

Talking to Clients and Others about Climate Change and Environmental Issues: Ethics, Skills and Strategies

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Annual Virtual Conference
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Oregon
Psychological
Association



Dark Humor and Deadly Seriousness

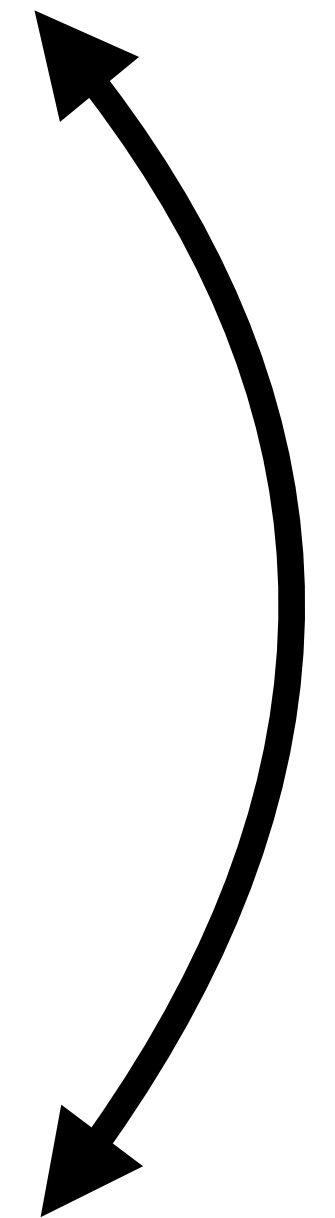
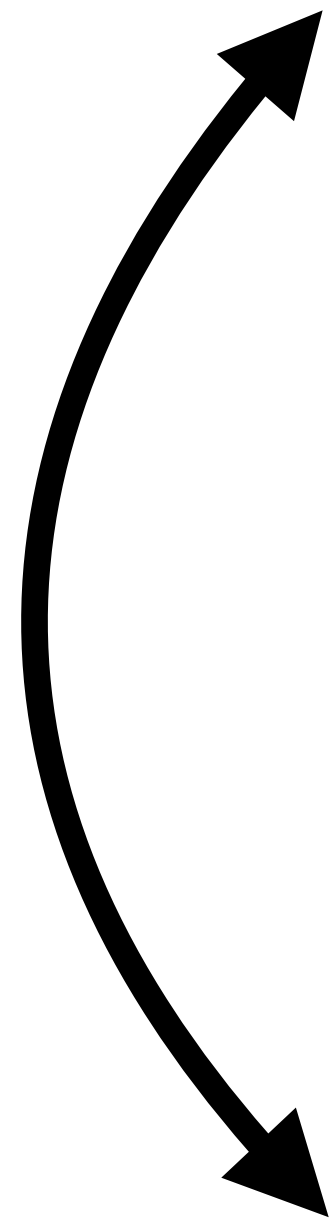
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"Do you have a minute for a problem whose solution has eluded humanity since the dawn of civilization?"

Engaging with environmental issues in therapy — Three Step Process

1. **Assess** our environmental identities, beliefs and experiences (including sources of trauma and resilience)
2. **Adapt** our existing therapeutic orientations and skill sets to ameliorate common environmental impacts and concerns
3. **Apply** these interventions into counseling and treatment efforts with diverse individuals



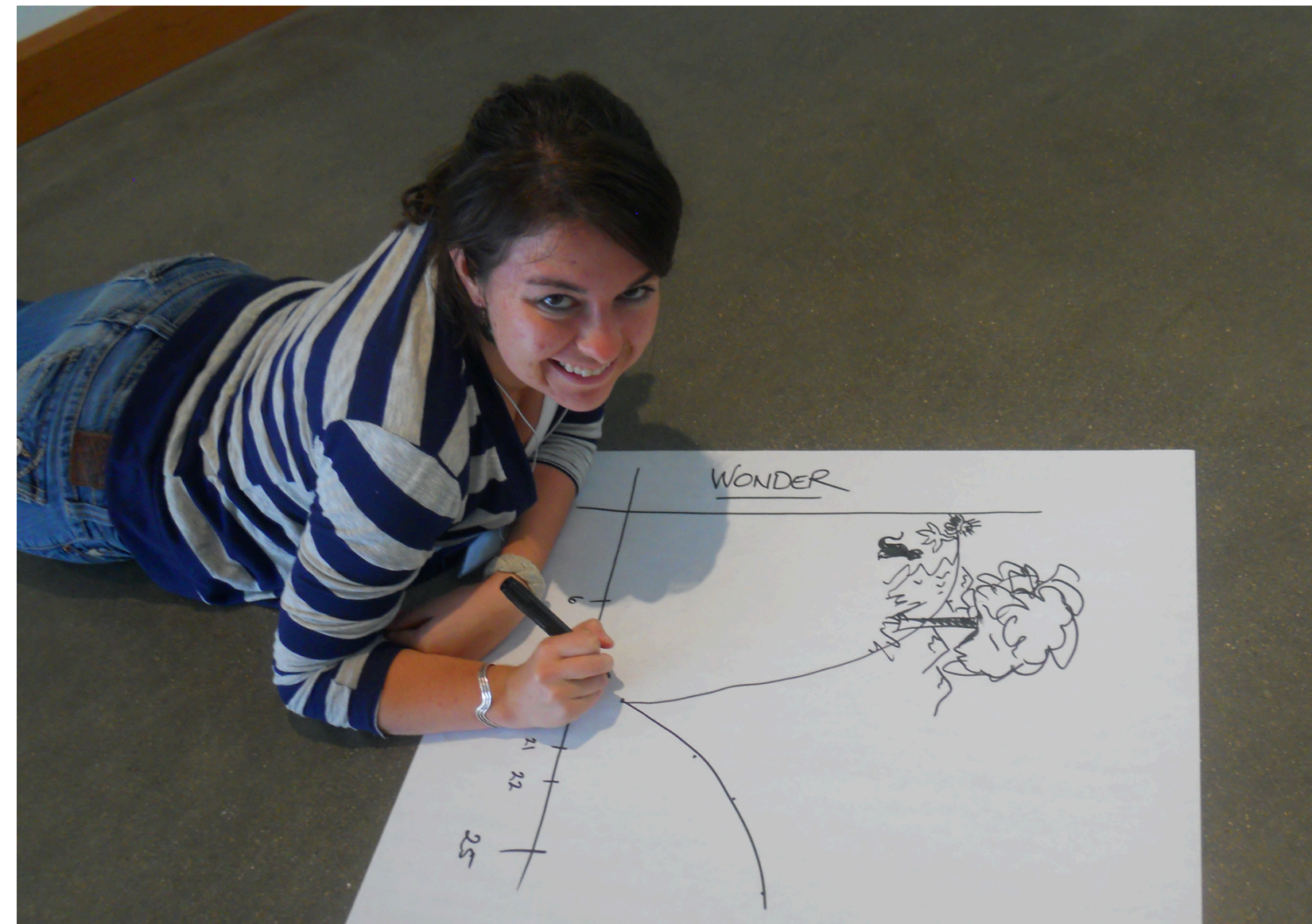


3

Environmental Identity Exercises

Environmental Identity Time Line

- Draw a simple time line from your birth to the present
- Identity significant nature experiences, memories, favored places, losses or traumas, contact with other species, family activities, mentors, the arts, world events...





Exercise: Restorative Place Visualization

Part I:

Broaching the Subject / Exploring Personal Motivations



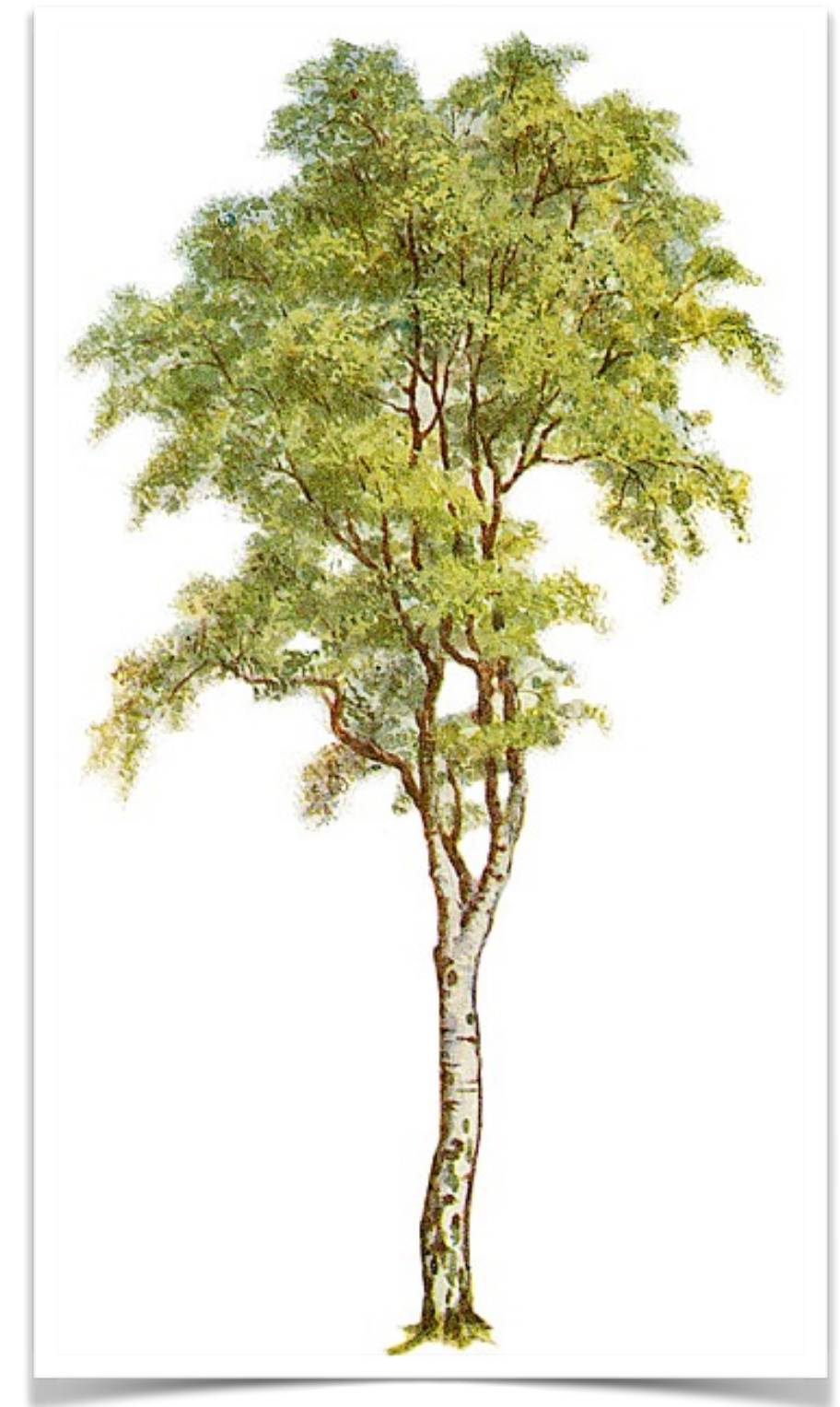
Climate Change and Therapy Basic Tasks

Broaching the topic

- Being an “honest broker” [Motivational Interviewing]
- Signaling and giving permission (advertising, intake questions) [Multicultural Competency]

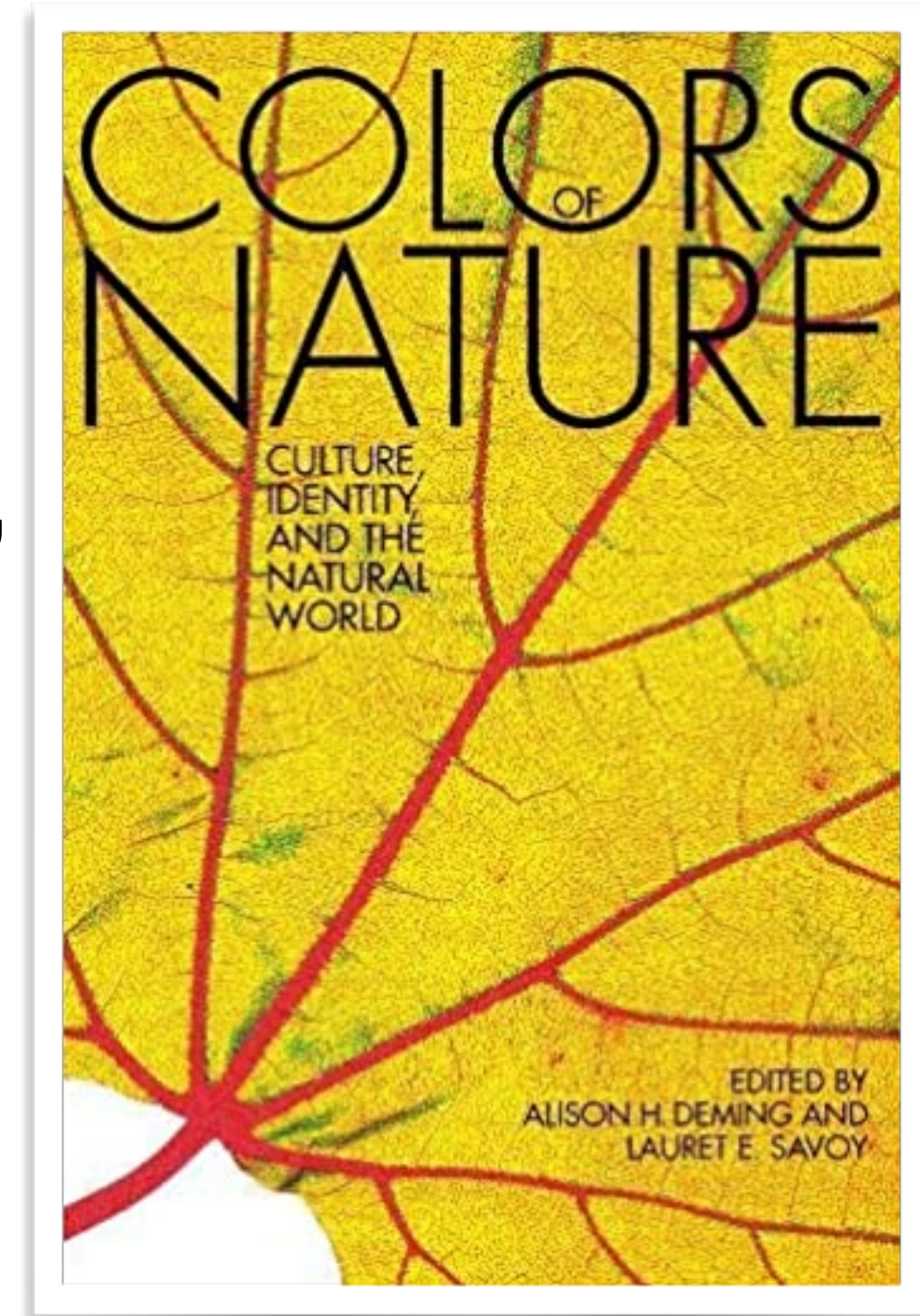
Setting a frame [Psychoeducation]

- Three basic tasks of environmental education:
 - Expression
 - Description
 - Prescription



Educating about Multiple Values [Environmental and Conservation Psychology, Diversity and Cultural Humility]

- Basic Values Underlying Environmental Behaviors:
 - Egocentric / Altruistic / Biocentric
- Values about Nature and Animals:
 - Caring, Utilitarian, Aesthetic, Scientific, Experiential,
 - Mastery, Aversive
- Values and frameworks for environmental action
 - (See Dryzek's "The Politics of the Earth")
- Calling out social and environmental justice issues
- (Preview) Values -> Beliefs -> Norms Theory



Nature-relations Across the Lifespan [Developmental Psychology , Environmental Education]

- Piagetian Perspective (see David Sobel, Louise Chawla)
 - Sensory experiences in nature
 - Imagination and play
 - Concrete Activities, Skills, Efficacy
 - Abstract Understandings of Ecology
- Get beyond stereotypes; develop a nuanced, diverse sense of context across the lifespan
 - Elders, Youth
 - New or Prospective Parents
 - Immigrants



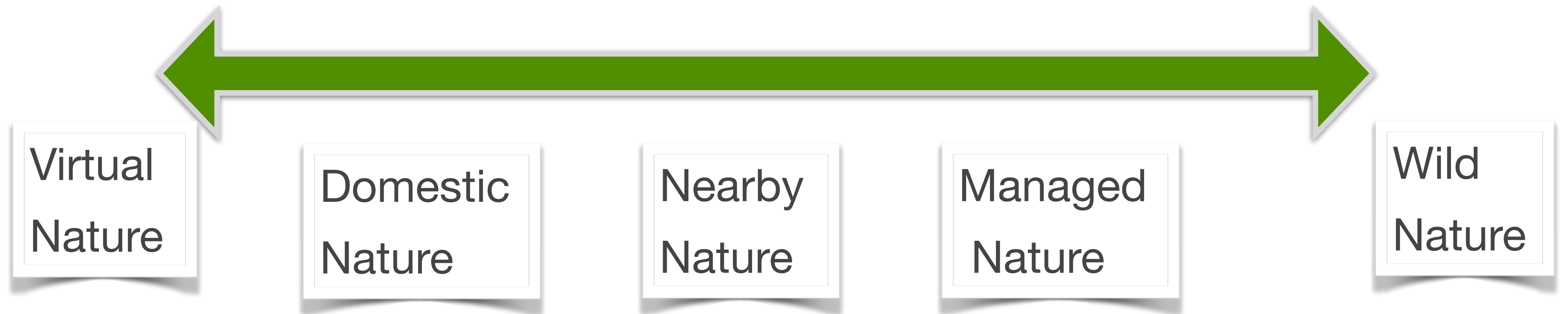
Supporting Nature Connection



- Spectrum of Nature
- Choosing the Right Outdoor Activities
- Activity is a $f : (\text{Resource} / \text{Challenge}) \times \text{Meaning}$

A Spectrum of “Nature” and Restorative Benefits

“From Nearby Nature to Wilderness”



Activity is a f :
(Resource / Challenge) x Meaning



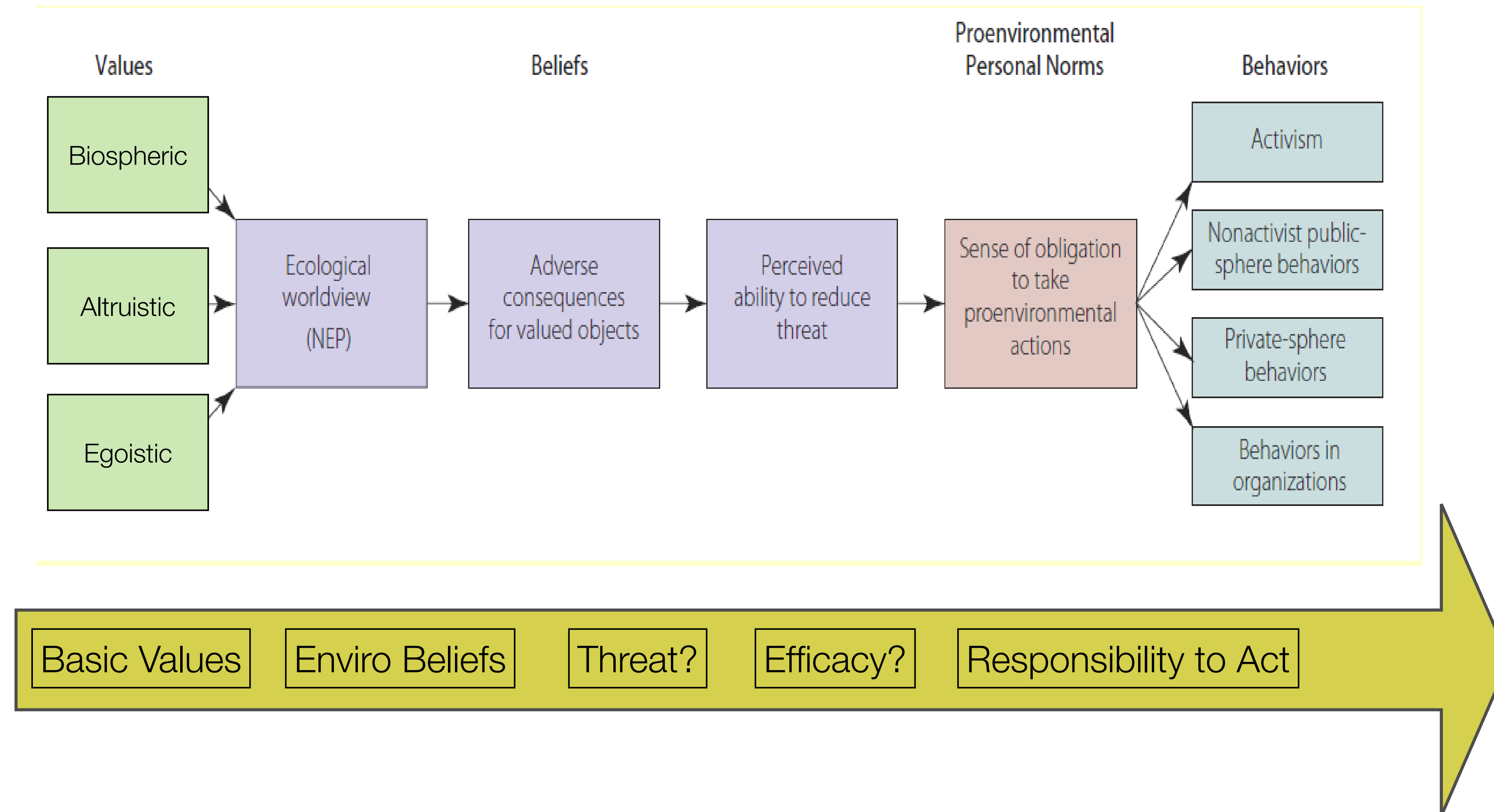
Behavior and Social Change

[Environmental Psychology and Sociology]

- Values-Beliefs-Norms
- Activist Learning Cycle
- “Front Line” Exercise



Values-Beliefs-Norms theory



Lessons from the Life Experiences of Activists

Synergy of

- Salience (Increased awareness of environmental issues and threats)
- Empowerment (Identification as an actor, being placed in a leadership role)
- Practical Knowledge (Ability, networks & resources)

Salience

Empowerment

Practical Knowledge

Finding Your Place of Engagement

“Front Line” Exercise



Sustainability 101

- Governance / Policy is most important goal
- Focus on high impact lifestyle changes (see Nielsen, Clayton, Stern et al, 2021, in AP “How psychology can limit climate change”)
- Fight back against Fossil Fuel Industry Disinformation and “Individual responsibility myth”
- Validate barriers (information, ability, constraints) and “Climate Hostage” Situation



Part II: Adapting Our Skill Sets

Adapt our existing therapeutic orientations and skill sets to ameliorate common environmental impacts and concerns

Mindfulness



**“Nature-based
Stress Reduction”**

Climate Change Science Basics

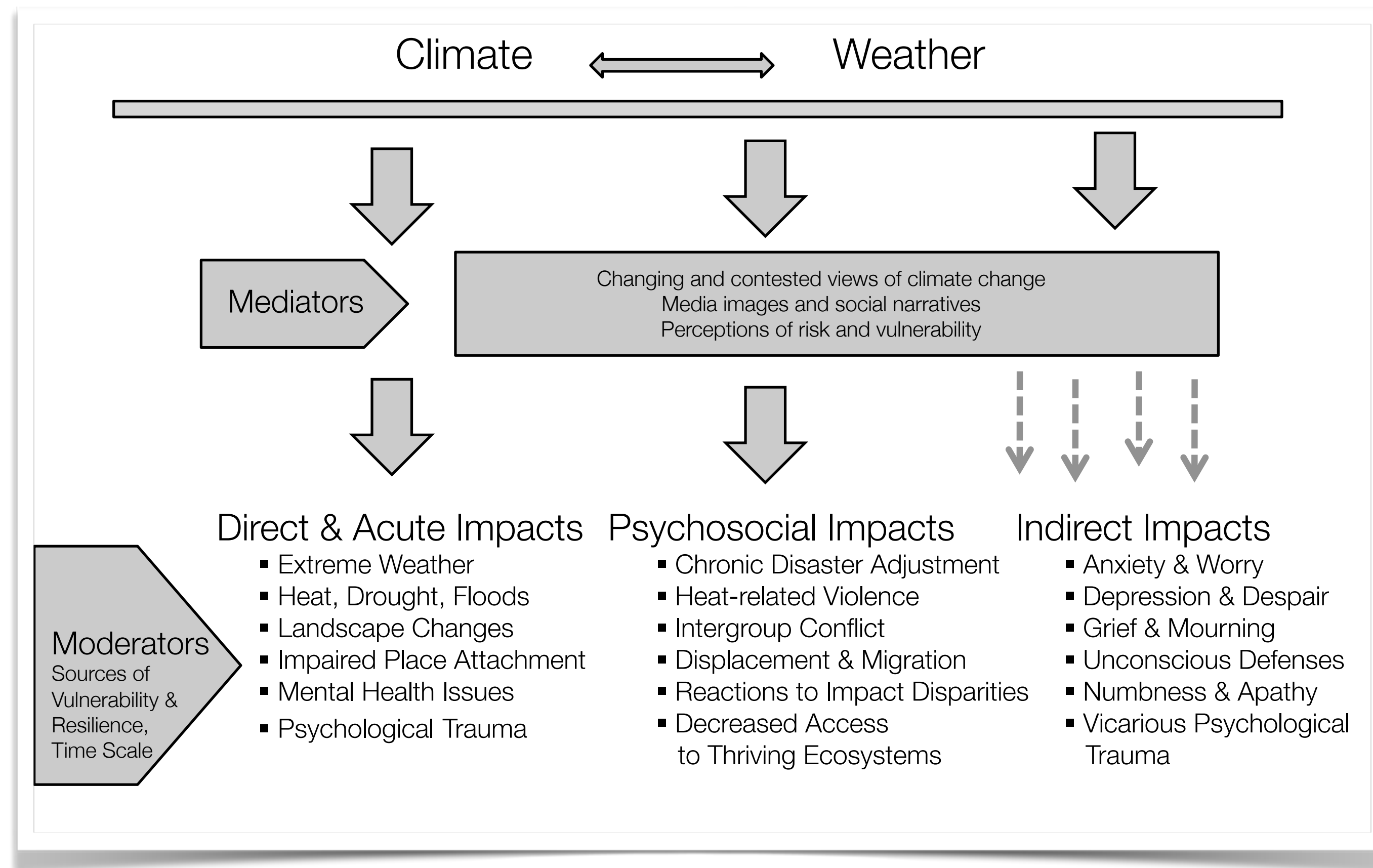
(History of Climate Change in Three Words: *Theory, Evidence, Politics*)

- Human activities have changed the atmosphere and the biosphere, leading to an increase in aggregate global temperature, causing various local disturbances
- Climate science is very well-established. (President Johnson was briefed on this in 1965.)
- Technology to quantify global temperature only in the last 25 years.
- 40 years of concerted disinformation and propaganda from fossil fuel companies, casting doubt, creating polarization, and implanting ideas like “Personal Carbon Footprint” (see Franta, 2021)

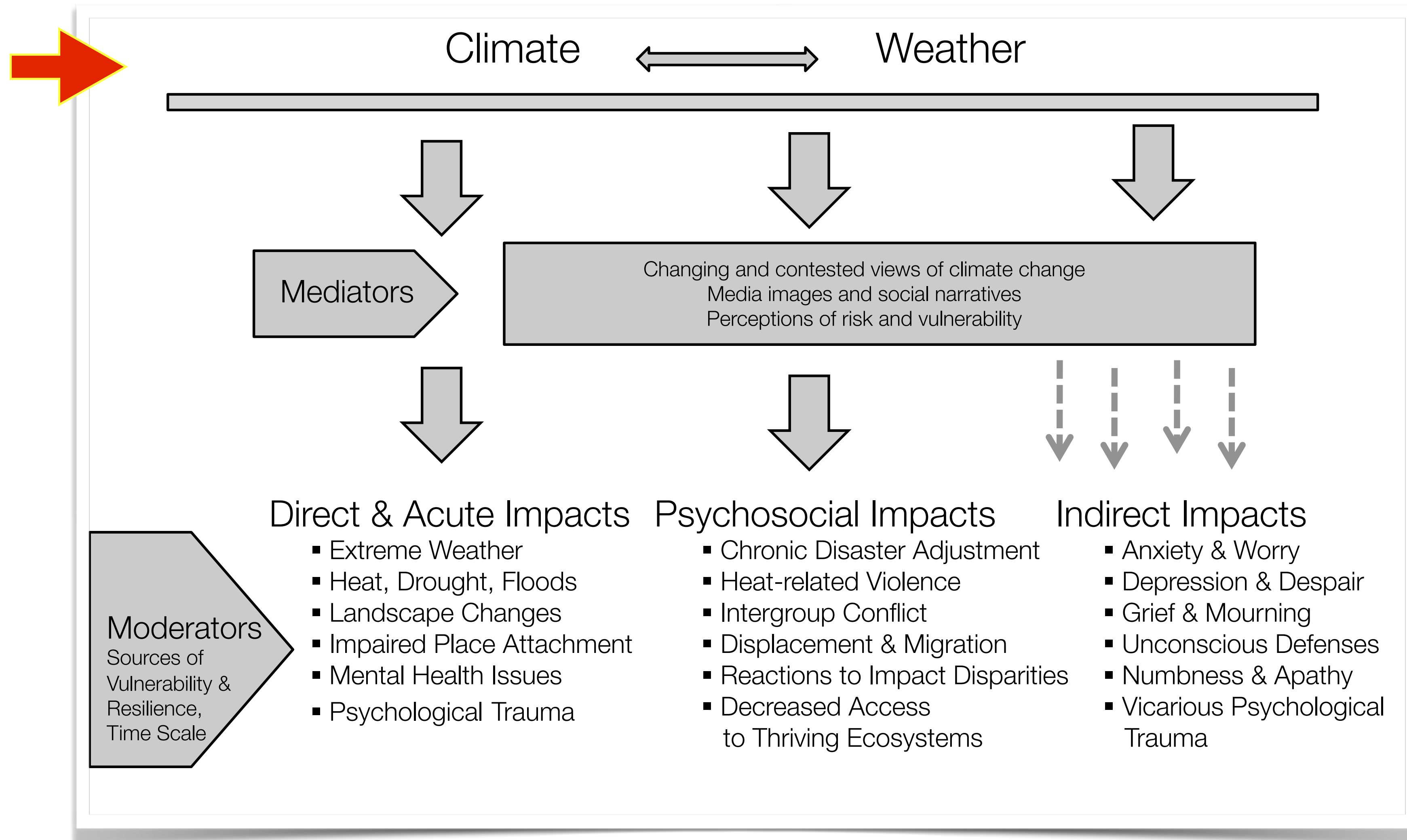
Mental Health Impacts of Climate Change



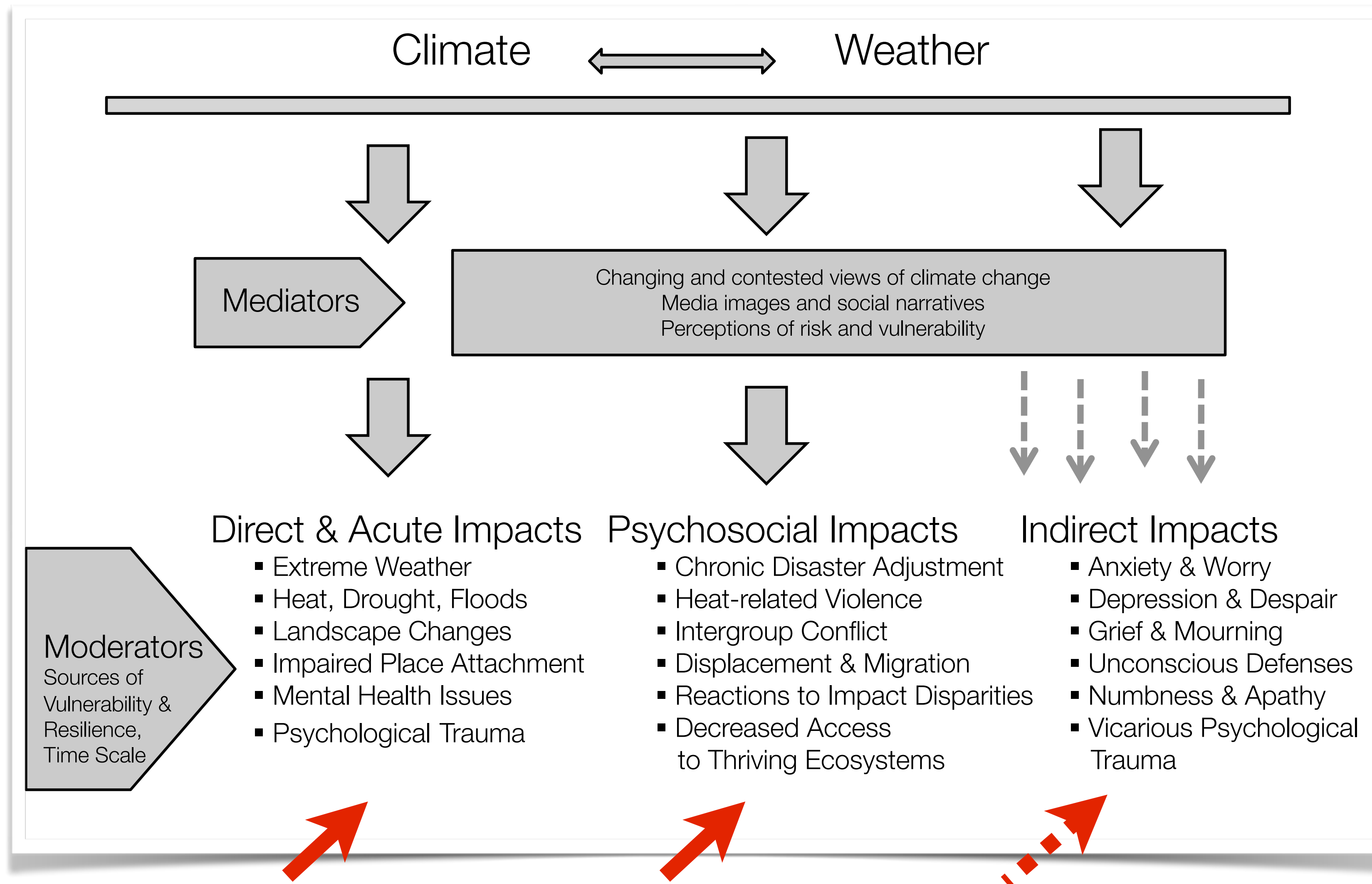
Climate Change Impacts [Environmental Psychology, Public Health, Epidemiology]



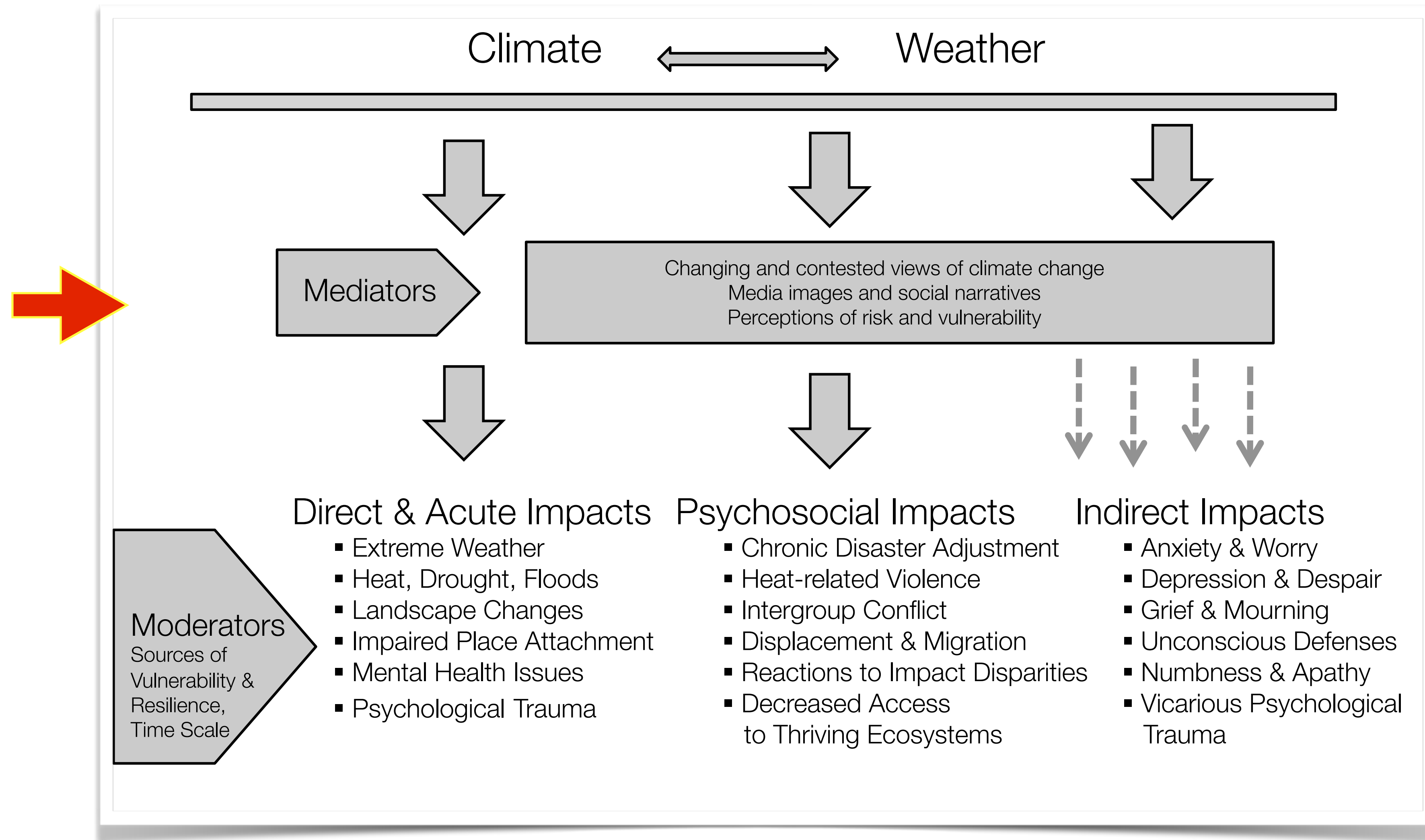
Classes of Psychological Impacts



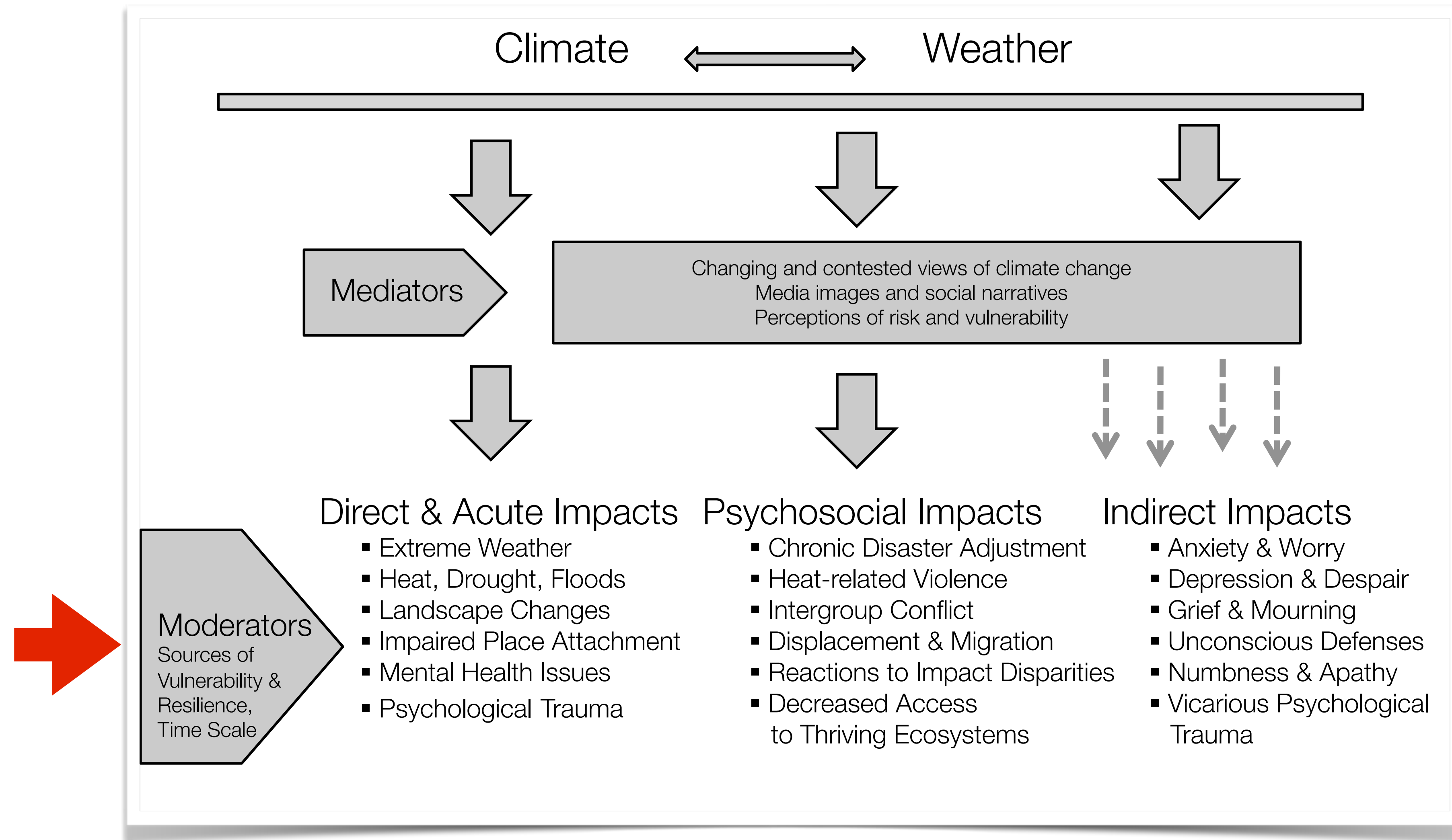
Classes of Climate Change Impacts



Classes of Climate Change Impacts

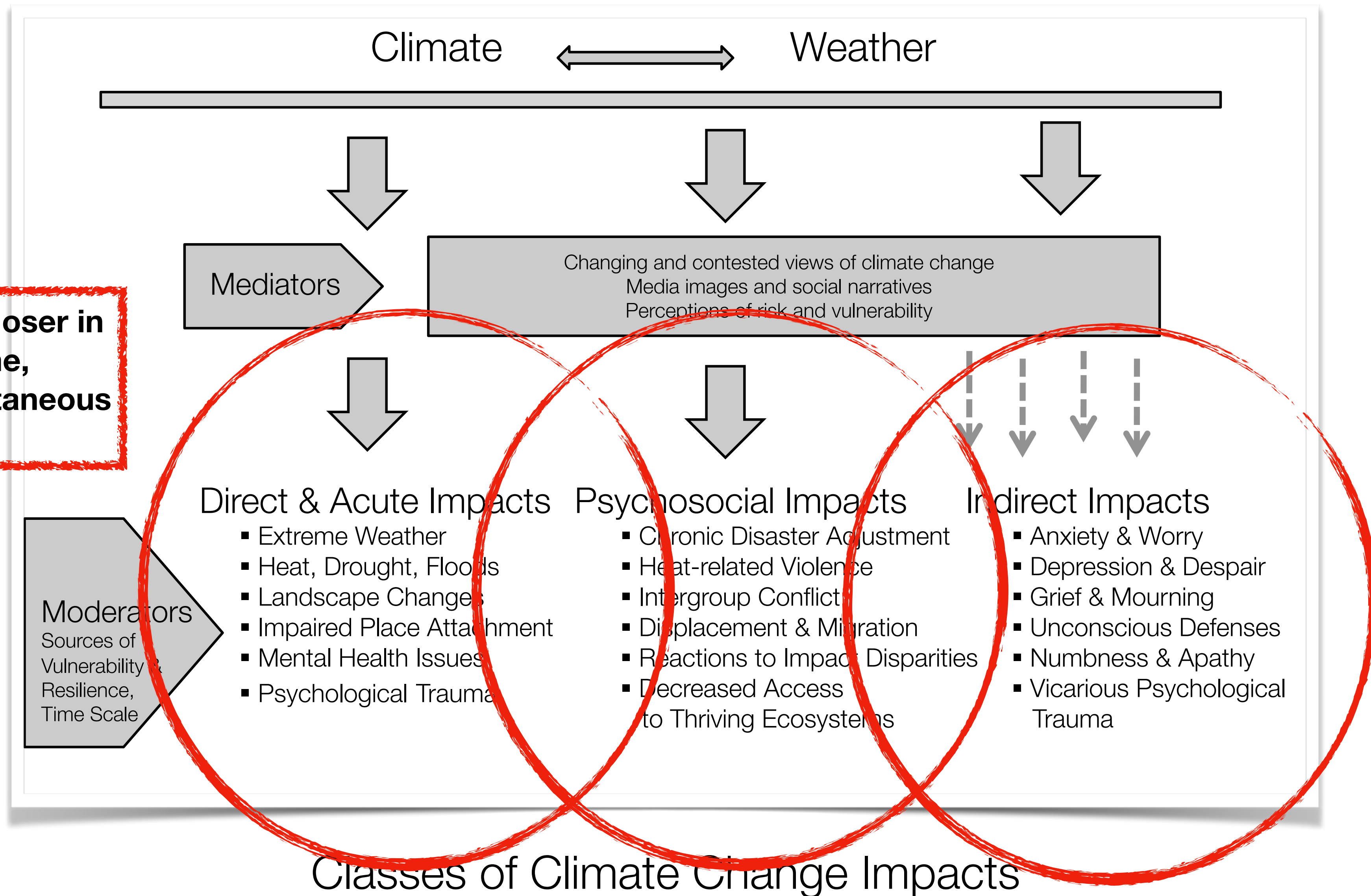


Classes of Climate Change Impacts



Classes of Climate Change Impacts

Impacts are now closer in space and time, with multiple simultaneous impacts



Some assumptions

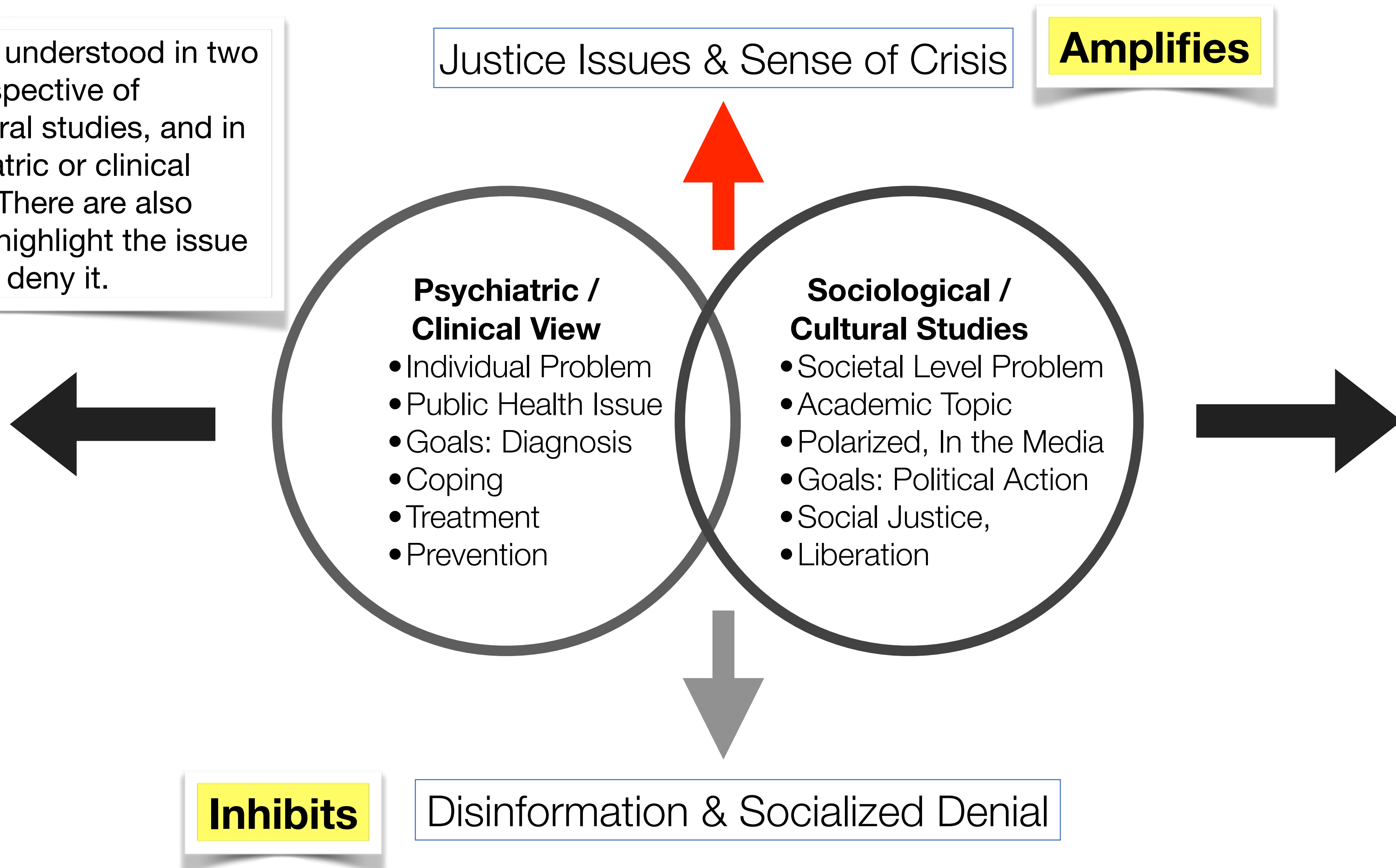
- *Individuals may be experiencing:*
 - consciousness-raising regarding environmental issues and their impact or “ecological footprint”
 - dissonance between their lifestyle and developing ecological values
 - possibly clinically significant health symptoms (e.g., stress, worry, hopelessness, and depression)

Diagnosing and Treating Eco- Anxiety and Other Issues



Challenges Defining Eco-Anxiety

Eco-anxiety can be understood in two ways, from the perspective of sociology and cultural studies, and in a functional psychiatric or clinical psychology sense. There are also competing pulls to highlight the issue or to downplay it or deny it.



Diagnosing Eco-Disorders

Basic Diagnostic Approach

Normative emotions about environmental stressors; minimal interference in daily functioning; efforts at coping and adjustment	No Diagnosis
Strong or excessive reaction to environmental stressors; impaired coping; significant interference with social, occupational or educational functioning	Consider Adjustment Disorder, and Subtypes
Clear diagnostic syndrome; Symptoms of anxiety, depression, obsessive compulsive, or trauma disorders; significant impairment; Presence of co-occurring disorders	Diagnose as Appropriate

Being a “Climate Hostage”

Thomas Doherty Works at the Intersection of Psychology and Environmental Science

By Delia O'Hara June 7, 2018

Clinical psychologist **Thomas Doherty** has coined a term — “climate hostages” — to describe people who feel the urgency of the climate change crisis but must cope with denial of the phenomenon among segments of the population.



See Amy Westervelt and <https://www.drillednews.com/>

Example of Client Query

“Hello Dr. Doherty, I recently came across a 2010 NYT article where I learned about your work in ecopsychology. My career is in renewable energy development, driven by my personal convictions about protecting Mother Nature and I think the notion of climate anxiety has certainly crept in - my optimism has increasingly been tested by continued environmental destruction, which has impacted my mental health. I am interested in the prospect of working with you and wondering what the best way is to go about exploring fit. I am also interested in understand payment/insurance plans.”

Goals of Climate Change Diagnosis and Treatment

Optimal Wellbeing Resilience

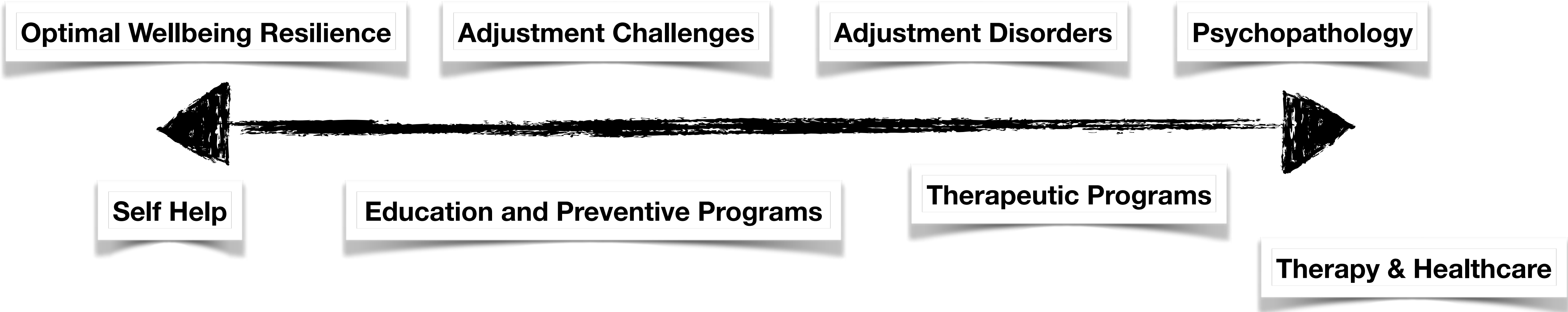
Adjustment Challenges

Adjustment Disorders

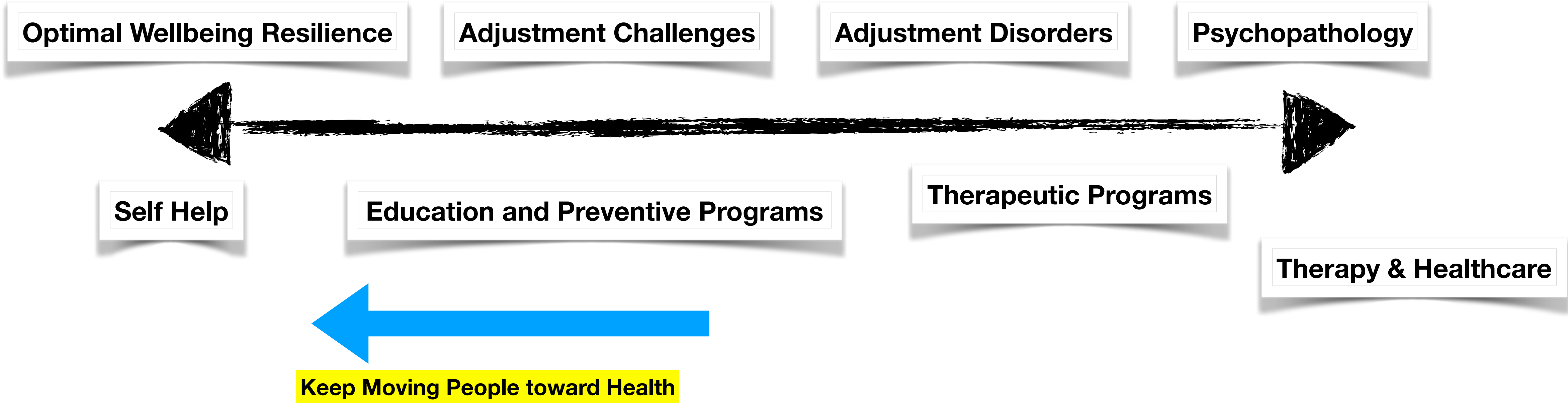
Psychopathology



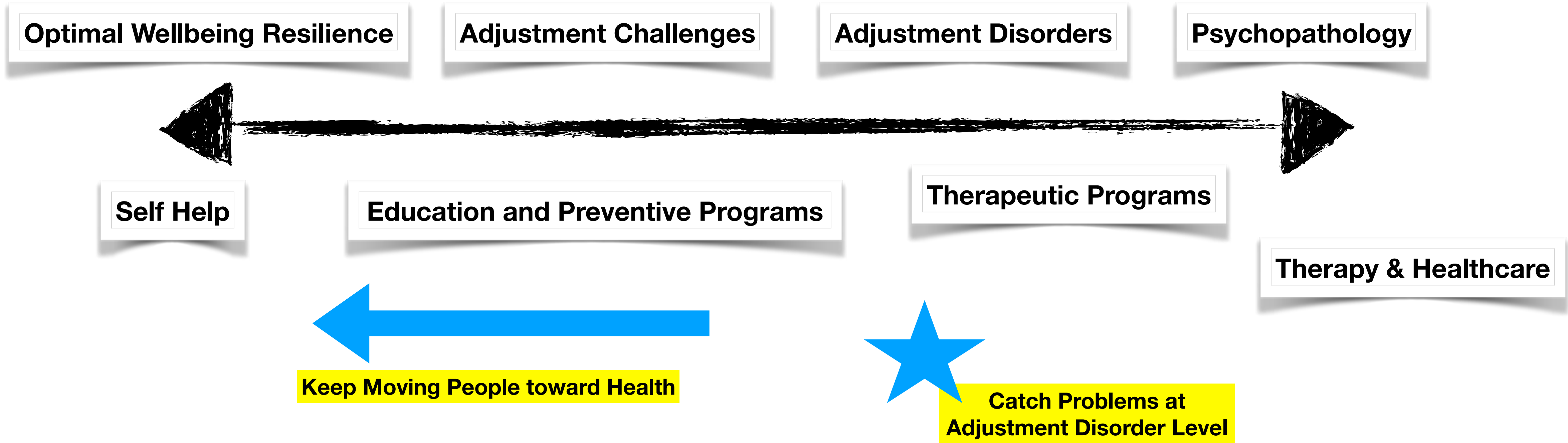
Goals of Climate Change Diagnosis and Treatment



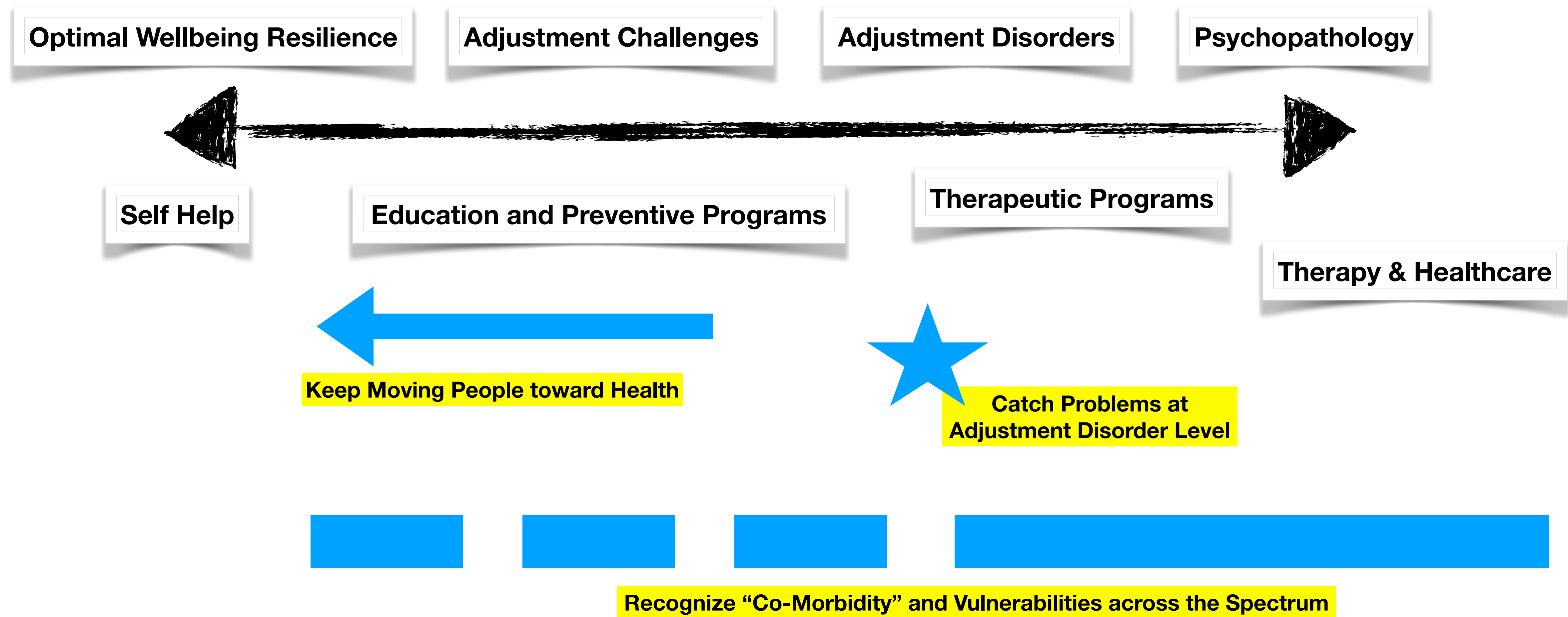
Goals of Climate Change Diagnosis and Treatment



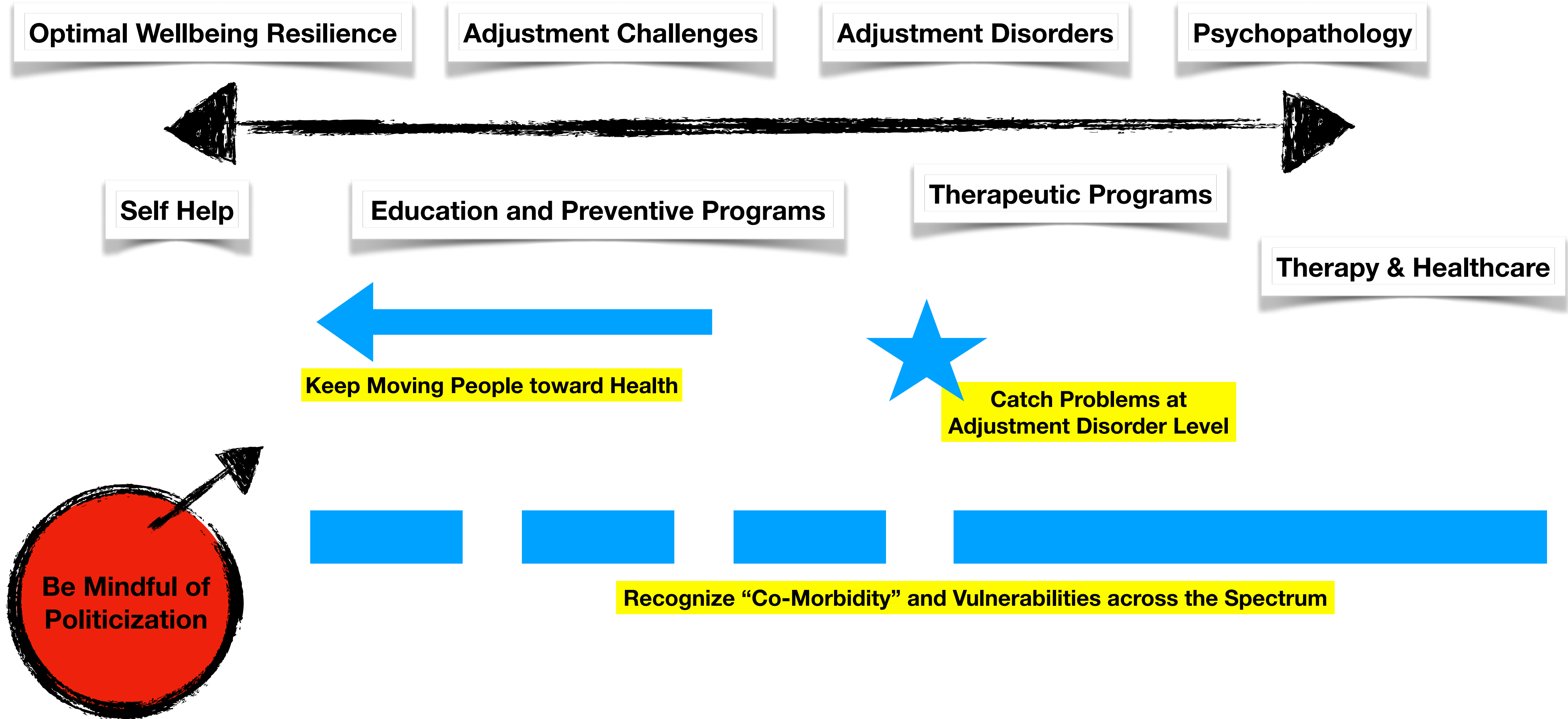
Goals of Climate Change Diagnosis and Treatment



Goals of Climate Change Diagnosis and Treatment



Goals of Climate Change Diagnosis and Treatment



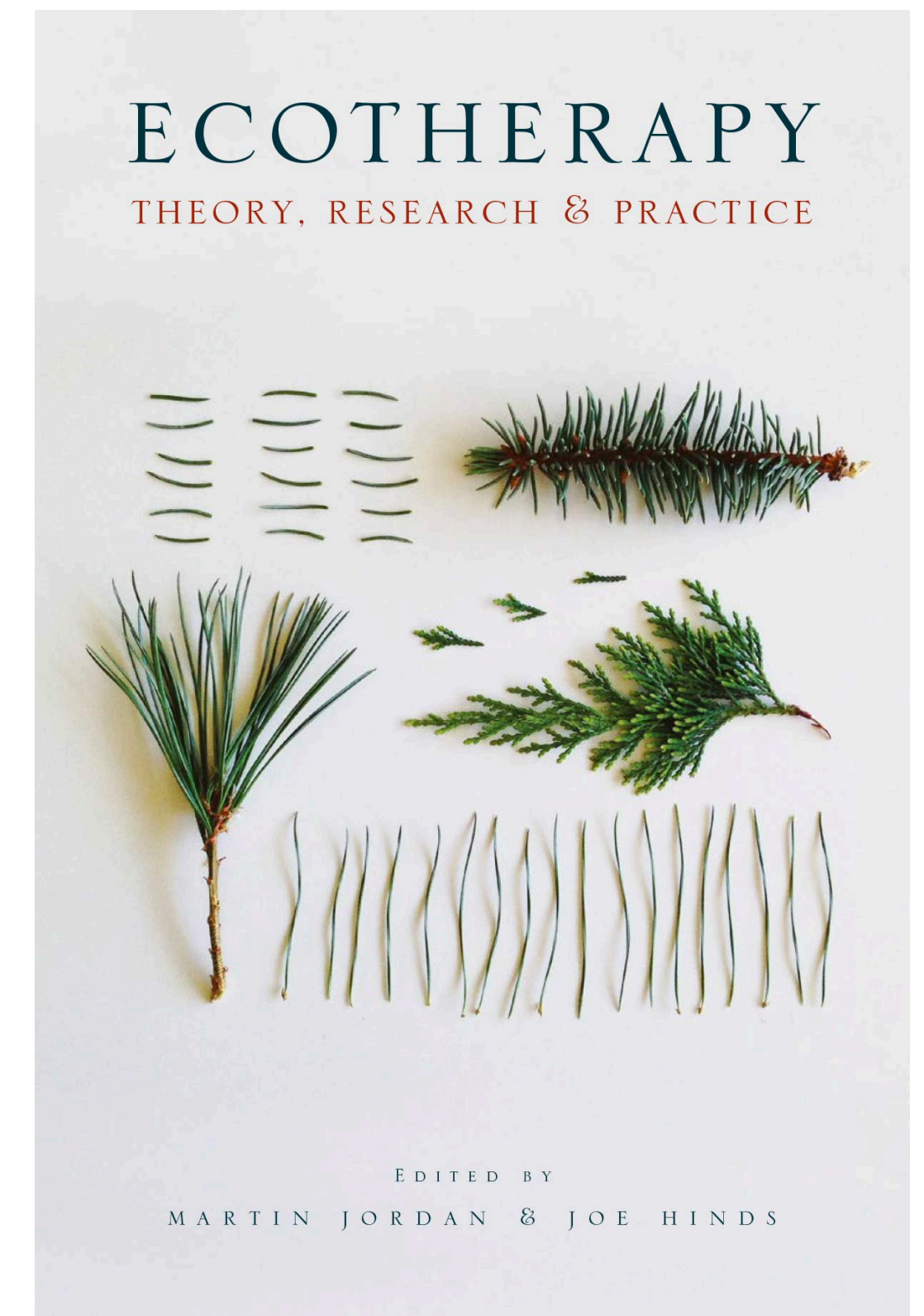
Ethics

- APA Ethics Principle A: **Beneficence** and Nonmaleficence (First Do No Harm)
- 2.01e “In those **emerging areas** in which generally recognized standards for preparatory training do not yet exist, psychologists nevertheless take reasonable steps to ensure the competence of their work and to protect clients/patients ... and others from harm.”
- 2.02 “In **emergencies**, when ...mental health services are not available and for which psychologists have not obtained the necessary training, psychologists may provide such services... [until] the emergency has ended or appropriate services are available.”
- 3.06 **Conflict of Interest** (personal or professional)
- See CE Training, Out-Of-Office Experiences:
<https://www.zurinstitute.com/resources/out-of-office-experiences/>



Basic Eco-Therapeutic Tasks

- Building Capacity
- Self-soothing
- Emotional Regulation
- Recovering / developing Environmental Identity
- Empowering for Restorative Nature Activities
- Filling in the Gaps in Developmental Tasks
- Finding a sense of self-actualization and agency (front line metaphor)

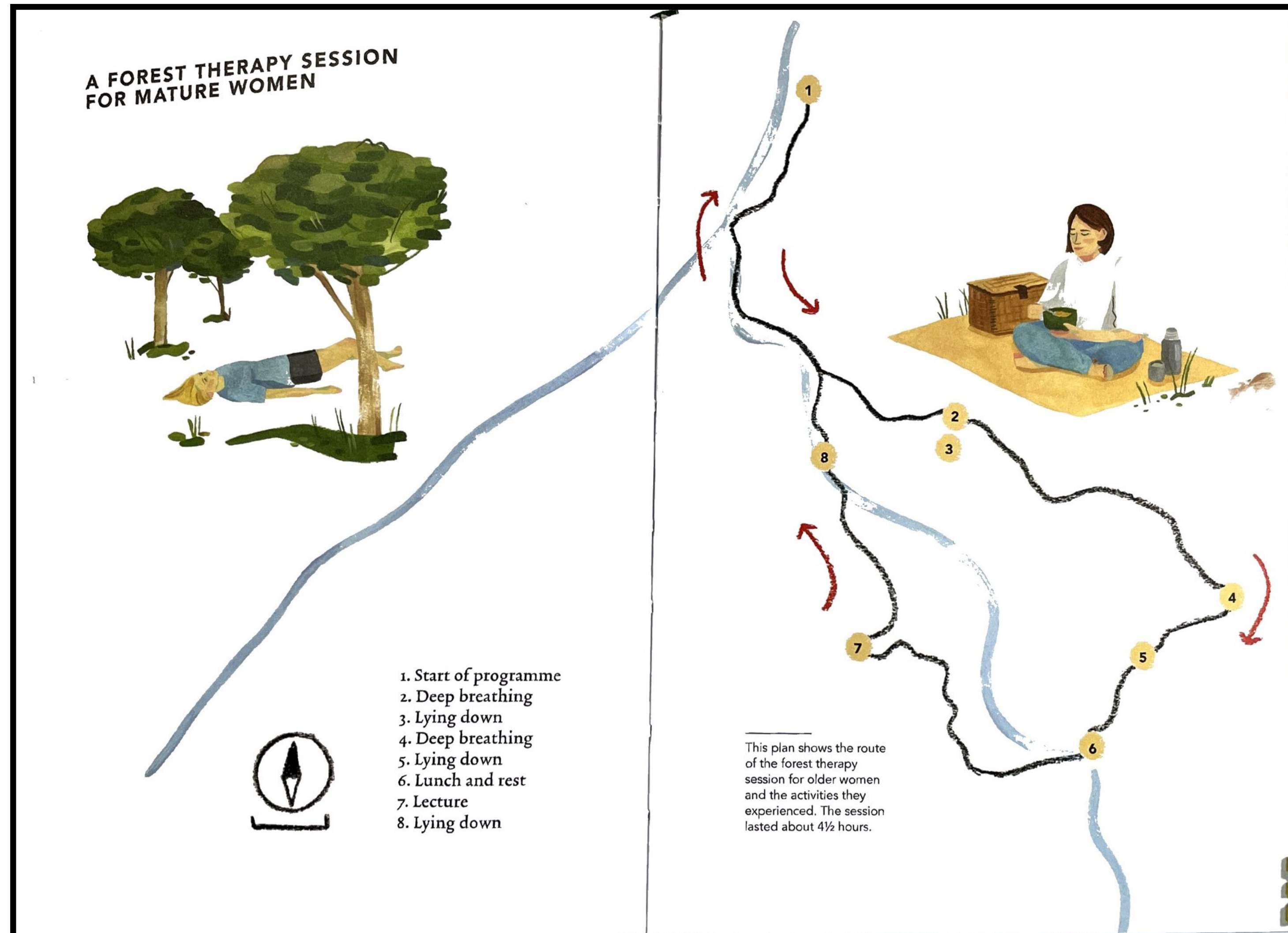


Working with Nature

- Recognize spectrum of nature
- Moving Outdoors
 - Managing Risk (Have a plan)
 - Tx Activity is a f : (Resource / Challenge) x Meaning
 - Education and Informed Consent
 - “Activating” Restorative Nature
 - Create a template -- See Miyazaki Image



Shinrin Yoku (Forest Bathing) Protocol



Contraindications



- Your energy is better directed elsewhere
- Your clients or patients need other services
- It's not the right time (in treatment process, in your career)
- Institutional barriers
- You're still building sense of competency or urgency
- You'd prefer to connect w/ nature or address environmental issues in other areas of your personal or professional life.

We Have More Resources Now

- Grassroots organizing of mental health and health care professionals (e.g., Climate Psychiatry Alliance)
- March 2021 Monitor on Psychology CE article: Addressing climate change concerns in practice (<https://www.apa.org/monitor/2021/03/ce-climate-change>)
- APA Speaking of Psychology Podcast Thomas Doherty and Ashlee Consolo (<https://www.apa.org/research/action/speaking-of-psychology/eco-anxiety>)
- APA Division 34 Climate Change and Mental Social Hour
- Climate change chapter in revised *Comprehensive Clinical Psychology*
- Thomas Doherty offering a consultation group for eco- and climate conscious change therapy

Part III: How to Engage and Apply

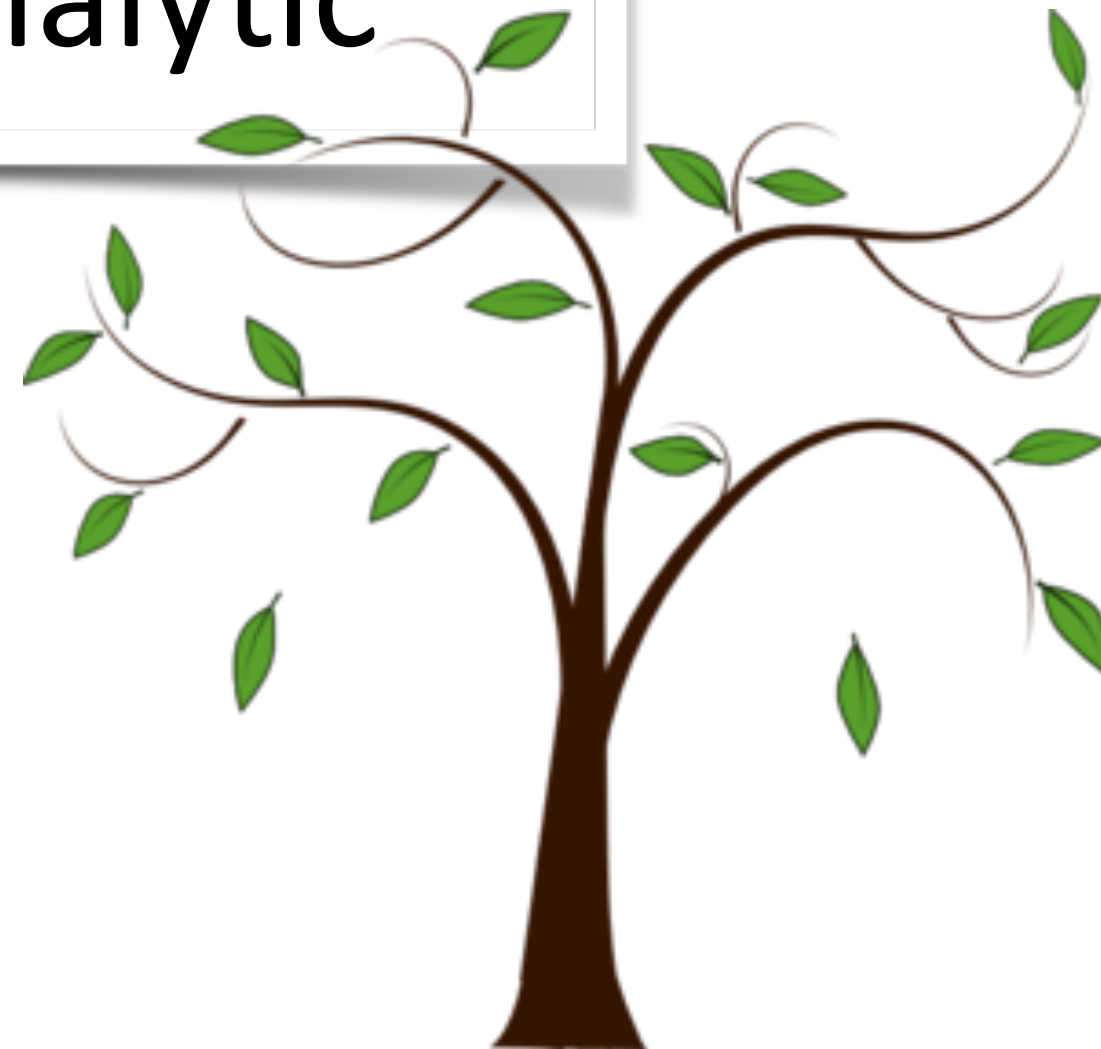
Apply these interventions into counseling and treatment efforts with diverse individuals.



Synergies w/ Common Therapy Approaches

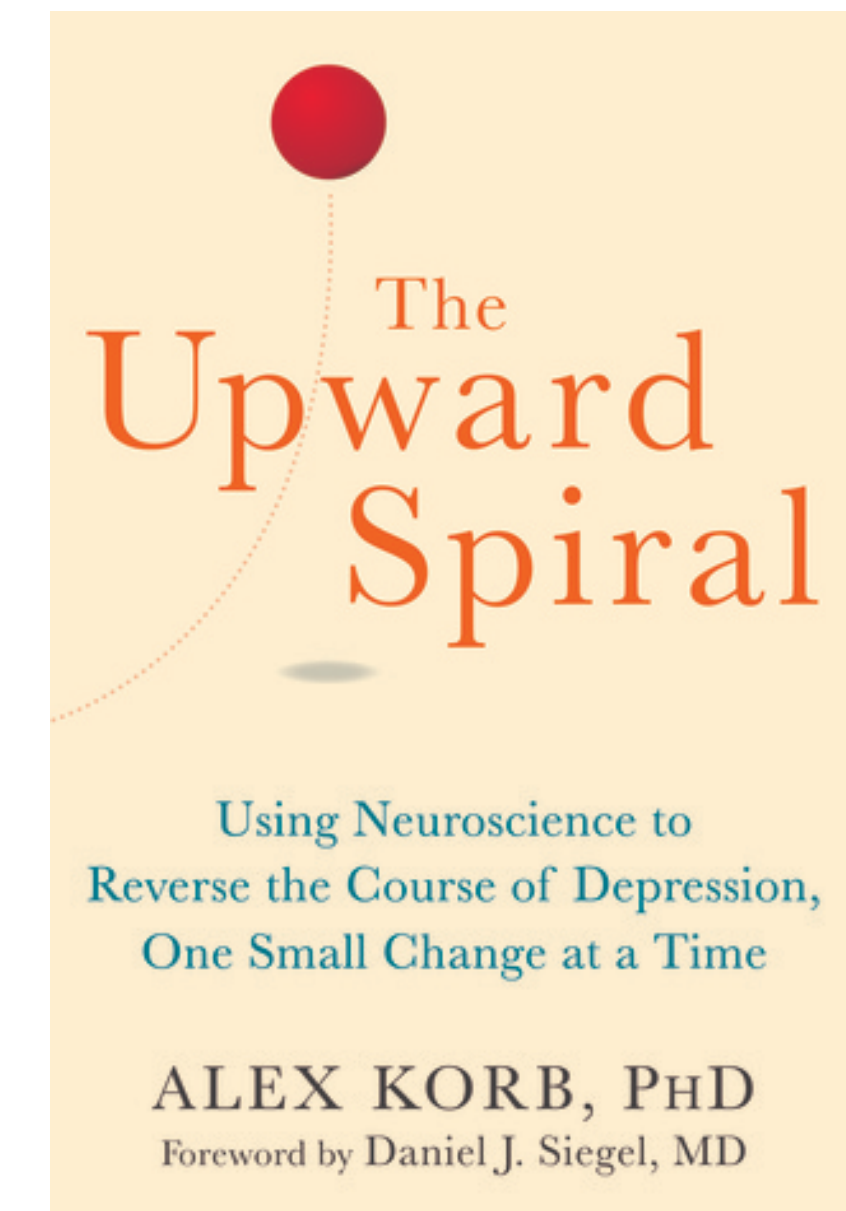
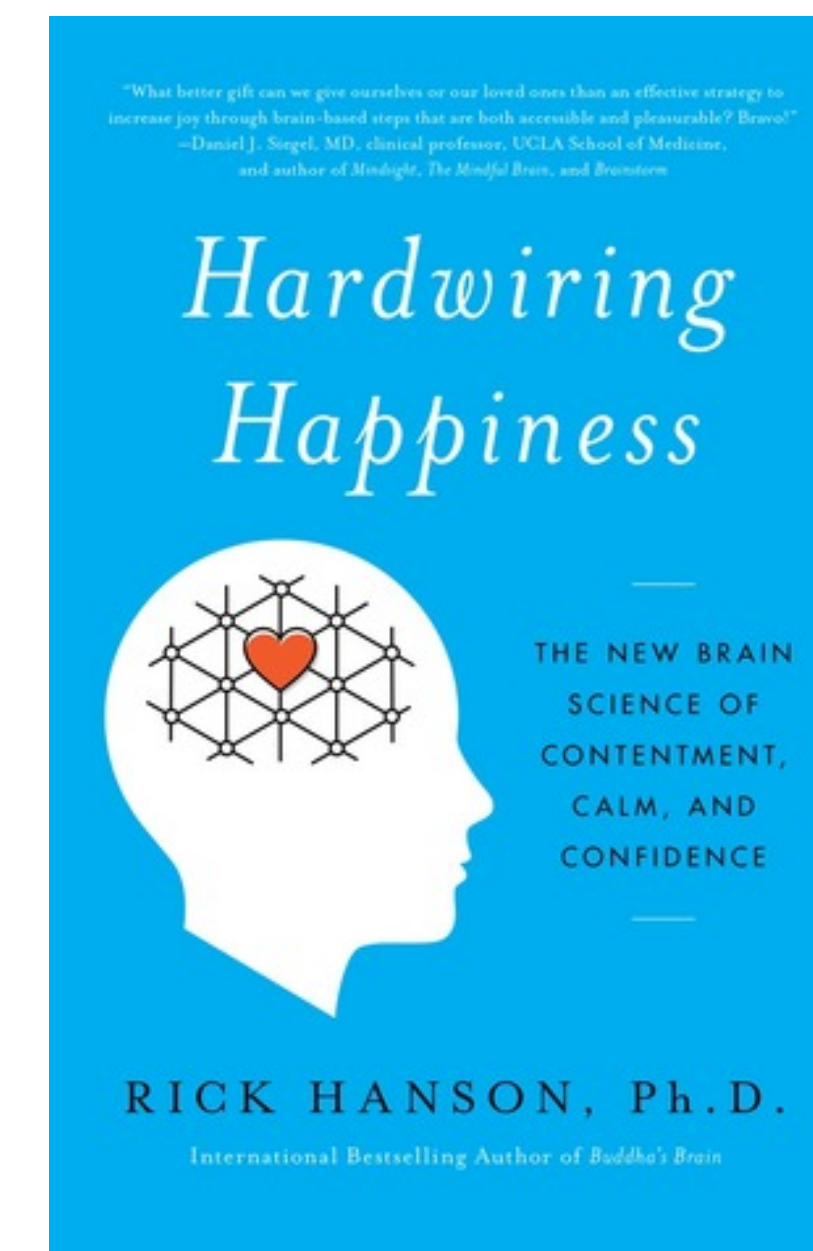
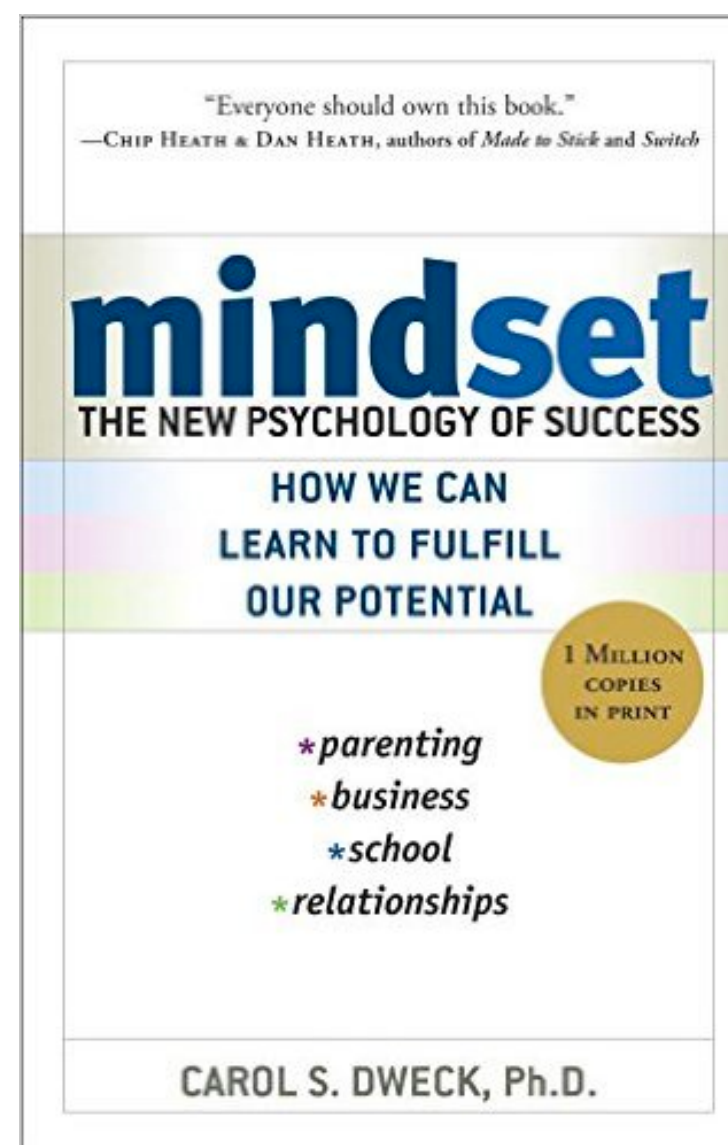
- Family Therapy
- Feminist
- Critical / Liberation Psychology
- Gestalt
- Interpersonal Neurobiology
- Psychodynamic / Psychoanalytic

- Cognitive Behavioral:
CBT / ACT / CFT / DBT
- Mindfulness
- Existential - Humanistic
- Positive Psychology
- Sports Psychology
- Transpersonal / Pastoral
Counseling

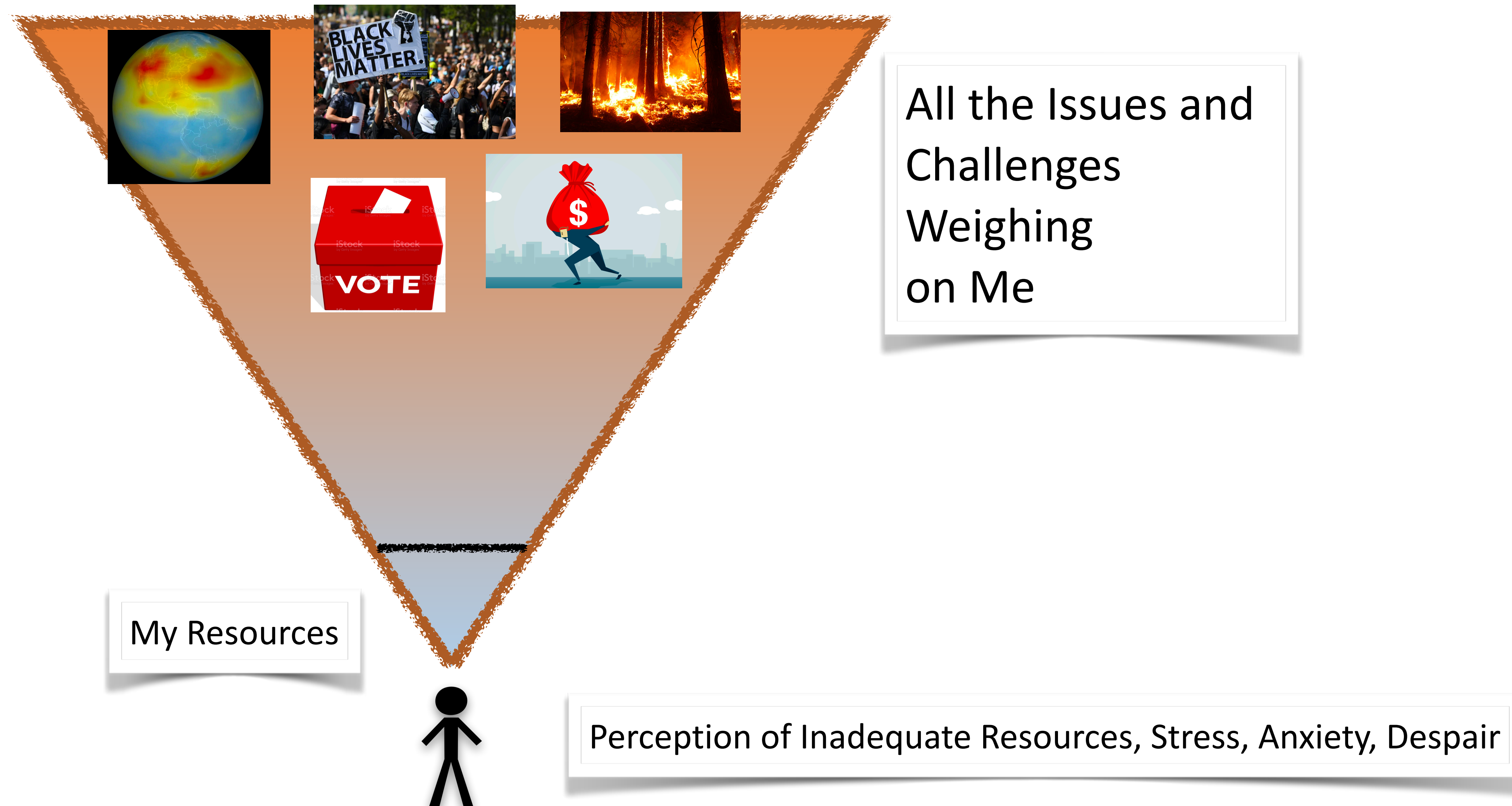


Examples of Self Help Books That Can Be Applied for Environmental Anxiety or Depression

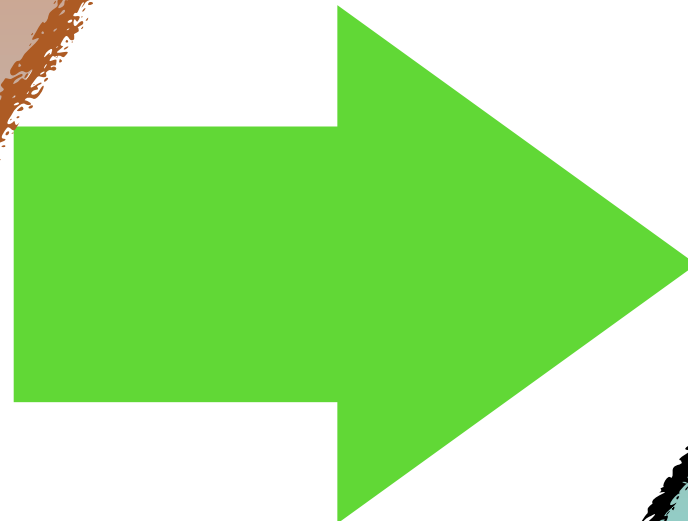
- *The Upward Spiral*, Alex Korb
- *Hardwiring Happiness*, Rick Hanson
- *Mindset*, Carol Dweck



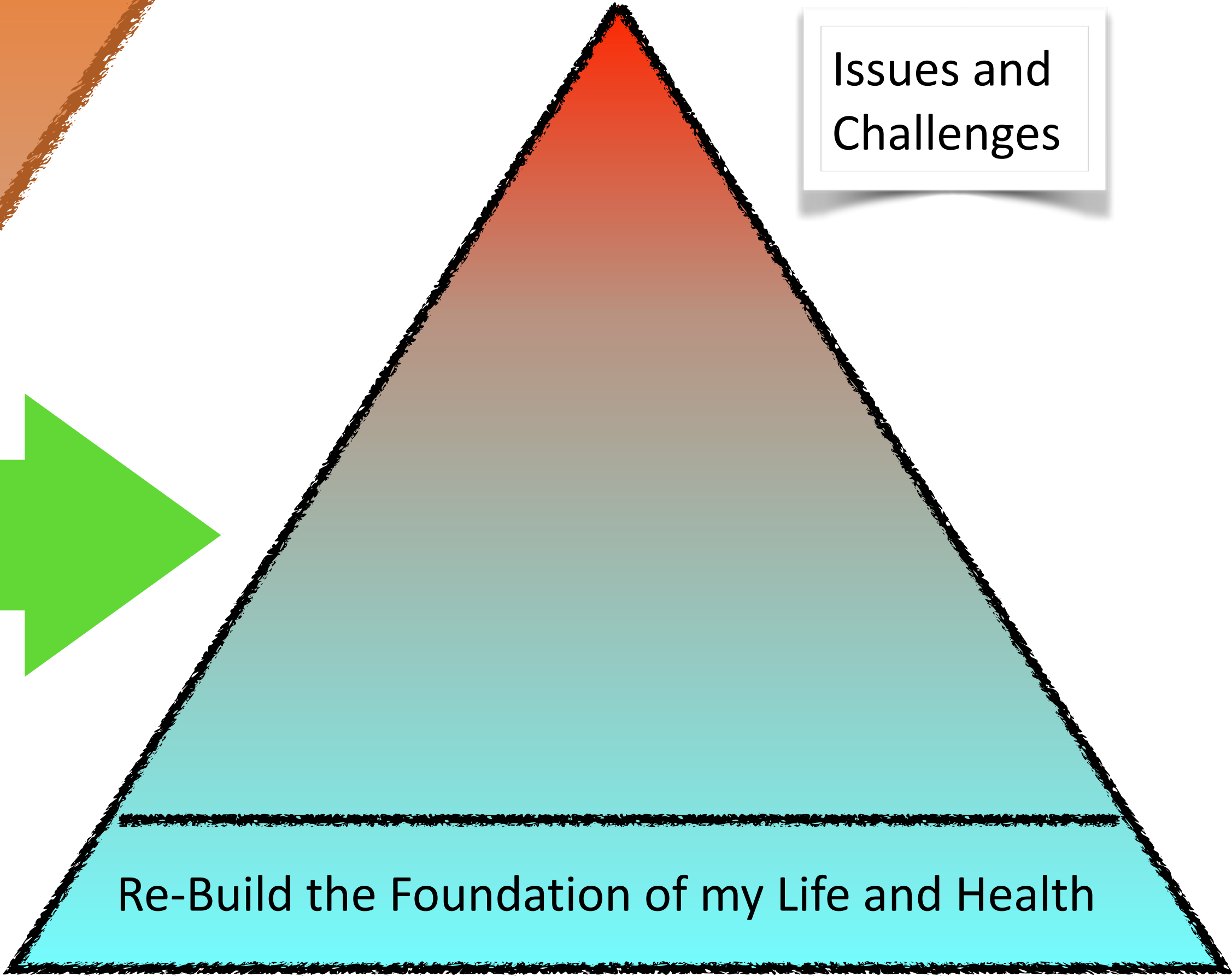
The “Upside Down Pyramid” Image



1. Cognitive
Reframe

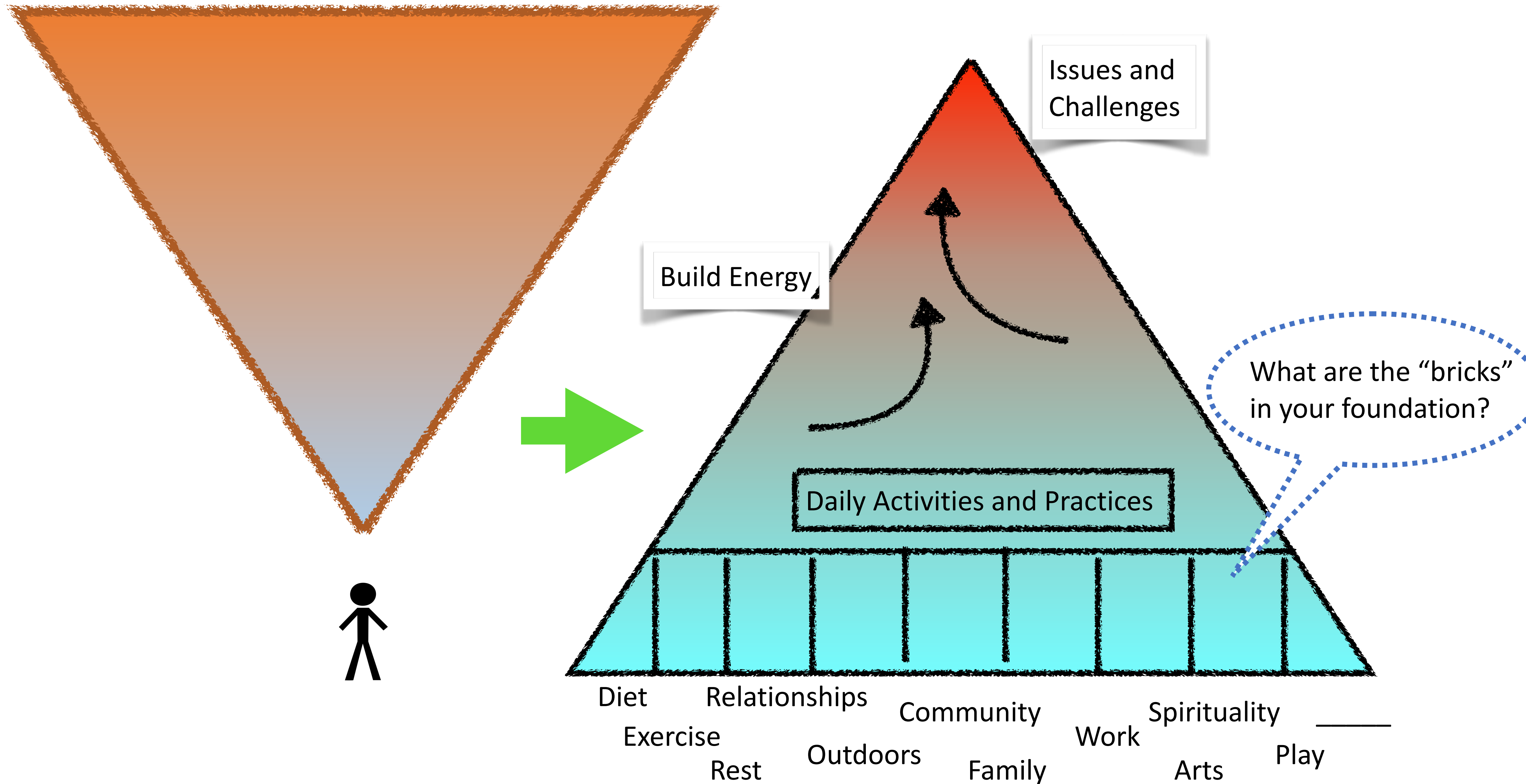


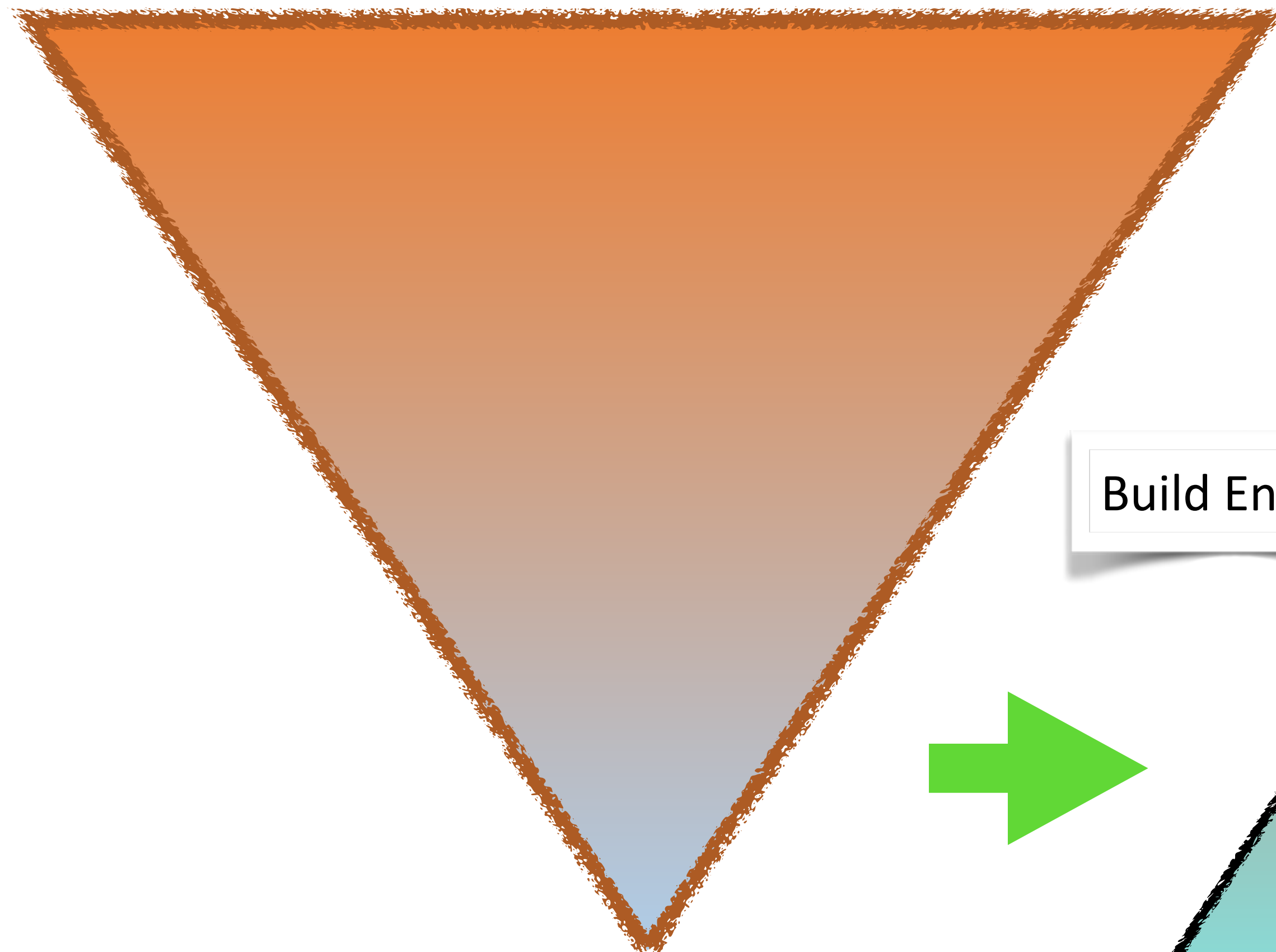
Issues and
Challenges



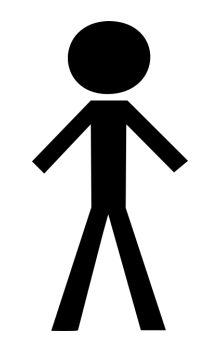
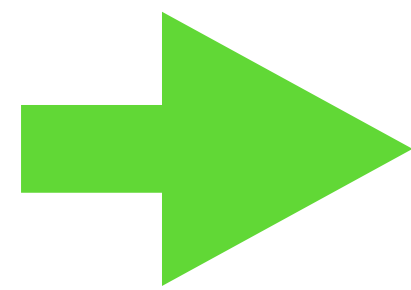
Re-Build the Foundation of my Life and Health

2. Focus on the Foundation

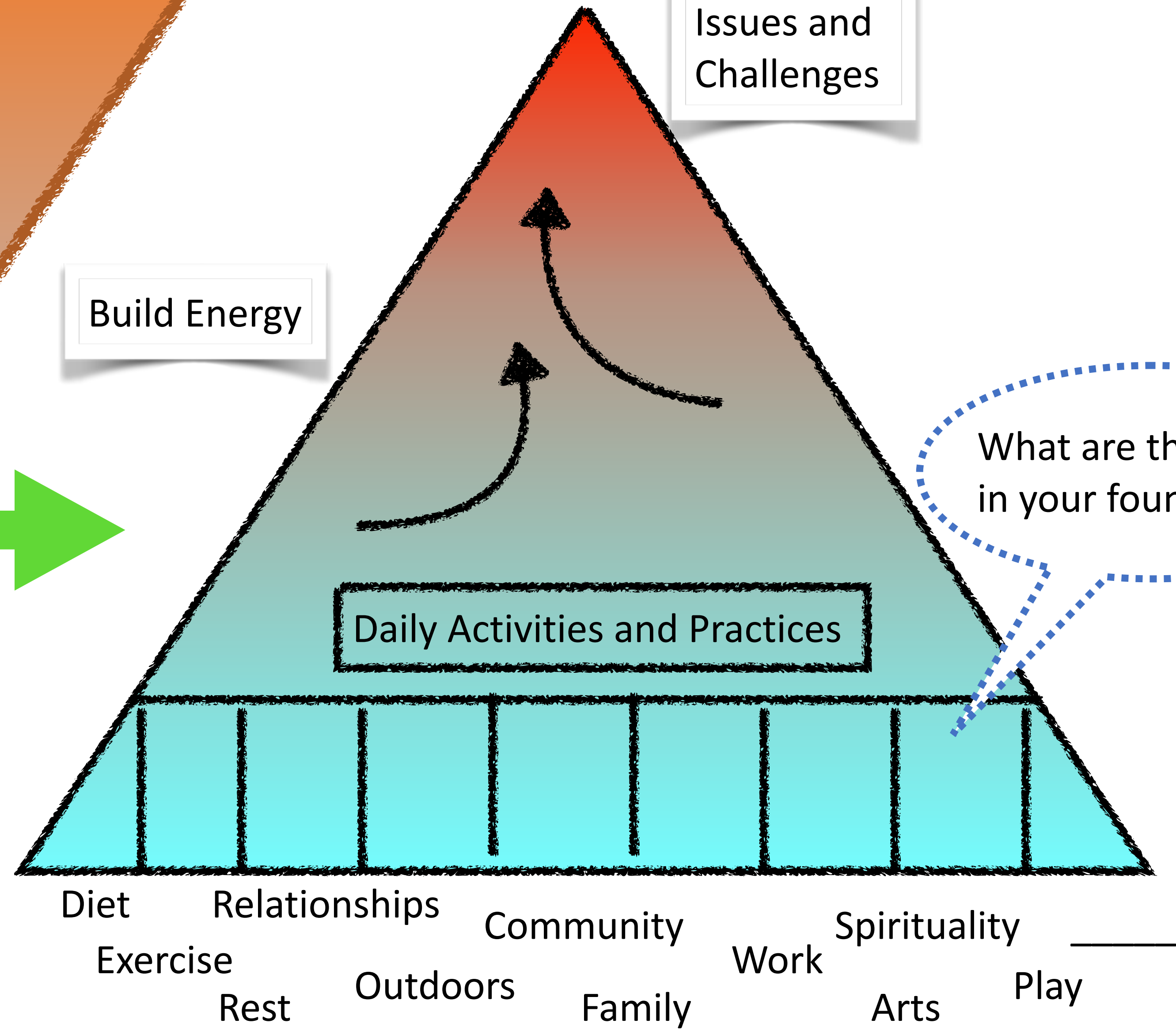




What to Keep?
What to Remove?
What to Add?



Build Energy



What are the “bricks”
in your foundation?



Dialog and Discussion

Please use Chat Box and Raise Hand as Needed

Post Reflection

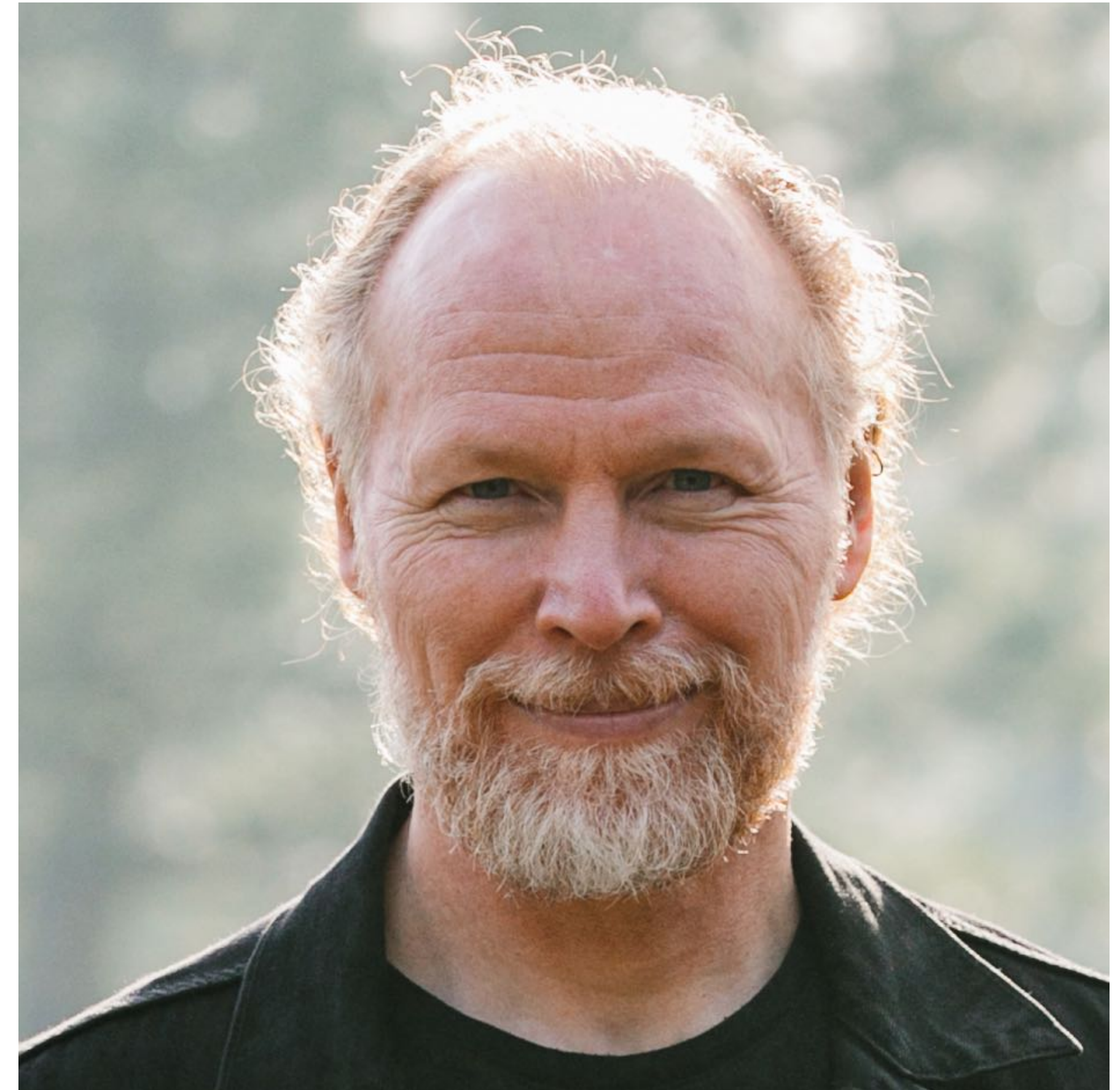
- “Attendees will gain clarity and empowerment about facilitating environmental discussions, and better ability to articulate their rationale for engaging in climate-related activities, and when this may be personally or professionally contraindicated.”
- “Attendees will be able to identify the emotional responses they are likely to encounter, and gain skills to better dialog with individuals from diverse cultural and economic backgrounds, to support environmental professionals and activists, and to appreciate the developmental needs of children and young people.”

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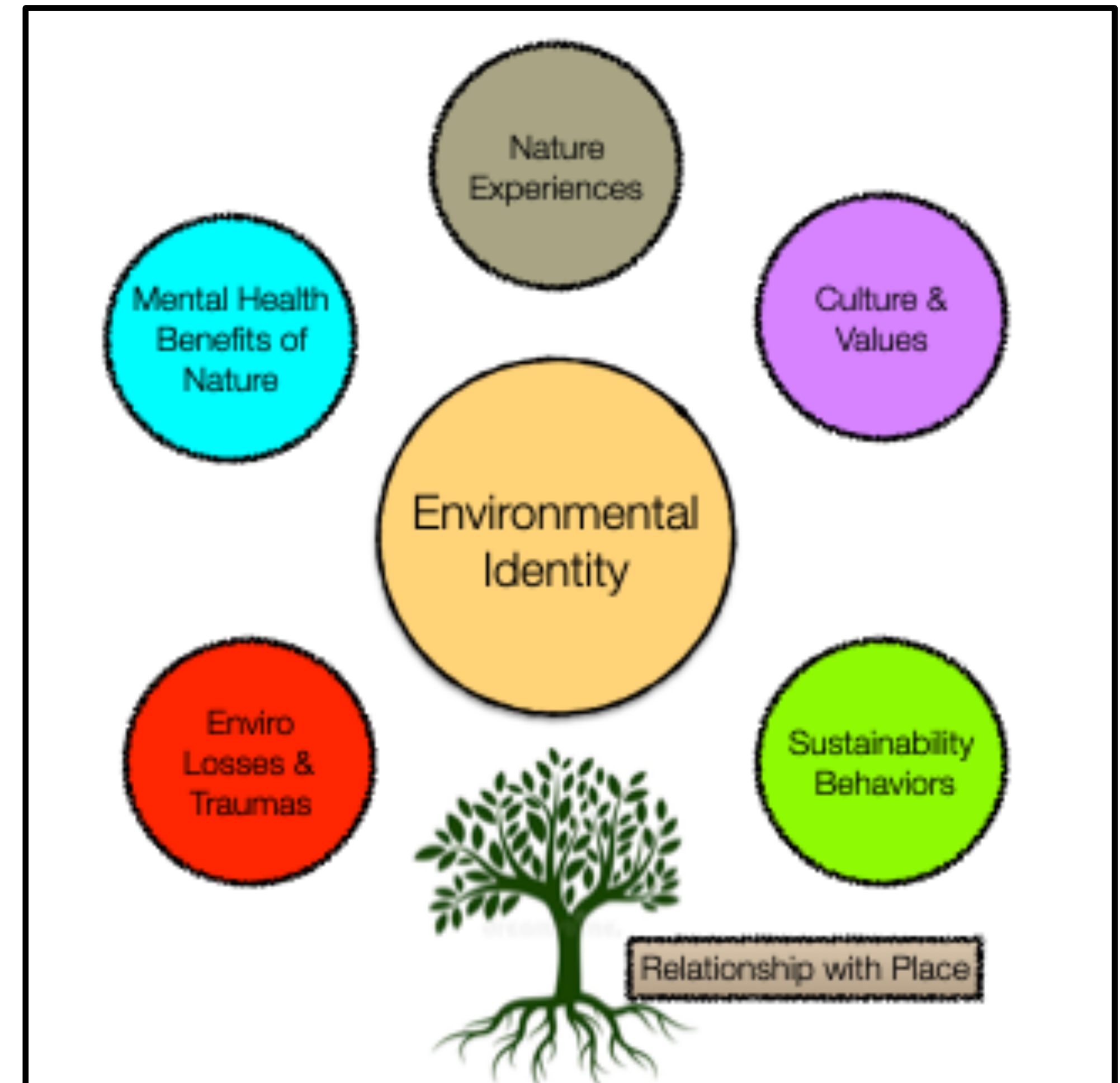
Additional Materials

Notable New Resources 4/30/21

- Daily Om Reflection: *Uncharted Territory*. <https://www.dailyom.com/cgi-bin/display/articledisplay.cgi?aid=77341>
- Milton, M. et al. (2020). Counseling psychology and climate change: A survey of the DCoP membership. *Counseling Psychology Review*, 35
- Kim Nicholas (2021) *Under the Sky We Make*
- Palinkas, L. A. et al. (2020). Strategies for delivering mental health services in response to global climate change: A narrative review. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17, 8562
- David Pogue (2020) *How to Prepare for Climate Change*

Activating Environmental Identity [Consciousness Raising, Psychoeducation, Social Psychology]

- EI Exercises [Art therapy]
 - Eco Time Line
 - Place Map
 - Eco-Genogram
 - Values List
 - Feelings List
 - Intersections w/ other forms of identity



Growing Your Environmental Identity



Eco-Anxiety: Anecdotal Evidence in 2007

- *“A growing number of people have literally worried themselves sick over a range of doomsday scenarios. Their worry has a name: Eco-anxiety.”*
 - Nobel, J. (2007, April 9). Eco-anxiety: Something else to worry about. The Philadelphia Enquirer. Retrieved April 15, 2007

Loss and Climate Change: The Cost of Parallel Narratives

Rosemary Randall
Director, Cambridge Carbon Footprint
United Kingdom.

Eco-Grief Work

Table 1. The Tasks of Grief		
	THE TASK	POSSIBLE NEGATIVE RESPONSES
1	Accepting the reality of the loss, first intellectually and then emotionally	Denial of the: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• facts of the loss;• meaning of the loss;• irreversibility of the loss.
2	Working through the painful emotions of grief (despair, fear, guilt, anger, shame, sadness, yearning, disorganization)	Shutting off all emotion, idealizing what is lost, bargaining, numbing the pain through alcohol, drugs, or manic activity
3	Adjusting to the new environment/acquiring new skills/developing a new sense of self	Not adapting, becoming helpless, bitter, angry, depressed, withdrawing
4	Reinvesting emotional energy	Refusing to love, turning away from life
Source: Adapted from Worden (1983).		

See also: Cunsolo, (2017) A. *Mourning Nature: Hope at the Heart of Ecological Loss and Grief*

THE DUAL PROCESS MODEL OF COPING WITH BEREAVEMENT: RATIONALE AND DESCRIPTION

MARGARET STROEBE and HENK SCHUT

Utrecht University, The Netherlands

There are shortcomings in traditional theorizing about effective ways of coping with bereavement, most notably, with respect to the so-called "grief work hypothesis." Criticisms include imprecise definition, failure to represent dynamic processing that is characteristic of grieving, lack of empirical evidence and validation across cultures and historical periods, and a limited focus on intrapersonal processes and on health outcomes. Therefore, a revised model of coping with bereavement, the dual process model, is proposed. This model identifies two types of stressors, loss- and restoration-oriented, and a dynamic, regulatory coping process of oscillation, whereby the grieving individual at times confronts, at other times avoids, the different tasks of grieving. This model proposes that adaptive coping is composed of confrontation-avoidance of loss and restoration stressors. It also argues the need for dosage of grieving, that is, the need to take respite from dealing with either of these stressors, as an integral part of adaptive coping. Empirical research to support this conceptualization is discussed, and the model's relevance to the examination of complicated grief, analysis of subgroup phenomena, as well as interpersonal coping processes, is described.

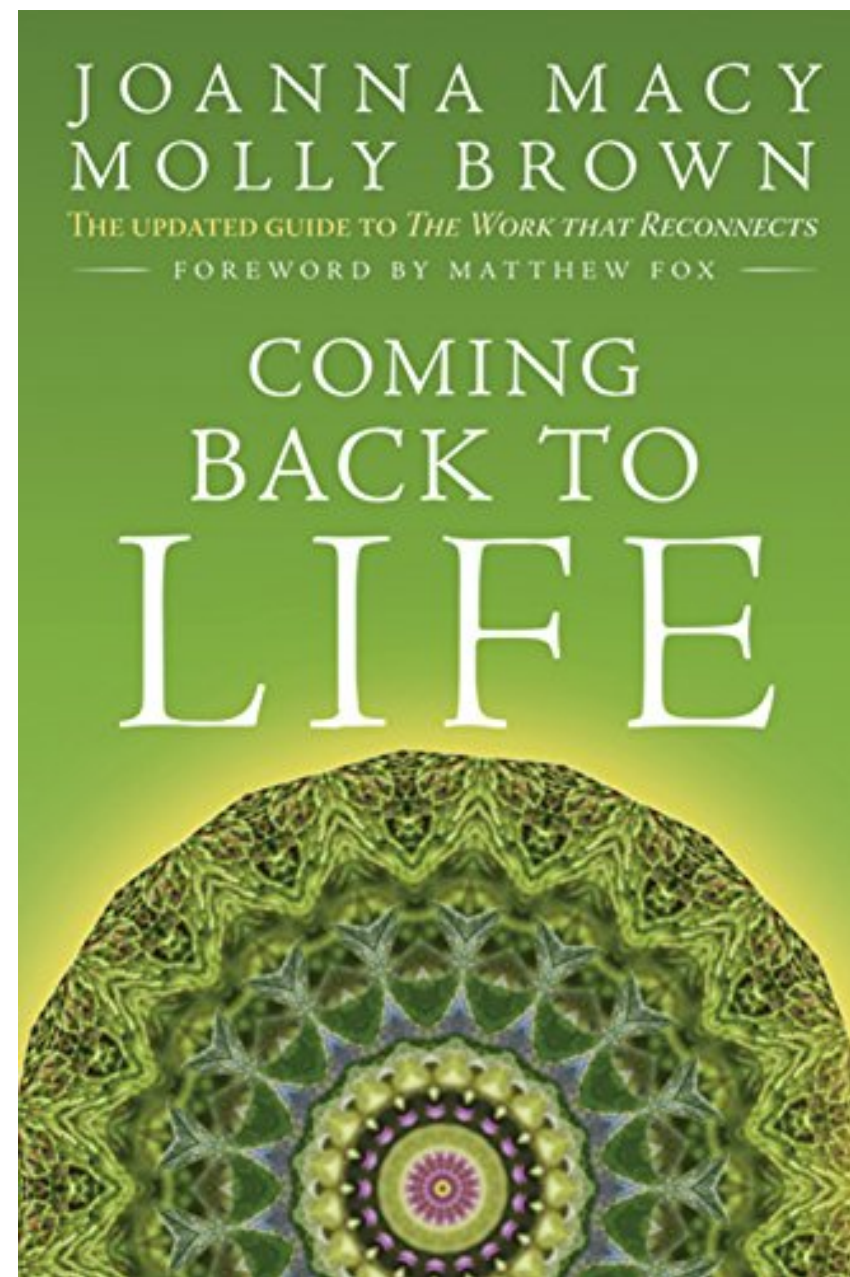
Dual Process Models for Bereavement Adapted to Environmental Grief



Figure 1. The Dual Process Model of Coping with Bereavement (Stroebe & Schut, 1999)

Toggling Between
Despair Work ...

Macy's "The Work that Reconnects"



“Of all the dangers
we face, from climate
chaos to nuclear war,
none is so great as the
deadening of our
response.”

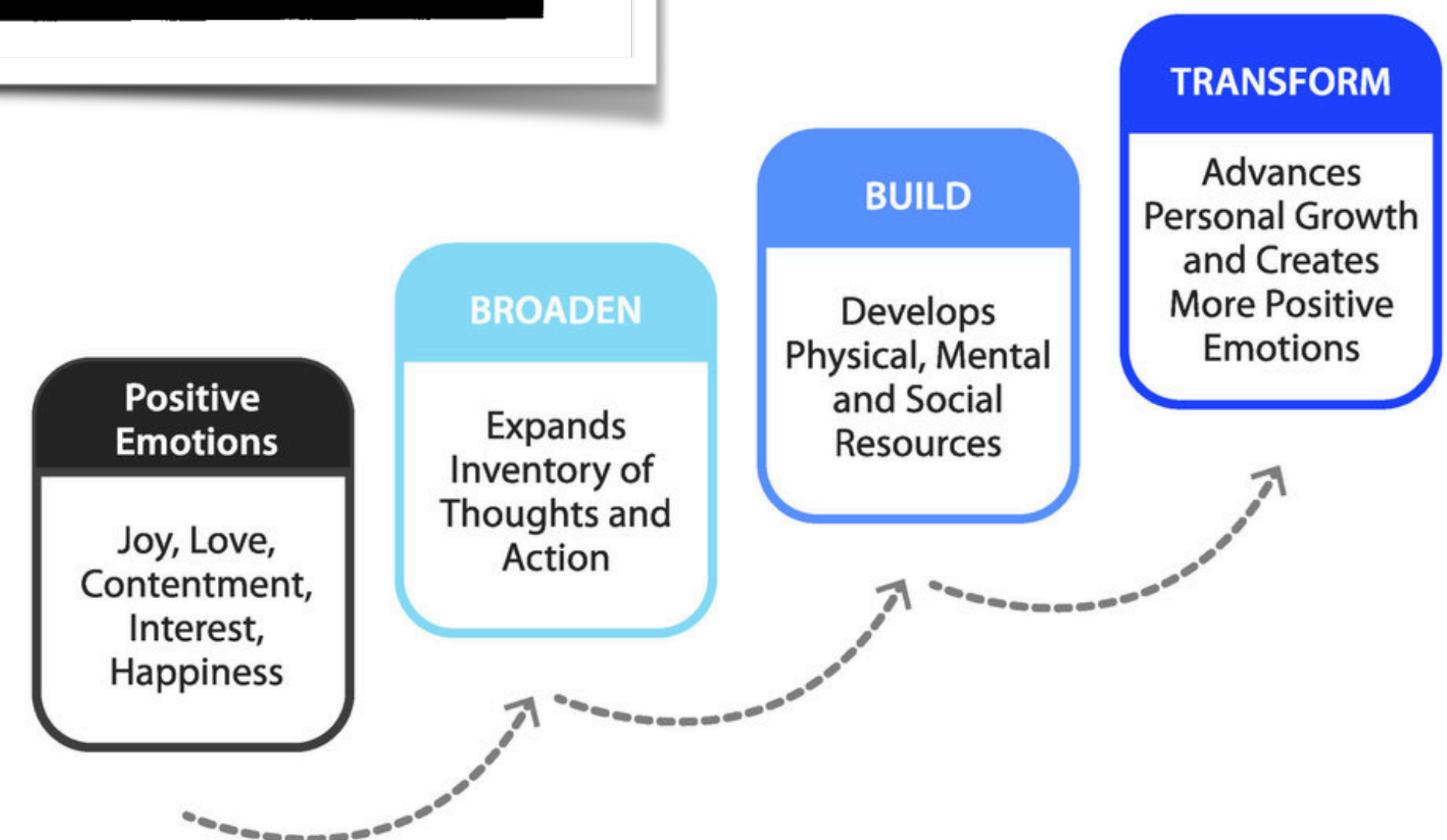
...and Broaden
and Build

Fredrickson's “Broaden & Build Theory”

The Role of Positive Emotions in Positive Psychology

The Broaden-and-Build Theory of Positive Emotions

Barbara L. Fredrickson
University of Michigan



Examples of Ecotherapy Tools and Techniques

- Metaphors and Graphic Images
- Imagery and Visualization
- Mindfulness and Meditation Practices in Nature
- Environmental Identity Time Line
- Eco-Genogram
- Childhood Place Mapping
- Eco-Confessional
- Coming Out Stories
- Nature or Outdoor Rituals

- Journaling in Nature
- Nature objects in office
- Walking Sessions
- Assigned outdoor activities
- Horticultural Therapy
- Partnering with Outdoor Guides or Programs
- Poetry, Literature, Arts
- Activism: “Front Line” Exercise

Outdoor Therapy Risk Management Plan

- Therapeutic Context and Goals
- Organizational Factors
- Cultural Factors
- Physical Environment
- Baseline risks for your area, type and frequency
 - (Use common sense, and then research)
- Therapist's (Tx's) Outdoor Skills
- Tx's Therapy Skills
- Risks to Tx, Client, Others?
- Efforts to mitigate risks?
- Liability?
- Choice
- Consent
- Go / No Go Decision
- Review / Debrief

Or: Partner w/ Outdoor Professionals — Hire a guide, rafting company, etc. that specializes in the activity, permits, liabilities.

Climate Disinformation

- Fossil fuel industry climate disinformation over the last 50 years, and its history and depth
- Psychologists as enablers or apologists for some of the fossil fuel industry misinformation (e.g., human failings due to evolution, cognitive biases, focusing on individual behavior change, social marketing, and deflecting from industry responsibility).
- Danger of psychology interventions as theater, not addressing deeper issues; pushing “fixed mindset” ideas (i.e., vs. “growth mindset,” see Carol Dweck’s work)
- Individual responsibility myth is *iatrogenic*, leads to self blame and despair