

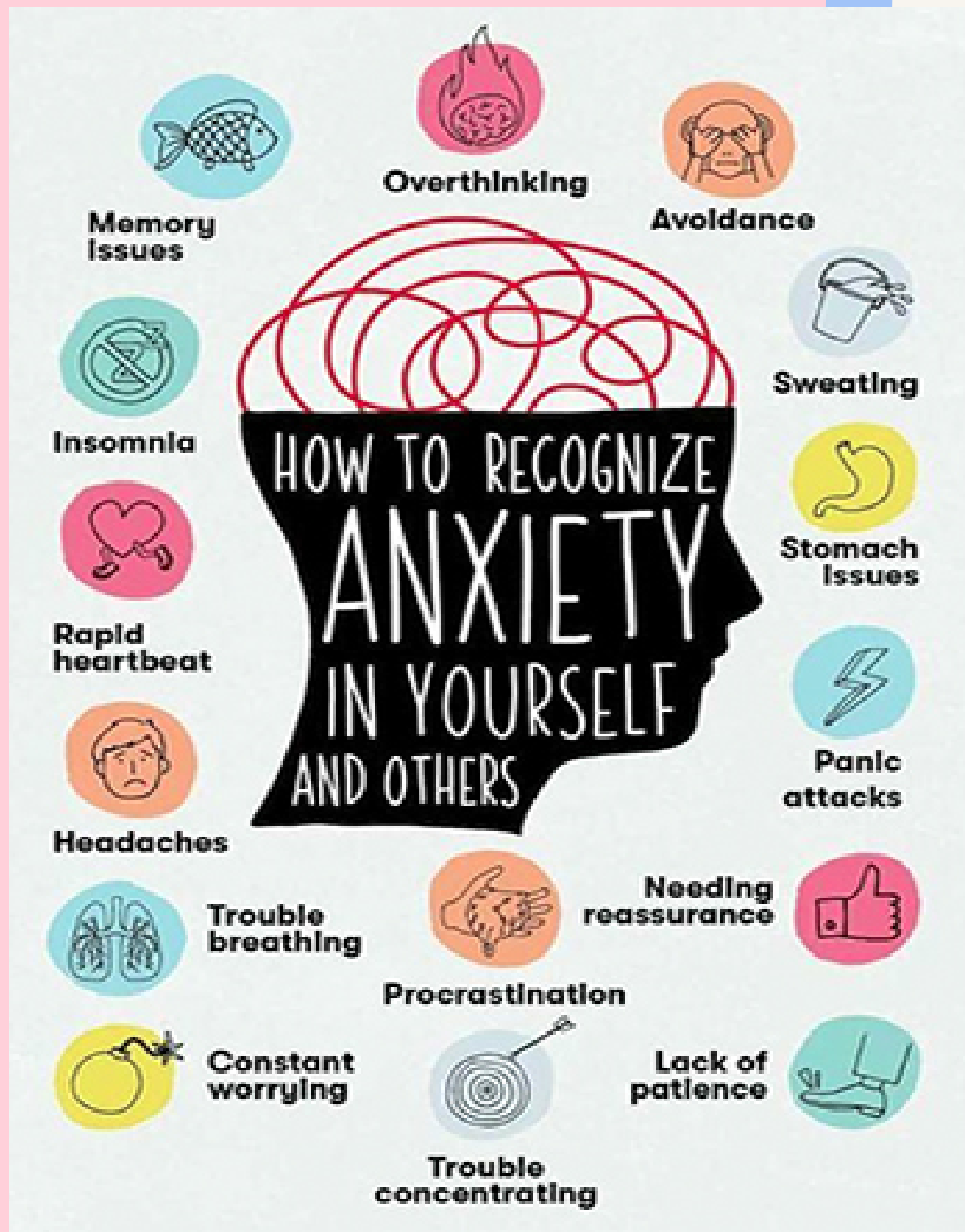


# Coping with Anxiety and Stress

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# PARENT/CARER INFORMATION SESSION - AGENDA

- What is anxiety
- What is stress
- Effects anxiety has on the body
- Behaviours/physical sensations of anxiety
- Types of thinking styles
- Coping strategies that can help manage anxiety
- Submitted questions answered



# WHAT IS ANXIETY?

Anxiety is what we feel when we are worried, tense or afraid – particularly about things that are about to happen, or which we think could happen in the future.

Anxiety is a natural human response when we feel that we are under threat. It can be experienced through our thoughts, feelings and physical sensations (Mind, 2022).

Anxiety is a feeling of unease, such as worry or fear, that can be mild or severe. Everyone has feelings of anxiety at some point in their life. For example, you may feel worried and anxious about sitting an exam, or having a medical test or job interview.

During times like these, feeling anxious can be perfectly normal.

But some people find it hard to control their worries. Their feelings of anxiety are more constant and can often affect their daily lives (NHS, 2022).

# WHAT IS STRESS?

We all know what it's like to feel stressed, but it's not easy to pin down exactly what stress means.

When we say things like "this is stressful" or "I'm stressed", we might be talking about:

Situations or events that put pressure on us – for example, times where we have lots to do and think about, or don't have much control over what happens.

Our reaction to being placed under pressure – the feelings we get when we have demands placed on us that we find difficult to cope with.

"It's overwhelming. Sometimes you can't see beyond the thick fog of stress."

There's no medical definition of stress, and health care professionals often disagree over whether stress is the cause of problems or the result of them. This can make it difficult for you to work out what causes your feelings of stress, or how to deal with them. But whatever your personal definition of stress is, it's likely that you can learn to manage your stress better by:

managing external pressures, so stressful situations don't seem to happen to you quite so often  
developing your emotional resilience, so you're better at coping with tough situations when they do happen and don't feel quite so stressed (Mind, 2022)



# FIGHT, FLIGHT, FREEZE

## THE STRESS RESPONSE IN KIDS

### FIGHT

Yelling, Screaming,  
Using Mean Words

Hitting, Kicking, Biting,  
Throwing, Punching

Blaming, Deflecting  
Responsibility, Defensive

Demanding,  
Controlling

"Oppositional",  
"Defiant", "Noncompliant"

Moving Towards What  
Feels Threatening

Irritable, Angry,  
Furious, Offended  
Aggressive

### FLIGHT

Wanting to Escape,  
Running Away

Unfocused, Hard  
to Pay Attention

Fidgeting, Restlessness,  
Hyperactive

Preoccupied, Busy with  
Everything But the Thing

Procrastinating, Avoidant,  
Ignores the Situation

Moving Away From What  
Feel Threatening

Anxious, Panicked  
Scared, Worried,  
Overwhelmed

### FREEZE

Shutting Down,  
Mind Goes Blank

Urge to Hide,  
Isolates Self

Verbally Unresponsive,  
Says, "I don't know" a lot

Difficulty with  
Completing Tasks

Zoned Out,  
Daydreaming

Unable to Move,  
Feeling Stuck

Depressed, Numb,  
Bored/Apathetic,  
Helpless

# EFFECTS ANXIETY HAS ON THE BODY

Churning in the stomach (may feel like butterflies for some people)

Pins and needles

Feeling sick/nausea

Trouble sleeping -  
struggling to get to sleep,  
waking up throughout the  
night, etc



Having panic attacks

Feeling light-headed or dizzy

Feeling restless - may result on  
legs shaking or fidgeting

Faster breathing

Sweating/hot flushes

# UNHELPFUL THINKING STYLES

- Mental Filter
- Mind Reading
- Prediction
- Compare and despair
- Critical self
- Shoulds and musts
- Judgements
- Emotional reasoning
- Mountains and molehills
- Catastrophising
- Black and white thinking
- Memories

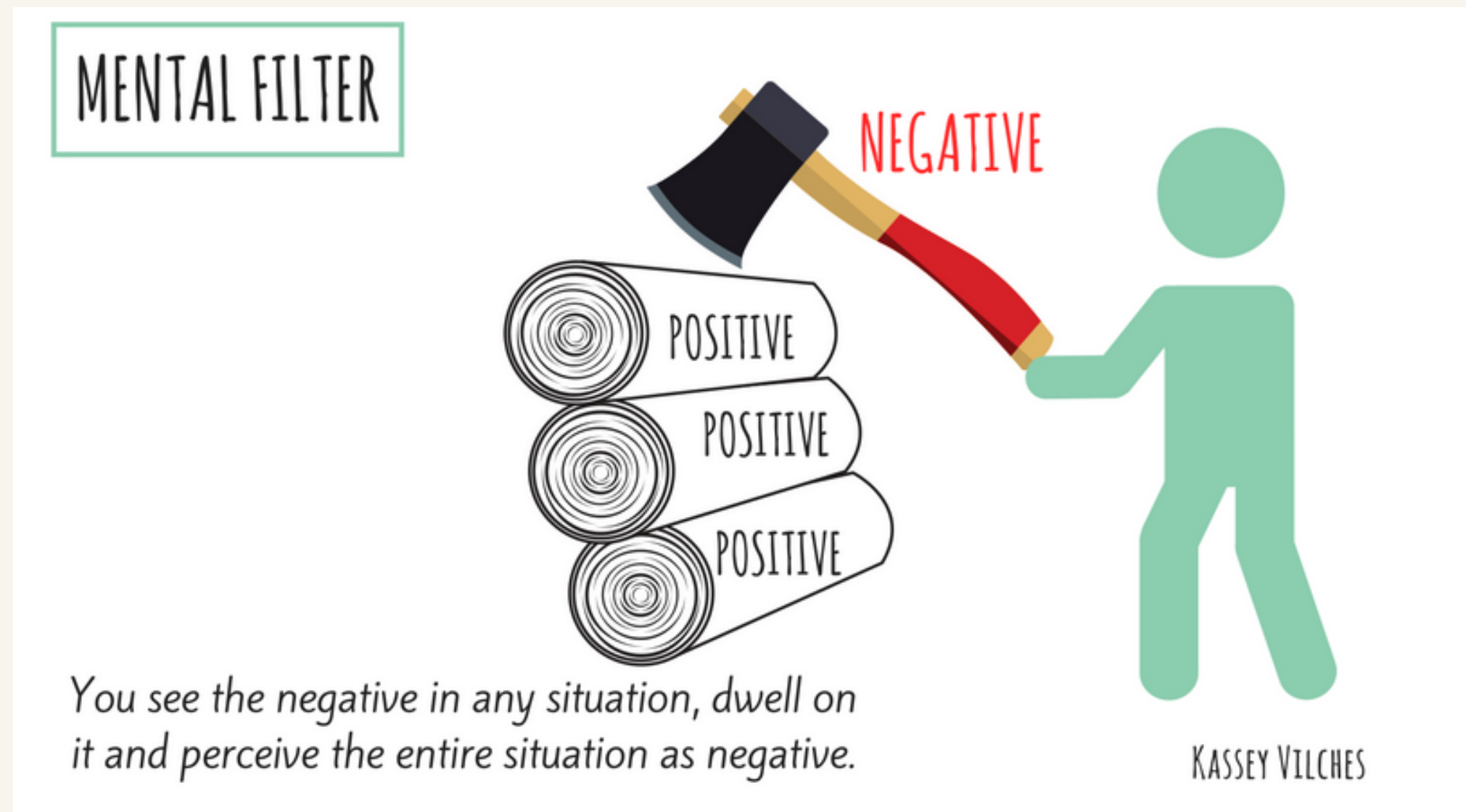




# UNHELPFUL THINKING STYLES

## Mental Filter

When we only notice what our 'filter' allows us to



# UNHELPFUL THINKING STYLES

## Mind reading

Assuming we know  
what others are  
thinking



# UNHELPFUL THINKING STYLES

## Prediction

Believing we know  
what will happen in  
the future

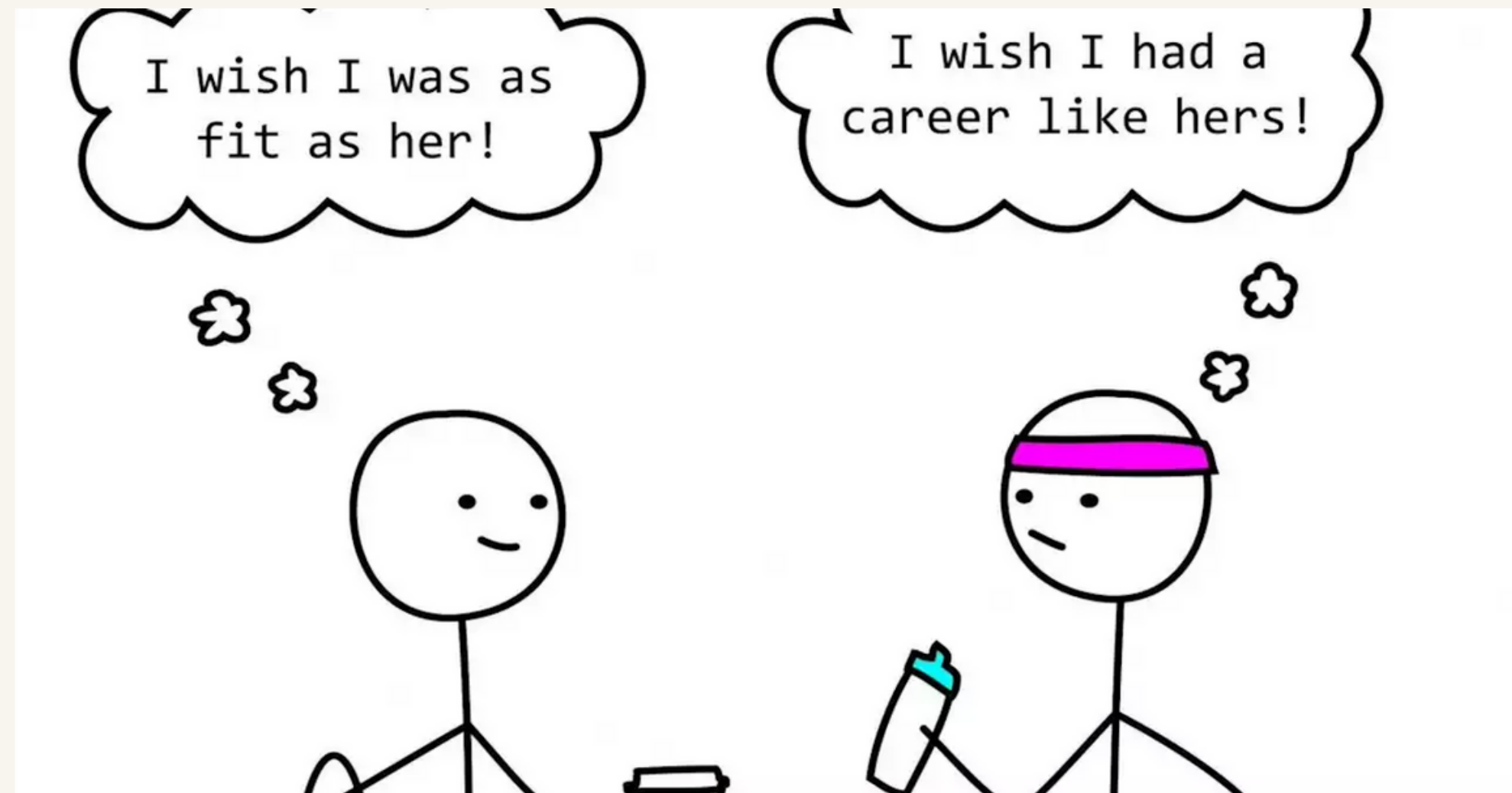




# UNHELPFUL THINKING STYLES

## Compare and despair

Seeing only positive and good things in others and using this to then compare ourselves to them



# UNHELPFUL THINKING STYLES

## Critical self

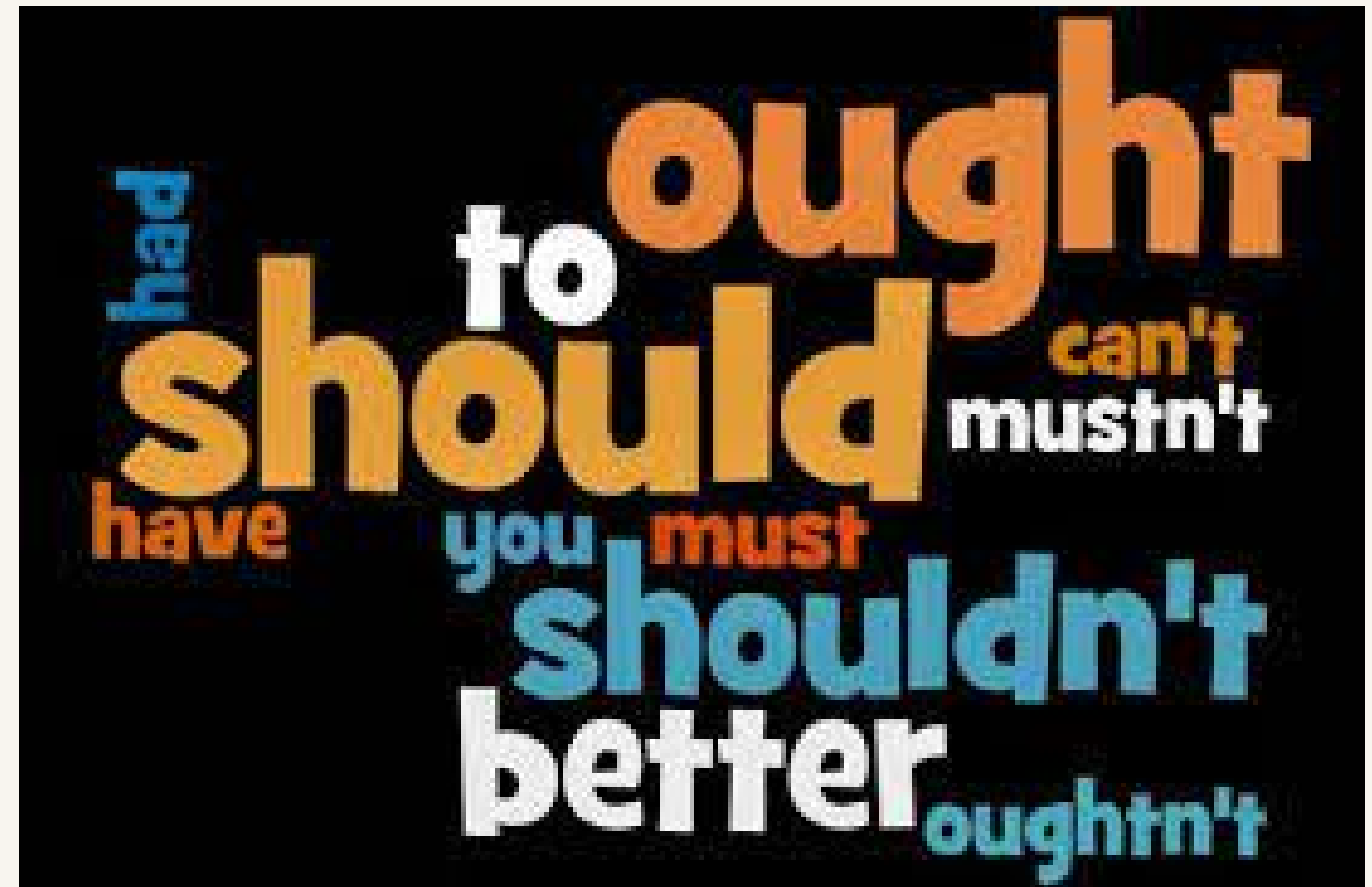
Blaming ourselves for events/situations that either aren't our fault or entirely our fault and /or putting ourselves down



# UNHELPFUL THINKING STYLES

## Shoulds, musts, have to

Using these phrases or the opposites (shouldn't, mustn't) puts a lot more pressure on ourselves and so when we don't do these things can cause further anxiety and can set high and potentially unrealistic expectations



# UNHELPFUL THINKING STYLES

## Judgements

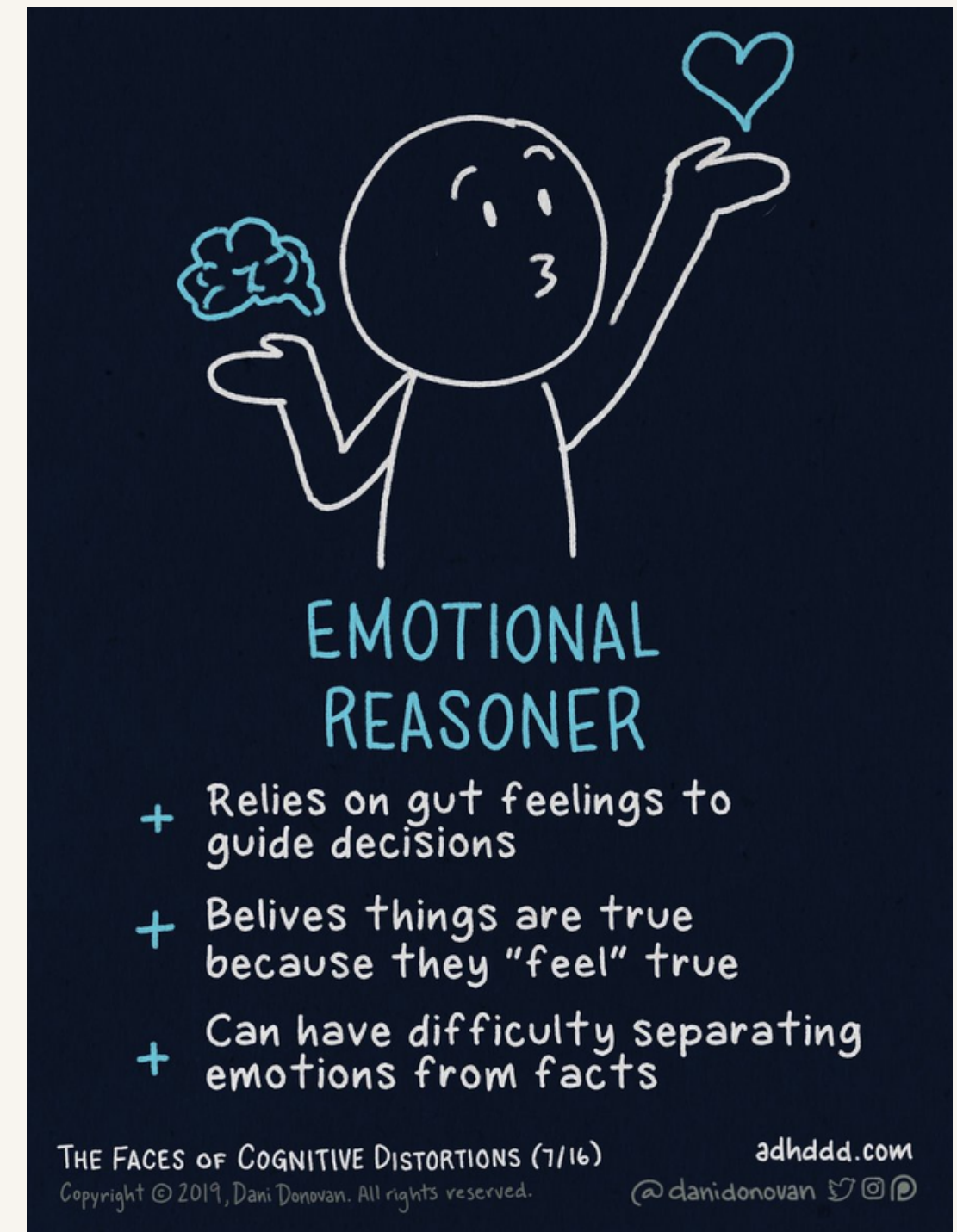
Making judgements about things rather than what evidence we have in front of us and around us



# UNHELPFUL THINKING STYLES

## Emotional reasoning

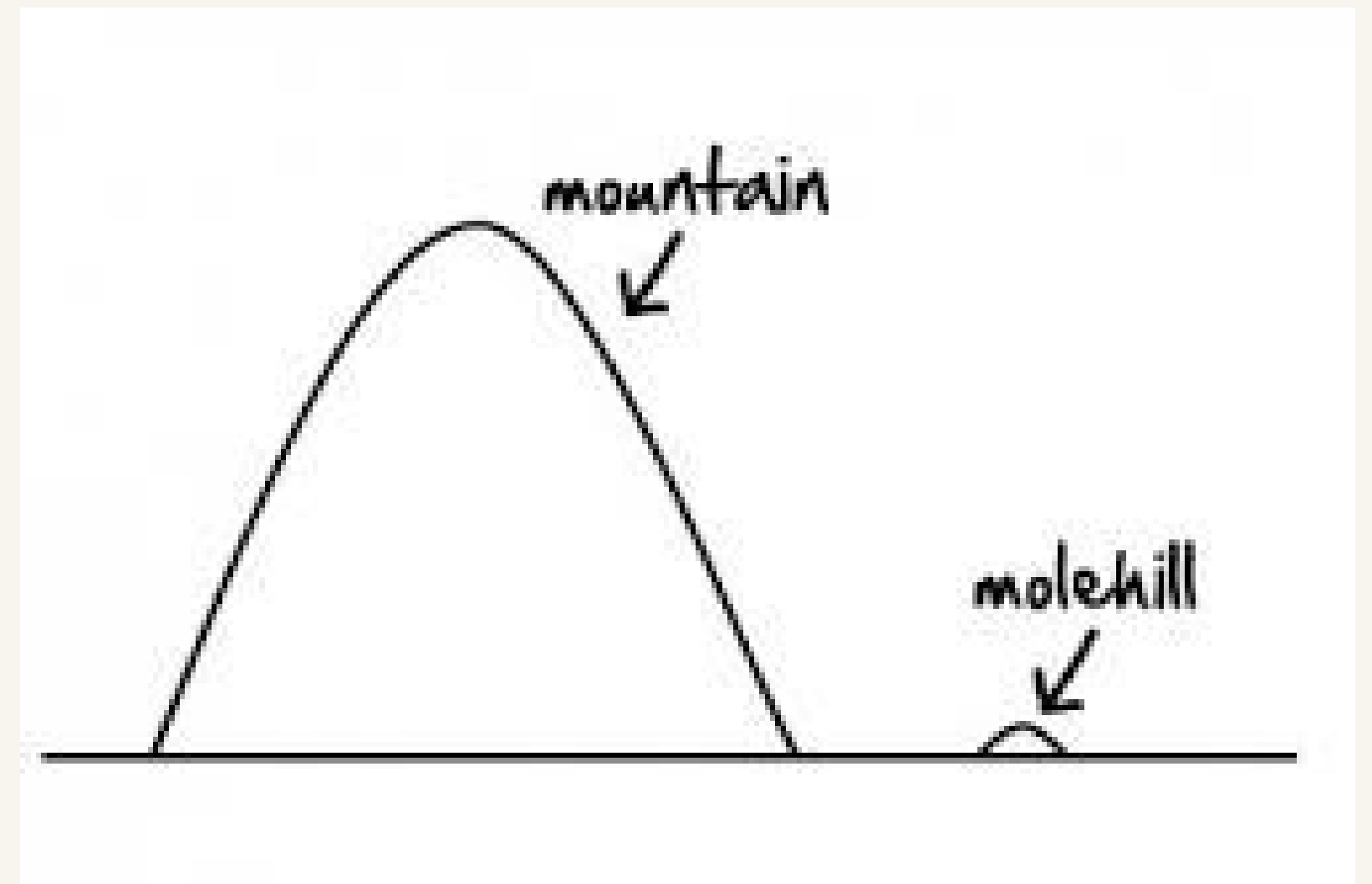
Feeling an emotion and assuming the worst, i.e *I feel anxious so danger must be near*



# UNHELPFUL THINKING STYLES

## Mountains and molehills

Exaggerating risk and/or  
minimising the positives





# UNHELPFUL THINKING STYLES

## Catastrophising

Imagining the worst possible thing that could happen from any situation



# UNHELPFUL THINKING STYLES

## **Black and white thinking**

Believing that things or someone can only be good or bad. There is no in between with this thinking style



# UNHELPFUL THINKING STYLES

## Memories

Current events or situation can trigger things from the past but can make us feel anxious about the particular thing in the here and now





# SAFETY BEHAVIOURS

Safety behaviours may seem helpful when we feel anxious or in situations that make us feel anxious. However, these safety behaviours can actually be a problem and only help with our anxiety in the short term, but not in the long-term. As a result, these safety behaviours just enables the anxiety to continue in these situations and potentially manifest in other situations which might not usually make us feel anxious. By identifying these safety behaviours and using different techniques to help, we can gradually manage these anxiety provoking situations and/or thoughts more easily.

It's also important to remember that not every coping technique will work or be as effective for everyone. The most important things to remember about these coping techniques is to practice them, especially when we don't feel anxious, as this will make it easier to use when we need them. It's also important not to feel disheartened if a technique works for some situations and thoughts but not others. This does not mean that the technique is no longer effective for you, it just means that another technique may be more useful, it needs adapting for that situation or thought or a couple of techniques are needing to be used, i.e challenging and acknowledging the thought and then using a breathing exercise.



**I CANNOT CONTROL:**  
(so, I can LET GO of these things)

the circumstances I am dealt

other people's actions & reactions

**I CAN CONTROL**  
(so, I will focus on these things)

the beliefs & attitudes of others

my actions & reactions

my use of knowledge & skill to help others

giving grace to others

pandemics, illness & disasters

my attitude

how I treat others

how long things last

my self-care & boundaries

my work ethic & moral standing

weather

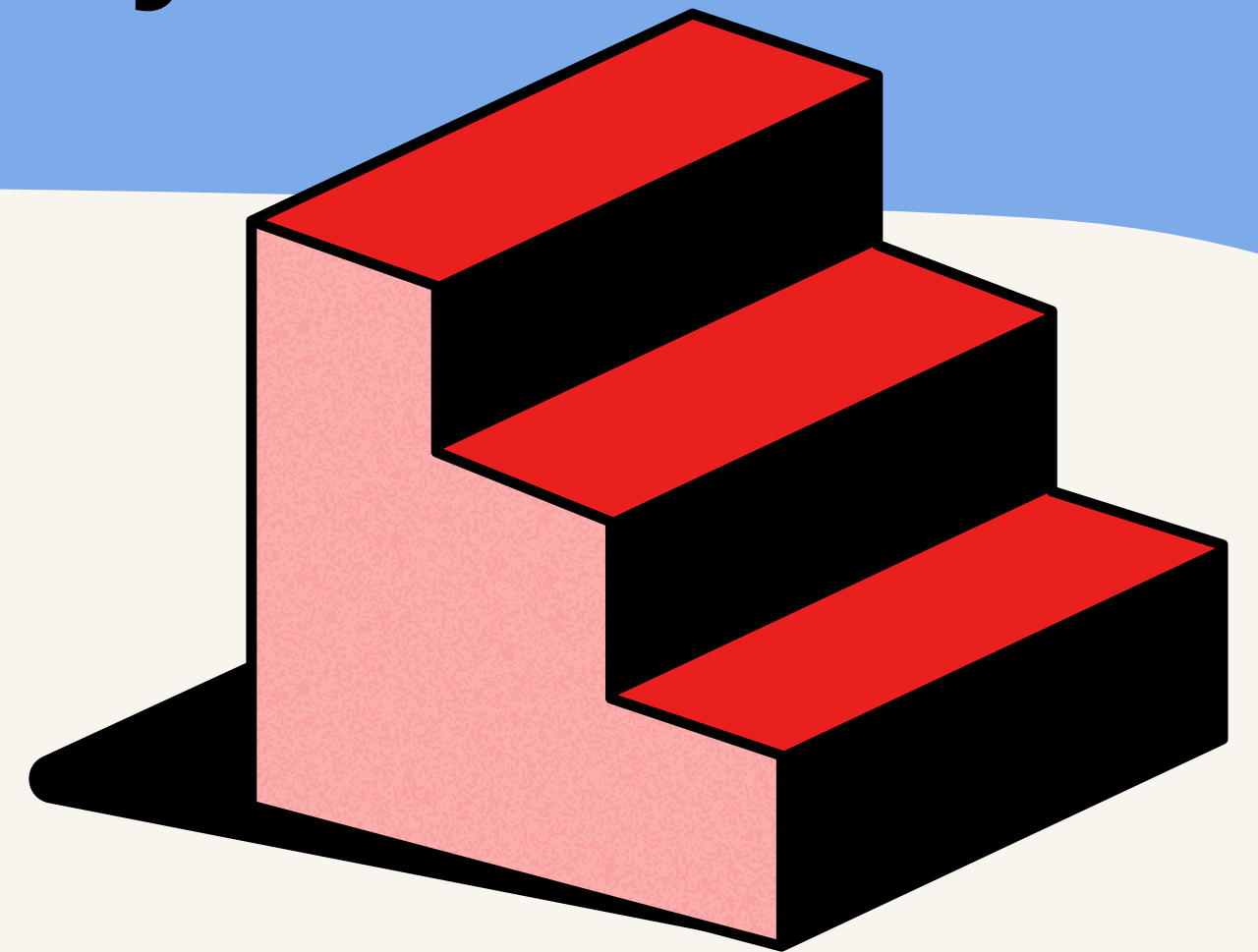
predicting what will happen

the happiness of others



# COPING TECHNIQUES

- Breathing techniques
- Grounding Techniques
- Worry time/Postponing worry





# BREATHING TECHNIQUES

- **Square breathing** - in for 4, hold for 4, out for 4, rest for 4
- **4,7,8** - breathe in for 4, hold for 7 and out for 8 (or using numbers which suits you)
- **Diaphragmatic breathing**



# GROUNDING TECHNIQUES

- **5,4,3,2,1** - 5 things you can see, 4 things you can hear, 3 things you can touch, 2 things you can taste, 1 thing you can taste
- **Body scan** - helps to bring focus to each part of the body individually and bring focus to where extra attention is needed in the body.
- **Body awareness** - helps bring your body and mind into the here and now

## Mental exercises:

- Count backwards from 100 or say the alphabet backwards
- Spell your name or someone else's name backwards
- Pick an object - either physically or mentally and describe it - what does it feel like/or might feel like, look like, colours, shape, etc
- Think of an object and draw it visually or if you prefer use your finger to draw this object in the air

# BODY SCAN

Starting from the toes, focus your attention on each part of the body. Everyone will be different with how long they focus on each part of the body for, but aim to focus on each part for around 8 seconds-30 seconds, depending what feels right for you. Work your way upwards and finish with bringing your attention to your head and mind. This exercise helps to bring self-awareness on each part of the body, focus on what areas need more attention, and helps relieves stress, tension and anxiety

# POSTPONING WORRY/WORRY TIME

