrant and serene.

Let's take a  
minute....

NSI Strategies

# Think of a time when something difficult happened at work

- What were the circumstances?
- What did you think, feel, & do?
- What was the aftermath?



# Workforce Well-Being

- **Compassion Resilience:** The ability to maintain our physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual well-being while responding compassionately to people who are suffering
- **Compassion Satisfaction:** The ability to experience pleasure from doing the work

# Four Core Concepts of Workforce Well-Being & Resilience

1. Promote brain friendly environments at work



2. Build psychological safety



3. Prioritize positive workforce culture



4. Increase connection



# Apply the EDI Lens to all 4 concepts

- Assessment to look at gaps and needs
- Training programs for all levels of staff
- Crucial conversations
- Focus on authentic relationships
- Policy and practice review and revision



# RESPONSE TO COVID

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- Extra floating holidays
- Shorter work weeks
- Redeployment of staff

Concept #1

**Promote Brain Friendly  
Environments at Work**



# Continuum of Stress



## Positive stress

*Brief* increases in heart rate  
*Mild* elevations in stress hormones  
increases in heart rate

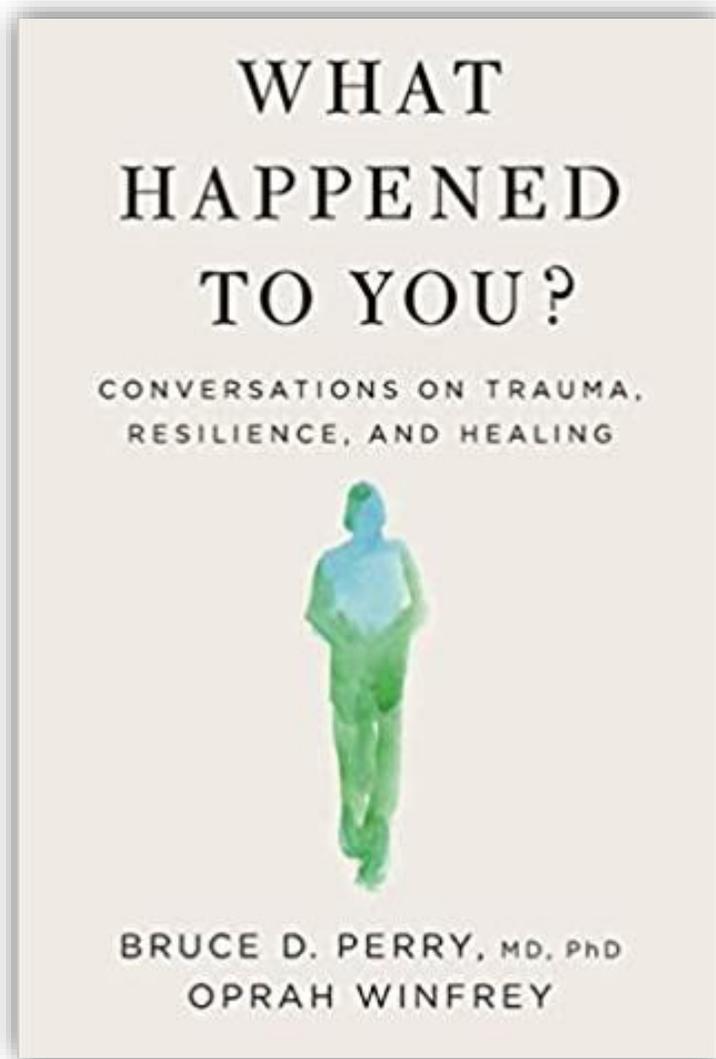
## Tolerable stress

Serious, *temporary* stress responses  
*Buffered* by supportive relationships

## Toxic stress

*Prolonged* stress response activation  
*Absence* of protective relationships

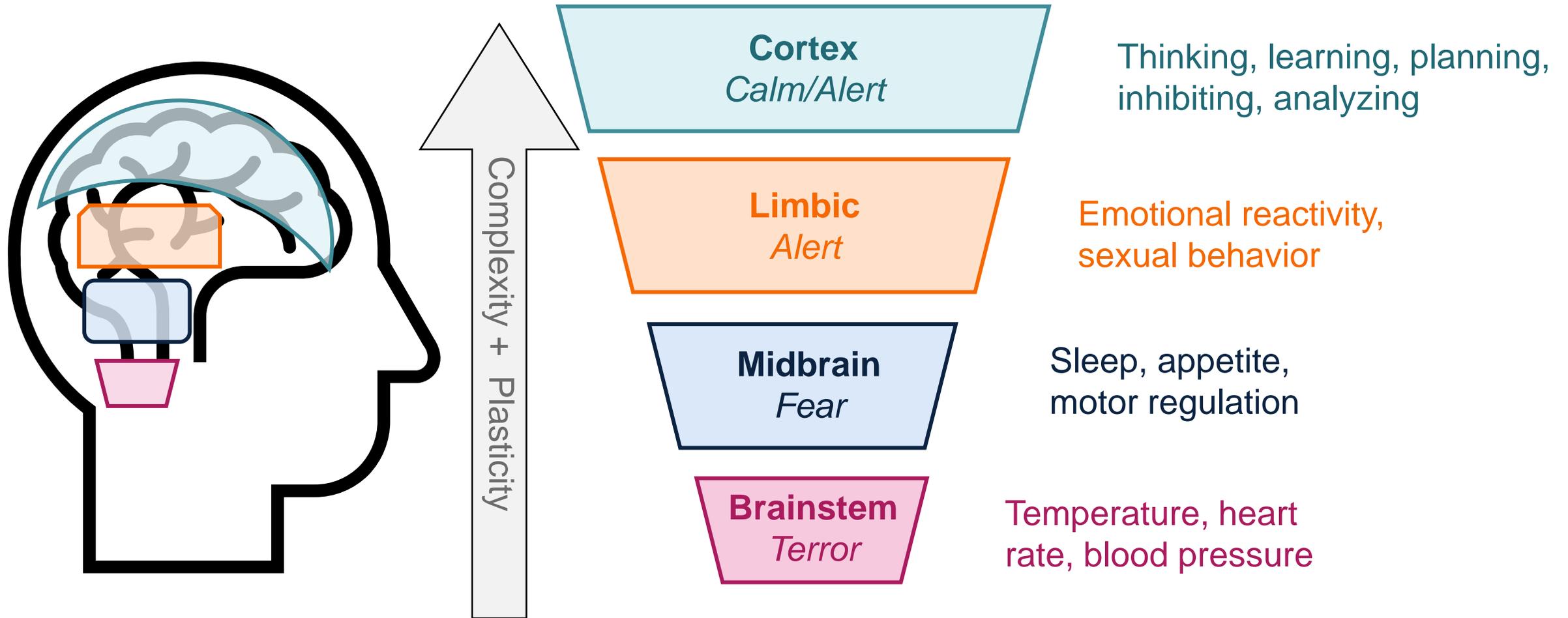
Aces Aware, 2020



*“...a brain aware  
perspective helps  
me when I’m trying  
to understand  
people.”*

*Dr. Bruce D. Perry*

# Basic Brain Structure



# Arousal Continuum

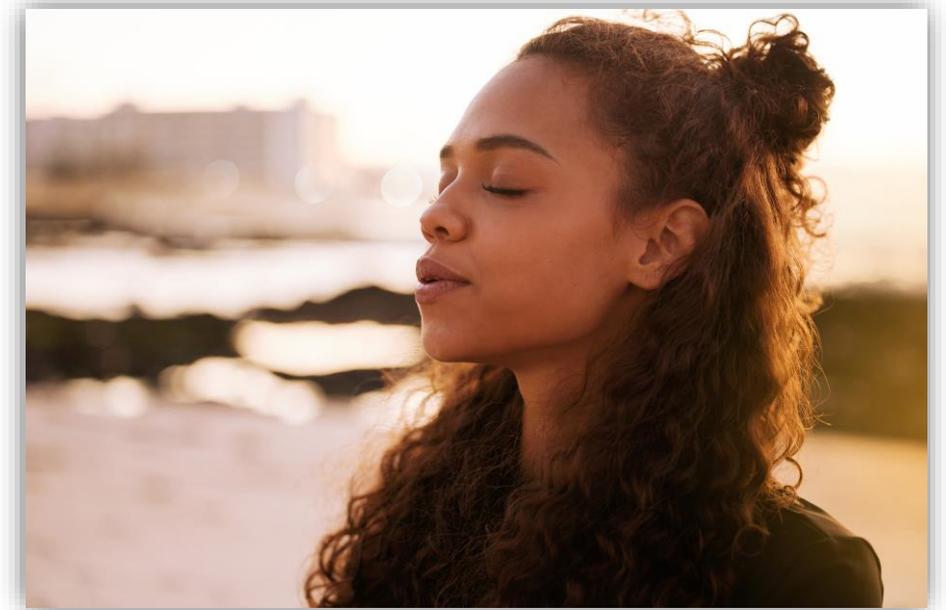
<i>Internal State</i>	CALM	ALERT	ALARM	FEAR	TERROR
<i>Dominant Brain Areas</i>	CORTEX	CORTEX (Limbic)	LIMBIC (Diencephalon)	DIENCEPHALON (Brainstem)	BRAINSTEM
<i>Adaptive "option" Arousal</i>	REFLECT (create)	FLOCK (hypervigilance)	FREEZE (resistance)	FLIGHT (defiance)	FIGHT
<i>Adaptive "option" Dissociation</i>	REFLECT (daydream)	AVOID	COMPLY	DISSOCIATE	FAINT
<i>Cognition</i>	ABSTRACT (creative)	CONCRETE (routine)	EMOTIONAL	REACTIVE	REFLEXIVE
<i>Functional IQ</i>	120-100	110-90	100-80	90-70	80-60

# Regulation

The basic strategy for quieting our lower brain

*“**Regulation** gives us the ability to put time and thought between a feeling and an action.”*

-Dr. Bruce D. Perry



# Three ways to regulate

## **Top down – use our cortex**

Purposeful pause

Mindfulness

Journaling

Mantras – “This will not last forever”

## **Bottom up: somatosensory, rhythmic, repetitive interventions**

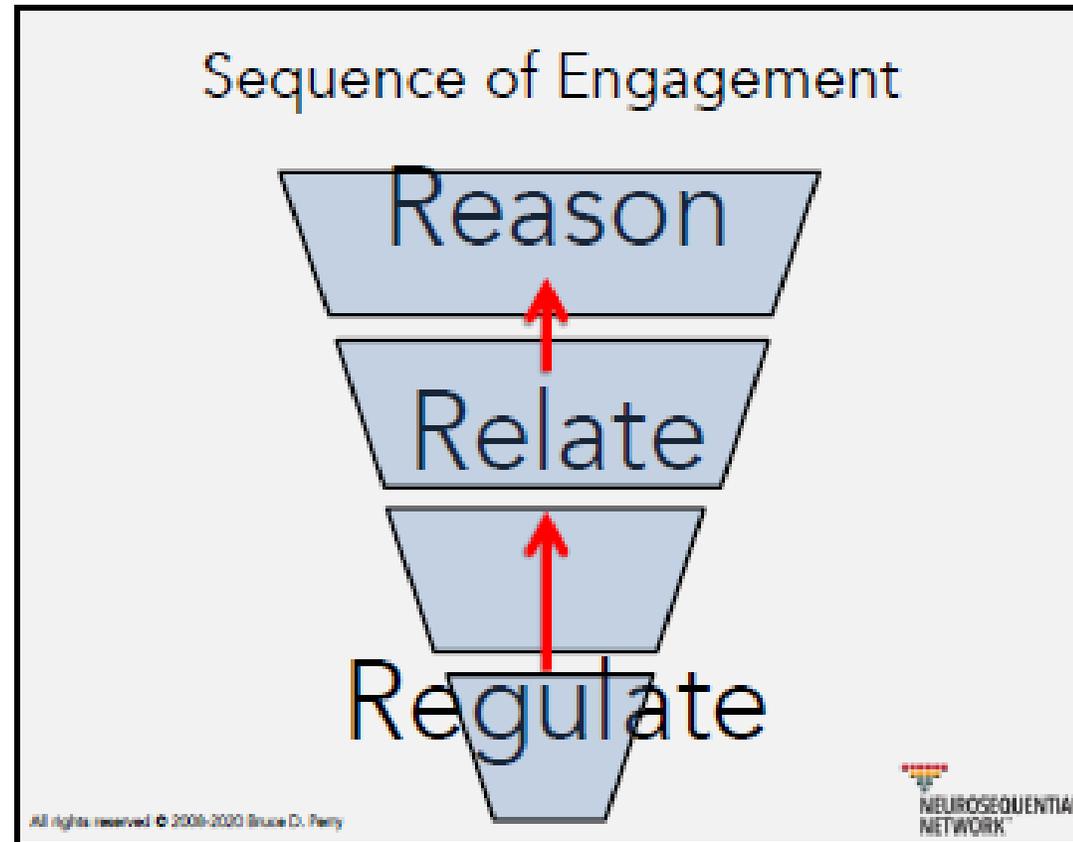
Walking and other exercise

Focused breathing

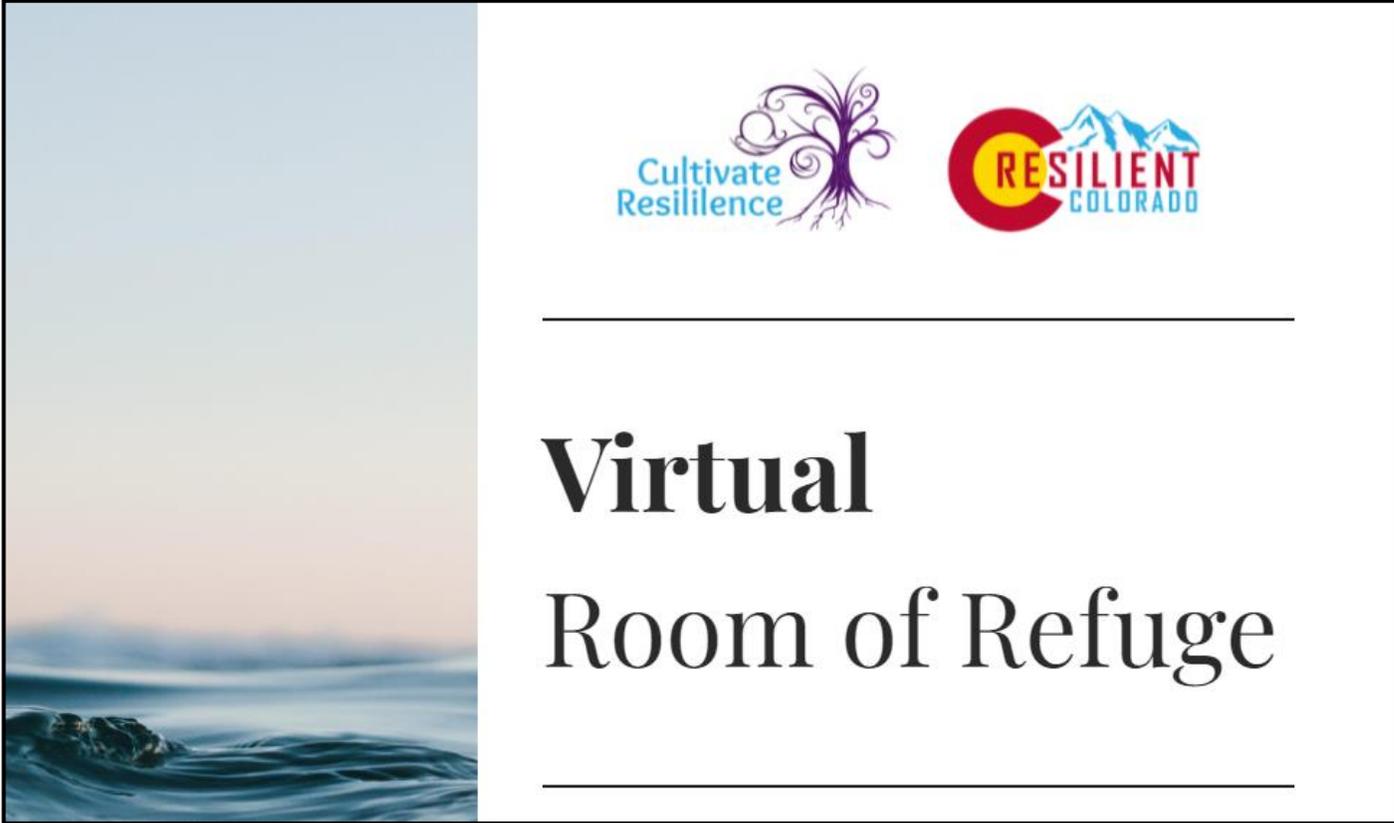
Music

## **In connections with other people**

# Regulate, Relate, Reason



# Regulation Resource



The graphic features a vertical image of ocean waves on the left side. To the right, there are two logos: 'Cultivate Resilience' with a purple tree icon and 'RESILIENT COLORADO' with a red and yellow circular icon and mountain peaks. Below the logos is a horizontal line, followed by the text 'Virtual Room of Refuge' in a large serif font, and another horizontal line below it.

<https://cultivate-resilience.org/virtual-room-of-refuge>

# BRAIN FRIENDLY CULTURE

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- Breathing & connection exercises before staff meetings
- Regular check-ins

Concept #2

# Build Psychological Safety



# Psychological Safety



- Climate in which people are comfortable expressing and being themselves
- ***Not*** freedom from accountability or always feeling comfortable

# It's ok to ...



What are some of the “what if”  
fears that come up?

# Leader's Toolkit

Category	Setting the Stage	Inviting Participation	Responding Productively
Leadership tasks	<p><b>Frame the Work</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Set expectations about failure, uncertainty and interdependence</li> </ul> <p><b>Emphasis Purpose</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify what's at stake, why it matters, and for whom</li> </ul>	<p><b>Demonstrate Situational Humility</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acknowledge gaps</li> </ul> <p><b>Practice Inquiry</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ask good questions</li> <li>Model intense listening</li> </ul> <p><b>Set up Structures and Processes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create forums for input</li> <li>Provide guidelines for discussion</li> </ul>	<p><b>Express Appreciation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Listen</li> <li>Acknowledge and thank</li> </ul> <p><b>Destigmatize Failure</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Look forward</li> <li>Offer help</li> <li>Discuss, consider and brainstorm next steps</li> </ul> <p><b>Sanction Clean Violations</b></p>
Accomplishes	Shared expectations and meaning	Confidence that voice is welcome	Orientation towards continuous learning

# Measuring Psychological Safety

1. If you make a mistake on this team, it is often held against you. (R)
2. Members of this team are able to bring up problems and tough issues.
3. People on this team sometimes reject others for being different. (R)
4. It is safe to take a risk on this team.
5. It is difficult to ask other members of this team for help. (R)
6. No one on this team would deliberately act in a way that undermines my efforts.
7. Working with members of this team, my unique skills and talents are valued and utilized.

# Psychological Safety

*Think back to your difficult work event.  
How was psychological safety at play?*

- Did you feel safe to talk with people about it?
- What are some of the “what if” fears that came up?

# PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

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- On-going conversations related to the impact of recent events
- Agency wide day off
- Virtual space to come together

Concept #3

**Prioritize Positive  
Workforce Culture**



# Staff Culture



What do you want to be able to say about the culture of the staff in your organization?

<https://compassionresiliencetoolkit.org/>

# Living Into our Values

*“We can’t live into values that we can’t name AND, living into values requires moving from lofty aspirations to specific, observable behaviors.”* Brene Brown



# Intrepid

**Spirited, Adventurous, Brave,  
Resolute**

Disrupts the status quo of systemic  
hate, apathy, and bias

- 1. I choose** courage over comfort when facing difficult situations and conversations.
- 2. I am clear and confident** in my communication.
- 3. I create** an environment where it is safe to take risks.
- 4. I ask** for help when I need it.

# Staff Culture

*Think back to your difficult work event.*

How did your organizational culture and norms impact this situation?

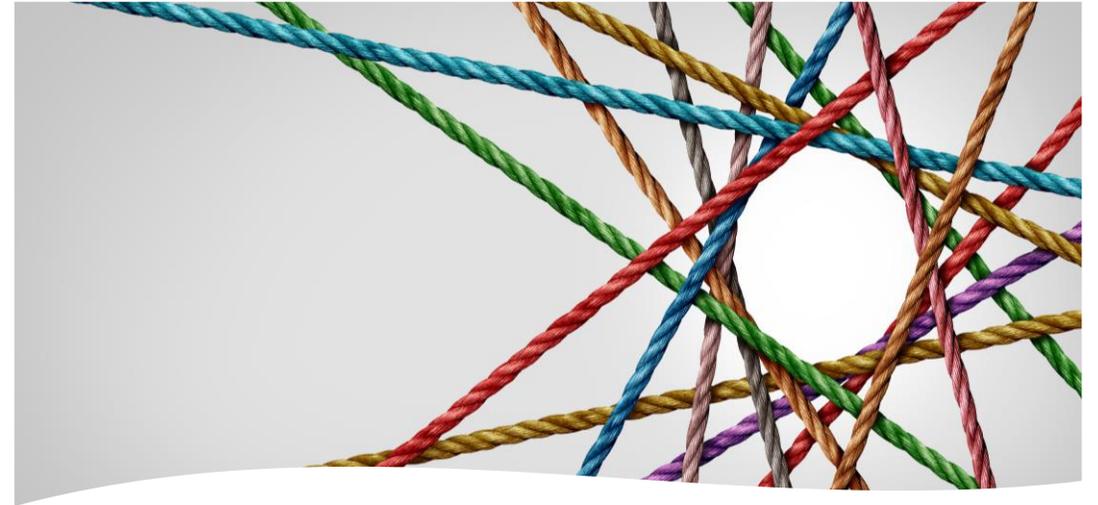
# POSITIVE WORKFORCE CULTURE

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- Updated job architecture
  - Unified job descriptions
  - Performance review process
  - Goal-setting
- Living our values
- Changes to our benefits

Concept #4

**Increase Connection**



# Connection

*“I define connection as the energy that exists between people when they feel seen, heard and valued; when they can give and receive without judgement; and when they derive sustenance and strength from the relationship.” -Brene Brown*

Increased odds  
an organization  
will thrive when  
employees feel  
connected

O.C. Tanner Institute, 2022



# What can we do to connect?



- Check in often with staff
- Build capacity of managers
- Offer one on ones between leaders and staff
- Build peer mentors
- Embrace recognition
- Formalize discussions around mental health & EDI
- Find shared purpose
- Foster cross-functional connections
- Promote individualize preferences for connection

# Importance of Connection



*Think back to your difficult work event.*

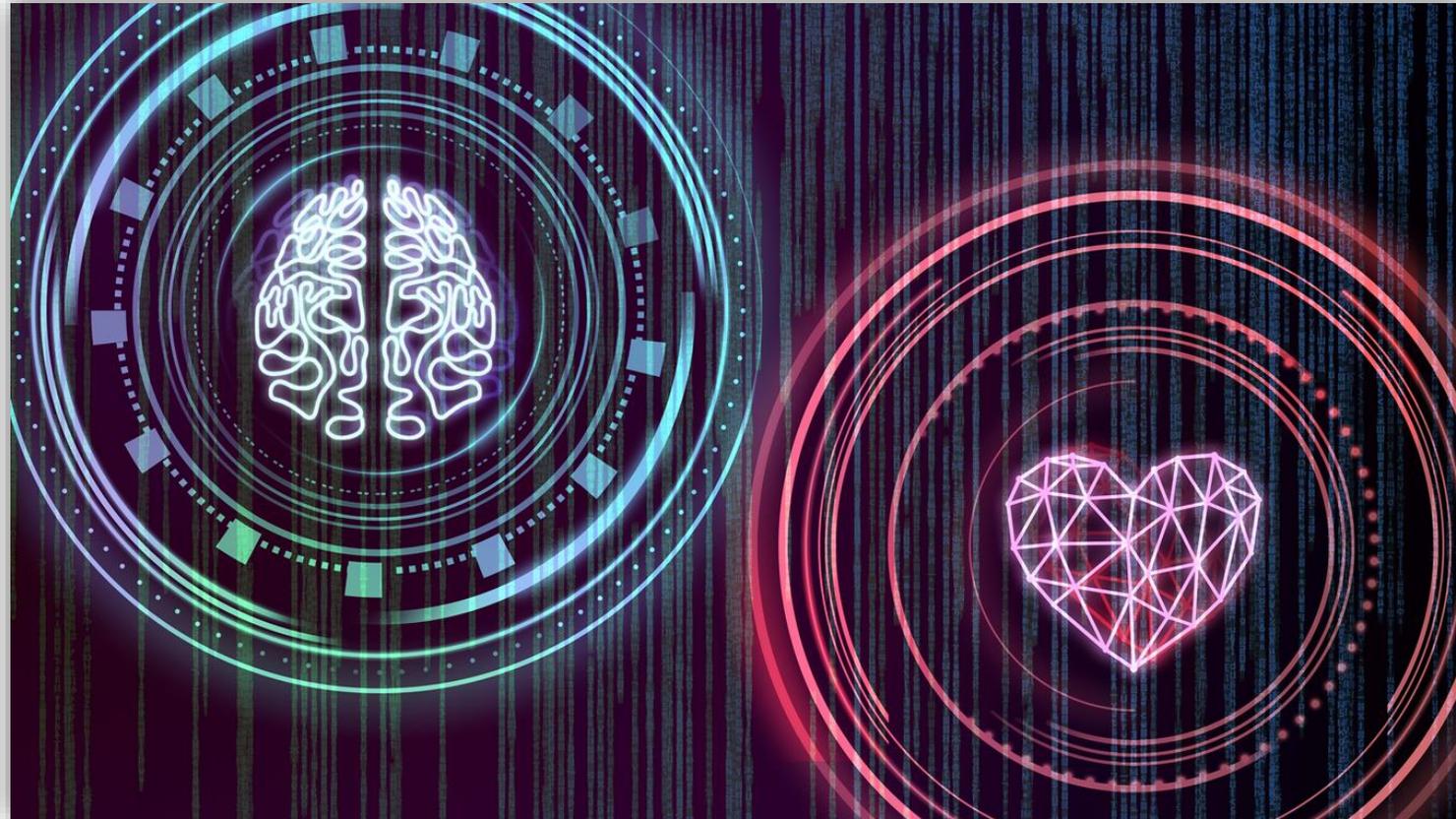
- How might have increased connection prevented this situation?
- How did connection help you recover from the incident?

# CONNECTION

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- Prioritizing connecting staff to each other and to resources
- Agency tours
- Lunch with Executive Leadership

# Both mind and heart...



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