
Promoting Trainee Resilience

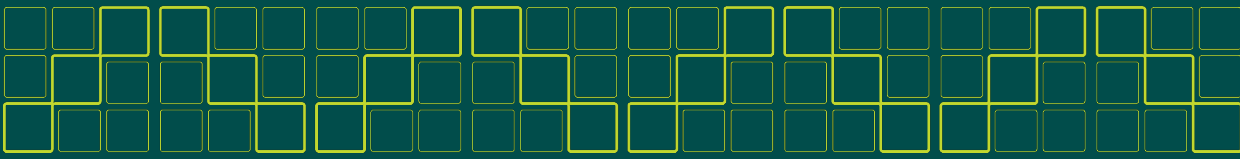
Dr. Sharon L. Milgram

Director, NIH OITE

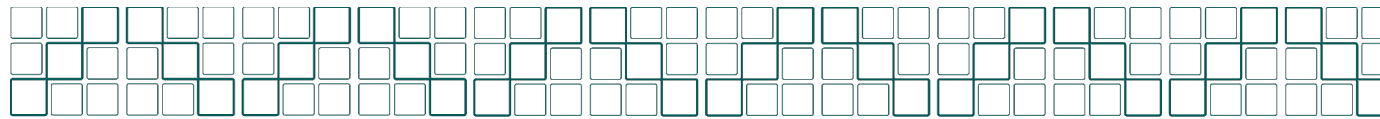
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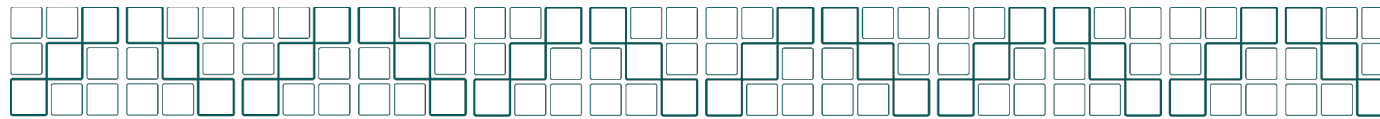


NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH



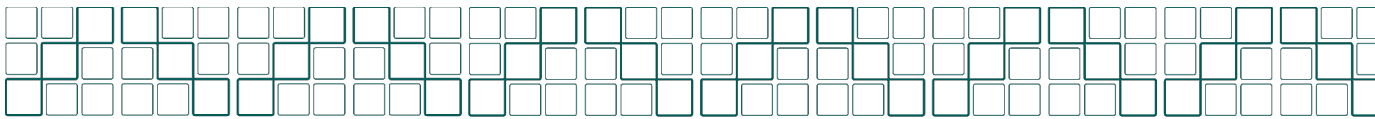
Why Resilience?

- The Question is not whether things will go wrong – the questions are...
 - when and what?...
 - how often?....
 - how bad?
 - with what potential consequences?



Resilience

- The way an individual [or organization] responds to setback and absorbs strain and...
 - continues to function (relatively) effectively in the face of the adversity
 - minimizes damage for long-term effectiveness
 - normalizes behaviors and activities after the stressor passes



Or Said Another Way

	Enthusiastic beginner	Disillusioned learner	Cautious performer	High Achiever
Competence	Low	Some	Moderate	High
Confidence	High	Low	Variable	High
Needs	Direction	Support	Support	Independence



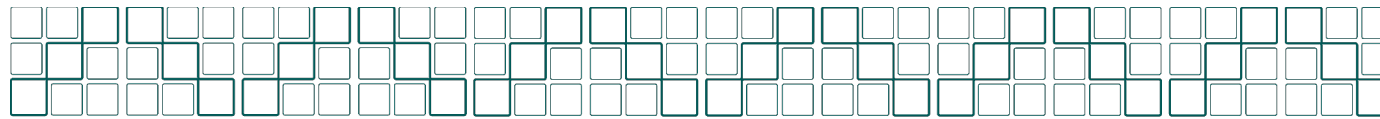
what happens here?



Two Important Points

- A group is only as resilient as the individuals that make up that group AND resilience starts at the top
- Resilience is a skill that can be developed with education, self-reflection, practice, and coaching.
 - As supervisors, it is our responsibility to help trainees develop their resilience (and wellness) skills.
 - Learn about resources on your campus
 - OITE has on-line resilience talks that can be helpful

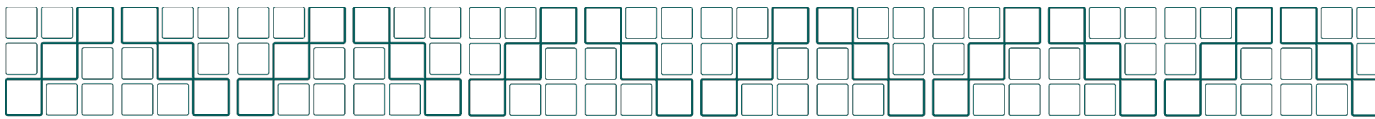
Resilient Scientist Series and Mental Health and Well-Being series are On the OITE You Tube Channel; many programs run on-campus discussion groups



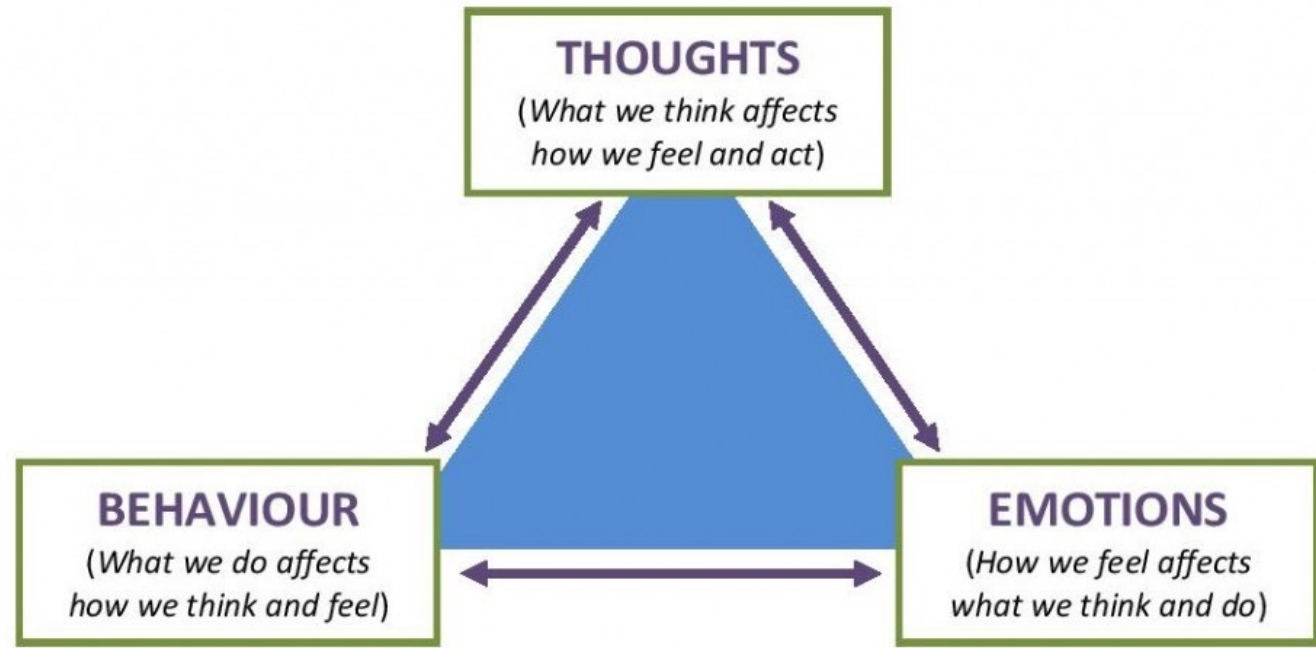
Take-Away Message

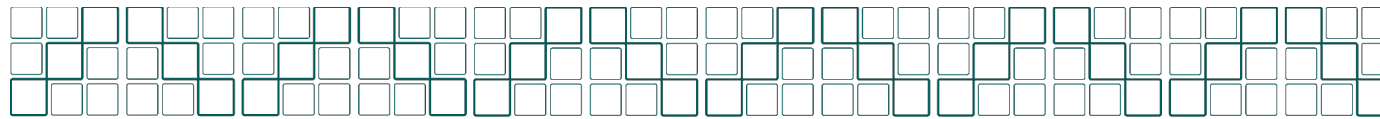
Resilience = People + Process +
Preparation

<http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/design-your-path/201305/10-traits-emotionally-resilient-people>

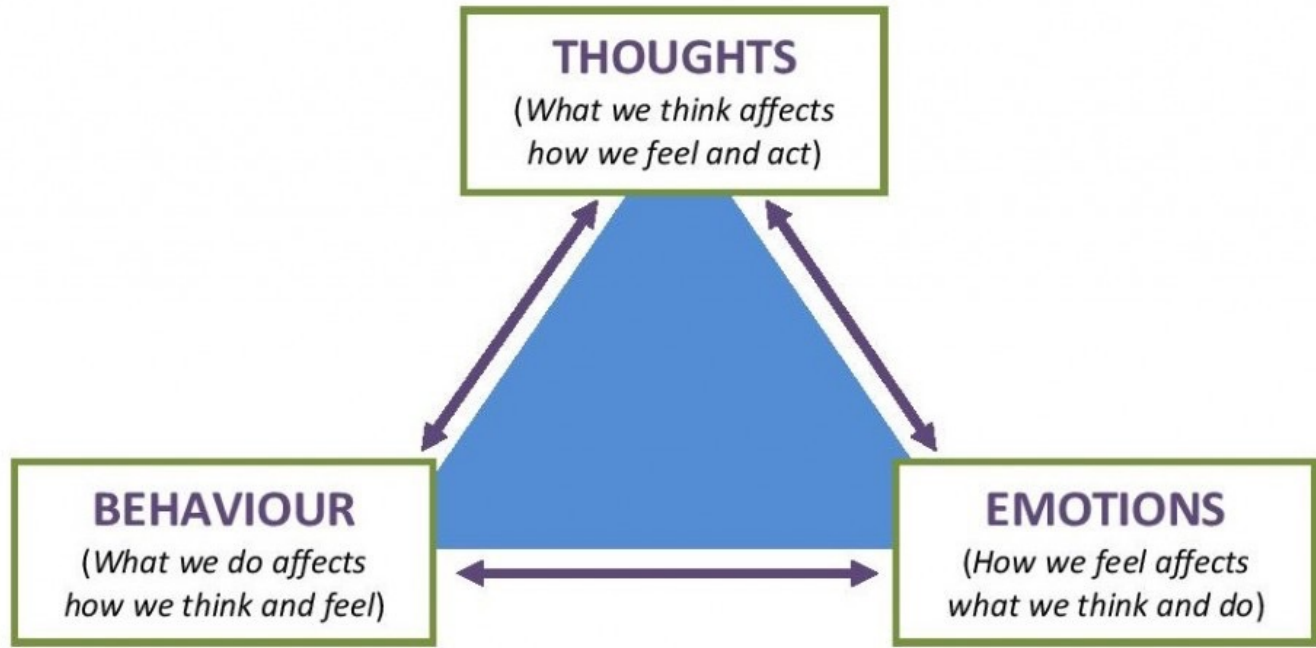


Our Thoughts Impact Our Feelings and Our Actions

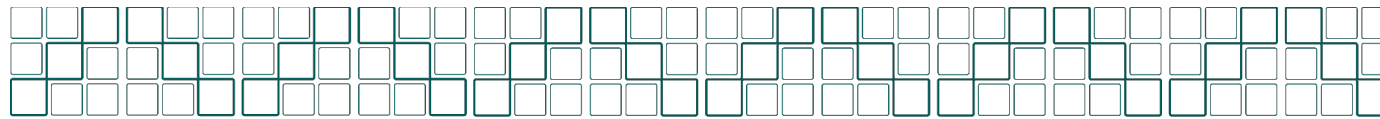




Providing Three Loci of Control

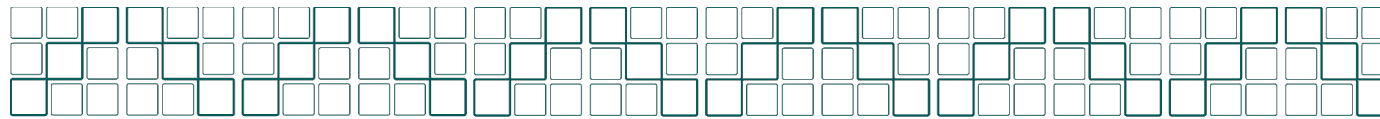


KEY: changes in one will impact the other two – in helpful or unhelpful ways



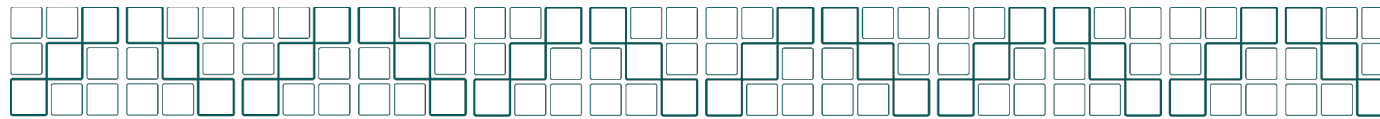
Distorted Thinking Leads Trainees To Self-Sabotage

- They avoid....
 - asking questions and/or talking about issues
 - working in general (or get very involved in with non-research work)
 - applying for appropriate schools, positions, fellowships and awards
 - volunteering for opportunities, assignments, leadership positions, etc.
 - stretching in their work assignments
- And....
 - withdraw from community
 - use unhealthy behaviors to try and feel better
- This can be become a negative cycle that leads to poor outcomes in school, internship, work and life



Topics Covered Today

- Cognitive distortions.... leading to an unrealistic assessment of a situation
- Imposter fears..... leading to feeling of being an outsider, not belonging and not deserving to belong
- And an antidote – cultivating a growth mindset

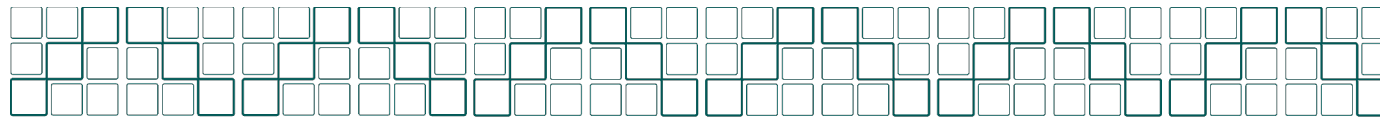


Cognitive Distortions

- Habitual ways that our mind convinces us of something that is not supported by the facts
 - we often see situations through an unrealistically negative lens leading us to feel bad about ourselves (which can lead to anxiety and depression)
 - sometimes we see situations through an unrealistically positive lens leading us to ignore taking care of issues

.

- Negative distortions (aka automatic negative thoughts) can occur frequently, because our brain has a strong primitive threat detection system



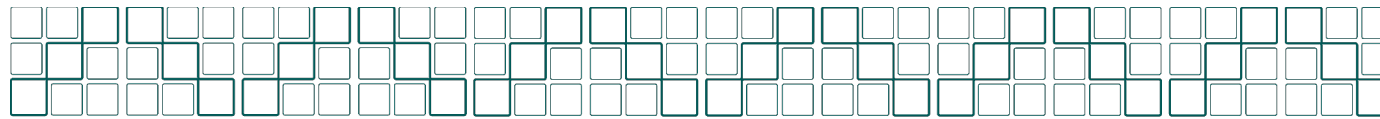
Some Examples Of Cognitive Distortions

- **All-or-nothing thinking:** Our performance is either perfect or it is a complete failure; something is either all good or all bad
- **Catastrophizing:** We exaggerate the implications of a set-back or mistake
- **Mind Reading/Fortune Telling:** We make assumptions about what someone else is thinking; we predict the outcome of an event before it happens
- **Emotional Reasoning:** We assume our emotions are a true reflection of the way things are
- **Over-generalization:** We take one negative event and see other similar events through that same failure
- **Personalization:** we hold ourself fully responsible for an outcome that isn't entirely under our control
- **Discounting the Positive (Minimizing):** We discount positive outcomes and positive attributes by insisting "they don't count".



Important To Appreciate

- We all have our go-to signature cognitive distortions
 - nature and nurture – our biology and brain chemistry; associated with early childhood messages and modified through experience
- When we have to deal with a setback in our group, distorted thinking drives
 - the story we tell ourselves
 - the story the trainee is telling themselves
 - the way we communicate (or don't communicate) with each other
- Can be further exacerbated by our (or their) biases and effect
 - the way we engage our trainee
 - the way our trainee engages with us
- How we behave and communicate can amplify or soften distortions that are affecting our trainees

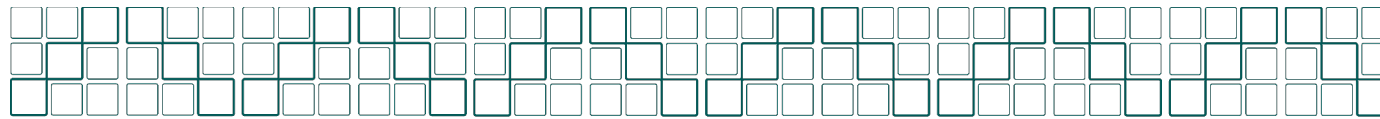


Imposter Fears

The feeling of phoniness in people who believe that they are not intelligent, capable or creative despite evidence of high achievement

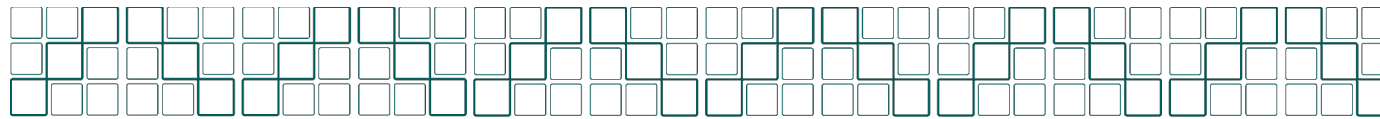


- Stems from the cognitive distortion of minimizing
- Imposter fears lead us to feel that we don't belong... and we need to feel that we belong to take risks and to learn and grow



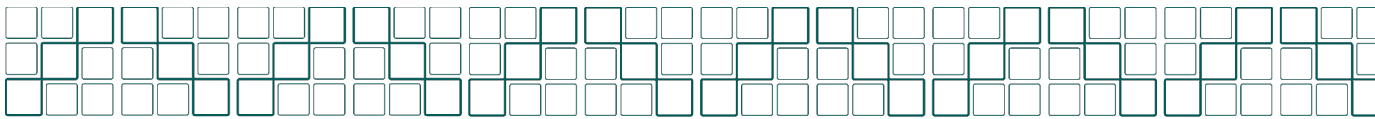
Causes of Imposter Fears

- Being a student
- Being in an environment that feels foreign to you
- Messages from family, community and culture
- Organizational culture and messaging
- Stereotype threat (Stress of 'representing' your entire social group)
- Working in a creative field



Important Piece of Data

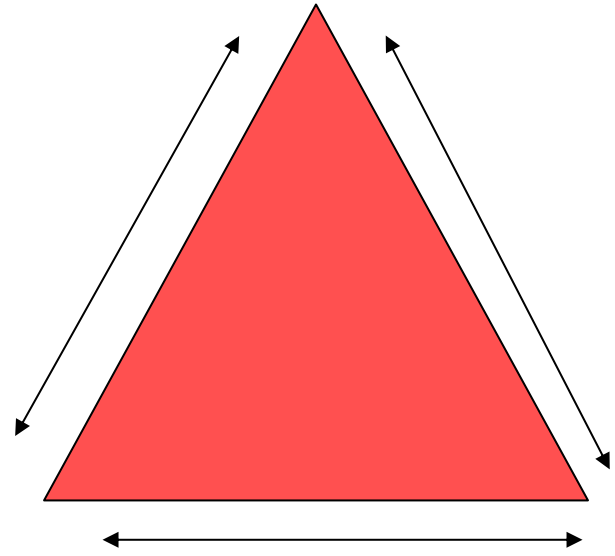
- **70%** of all people experience imposter fears at some point in their educational and work journey
- Therefore, we may:
 - experience imposter fears ourselves
 - love someone (or many someones) who experience imposter fears
 - train and teach someone (or many someones) who experience imposter fears
- Important food for thought
 - we can (and do) drive imposter fears in our trainees through our comments and actions



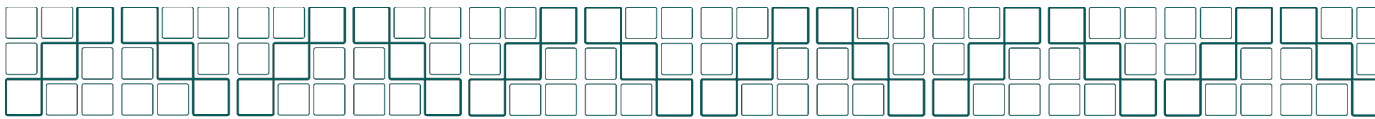
How This Often Plays Out For Trainees

Thoughts: I can't believe I am getting so little accomplished right now. I won't pass my qualifying exam and my abstract won't get accepted. I will never finish grad school or be successful in science. My PI is probably sorry s/he accepted me into their group, and I won't ever be able to find another lab.

Behavior:



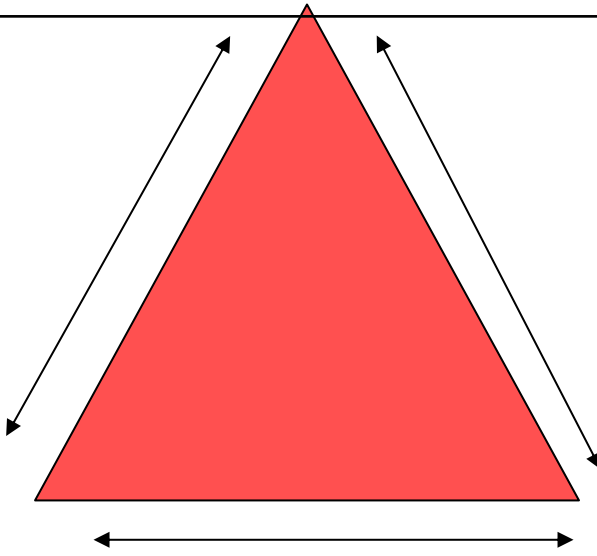
Feelings:



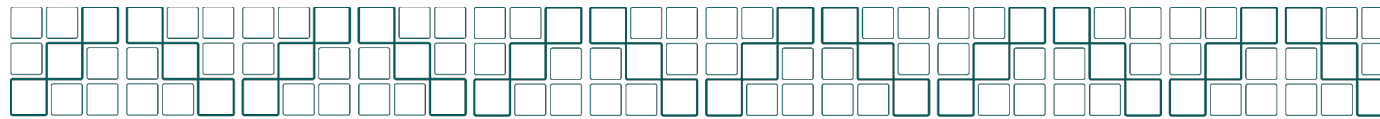
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Behavior: Difficulty concentrating, avoiding lab, ignoring emails from the PI, watching TV instead of working, not going to program activities, etc.



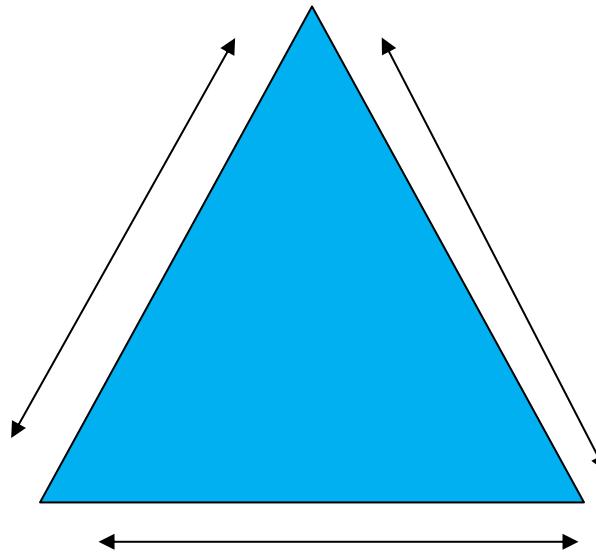
Feelings: Panicked, stressed, worried, embarrassed, angry, overwhelmed, distracted, sad, resigned.



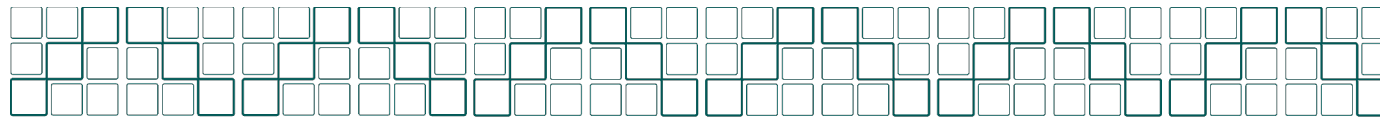
How This Often Plays Out For Us

Thought: I can't believe my trainee is avoiding me. They don't seem to care about science and are not really cut out for grad school. And they want me to.....

Behavior: avoid them, talk to others about them, act dismissive when they ask questions, make comments about how hard scientists have to work.

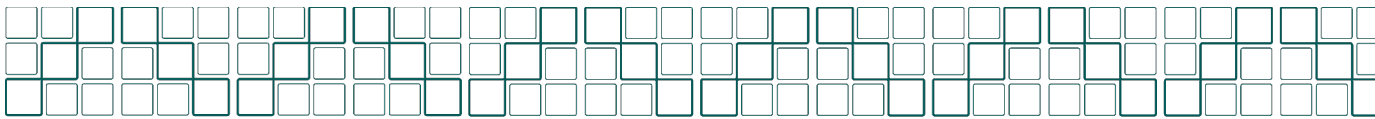


Feel: frustrated, angry, unappreciated worried, (about them and/or the work)



Slow Down and Reframe

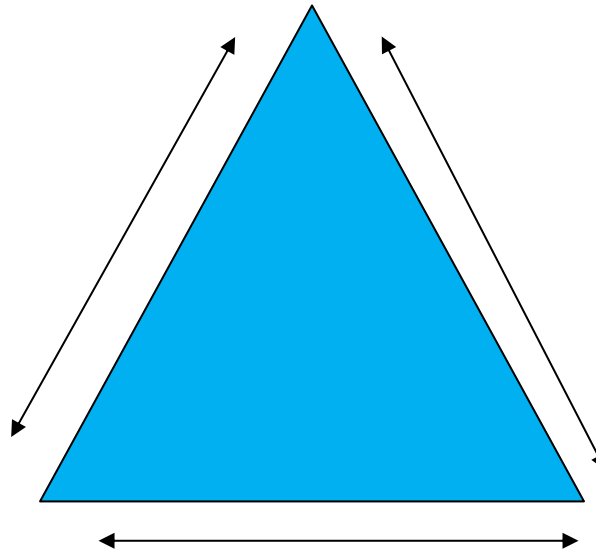
- Finding other possible ways of looking at the problem to hopefully increase the chances of a better outcome
 - better does not always mean easy or successful



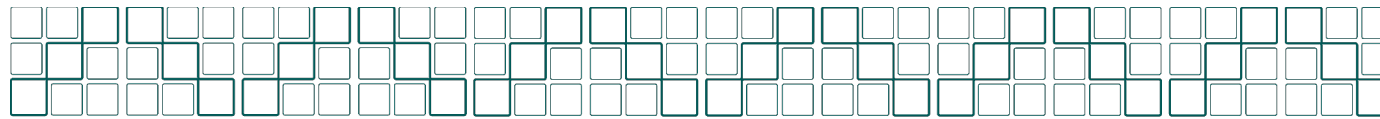
A Better Approach For Us

Thought: I can't believe my trainee is avoiding me. They don't seem to care about science right now and I need to find out what is going on before too long. There are a lot of possibilities. I can't help until I know what is happening.

Behavior: ask them to come talk with you; jointly explore what might be going on; refer them to OITE for support and wellness advising.

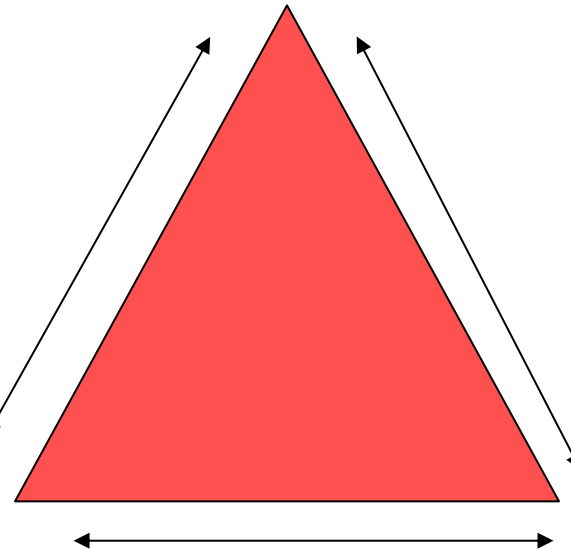


Feel: open, concerned, frustrated, angry, unappreciated, worried.



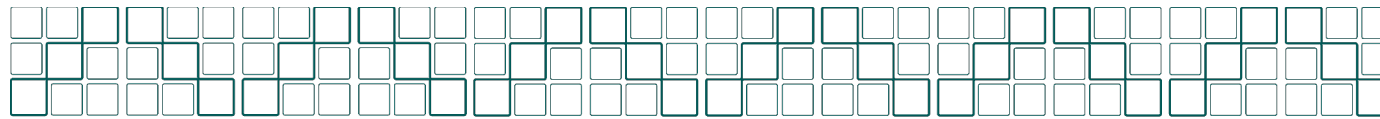
A Better Approach For Them

Thought: My productivity has been disappointing in some ways. I wish I did better focusing during the pandemic and need help prioritizing given the situation. I need some support to get to the point where I can talk to my PI about this.



Behavior: reach out for support from others, come talk with you, use OITE and other resources; set realistic goals; seek help.

Feel: hopeful, focused, motivated, worried, stressed, embarrassed, disappointed.



Reframing Strategies

Hear our distorted self-talk

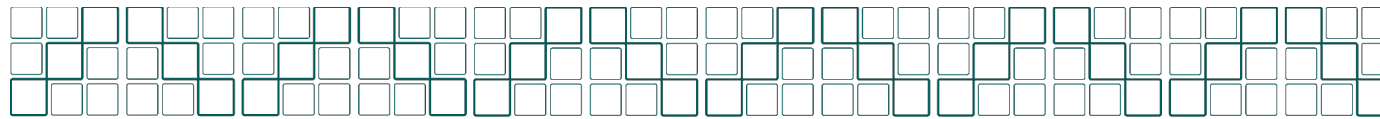
Appreciate we have a choice

Talk back, question, and reframe

Seek resources

Note:

- Learning reframing strategies takes time, energy and practice
- This can work for us – AND we can help our trainees do the same
 - this starts by making sure they know this material
 - and involves developing our ability to talk with them in different ways
- We cannot effectively use these skills when we are stressed and unwell



Growth Mindset – A Powerful Reframing Tool



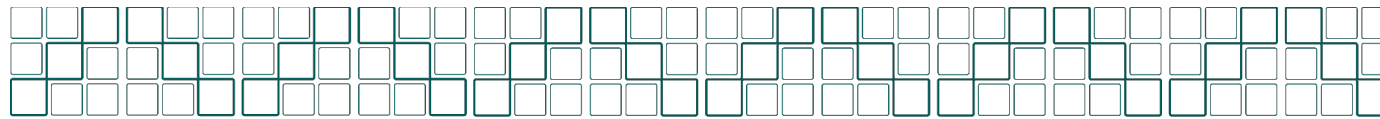
Filmed November 2014 at TEDxNorrköping
Carol Dweck: The power of believing that you can improve



Subtitles

Mindset: The New Psychology of Success

<https://psychology.stanford.edu/cdweck>; <http://mindsetonline.com/>

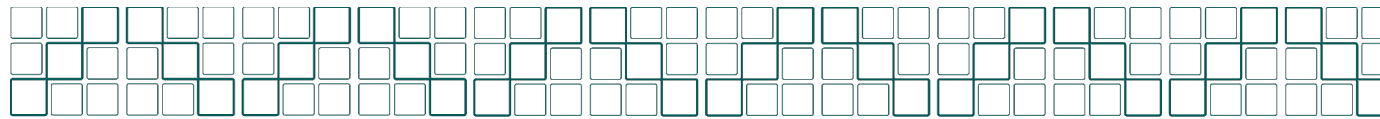


The 'Power of Yet'

- In a nutshell
 - fixed mindset: Oh, I am not good at
 - growth mindset: Oh, I am not good at**YET.**

- We are generally a mix of fixed and growth mindsets and can move between the two based on how we feel and what is happening around us.

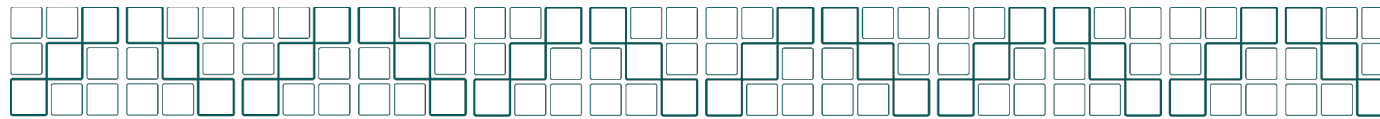
- Our goal is to develop and maintain (as often as possible) a growth mindset in areas that really matter to us.
 - as mentors, our goal is to help staff develop their growth mindset



Cultivating a Growth Mindset

(Helping Students Learn Their Mistakes and Struggles)

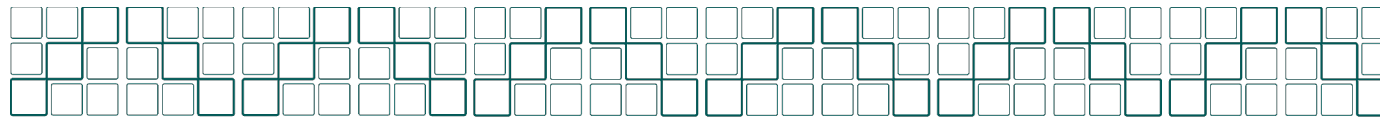
- Normalize seeking help and using resources from the outset
 - use orientation (research group, IC and OITE) and IDPs wisely
- When giving praise be specific (no general "great job") and acknowledge effort, the use of resources, and skill development
- Help them reframe mistakes as opportunities to learn; model this yourself by acknowledging your mistakes and showing what you plan to learn from them
- Discuss process and not only outcome when giving feedback and assessing progress
- Whenever possible, take a strengths-based approach
- Acknowledge the emotions that go along with mistakes and difficulties
- Avoid "should know" conversations and focus instead on knowing in the future



Helpful Growth Mindset Language

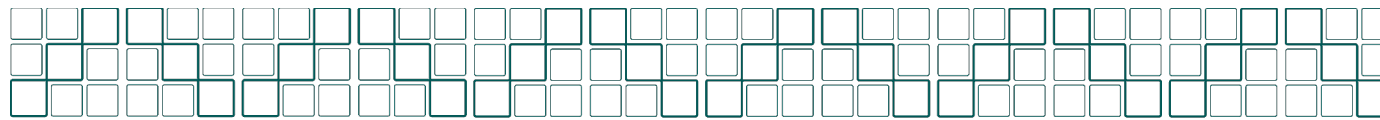
- “We all make mistakes. The key thing is to learn from them. What can you learn from what happened?”
- “I can understand why are you embarrassed. Maybe you can take a moment to collect yourself and then we can talk, so we sort out what to do differently the next time”.
- “I know you want to focus on what did not go well – and we will get to that. Let’s start though by talking about what did go well.”
- ”I am so pleased to hear that you are going to attend the OITE webinar on virtual posters. Using resources to learn is important.”
- “I want to encourage you to use on-line resources to improve your coding skills. It takes time and practice to really nail this.”

NOTE – this can only happen when we are calm and not reactive



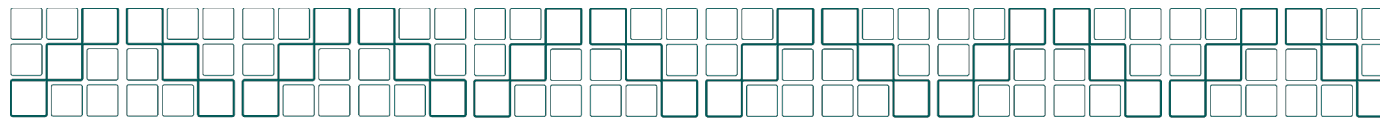
Four Stages Of a Discussion

- Opening
 - establish connection and trust
- Fact finding
 - listen to understand (active listening)
 - ask non-judgmental questions (we do not need a lot of fact checking at this point)
- Resource sharing and joint problem solving
 - know basic information
 - offer but do not force (with exceptions); use warm hand-offs
- Closing
 - summarize action plan
 - establish on-going availability or specific follow-up
 - voice confidence



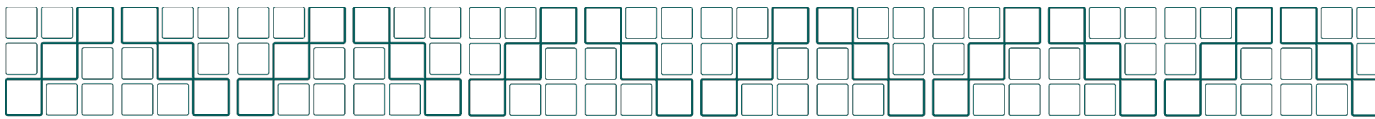
Tips For Supportive Conversations

- Learn about/reflect on your go-to communication style(s) and how it may be received/perceived by others
- Remember to:
 - Listen actively
 - Thank them for sharing
 - Affirm their feelings
 - Avoid making it about you (to a point)
 - Ask curiosity and not judgement questions (what and how, not why)
 - Find the successes (strength-based questions)
 - Promote the use of resources
 - Keep the focus on them and their experience
 - Go slow and give space
 - Be kind AND truthful AND avoid gratuitous positivity



Our Role In Supporting Trainee Resilience

Resilience Competencies (= protective factors)	How you can help
The ability to find community and engage authentically with peers and mentors	Explicitly encourage engagement in relevant NIH communities; promote mentoring networks
The ability to find resources and the willingness to use them – proactively and in times of stress and setback	Know about resources; explicitly encourage (or require) their use and make referrals as appropriate
A sense of purpose and meaning, day-to-day and in the long-term	Give them chances to do what motivates them; in your group and beyond
The ability to understand and acknowledge negative emotions	Model emotional intelligence; develop your communication skills and openly address emotions in the workplace
An understanding of how distorted self-talk undermines progress and appropriate responses to setback	Model reframing and questioning of various cognitive distortions; know about imposter fears and stereotype threat and talk about them
Having a growth mindset	Frame mistakes as learning opportunities
A well-developed stress management and wellness toolkit	Model healthy stress management; talk about wellness and encourage the use of resources



And Remember....



- Unhelpful
- Unkind
- Closed
- Disrespectful
- Fixed mindset



- Helpful
- Kind
- Open
- Respectful
- Growth mindset



- Unhelpful
- Complicated
- Closed
- Disrespectful
- Fixed mindset

Jackal and giraffe based on work at <https://www.cnvc.org/>