



HELP for
HEROES

RECOVERY COLLEGE:
SELF-HELP GUIDES
TO RECOVERY

**EMOTION
IN ACTION**

A FIELD GUIDE
TO SELF-CARE:

EMOTION IN ACTION

Emotional wellbeing is important to our ability to function every day and the implications of decreased emotional well-being are often linked to mental health concerns such as anxiety, stress and depression.

These in turn can contribute to physical health concerns such as digestive disorders, sleep disturbances and a lack of energy, which is why it's so important that we try to keep our emotional wellbeing in check.

HELP for
HEROES

A diverse group of people, including a young woman, a man with a beard, a woman with glasses, a woman in a striped shirt, and a man in a blue polo shirt, are laughing together outdoors. The background is a blurred green landscape.

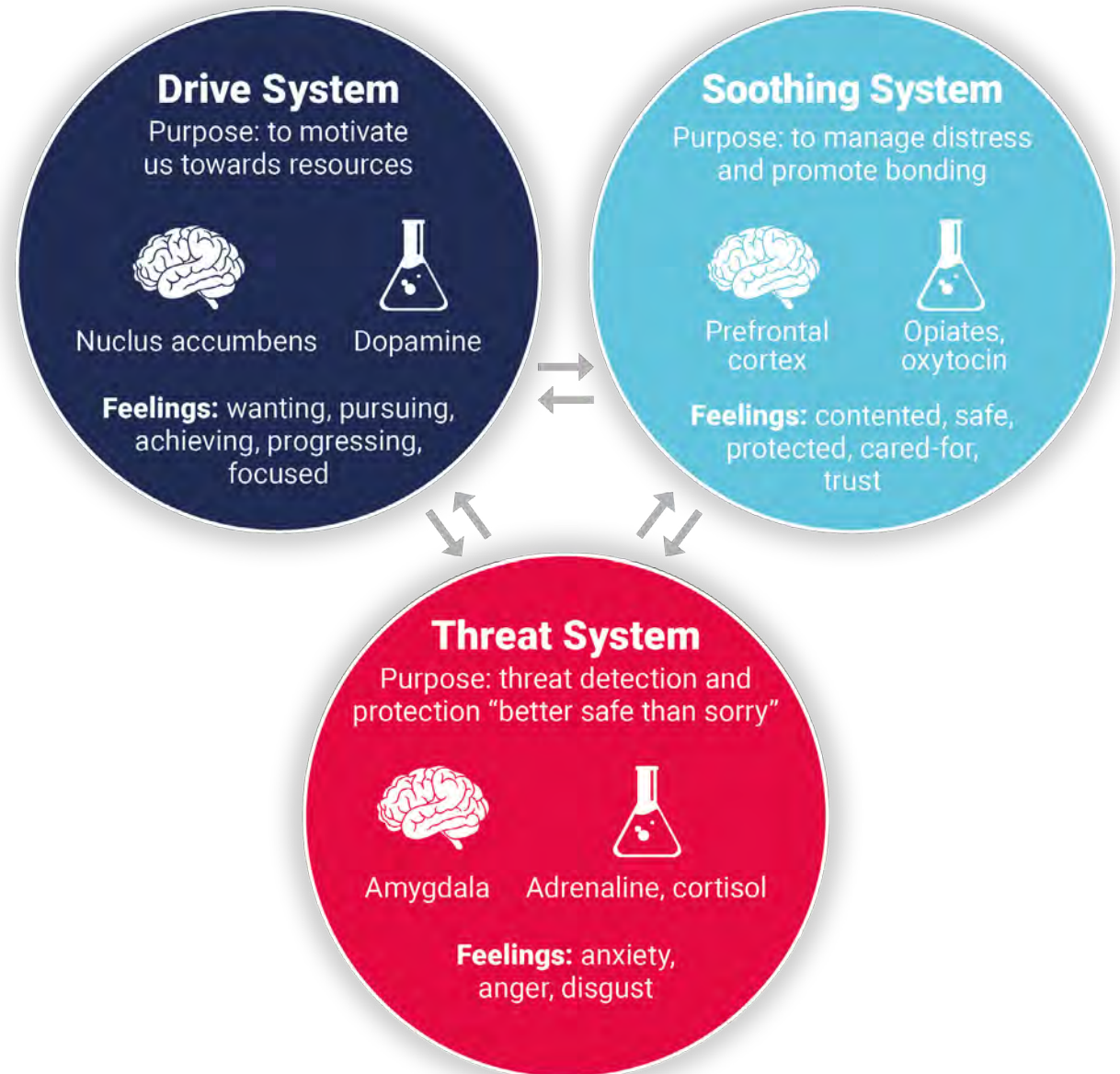
BODY EMOTION MIND IN ACTION

PREPARE

**HELP for
HEROES**

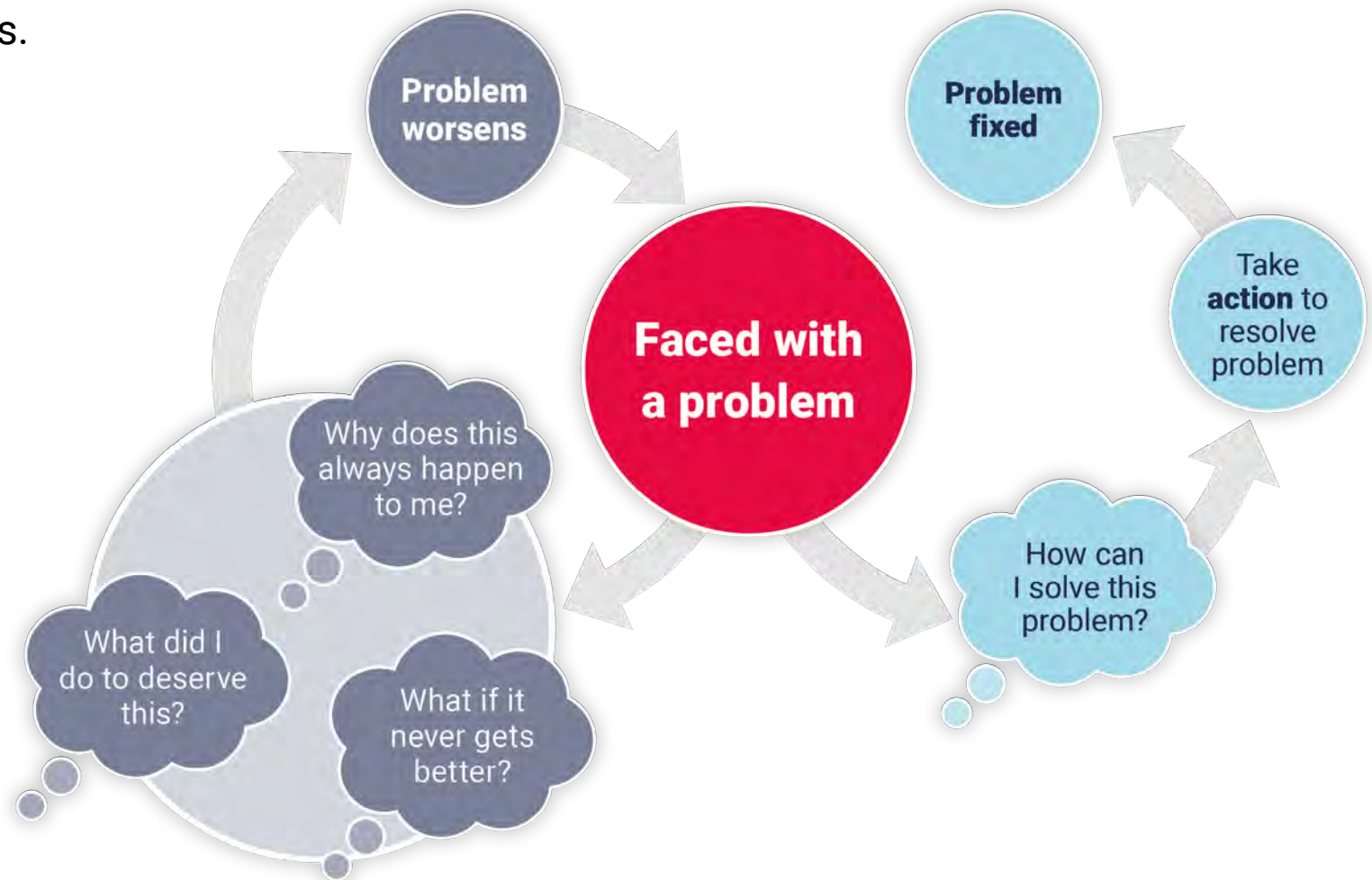
THE EMOTIONAL REGULATION SYSTEM

The mind's emotional regulation system needs to be in balance for optimum wellbeing and so that we can thrive, rather than just survive.



HELPFUL AND UNHELPFUL THINKING

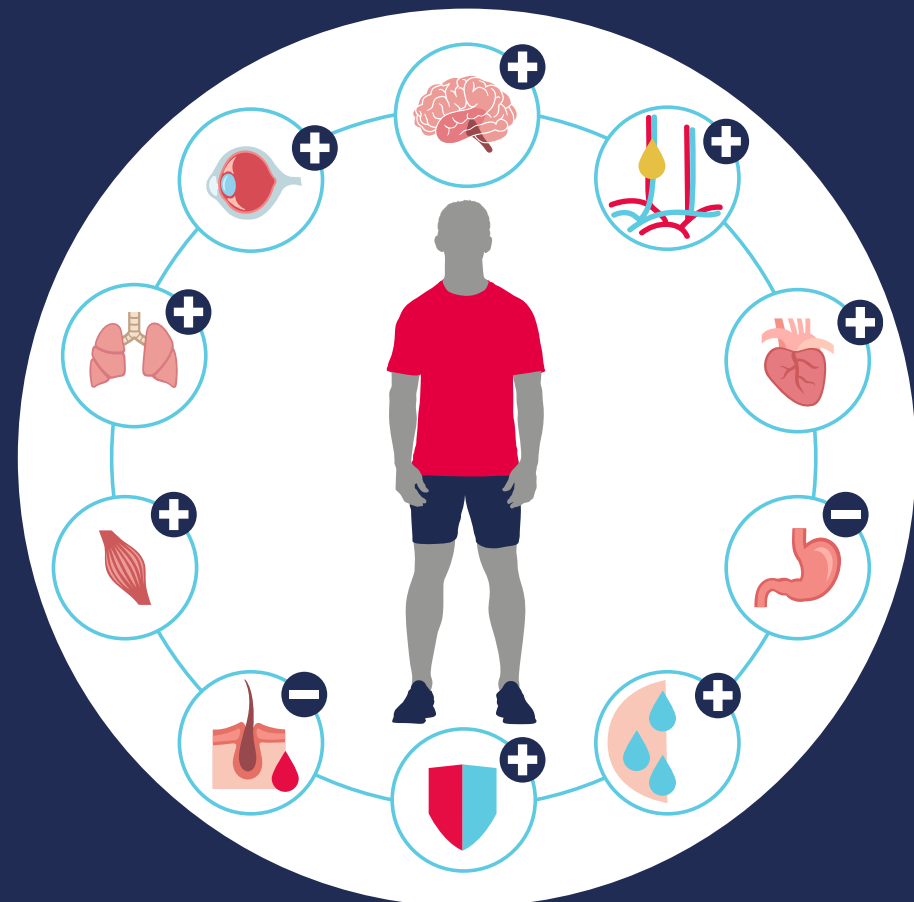
Sometimes, our thinking can get caught up in negative cycles, which then adds to our emotional distress.



When we feel emotionally distressed or upset, we may notice physical reactions in the body. You may feel physical sensations such as an increase in heart rate, muscles tensing, blood pressure increasing, an increase in saliva rate or pupil dilation. Other sensations may include:

- + Quickening of breath
- + Blood directing to major muscle groups, away from:
 - Digestive system
 - The rational part of your brain
 - Extremities (your fingers & toes)

- + Sweating
- + Feeling light headed
- + Changes to vision
- + Feeling shaky/unstable
- + Loss of motor control
- + Finding it hard to think clearly



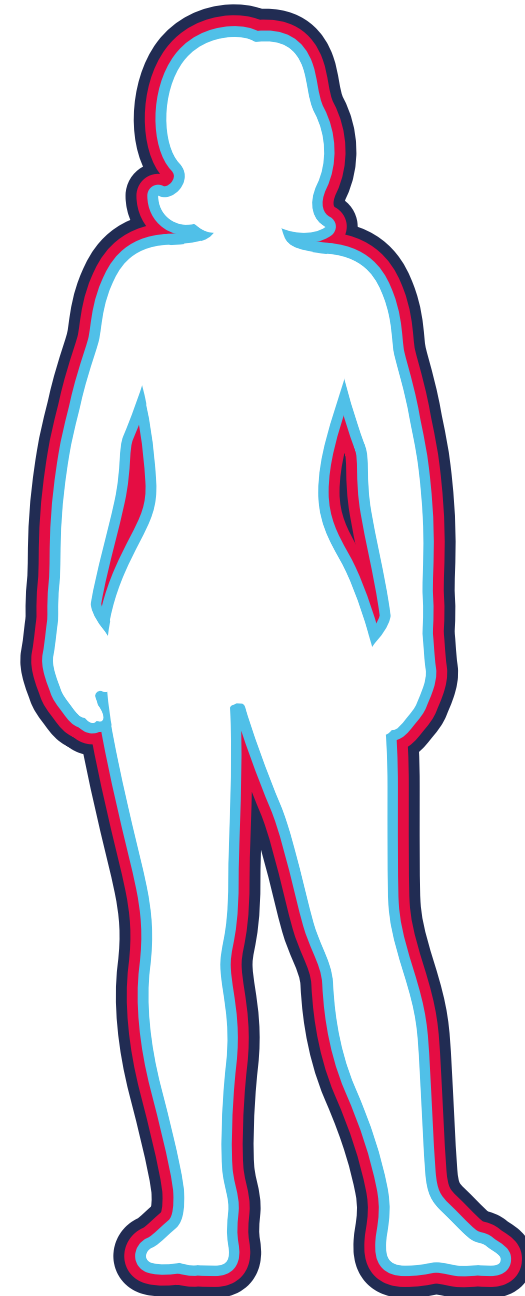
HELP for
HEROES

EXERCISE

To help you acknowledge some of these symptoms, try drawing yourself as an image.

Note the following on your drawing:

- + **HOW YOU FEEL STRESS**
- + **WHERE YOU FEEL STRESS**
- + **WHAT YOU DO WHEN YOU EXPERIENCE STRESS**



A woman with dark hair, wearing a white knit sweater, is sitting in profile by a window. She has her hand resting on her chin, looking out the window. A white coffee cup is on the windowsill in front of her. The scene is lit with warm, natural light from the window.

**BODY
EMOTION
MIND
IN ACTION**

ACKNOWLEDGE

HELP for
HEROES

Every traumatic event we go through teaches us things. We have the power to take what we have learned and turn our suffering into wisdom and compassion that can help both ourselves and others.

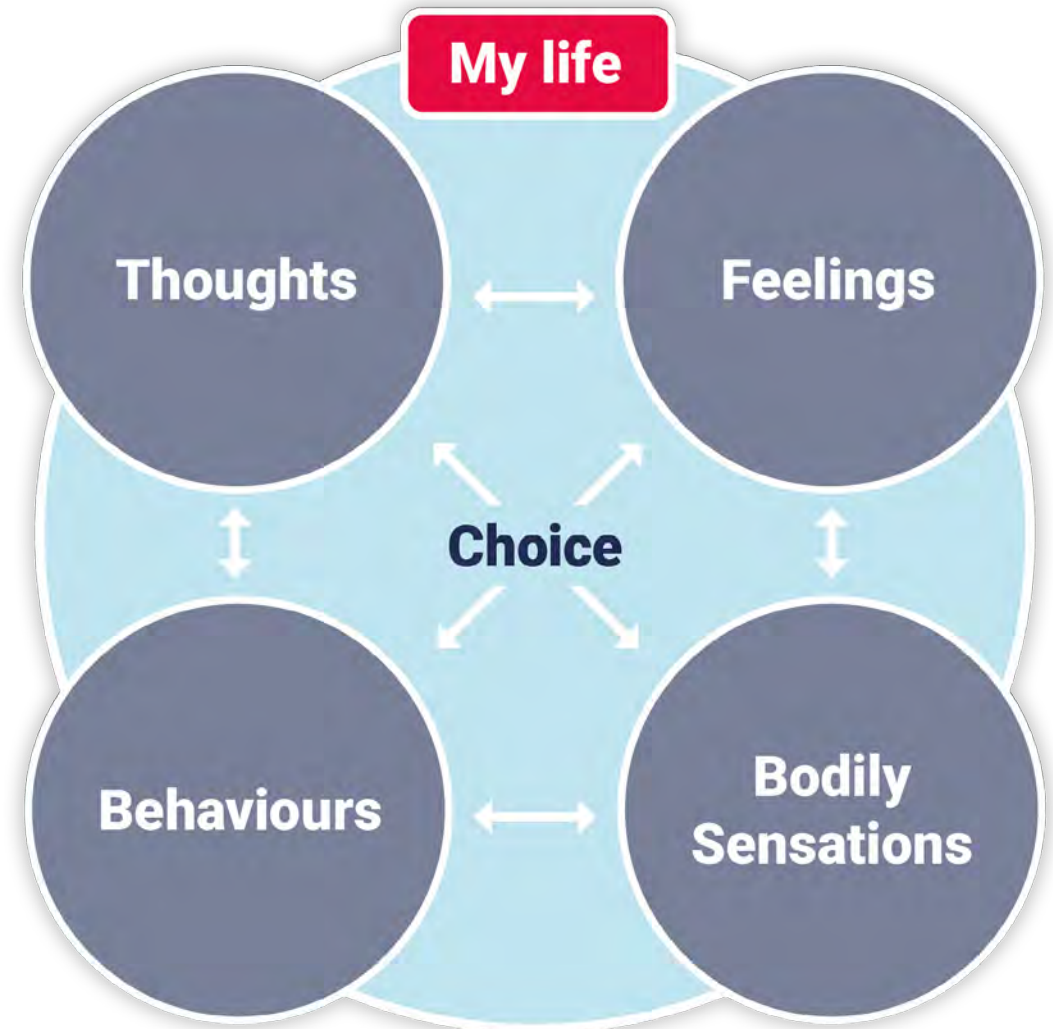
We call this the process of becoming **'the wounded healer'**.

HELP for
HEROES



It's important that we acknowledge our emotions, so that we can process them in the healthiest way. Use this diagram to jot down some of your thoughts. At any point in this cycle, you can acknowledge your automatic reaction and then choose how to respond to create a different outcome. The key is to be curiously aware of your thoughts, feelings, behaviours and bodily sensations.

These clues will help you to choose your best response .



BODY
EMOTION
MIND
IN ACTION

TREAT

**WE HAVE THE
ABILITY TO HEAL OUR
OWN FEELINGS OF
BROKENNESS AND
REPAIR OURSELVES.**

HELP for
HEROES




WHAT IS HELPFUL?

The key to dealing with overwhelming emotion is to learn how to respond mindfully to it. Try to practice the 'four Rs':

- + **RECOGNISE – IDENTIFY YOUR EARLY WARNING SIGNS**
- + **RETREAT – AWAY FROM THE SITUATION PHYSICALLY**
- + **RELAX – WHILST AWAY USE RELAXATION TECHNIQUES AND COGNITIVE CHALLENGING TECHNIQUES**
- + **RETURN – ONCE YOUR PHYSICAL RESPONSE HAS CALMED AND YOU ARE NOT OVERWHELMED.**

HELP for
HEROES





You can also try something called the soothing system. The soothing system is associated with feelings of being safe, calm, peaceful, and content. When we feel stressed or threatened, we can use practical tools to soothe our mind and to 'trick' it into feeling calm.

Here are some of the tools you might want to add to your soothing 'kitbag':

- + A GOOD BODY POSTURE**
- + USING POSITIVE FACIAL EXPRESSIONS**
- + RHYTHMIC BREATHING**
- + A COMFORTING SMELL**
- + FOCUSING YOUR ATTENTION ON SOMETHING THAT DISTRACTS YOU FROM YOUR FEELINGS**
- + SOOTHING SOUNDS**

Stress is an everyday part of life, it's how you manage it that matters.

There are many ways to manage stress healthily. Breathing exercises are one way. Explore your own ways of managing and reducing stress in your daily routine.

Find something that works for you.

THE THREE MINUTE BREATHING SPACE

Try these breathing exercises to calm your body from the effects of stress:

Watch the breathing video

HELP for
HEROES



AND FINALLY...

If you have any questions at all, take positive action by contacting a member of our Recovery team:

getsupport@helpforheroes.org.uk