LEVEL UP! AN EXPERIENTIAL ADHD SKILLS GROUP FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS

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LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to acknowledge the land on which the University of Oswego operates, which is the territory of the Onondaga Nation, the "people of the hills", or central firekeepers of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the Indigenous peoples on whose ancestral lands SUNY Oswego now stands.

At the end of this training, you will be able to:

- Identify Key Aspects of the Experiential Learning Model and How They Support Skill Development in Students with ADHD

- Explore Hands-On, Interactive Activities and Games that Can Be Creatively Used to Teach Tools and Strategies for Managing ADHD and Executive Function Challenges in the Group Setting

- Learn Strategies for Creating a Unique Group Design, Session Flow, and Thematic Progression of a 10-Week Experiential ADHD Skills Group

- Develop Practical Strategies for Implementing this Group Model and Adapting it to Fit your Specific Clinical or Institutional Setting

ADHD prevalence and Impact on College Students

- Recent 2023 study showed as high as16%
  (Statista Research Department, Nov 18, 2024)

- Many students are undiagnosed and/or untreated

- More likely to have lower GPAs

- Take longer to graduate

- Withdraw from courses or college more frequently

- Increased rates of depression, anxiety, substance use, and academic probation
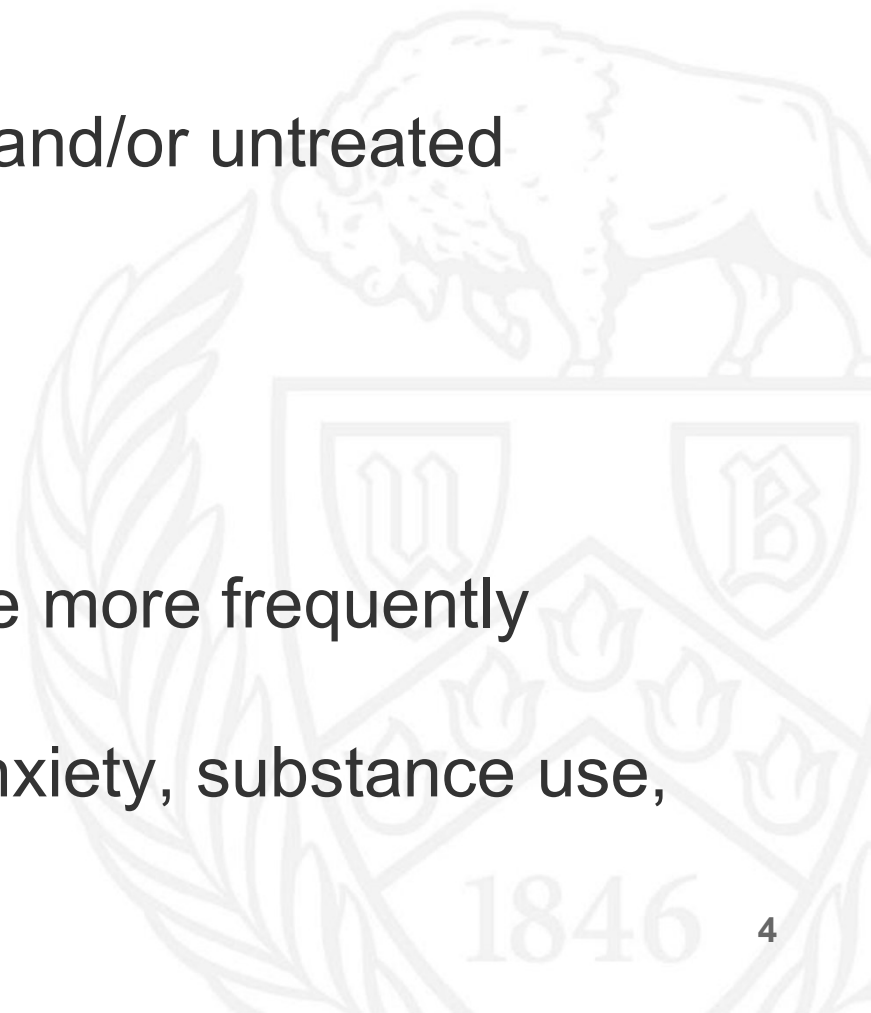
Executive Function (EF) Challenges in the Academic Setting

- Time Management

- Task initiation / Mental Paralysis

- Working Memory

- Sustained Attention

- Planning and Organization

- Same skills required for independent academic life

- Challenges can lead to shame and underachievement
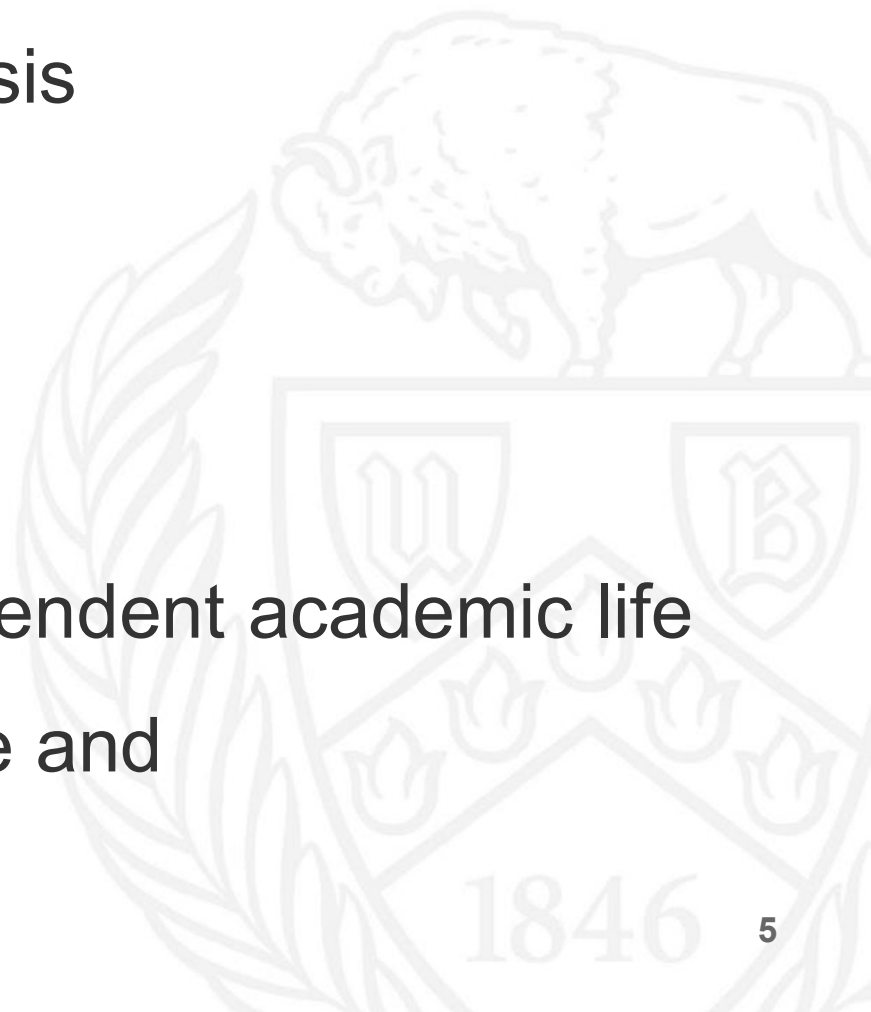
Overview of Experiential Learning Model

Learning by doing and reflecting on experiences, rather than solely relying on passive information intake

Why it Works -

- Engages **multiple modalities** (movement, discussion, visuals)

- Provides **real-time feedback** and concrete application

- Fosters **autonomy and internal motivation**

- Encourages **peer interaction** and social learning

Four-Stage Learning Cycle

Stage	Description	ADHD / EF Benefit
Concrete Experience	Doing or having an experience (i.e. playing a game or activity)	Activates attention through novelty and movement
Reflective Observation	Reviewing and reflecting on the experience	Builds metacognition and emotional insight
Abstract Conceptualization	Learning from the experience – making connections and gaining insights	Helps organize ideas and strategies
Active Experimentation	Trying out new strategies in real life	Encourages transfer of skills to daily academic life

Intersectionality
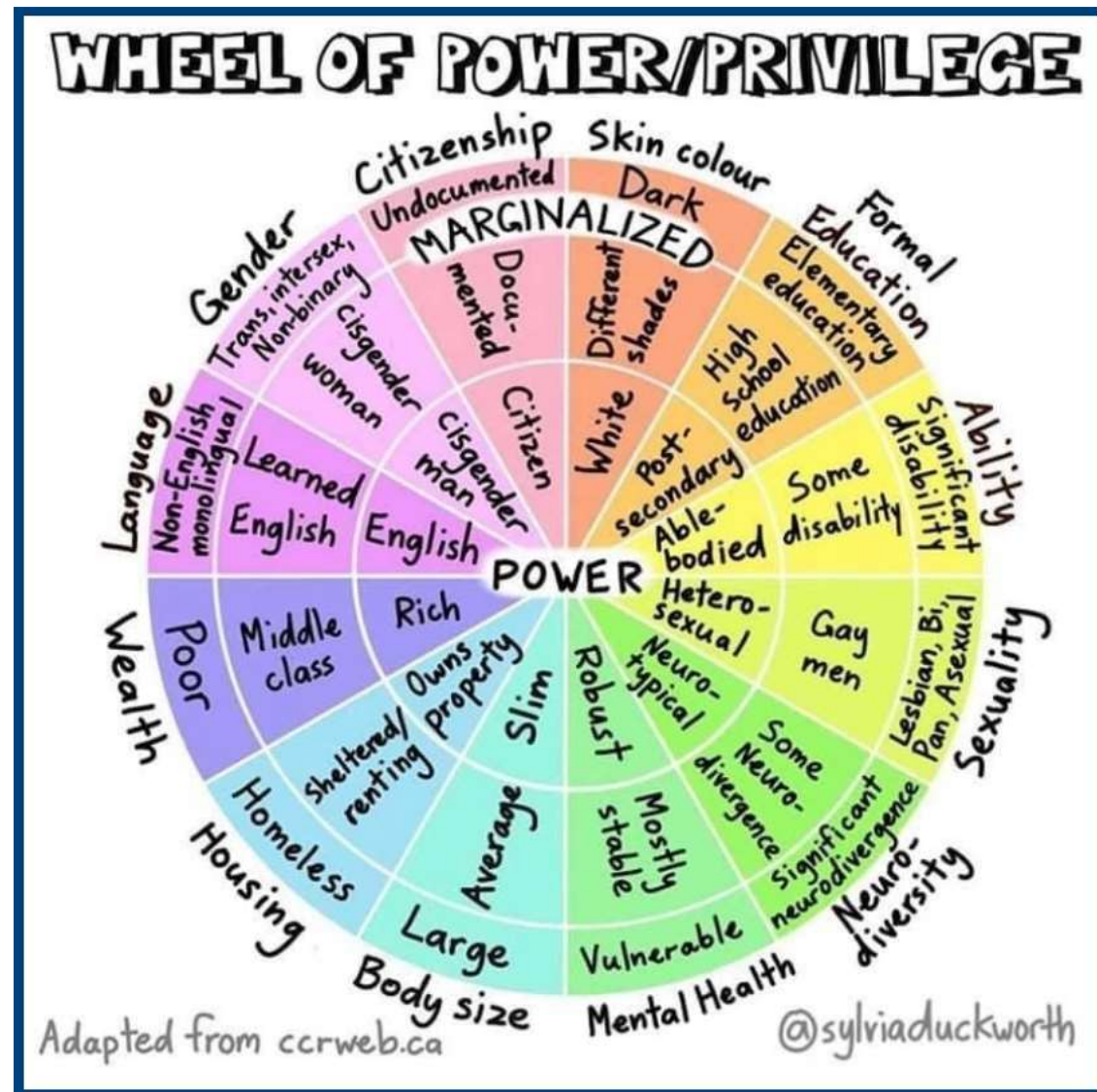
UB Group Overview – Fall 2024

Group Design:

- In Person Group

- 10 Weekly Sessions

- Pre-Screens prior to group

- Held on Thursday's from 3:00 – 4:00 PM

Outcomes:

- 10 Enrolled & 5 on Waitlist

- Three (3) Withdrew before 3rd session
  Not a good fit or couldn't commit

- Four (4) Attended 8 out of 10 Sessions

- Three (3) Attended 9 out of 10 Sessions

UB Group Overview –
Spring 2025: In-Person Option

Group Design:

- Planned for 10 Weekly Sessions
  Ran 8 due to unexpected events

- Pre-Screens prior to group

- Held on Wednesday's from 5:00 – 6:30 PM

Outcomes:

- 11 Enrolled
  Half full before semester started

- Three (3) Dropped out due to no showing
  No reason given

- Four (4) Attended 7 out of 8 sessions

- Four (4) Attended all 8 sessions

UB Group Overview –
Spring 2025: Zoom Option

Group Design:

- Zoom

- 9 Weekly Sessions

- Pre-Screens prior to group

- Held on Thursday's from 3:30 – 4:30

Outcomes:

- Five (5) Enrolled at launch
  Two (2) Additional enrolled after launch

- One (1) never attended

- Three (3) Stopped attending after the third session

- Two (2) Attended 6 out of 9

- One (1) Attended 7 out of 9

- One (1) Session was not held due to no participants

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UB Satisfaction Survey Results – Fall 2024

Agree or Strongly Agree	Focus Area
6	Gained better understanding of organizational system & effectively use them
6	Better able to develop problem solving skills
6	Understand impact that work environment has on distraction
6	Learned how to identify & dispute negative and/or unhelpful thoughts that impact focus & productivity
6	Able to use group environment to discuss successes & challenges as they committed to trying new skills
4	Overall Well-being has improved by end of group
5	Satisfied with the quality of their group counseling experience
5	Would recommend group counseling to a friend

7 students completed survey

What has been most helpful about this group?

- "The social aspect mainly, as group setting allowed me to open up more and be more in tuned with myself"

- "Knowing others struggle with the same issues I have"

- "It was nice to go over skills again"

- "It helped me prioritize my mental health"

- "I like the processing aspect of group mostly, and just feeling like I'm not alone really helped"

- "Exercises"

What would you like to see changed?

"I would like to see myself get better over all in terms of all the skills taught in group"

"Honestly I don't know what I would change, I feel like the group met my expectations"

"More interactive activities"

UB Satisfaction Survey Results – Spring 2025 (In-Person)

Agree or Strongly Agree	Focus Area
7	Gained better understanding of organizational system & effectively use them
6	Better able to develop problem solving skills
7	Understand impact that work environment has on distraction
6	Learned how to identify & dispute negative and/or unhelpful thoughts that impact focus & productivity
7	Able to use group environment to discuss successes & challenges as they committed to trying new skills
6	Overall Well-being has improved by end of group
7	Satisfied with the quality of their group counseling experience
6	Would recommend group counseling to a friend

7 out of 11 completed survey

What has been most helpful about this group?

"Learning about the "Flora app"

"Hands on activity"

"It was very helpful to spend time with other people who have similar struggles as me"

What would you like to see changed?

"If there's a change, I'd like to see it would 1 – be more time (lol). But an actual change would be to have additional time at the end or beginning where we can off-topic discuss our days and how our weeks have been going, as well as some of the challenges from said week"

"I wish there was less of an opportunity for individuals to take over a whole session"

"More topics focused directly on ADHD"

COMMENTS

"Simply, I'm truly glad I was able to be a part of this. Having group with peers of the same neurodivergency has made me feel accepted & like I'm not alone. It's difficult feeling like you're the only one different and struggling, but seeing others like me succeeding has inspired me greatly."

"This was very helpful and I would recommend it to anyone who struggles. It made me feel much less alone."

"I'd prefer that use of Generative AI be avoided at all costs"

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UB Satisfaction Survey Results – Spring 2025 (Zoom)

Agree or Strongly Agree	Focus Area
3	Gained better understanding of organizational system & effectively use them
3	Better able to develop problem solving skills
3	Understand impact that work environment has on distraction
2	Learned how to identify & dispute negative and/or unhelpful thoughts that impact focus & productivity
3	Able to use group environment to discuss successes & challenges as they committed to trying new skills
3	Overall Well-being has improved by end of group
3	Satisfied with the quality of their group counseling experience
2	Would recommend group counseling to a friend

3 out of 7 completed survey

What has been most helpful about this group?

"The large amount of skills and organizational help that was provided in a setting fit for college age adults. Allowing us to see others and how they dealt with these "tools" also was good to see from different perspectives and situations"

"The workshop and support group model"

"Encouragement, taking through things, having a safe space to be honest"

What would you like to see changed?

"Longer sessions. It then would be more personal and larger in-depth questions can be answered. As well as more discussion could happen"

"It would be nice if the slideshows were sent to us after the meetings. I tend to be very forgetful and sometimes it's hard to jot things down during the meeting"

"Would love this to be expanded and have one group go through the entire semester"

"This was an amazing experience and I'm honestly going to miss it a lot. Thank you so much for all you have done. Being a part of this group has pushed me in a better direction and I hope you are proud of the impact you had ☺ Thank you!"

"A lot of the group felt heavily lead. Which is good however more discussion and reflection could have been nicer after acquiring new skills or techniques."

"This was a fantastic experience, I wish this was longer and didn't have to end so quickly. All of the skills I learned were available has made me become more confident in dealing with future challenges."

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Overview of Group

- First Session – Introductions, Group Rules & Expectations, and Pre-Self-Assessment

- Check-In and Check-Out Questions

- Generally, two activities or games each session with reflection questions

10-Week Program Walk-Through

Session 1	Positive Self-Image & Understanding Your ADHD
Session 2	Time Management
Session 3	Organization & Problem-Solving
Session 4	Emotional Wellness & Regulation
Session 5	Addressing Distraction
Session 6	Overcoming Mental Paralysis
Session 7	Unhelpful Thinking Patterns
Session 8	Your Thinking Style & Building Healthy Habits
Session 9	Switching vs. Multi-tasking & Impulsivity
Session 10	Goal Setting & Planning for Progress

Session 1 –
Positive Self-Image & Understanding Your ADHD

- Introductions / Group rules & Expectations

- ADHD Challenges Wheel (Pre Self-Assessment Screening)

- Self-Reflection Puzzle Activity

- Perpetual Commotion
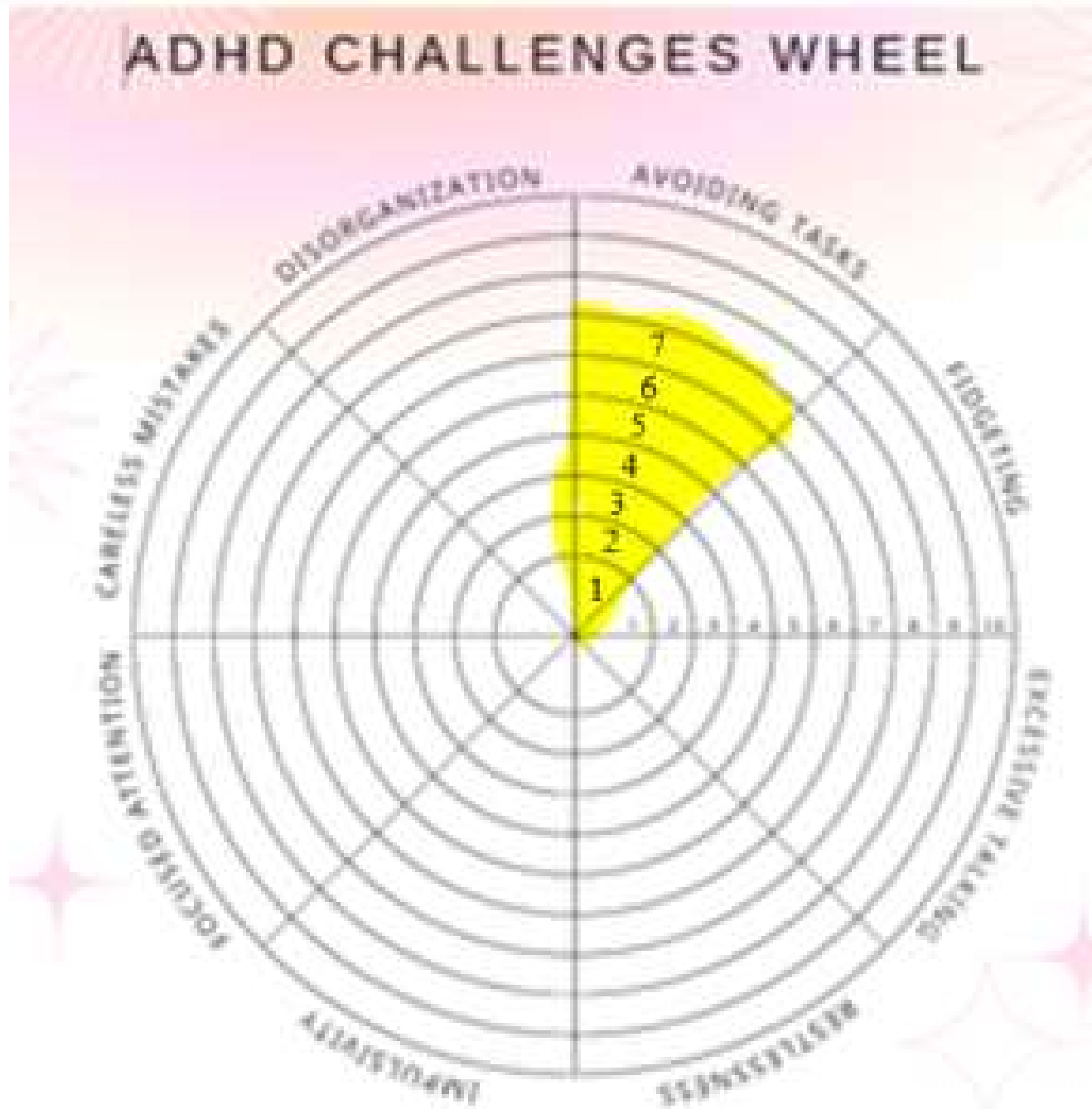
Respectful

Hard Working

Honest

Helping Others

Creative

Open Minded

Ambitious

Kind

Determined

Organized

Resourceful

Good Writer

Self-Aware

Calm

Loyal

Willing to take risks

Curious

Punctual

Good Listener
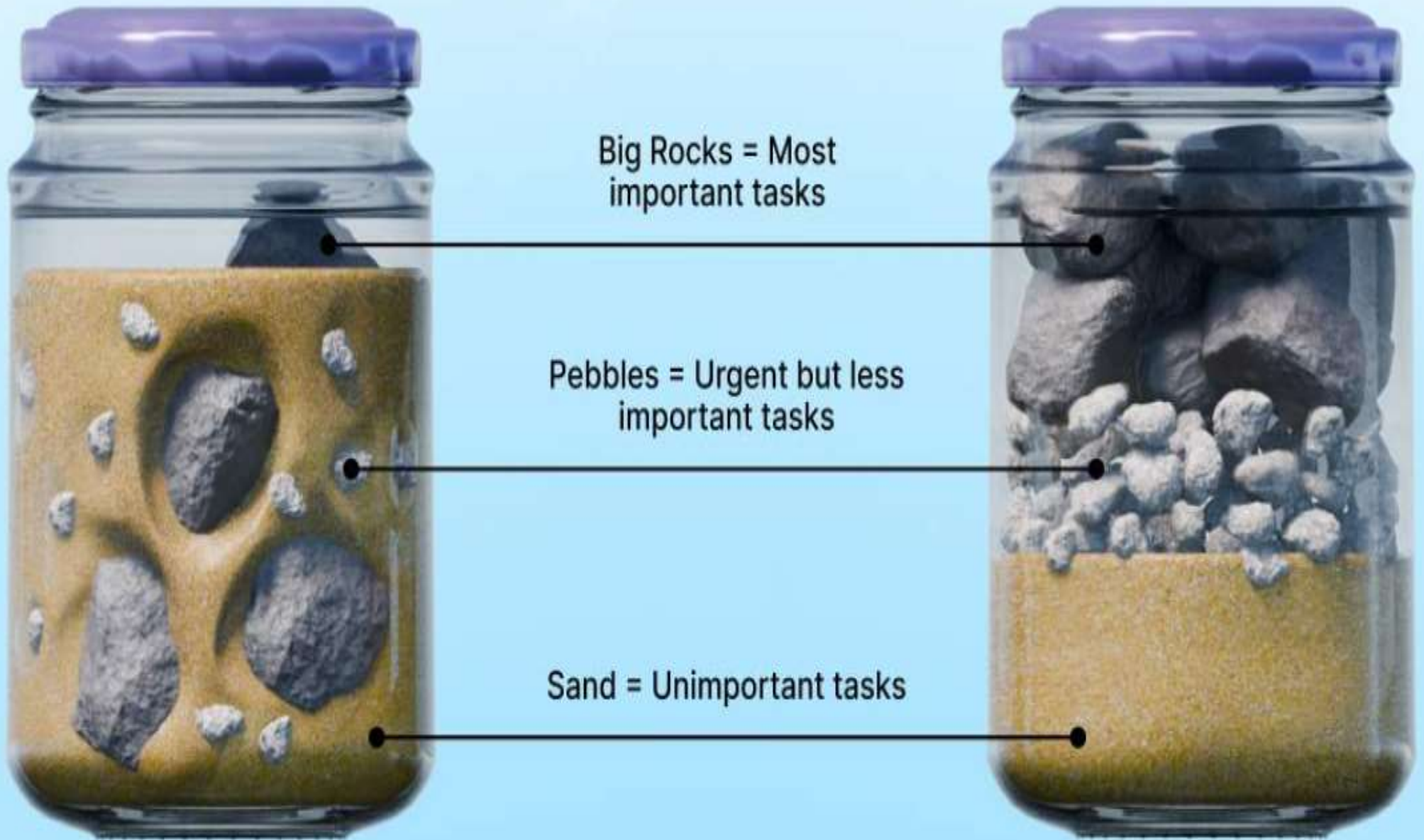
Reliable
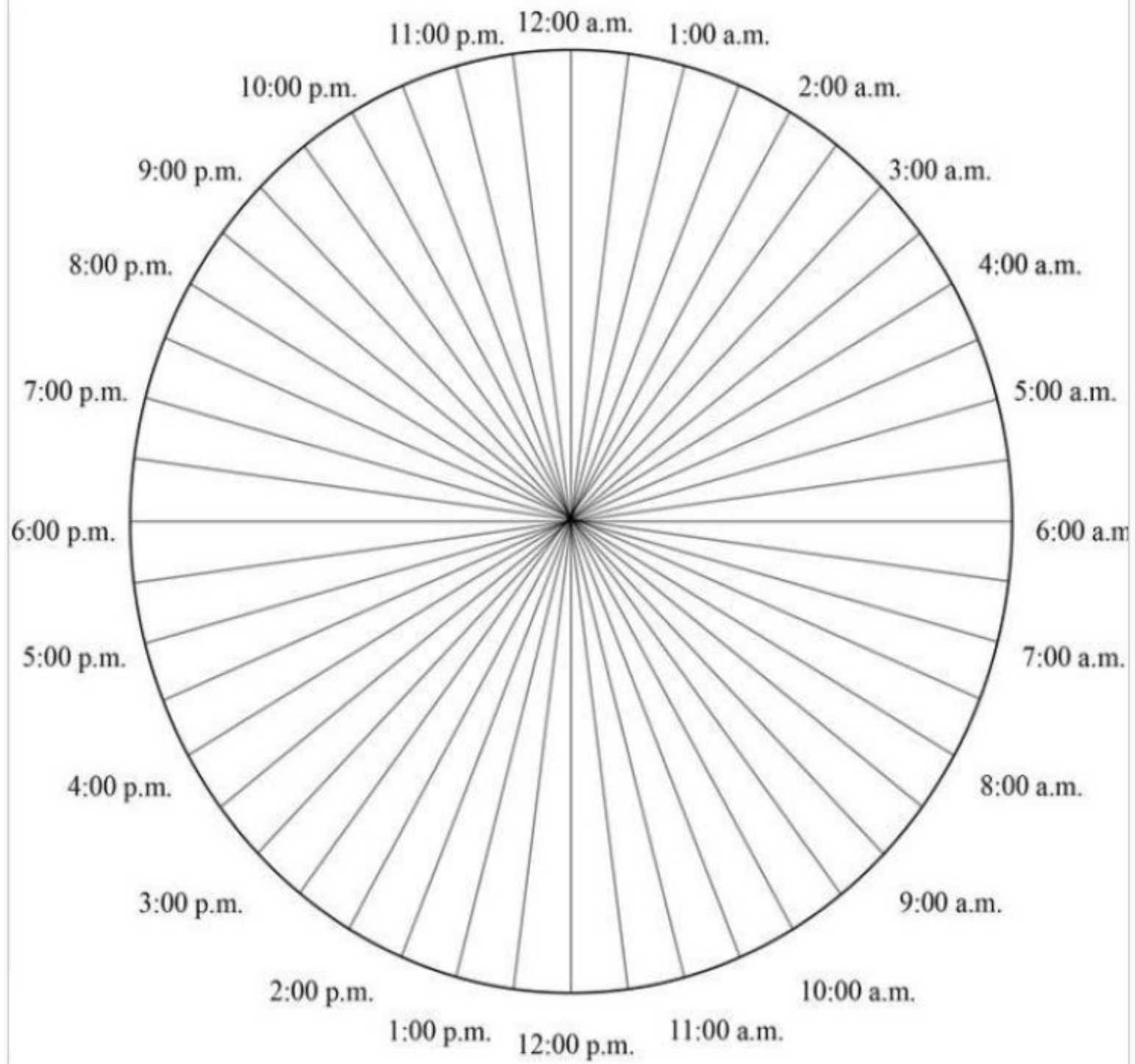
Session 2 –
Time Management

- Icebreaker – Sound Ball

- Mason Jar Activity

- 24-Hour Time Management Circle

Big Rocks = Most important tasks

Pebbles = Urgent but less important tasks
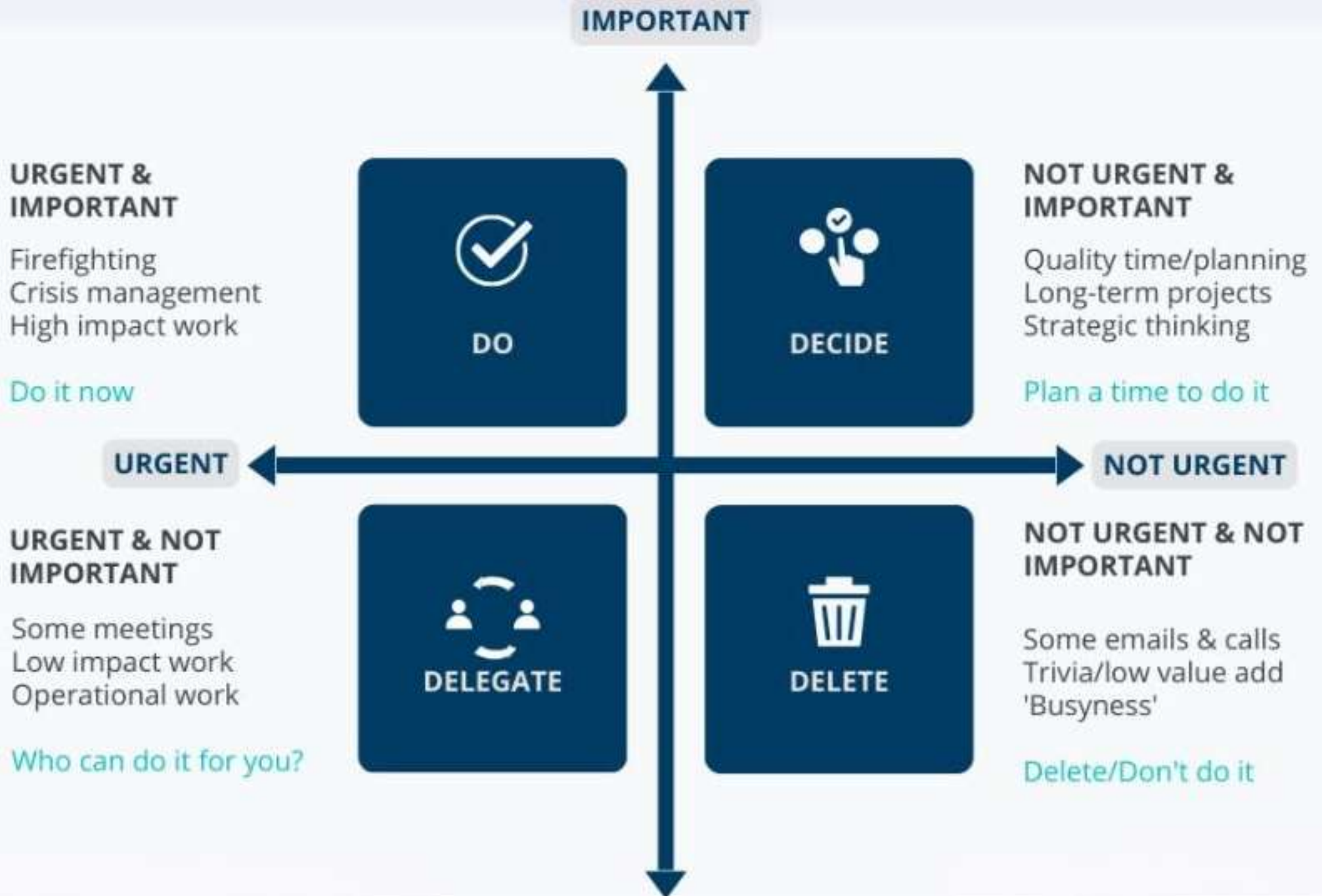
Sand = Unimportant tasks

Session 3 – Organization & Problem-Solving

- Organize Random Items

- Psychoeducation – Eisenhower Decision Matrix

- Hospital Scenario Matrix Activity

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IMPORTANT

URGENT & IMPORTANT

Firefighting
Crisis management
High impact work

Do it now

DO

NOT URGENT & IMPORTANT

Quality time/planning
Long-term projects
Strategic thinking

Plan a time to do it

DECIDE

URGENT — NOT URGENT

URGENT & NOT IMPORTANT

Some meetings
Low impact work
Operational work

Who can do it for you?

DELEGATE

NOT URGENT & NOT IMPORTANT

Some emails & calls
Trivia/low value add
'Busyness'

Delete/Don't do it

DELETE

Organizing & Problem-Solving for Hospital Patients Activity:

Directions:

Working as a team imagine that you got a job working at a hospital and your responsibility for the day is to prioritize the patients based on the urgency and importance to be seen. See below the list of injuries or health concerns and list each one in the appropriate quadrant on the sheet provided. If multiple client issues end up in the same quadrant list them in order of priority (urgency and importance) within the quadrant. Write down somewhere the reasoning for why you placed each person where you did.

A 60-year-old individual complaining of back pain	A 19-year-old pregnant woman who is 6 months pregnant and in labor	A 3-year-old child with a broken foot	A 27-year-old individual lost an arm in a work accident.
An 85-year-old individual with flu-like symptoms	A 21-year-old that ran out of their allergy medication – no showing any symptoms	A 45-year-old that is complaining of not being able to sleep for the past three days	A 7-year-old whose parents report having fallen off their bike. You see several bruises on their arms, legs, and face
A 49-year-old who was brought in by ambulance with heart attack-like symptoms	A 19-year-old who a rash on their arm. No difficulty breathing.	A 35-year-old complaining of ankle pain. No evidence of deformity.	A 23-year-old who fell and broke their arm, visually evident
A 62-year-old who is throwing up blood and complaining of difficulty breathing	A 55-year-old complaining of tooth pain	A 20-year-old complaining of chest pain. All vitals are normal.	A 74-year-old complaining of chest pain and difficulty breathing. Concerns about their vitals not being normal.
An 84-year-old who fell at the nursing home and lost consciousness. They are currently awake and alert.	A 92-year-old was brought in by ambulance after losing consciousness. History of diabetes and reports they didn't eat anything that morning. Currently awake but still confused.	A 23-year-old with a history of seizures brought in by their friend after having a seizure. Currently alert and aware. Reports they forgot to take their medication that morning.	A 39-year-old who was brought in by their spouse with symptoms of sudden numbness in the right side of their face, arm and leg. They are having trouble speaking and appear confused.

Session 4 – Emotional Wellness & Regulation

- **CBT Cycle**
  - Thought Stopping
  - Cognitive Restructure
  - Vagus Nerve Activation

- **Emotional Regulation Jenga**

Situation or Event?

Thoughts

What Negative or unhelpful thought came to mind?

Steps for addressing the cycle:

1. Is this a mean, negative, and/or unhelpful thought or feeling?

- If yes, put it on the thought train and send it packing

2. Is there possibly some truth to this thought or feeling? What proof do you have (remember just because we think or feel it or someone else said it is not proof and does not mean it is true)?

- If yes, what is a nicer way to phrase it – remember if something is true we have the opportunity to take steps to change it

3. Flip it... what is a more neutral or positive way to reframe this thought (even if you don't believe it)

4. Send the thought train and negative thoughts into the container (i.e. wall safe)

5. Focus on and put up reminders of the positive thoughts

Physical Symptoms

What do you feel in your body?

Flip to positive or more helpful thinking:

Behaviors

How do you behave when you have this thought and feelings that it brings up for you?

Feelings

What feelings does that thought bring up for you?

Change in behaviors with new positive/helpful thoughts:

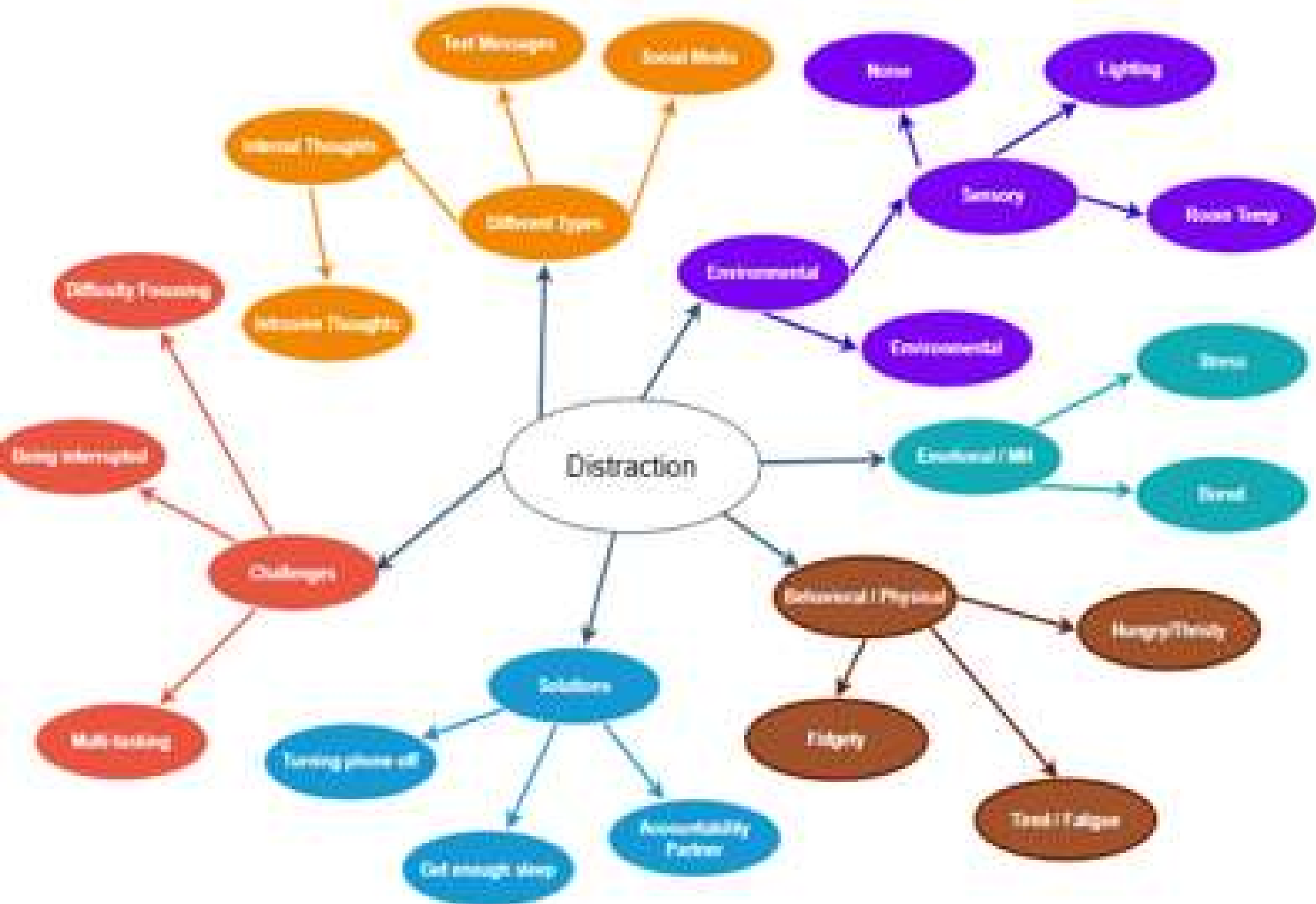**Change in feelings with new positive/helpful thoughts:**
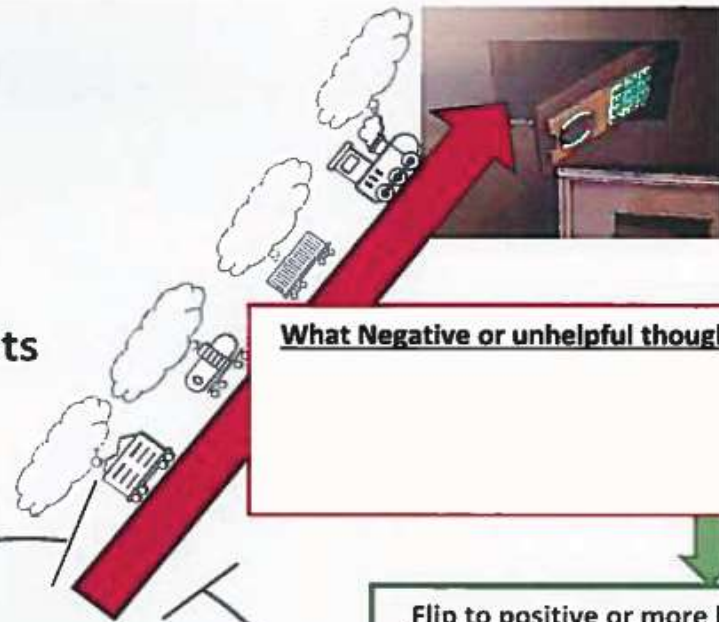
Session 5 – Addressing Distraction

- The Land Mine Activity

- Mind Map Activity

- Group Discussion – Solution Finding
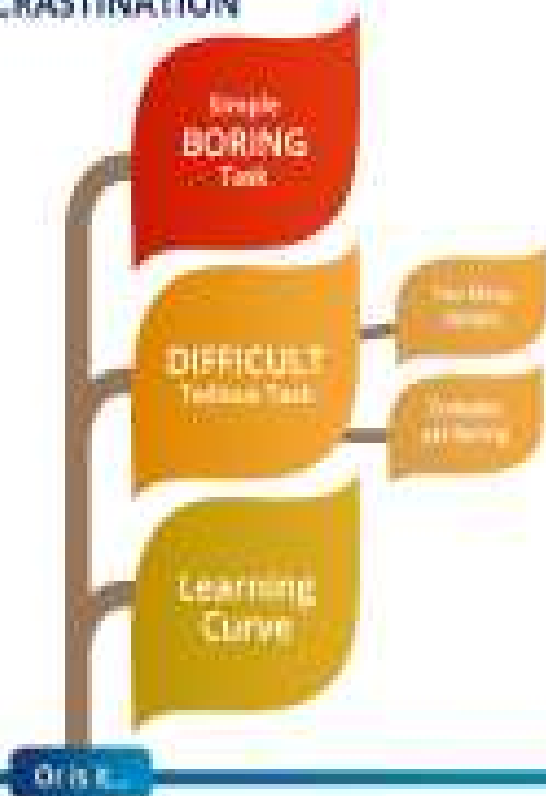
Session 6 – Overcoming Mental Paralysis

- Thrive with ADD Mental Paralysis Tree

- Mental Paralysis Mind Map Activity

- Group Discussion – Solution Finding

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Can't Get Started?

PROCRASTINATION

HOW to IDENTIFY the PROBLEM

1. Pick a task you can't start

2. Decide if you are PROCRASTINATING — uninterested to start or ... PARALYZED — unable to start

3. Choose the large leaf that fits the problem, and its small leaf

4. Track your problem patterns to determine the kinds of solutions you need

- Simple BORING Task
- DIFFICULT Tedious Task
- Learning Curve

Or is it...

MENTAL PARALYSIS

- Hyper-focus
- Something Must Come FIRST
- Don't Have Time
- Disorganized Can't Find...

- SHAME
- FEAR
- Ambiguity
- Perfectionism
- Overwhelmed
- Don't Know How to...
- Can't Focus Here
- Can't Process Information

procrastination TRANSFORMATION

Session 7 –
Unhelpful Thinking Patterns

- Understanding Unhelpful Thinking Patterns Activity

  - Reframing Thought Challenge

"Reframing the Thought" Challenge

Objective: Help participants practice identifying and reframing unhelpful thoughts.

- **Materials:** Pre-written examples of unhelpful thoughts or have participants share their own.

- **Instructions:** Present an unhelpful thought and ask participants to work in pairs or small groups to reframe it into a more helpful or balanced thought. Then, share their reframed thoughts with the group.

- **Example:** "I didn't do well on this exam; I'll never pass my classes" → "I didn't do well on this exam, but I can learn from my mistakes and improve next time."

Session 8 –
Your Thinking Styles & Building Health Habits

- Thinking Style Self-Assessment Questionnaire

- Guessing Others Thinking Style Activity

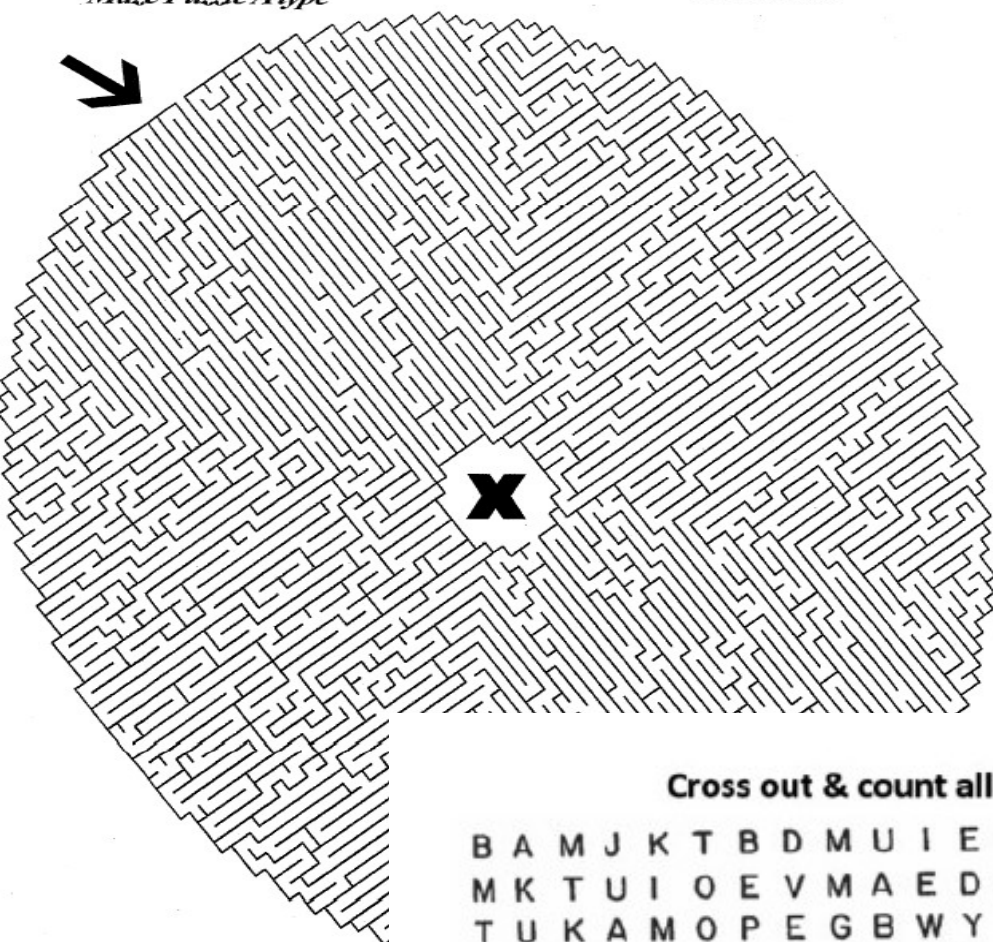- Self-Care & Health Habits Mind Map Activity

Self-Assessme

Gregoric Thinking Style:

CONCRETE SEQUENTIAL	ABSTRACT SEQUENTIAL
This learner likes: ■ order ■ logical sequence ■ following directions, predictability ■ getting facts **They learn best when:** ■ they have a structured environment ■ they can rely on others to complete this task ■ are faced with predictable situations ■ can apply ideas in pragmatic ways **What's hard for them?** ■ Working in groups ■ Discussions that seem to have no specific point ■ Working in an unorganized environment ■ Following incomplete or unclear directions ■ Working with unpredictable people ■ Dealing with abstract ideas ■ Demands to "use your imagination" ■ Questions with no right or wrong answers	**This learner likes:** ■ his/her point to be heard ■ analyzing situations before making a decision or acting ■ applying logic in solving or finding solutions to problems **They learn best when:** ■ they have access to experts or references ■ placed in stimulating environments ■ able to work alone **What's hard for them?** ■ Being forced to work with those of differing views ■ Too little time to deal with a subject thoroughly ■ Repeating the same tasks over and over ■ Lots of specific rules and regulations ■ "sentimental" thinking ■ Expressing their emotions ■ Being diplomatic when convincing others ■ Not monopolizing a conversation
CONCRETE RANDOM	**ABSTRACT RANDOM**
This learner likes: ■ experimenting to find answers ■ take risks ■ use their intuition ■ solving problems independently **They learn best when:** ■ they are able to use trial-and-error approaches ■ able to compete with others ■ given the opportunity to work through the problems by themselves. **What's hard for them?** ■ Restrictions and limitations ■ Formal reports ■ Routines ■ Re-doing anything once it's done ■ Keeping detailed records ■ Showing how they got an answer ■ Choosing only one answer ■ Having no options	**This learner likes:** ■ to listen to others ■ bringing harmony to group situations ■ establishing healthy relationships with others ■ focusing on the issues at hand **They learn best when:** ■ in a personalized environment ■ given broad or general guidelines ■ able to maintain friendly relationships ■ able to participate in group activities **What's hard for them?** ■ Having to explain or justify feelings ■ Competition ■ Working with dictatorial/authoritarian personalities ■ Working in a restrictive environment ■ Working with people who don't seem friendly ■ Concentrating on one thing at a time ■ Giving exact details ■ Accepting even positive criticism

Session 9 – Switch vs. Multi-Tasking

- Switching Activity Experience

- Impulsivity Mind Map

- Group Discussion – Solution Finding

Risk Game
Logic Grid Puzzle

● ● ● ○ ○

brainzilla

Four friends played Risk together. Try to figure out who conquered more territories.

1. Each player must destroy an army of a different color.
2. No pair of players are mutual enemies.
3. Chad has one territory more than the player in charge of the green army. Chad's target isn't red.
4. The purple player must destroy the red or black player.
5. The black player has 2 more territories than Benson.

6. Tyler has 2 fewer territories than his enemy.
7. Logan either is black or must destroy the black army.
8. The player with 10 territories is controlling the green or purple army. His objective isn't the red army.
9. The player aiming to destroy Logan has the red army.

Play This Logic Grid
brainzilla.com/xdm55

Cross out & count all of the M's

```
B A M J K T B D M U I E M N O P L D H M
M K T U I O E V M A E D M U I L P I U E
T U K A M O P E G B W Y I L O H M J U O
R T U N G D R M U P E V Z X H A U A M U
Q E T V M I K R D U I P L E N U G S T B
S T G J U I L R V H X M U A R C I L O P
M U A E V W S T B U L O H C T B U H X Q
D Y M R T M I L I E B H M I L K O P T N
A T N H P L T M U I E V H D I L O B E W
G Y J I M E C V E D M I E A S Y H Y U M
S M E B Y N H C M I O R V H S U A M I R
E G W C B Y M R N I L O P M R B G E V M
M K T U I O E V M A E D M I L P I U E N
T U K A M O P E G B H I I L O H M J U O
R T U N G D R M U O P E V Z X W A U A M
```

Total M's: _____

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Session 10 –
Goal Setting and Planning for Progress

- SMART Goals Activity

- Skills & Tools Recap

- Group Discussion / Reflection

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SMART Goals

S	**Specific** What am I going to do? Why is this important to me?
M	**Measurable** How will I measure my success? How will I know when I have achieved my goal?
A	**Attainable** What will I do to achieve this goal? How will I accomplish this goal?
R	**Relevant** Is this goal worthwhile? How will achieving it help me? Does this goal fit my values?
T	**Time-Bound** When will I accomplish my goal? How long will I give myself?

Implementation Tips

- Recruitment & Outreach

- Consist Integrating into Existing Structures

- Start with a Clear Structure

- Train the Facilitators

- Build in Flexibility

- Encourage Connection

- Gamify Across Sessions

- Involve Peers

- Use Multisensory Materials

- Flexible Delivery Models

- Faculty & Advisor Buy-In

References

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