

UNDERSTANDING MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING: CONSIDERATIONS FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH SPINA BIFIDA AND THEIR FAMILIES



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WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH?

How people think, feel, and act as they cope with life

Good mental health: generally being able to think, feel, and react in the ways that you need and want to in order to live your life

Everyone feels worried, anxious, sad, or stressed sometimes.

These feelings become *problematic* if they **do not go away**
and/or **interfere with daily life.**

MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

- **Common**
 - Affect around one in four people in any given year
- Many types of mental health problems
 - Anxiety
 - Depression
 - PTSD
 - Schizophrenia
 - Bipolar Disorder



MENTAL HEALTH & SPINA BIFIDA

- Research has found that (compared to typically developing peers), children/adolescents/young adults with SB have:
 - Lower health-related quality of life (HRQOL)
 - Higher levels of depressive symptoms
 - Lower self-esteem
 - More social difficulties

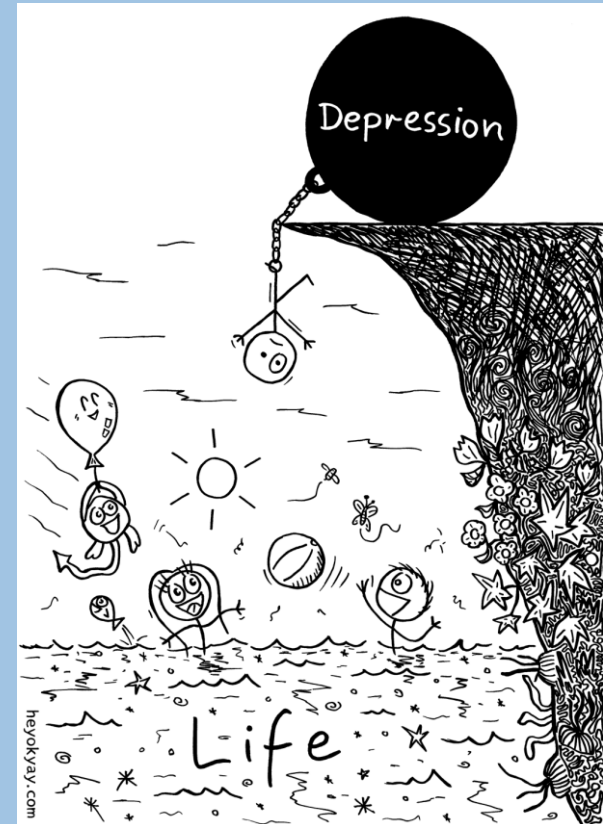


DEPRESSION



DEPRESSION

- Feeling sad or having a depressed mood
 - Irritability
- Loss of interest or pleasure in activities
- Changes in appetite (overeating, appetite loss)
- Changes in sleep
- Loss of energy
- Changes in activity levels (restlessness)
- Feeling worthless, guilty, helpless, or hopeless
- Difficulty thinking, concentrating or making decisions
- Thoughts of death or suicide



ANXIETY DISORDERS

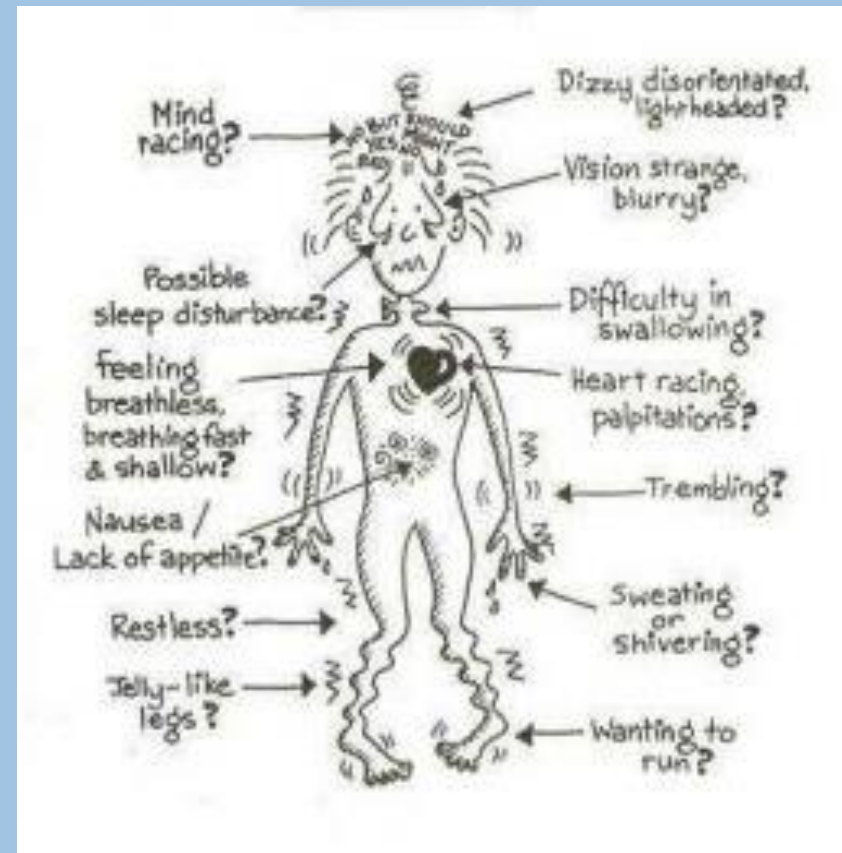
Disorders that are characterized by excessive *fear* and *anxiety* and related behavioral disturbances

- Generalized Anxiety Disorder
- Panic Disorder
- Specific Phobia(s)
- Agoraphobia
- Social Anxiety Disorder
- Separation Anxiety Disorder



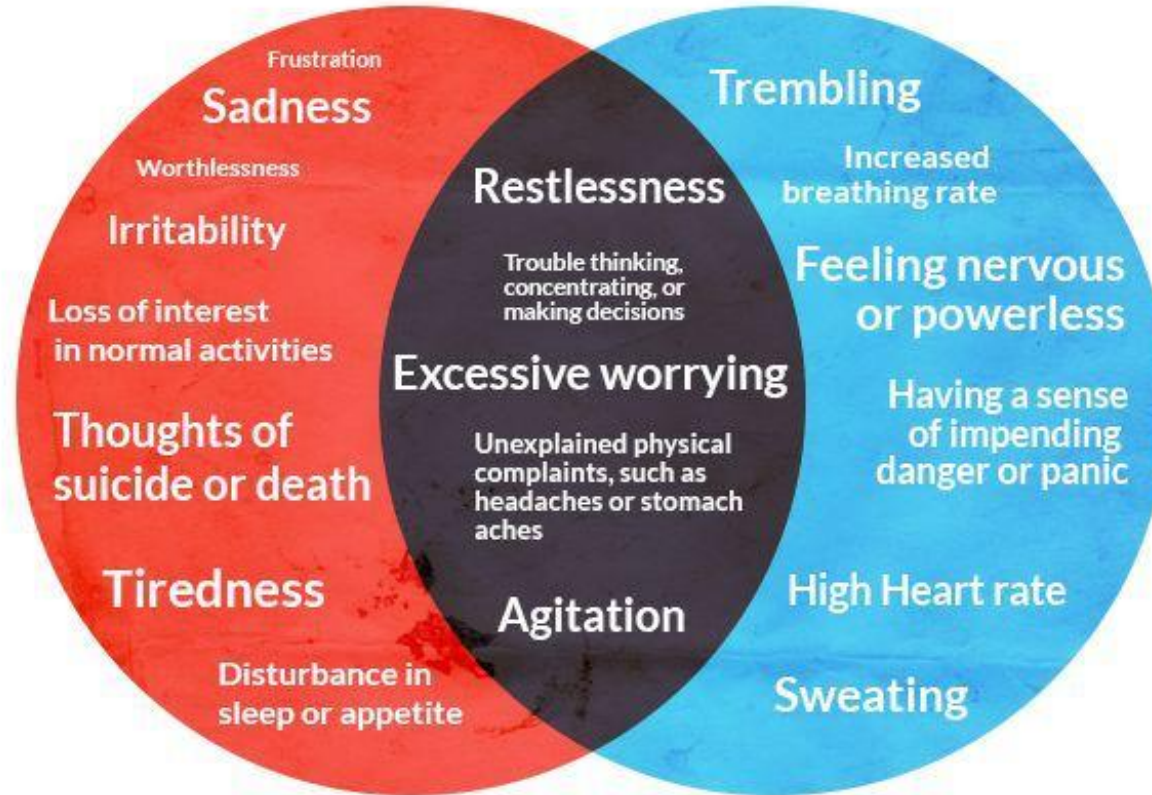
SYMPTOMS OF GENERALIZED ANXIETY

- Excessive anxiety and worry that is difficult to control
- Associated with physical symptoms
 - Restlessness or feeling keyed up or on edge
 - Being easily fatigued
 - Difficulty concentrating or mind going blank
 - Irritability
 - Muscle tension
 - Sleep disturbance (difficulty falling or staying asleep)



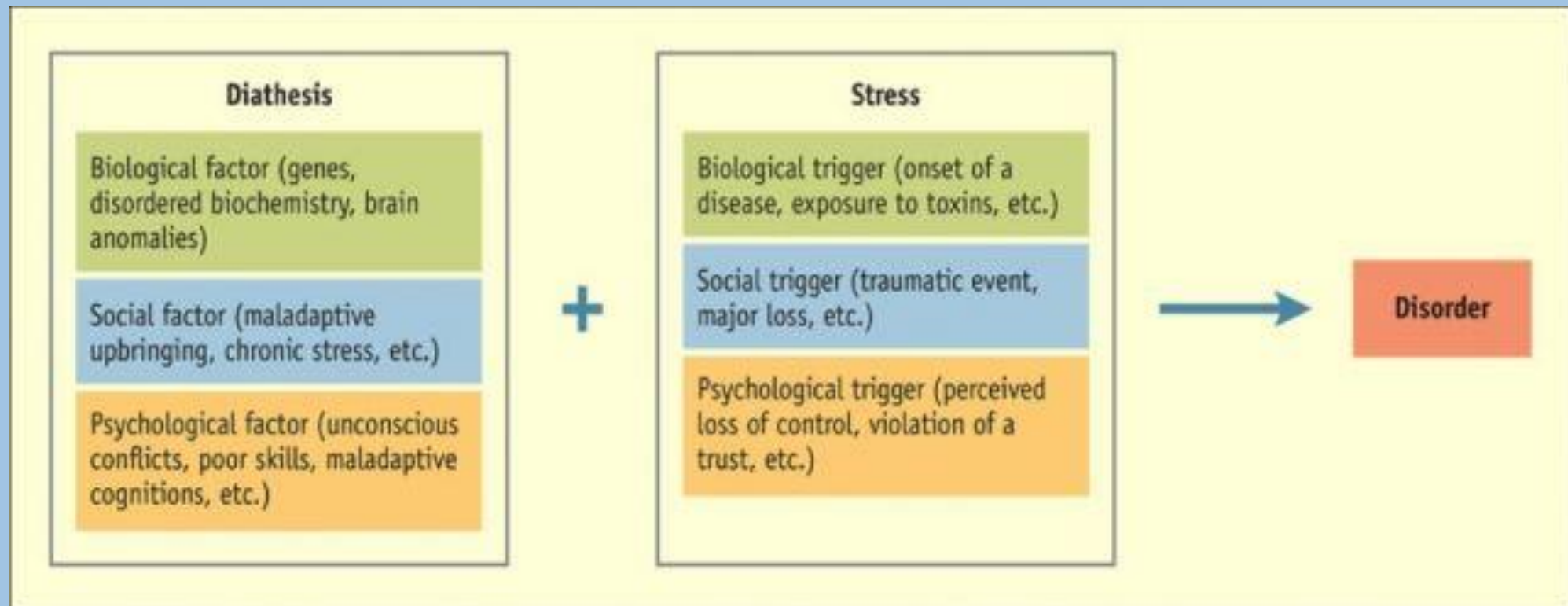
Depression

Anxiety





WHAT CAUSES DEPRESSION & ANXIETY?

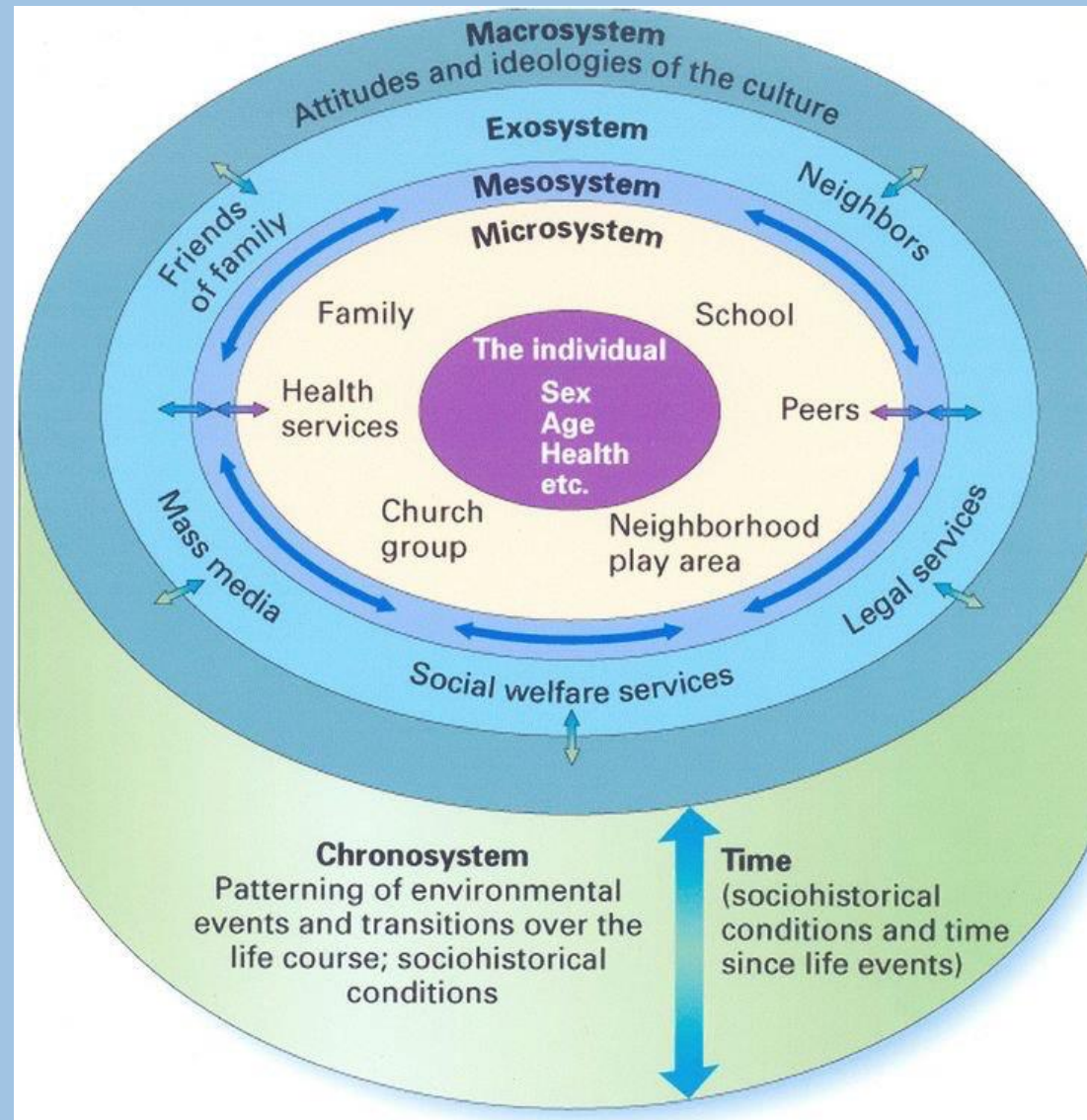


WHAT CAUSES DEPRESSION & ANXIETY?

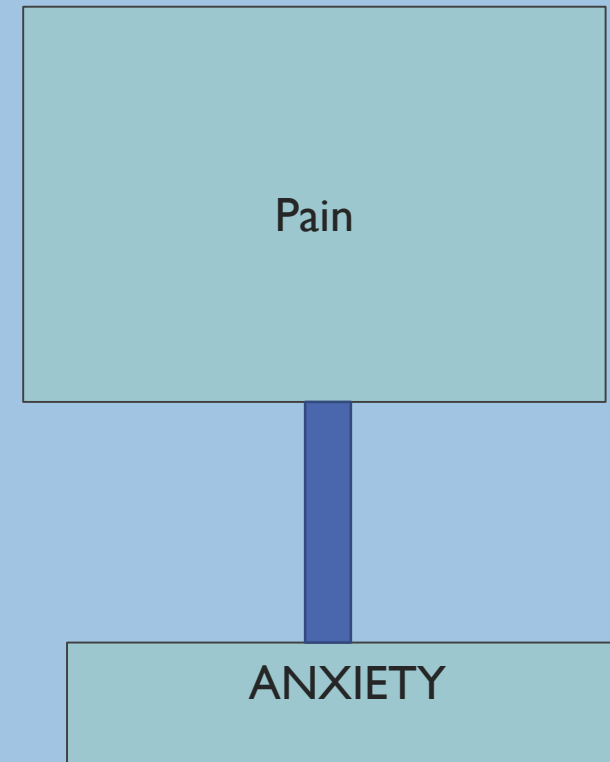
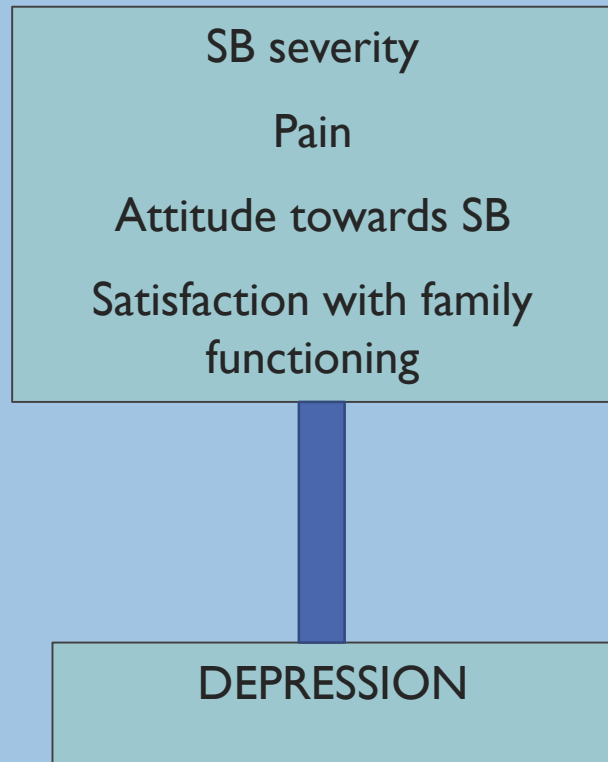
- Biochemistry – differences in chemicals in the brain
- Genetics – depression can run in families
- Personality
- Thinking patterns
- Stress
- Low self-esteem
- Environmental factors
 - For example, exposure to violence, neglect, abuse or poverty

WHY DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY IN SB?

- Many of the known risk factors for depression co-occur with spina bifida
 - Other medical conditions (e.g., hydrocephalus, chronic pain)
 - ADHD
 - Chronic stress (at home, school, work, or from something else like surgery)
 - Low self-esteem
 - Decreased social support & isolation
 - Learned helplessness

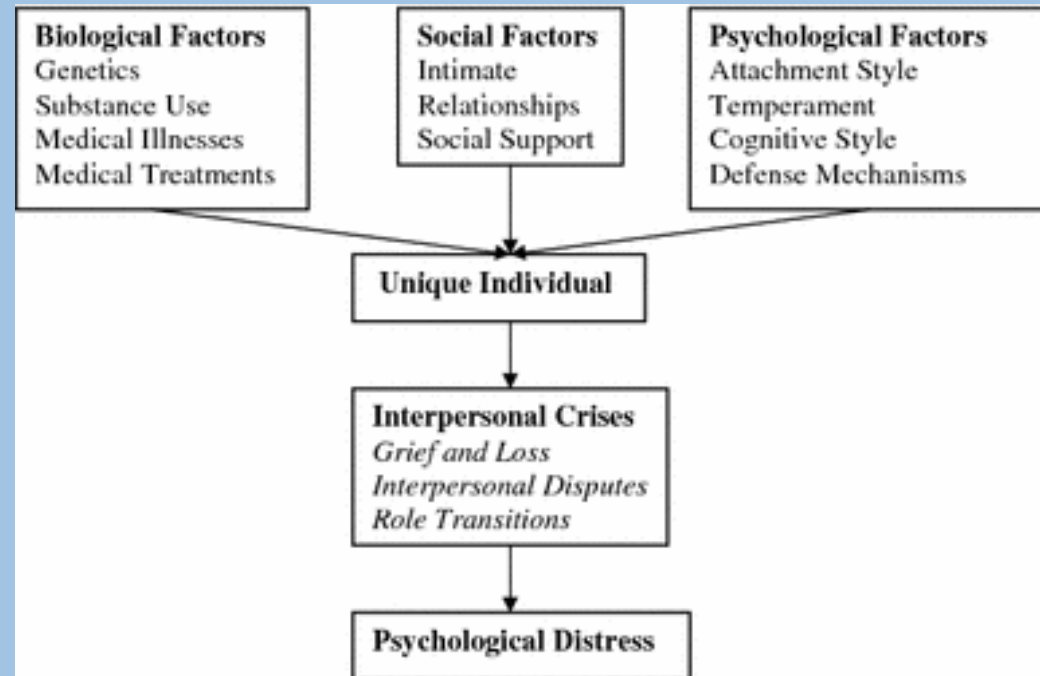


WHY DEPRESSION & ANXIETY WITH SB?



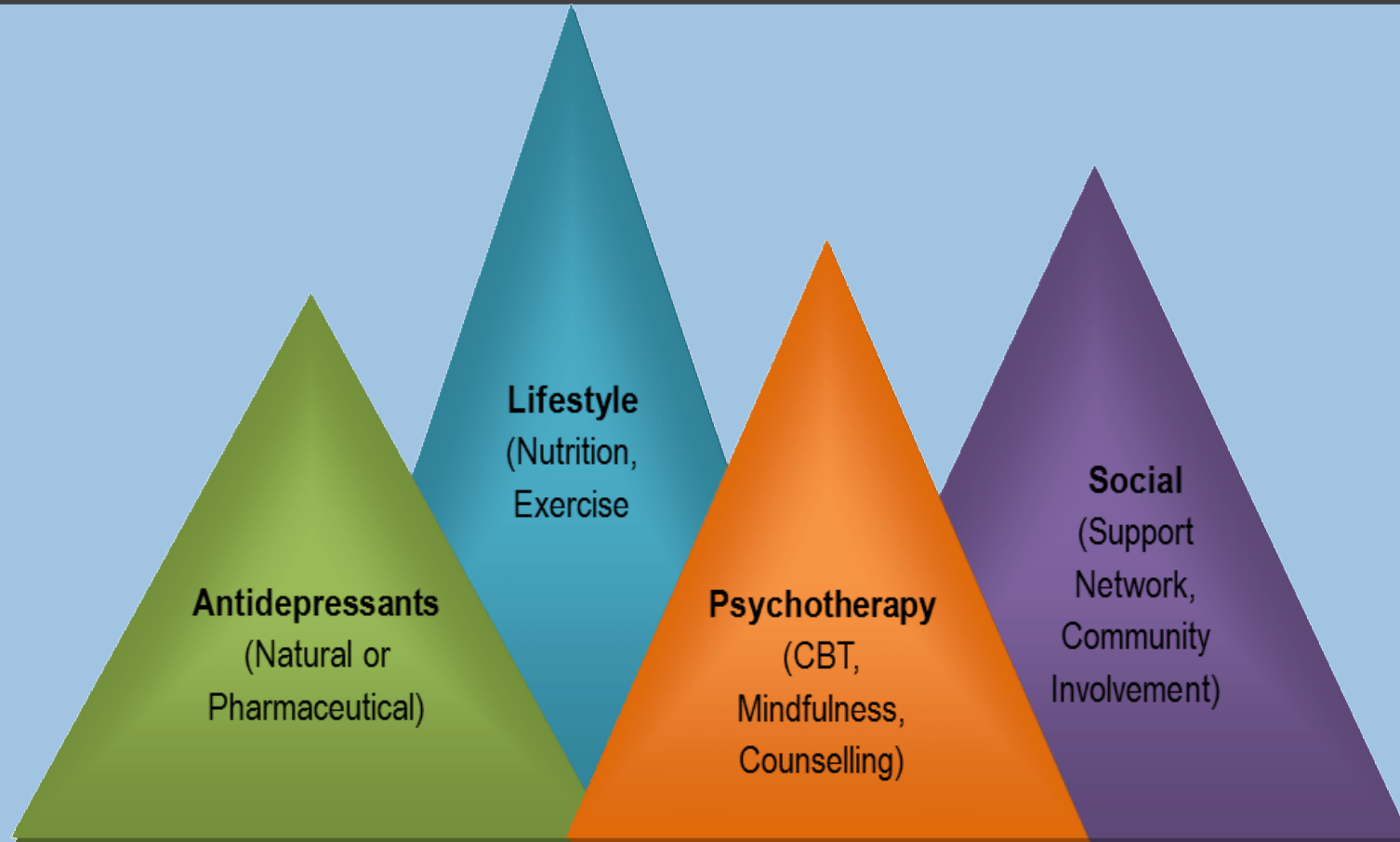
THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL FUNCTIONING

- Children with SB (+ their parents) report more social problems than TD peers
- Youth with SB tend to be more passive than TD peers
- Across the lifespan, individuals with SB spend more time in the home, less time with friends
- Social difficulties continue through adolescence and young adulthood





TREATMENT OPTIONS



LIFESTYLE & SOCIAL CHANGES

- Regular exercise
- Healthy diet
- Consistent sleep habits & quality sleep
- Stress management
- Support from friends, family, other individuals (e.g., members of religious group)

BOOST YOUR COPING SKILLS

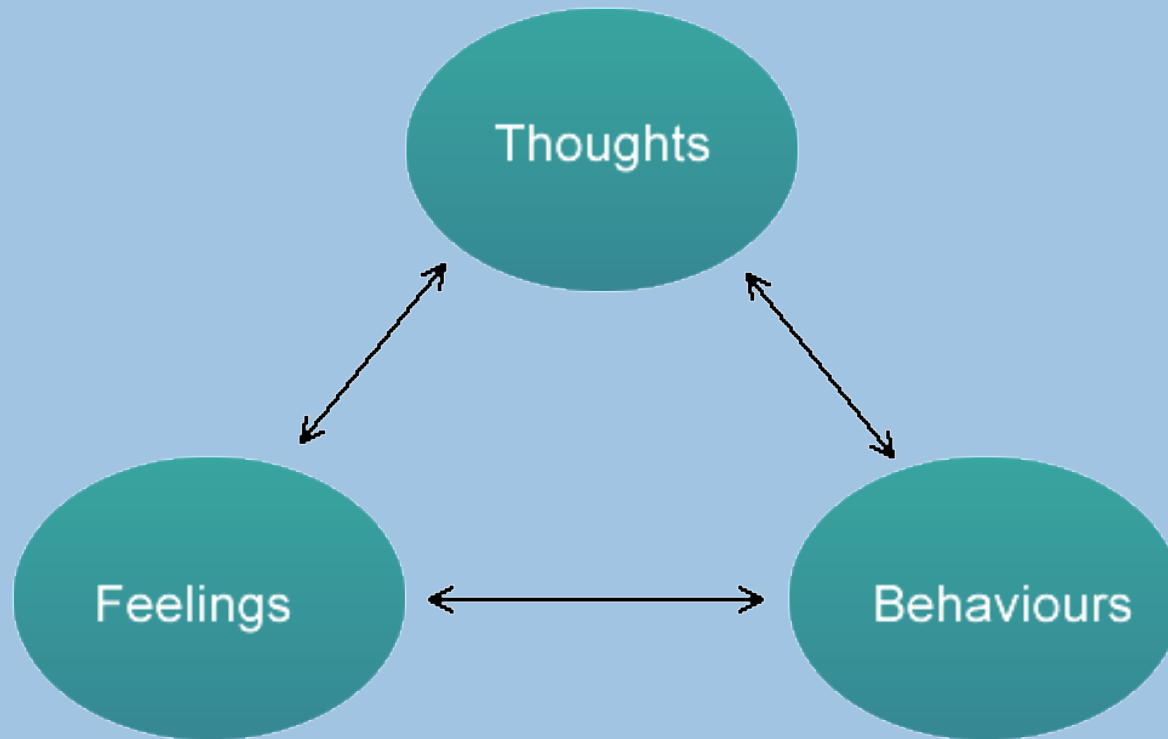
- Deep breathing
- Relaxation exercises
- Coping statements
- Mindfulness
- Behavioral activation

PROFESSIONAL TREATMENT

- Medications
- Psychotherapy



COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY



CBT model demonstrating the reciprocal influence that thoughts, feelings and behaviours can have on each other.

REVIEW – WARNING SIGNS

- Feeling unexplainably fatigued
- Withdrawal from family and friends
- Difficulty concentrating
- Difficulty making decisions
- Avoidance of preferred/desired activities
- Thoughts of hurting yourself or that you'd be better off dead



HOW TO FIND HELP

1. Consult your doctor – rule out a physical cause of symptoms
 - Symptoms could be related to shunt malfunction or infection or be side effects of medications
2. Consult a psychiatrist or psychologist
 - Assessment will include LOTS of questions about medical, developmental, and family history

THANK YOU! QUESTIONS?