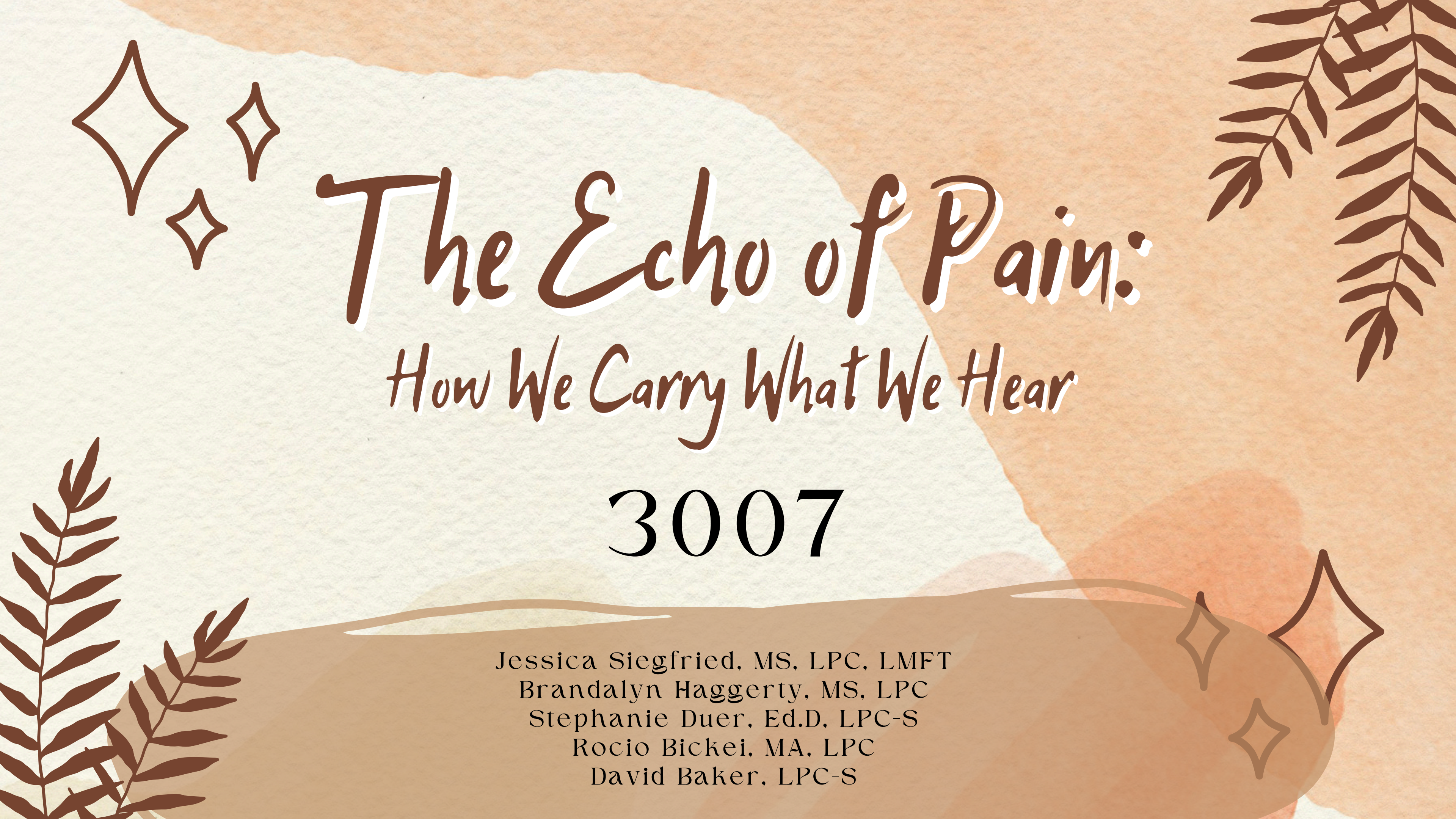




The Echo of Pain:

How We Carry What We Hear

3007

Jessica Siegfried, MS, LPC, LMFT
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INTRODUCTIONS



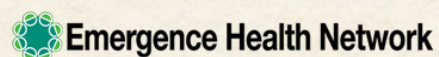
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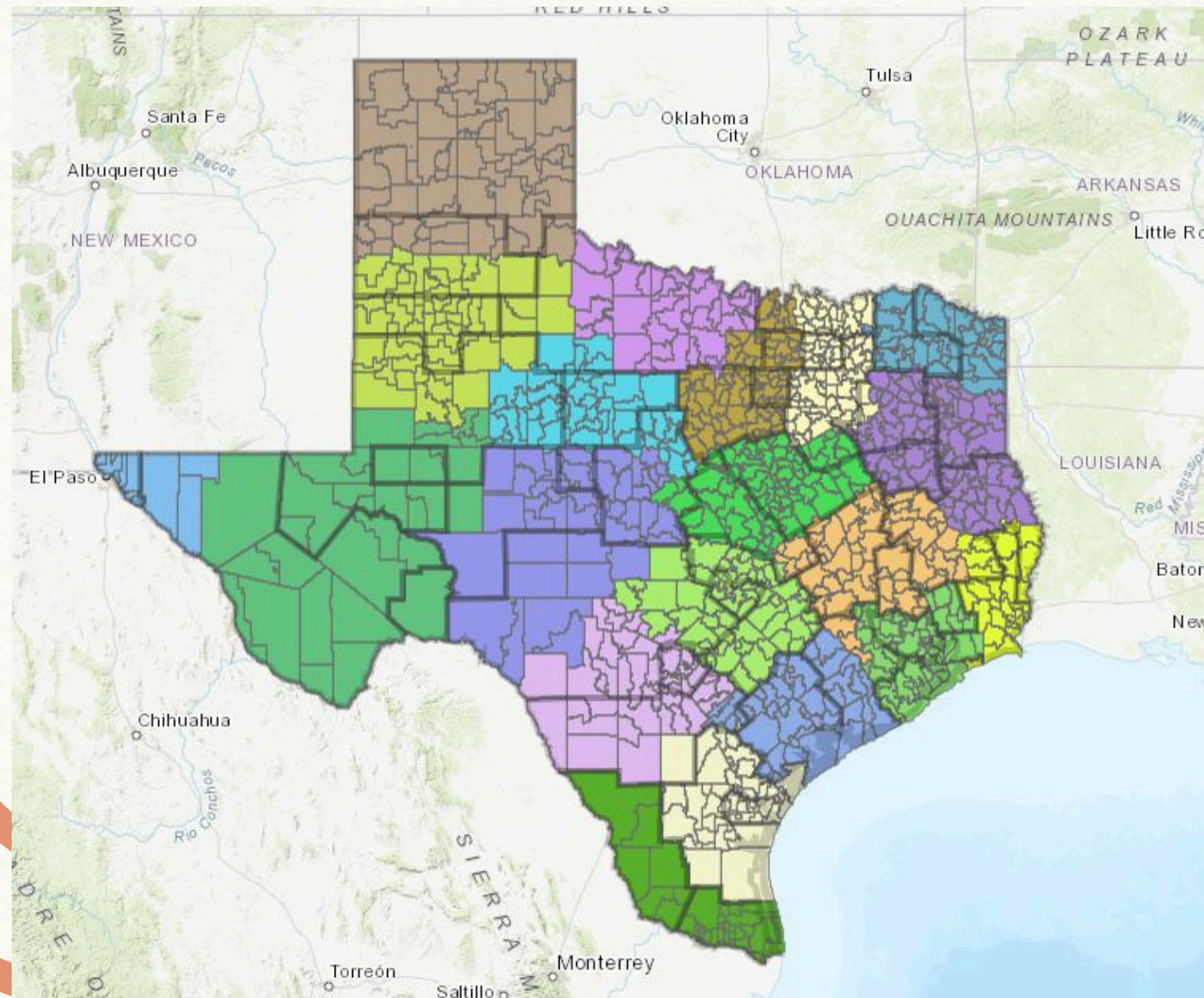


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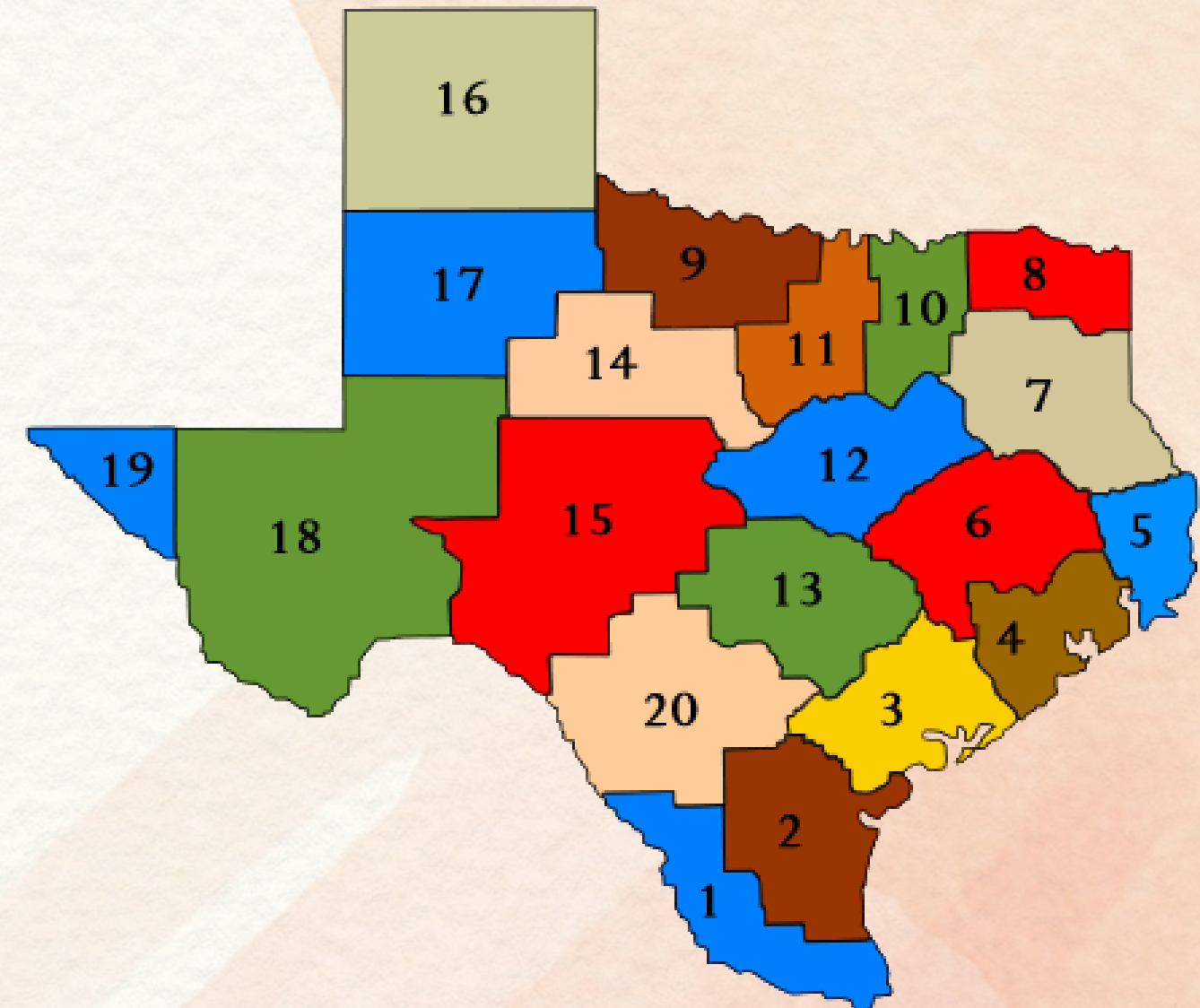


LOCATING YOUR BHPP

TX Community Mental Health Centers,
Education Service Centers, and Public School
District



Education Service Centers Map



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Identify the signs and symptoms of vicarious trauma and differentiate it from burnout and compassion fatigue.

Describe how repeated exposure to others' trauma affects the brain, body, and emotional regulation systems.

Implement individualized and team-based strategies to prevent, reduce, and recover from vicarious trauma.



DEFINITIONS

Burnout

Workplace and System Stress

Vicarious Trauma

Internal Transformation

Compassion Fatigue

Emotional Exhaustion

Secondary Trauma

Indirect trauma

TOLL OF TRAUMA

Secondary Traumatic Stress

Stress from indirect trauma exposure



Compassion Fatigue

Diminished empathy and emotional exhaustion



Emotional Burden

Accumulated stress and psychological weight



Personal Life Impact

Effects on personal well-being and relationships

Burnout

Exhaustion from prolonged work stress



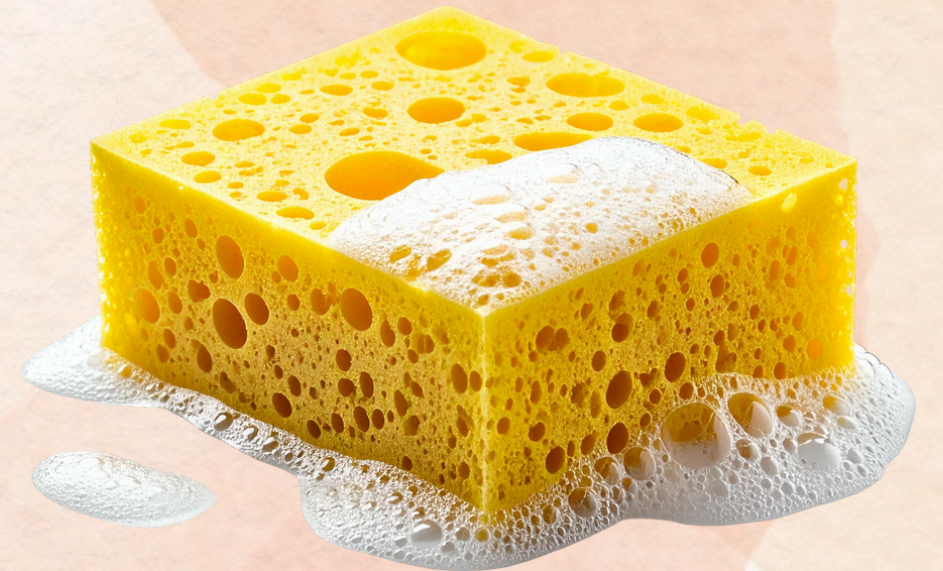
Professional Quality of Life

Impact on job satisfaction and performance



REFLECTION

If the emotional weight of your work had a physical form, what would it look like today?



REFLECTION

What is something about this work that tends to stay with you after hours?

Feeling responsible for outcomes

Emotional numbness

Conversations replaying at night

Hypervigilance

Difficulty 'turning work off'



WHICH IS IT?

Vicarious Trauma, Burnout, or Compassion Fatigue?



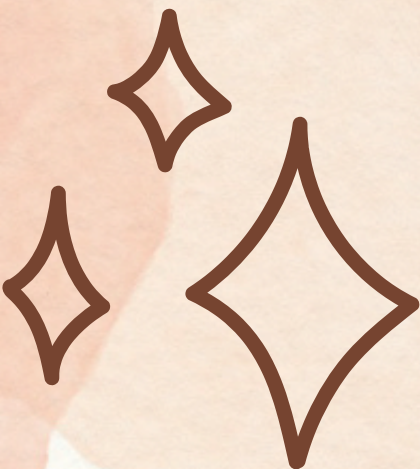
I dread going to work because my caseload is overwhelming and I feel unsupported by my organization.



I feel detached from my clients and sometimes wonder if I'm making any difference at all.



I keep thinking about a client's trauma story even when I'm at home. It's hard to turn it off.



COMMON SIGNS OF VICARIOUS TRAUMA



Intrusive
Thoughts or
Images



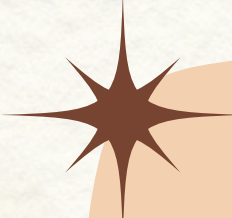
Emotional
Numbing or
Detachment



Cynicism or
Negative
Worldview



Sleep
Disturbances
or Difficulty
Concentrating



Hypervigilance
or Boundary
Challenges



Irritability,
Anger or
Increased
Anxiety or Fear

THE BRAIN ON TRAUMA

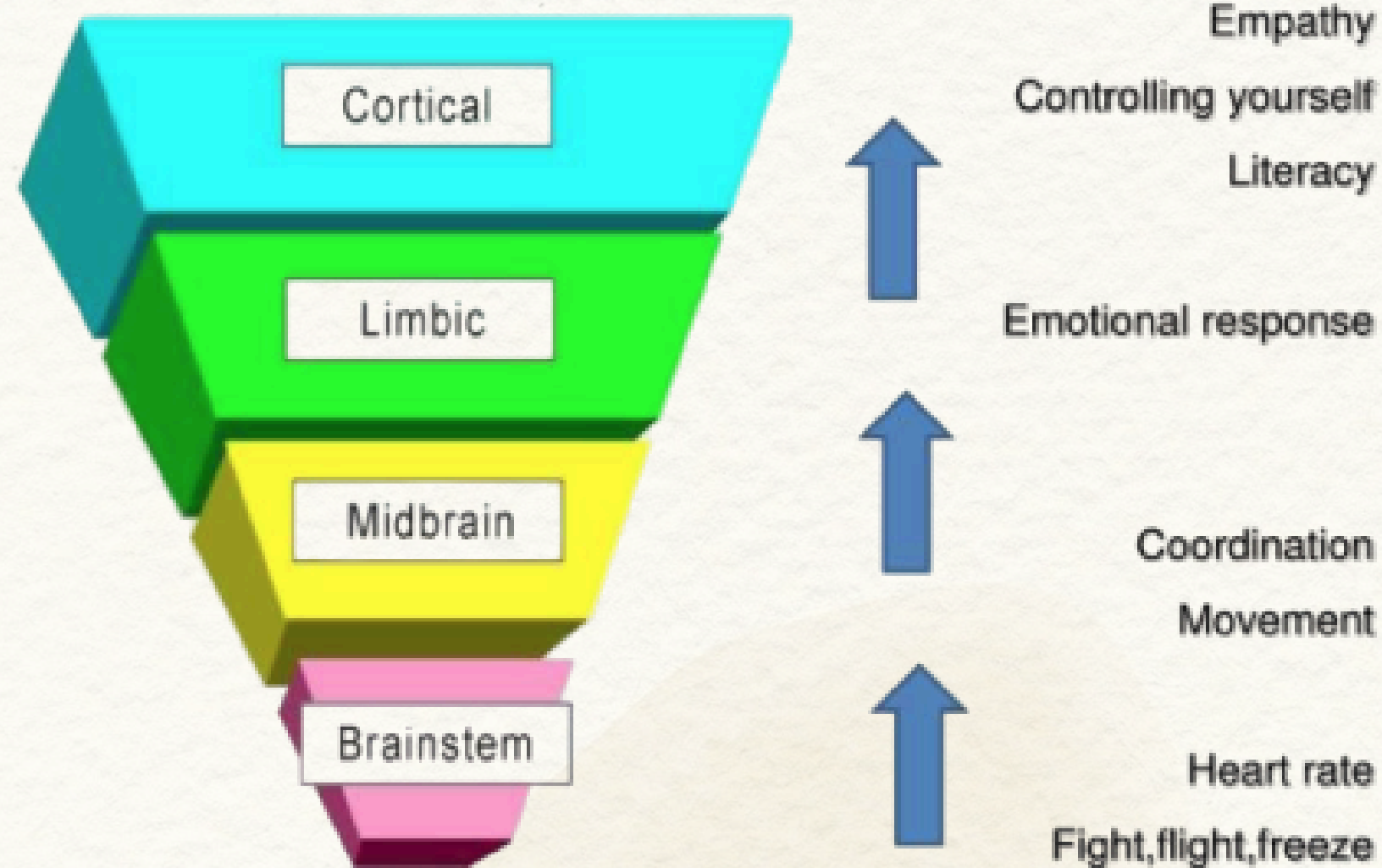
What does
that look
like?

What does
that mean
for us as
providers?

Why should
we care?

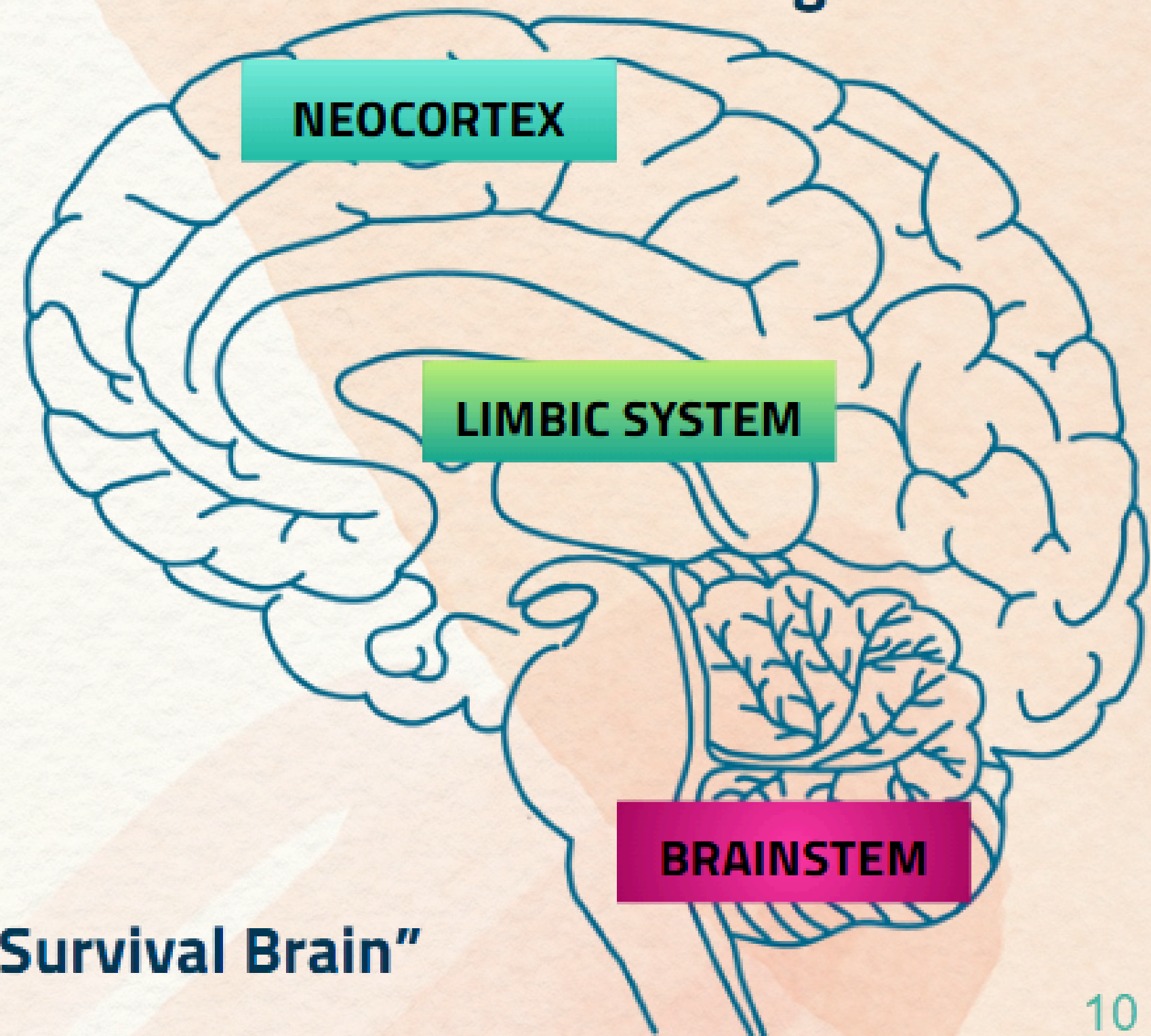
THE BRAIN ON TRAUMA

Perry's Neurosequential Model



Perry, B.D. (2002). *Brain Structure and Function I: Basics of Organisation*. Adapted in part from "Maltreated Children: Experience, Brain Development and the Next Generation" (W.W. Norton & Company).

"Thinking Brain"



"Survival Brain"

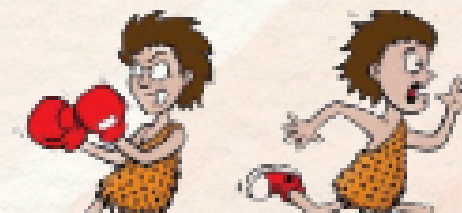
The Stress Response System



"Thinking Brain"



"Survival Brain"



SURPRISING CONSEQUENCES OF VICARIOUS TRAUMA



IMPACT OF VICARIOUS TRAUMA ON PRACTICE

Impact

- Reduced empathy or emotional numbing
- Over-identification with clients
- Difficulty maintaining objectivity
- Increased reactivity in sessions

Functioning

- Decreased concentration and decision-making
- Avoidance of certain cases or topics
- Documentation fatigue or errors
- Reduced sense of effectiveness

Boundaries

- Blurring of professional boundaries
- Taking work home mentally/emotionally
- Difficulty “turning off” after sessions
- Overextending or rescuing behaviors

IMPACT OF VICARIOUS TRAUMA ON LIFE OUTSIDE OF WORK

Emotional Impact

- Irritability or mood swings
- Emotional withdrawal or numbness
- Increased anxiety or fear
- Persistent sadness or heaviness

Relationships

- Reduced patience with loved ones
- Feeling disconnected or isolated
- Difficulty being fully present
- Conflict or misunderstandings

Worldview & Identity

- Increased sense that the world is unsafe
- Loss of trust in others
- Questioning meaning, purpose, or hope
- Shift in personal or professional identity

DID YOU KNOW

Undiagnosed stress causes

60%

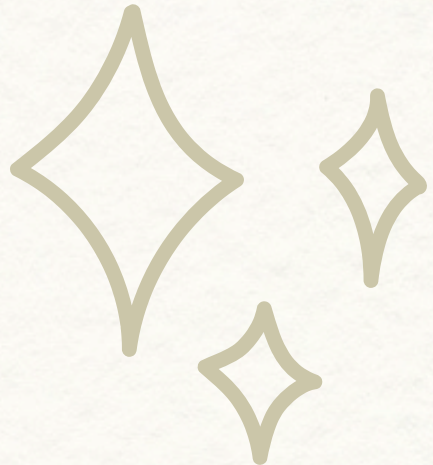
of all illness and disease!



PULSE CHECK

Let's be honest for a moment mentally raise your hand if you feel this statement is true

- ✦ I think about clients or work long after my day is over.
- ✦ I don't always have space to process what I'm holding
- ✦ I feel like I have to push through, even when I'm exhausted.
- ✦ I feel emotionally drained, even when I care deeply.
- ✦ I feel responsible for my clients' outcomes.
- ✦ I've become more cynical or less hopeful over time.
- ✦ Some client stories stay with me and are hard to shake.



BALANCE

- Stand up
 - Stand on one leg
 - Right hand on head
 - Left finger on nose
 - Raise right hand up
 - Now hold it
- 
- 

“Have no fear!” said the cat.
“I will not let you fall.
I will hold you up high
As I stand on a **ball**.”





ACTIVITY



DAILY PROTECTION & RESET

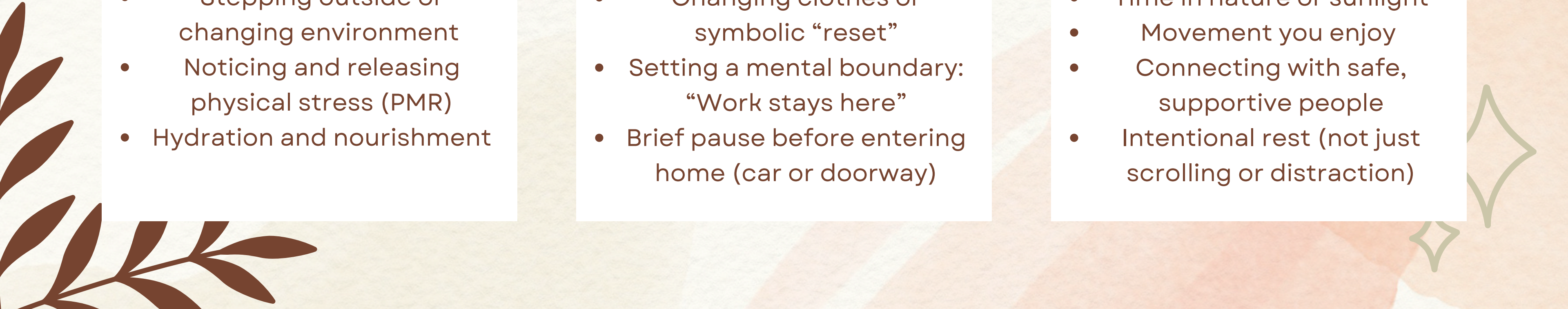
Micro-Resets During the Day

- 1-3 minute breathing or grounding pauses
- Brief movement between sessions
- Stepping outside or changing environment
- Noticing and releasing physical stress (PMR)
- Hydration and nourishment

Transition Rituals

- End-of-day decompression routine
- Music, silence, or intentional pause before going home
- Changing clothes or symbolic “reset”
- Setting a mental boundary: “Work stays here”
- Brief pause before entering home (car or doorway)

Restoration

- Prioritizing sleep and recovery
 - Engaging in activities that bring joy
 - Time in nature or sunlight
 - Movement you enjoy
 - Connecting with safe, supportive people
 - Intentional rest (not just scrolling or distraction)
- 



PROTECTING YOUR MINDSET

Reframing & Perspective

- Recognizing limits of your role
- Focusing on what is within your control
- Challenging all-or-nothing thinking

Intentional Awareness

- Noticing negative thought patterns
- Naming emotional reactions
- Practicing self-compassion

Managing Exposure

- Limiting overexposure to trauma content
 - Balancing caseload when possible
 - Taking intentional mental breaks
- 



SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

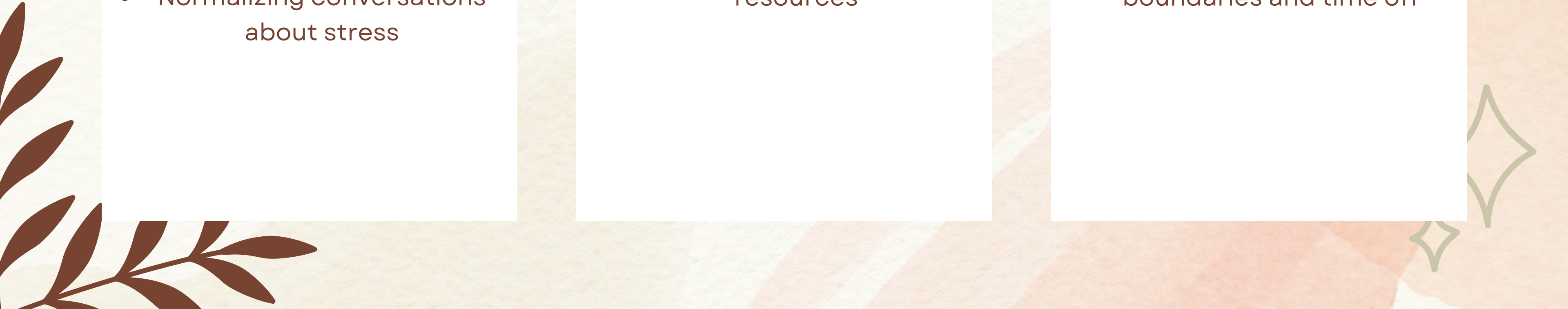
Peer Support

- Regular check-ins with colleagues
- Shared processing of difficult cases
- Normalizing conversations about stress

Structural Supports

- Reasonable caseloads
- Built-in breaks and time for documentation
- Access to mental health resources

Leadership

- Reflective supervision
 - Supportive, trauma-informed leadership
 - Encouragement of boundaries and time off
- 

BUILD YOUR PLAN

1 Daily Practice

When stress builds up, I will...

1 Weekly Reset

Once a week, I will make time to...

1 Boundary

To protect my wellbeing, I will...

1 Support Person

Someone I can reach out to is...

KEY TAKEAWAYS



Awareness is the first step

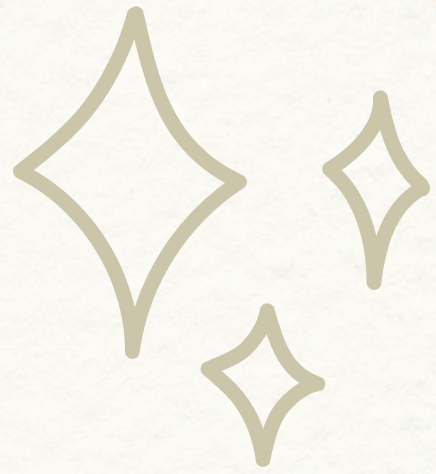


Your response is normal



Support is essential

CLOSING GROUNDING





ANY
QUESTIONS?

THANK
YOU