



Coping with the COVID-19 Crisis

*Leading, managing, surviving and
thriving in turbulent times*

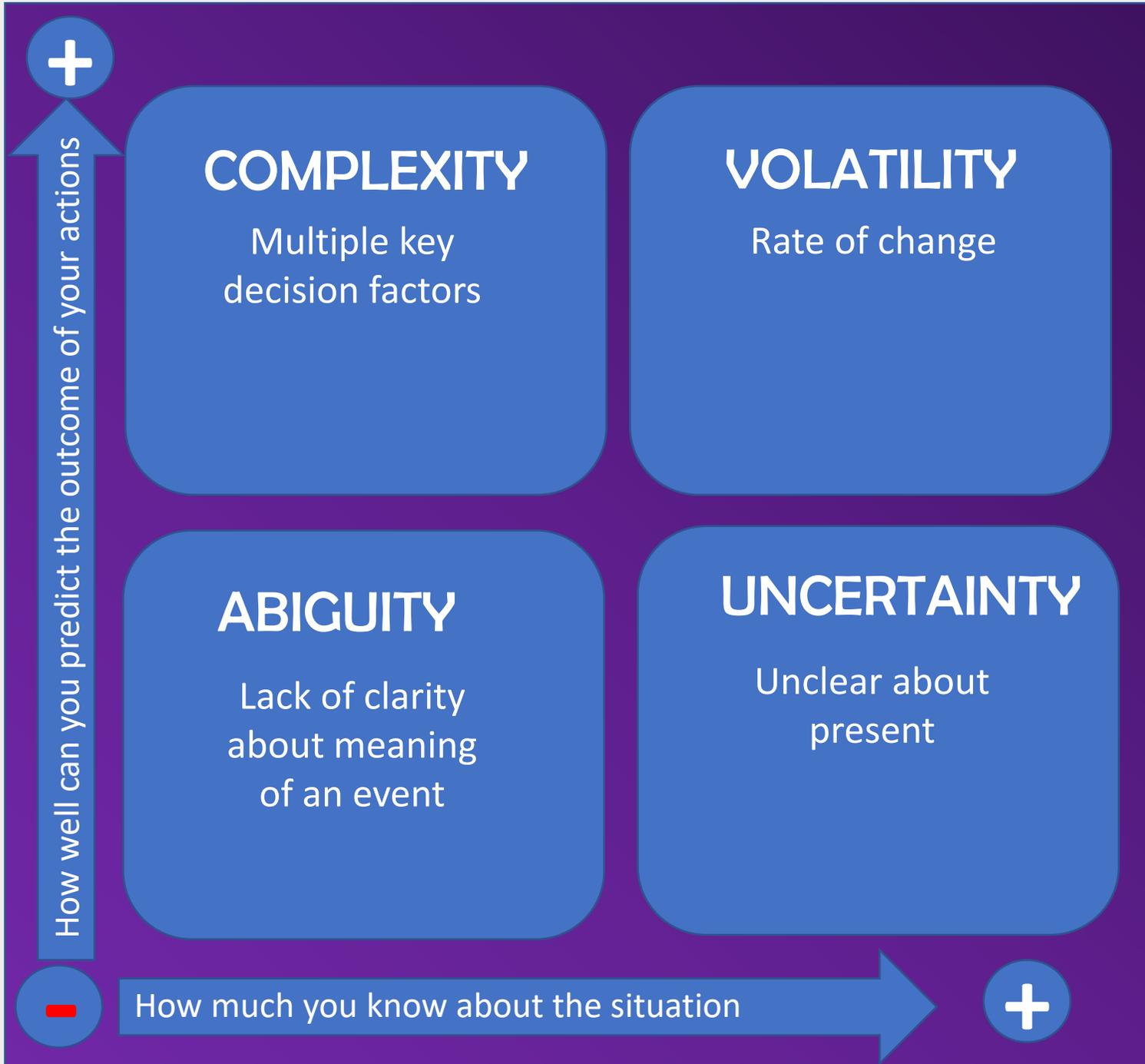
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VUCA Situations
Impact of Stress
Preventing Burn Out
Leadership Wisdom





A Classic VUCA Challenge

Inadequate information in a **constantly changing** environment where the future is **difficult to predict** and best practices either don't exist or for some reason aren't being deployed

The COVID-19 Pandemic created unprecedented challenges for leadership across disciplines, fields and industries

The Wise Leader Plays the Long Game and Cultivates Wisdom



--Baker et al, JPHPM March 19, 2020

Solely data-driven decision making is insufficient as data can change hourly. Leaders must adopt a broader perspective incorporating data, information, knowledge, and also cultivating wisdom.

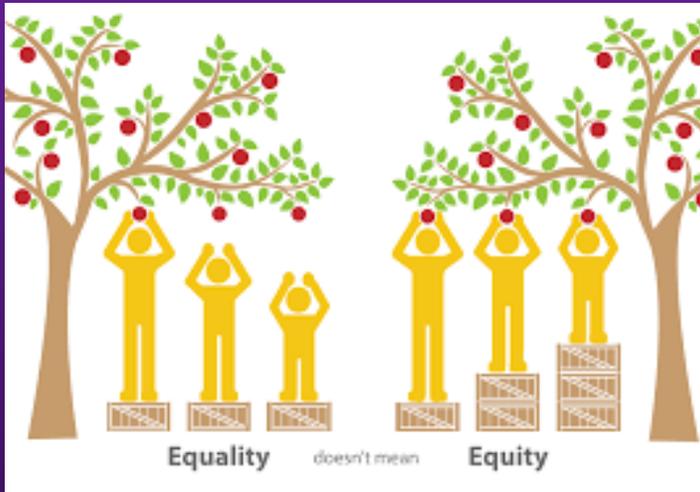
To make wiser decisions, ask:

- How are we encouraging a few wise individuals to serve as “participant observers” to “get on the balcony” and observe our decision-making processes and provide real time feedback?
- How are we seeking to uncover what we don’t know and also identify what may be unknowable?

Crisis Decision Making Can Exacerbate Blind Spots



Take Equity,
Diversity and
Inclusion into
account by asking
the right questions



- How is our prevailing mindset interfering with our ability to both question our assumptions and encourage alternative perspectives?
- If we make decisions too quickly in crisis situations, might we overlook important inequities that exist in the system
- How might these decisions miss addressing inequities that exist in our community?
- How might these decisions contribute to furthering inequities
- In what ways are we fostering systems and procedures to better “look around corners” and anticipate events more effectively?

VUCA challenges create stress

Individual stress

Team stress

Communication challenges

Changes in team purpose and mission

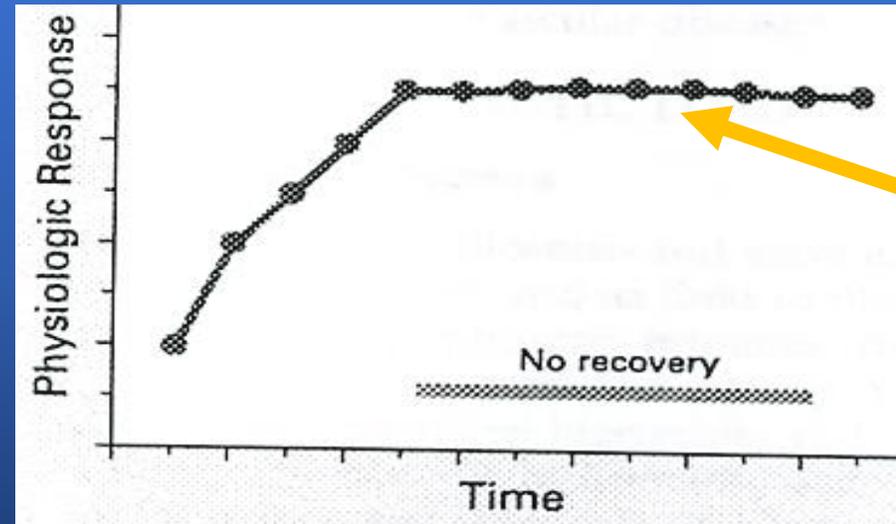
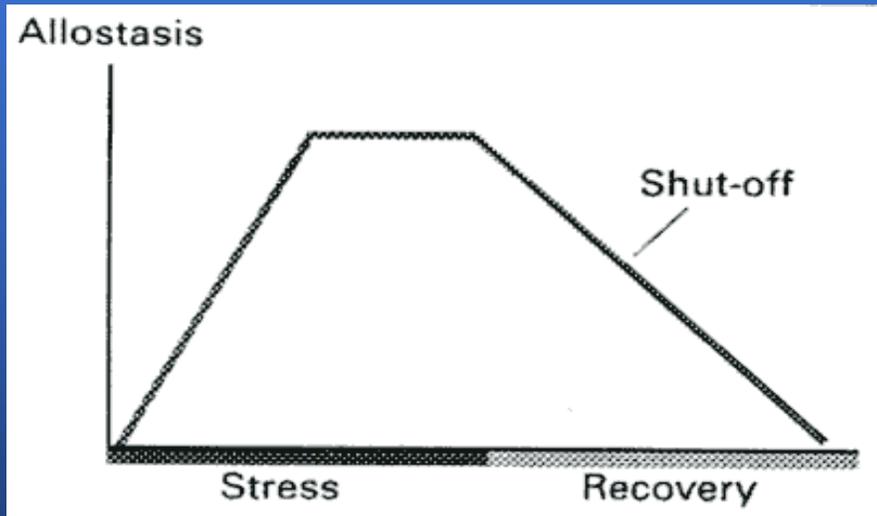
Inadequacy of prior strategies and practices

Obsolescence of policies or team strengths



Allostasis: the body's ability to maintain stability amidst change

Describes how the body deals with stress and danger, including recovery (1)



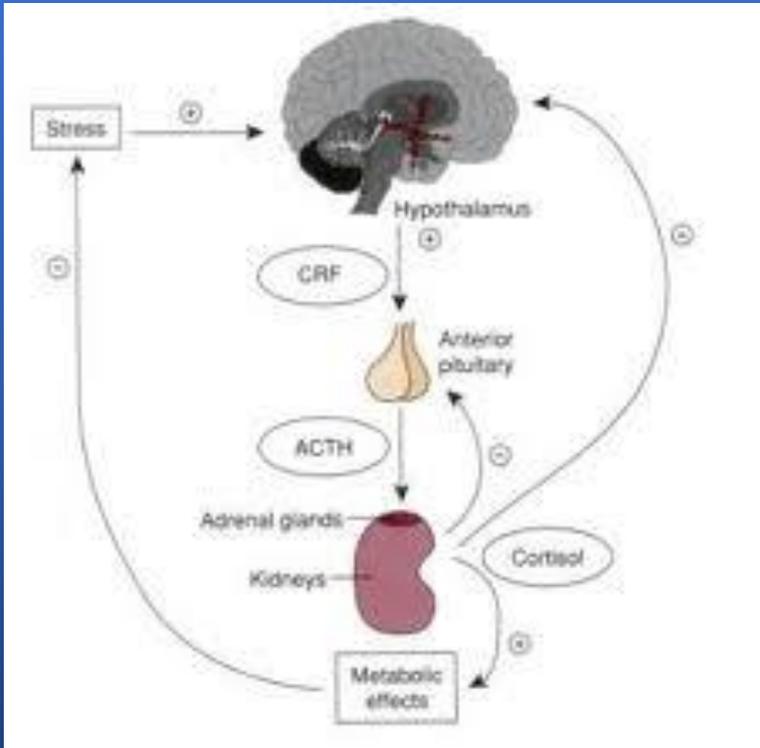
While the body has normal recovery mechanisms, when you can't use those (fight or flight) you can overwhelm your body's capability to cope—because there is no recovery phase.

1. Lu and Collins

<http://www.cadamedia.com/archives/mchb/amchp2005/transcripts/p1a.htm>

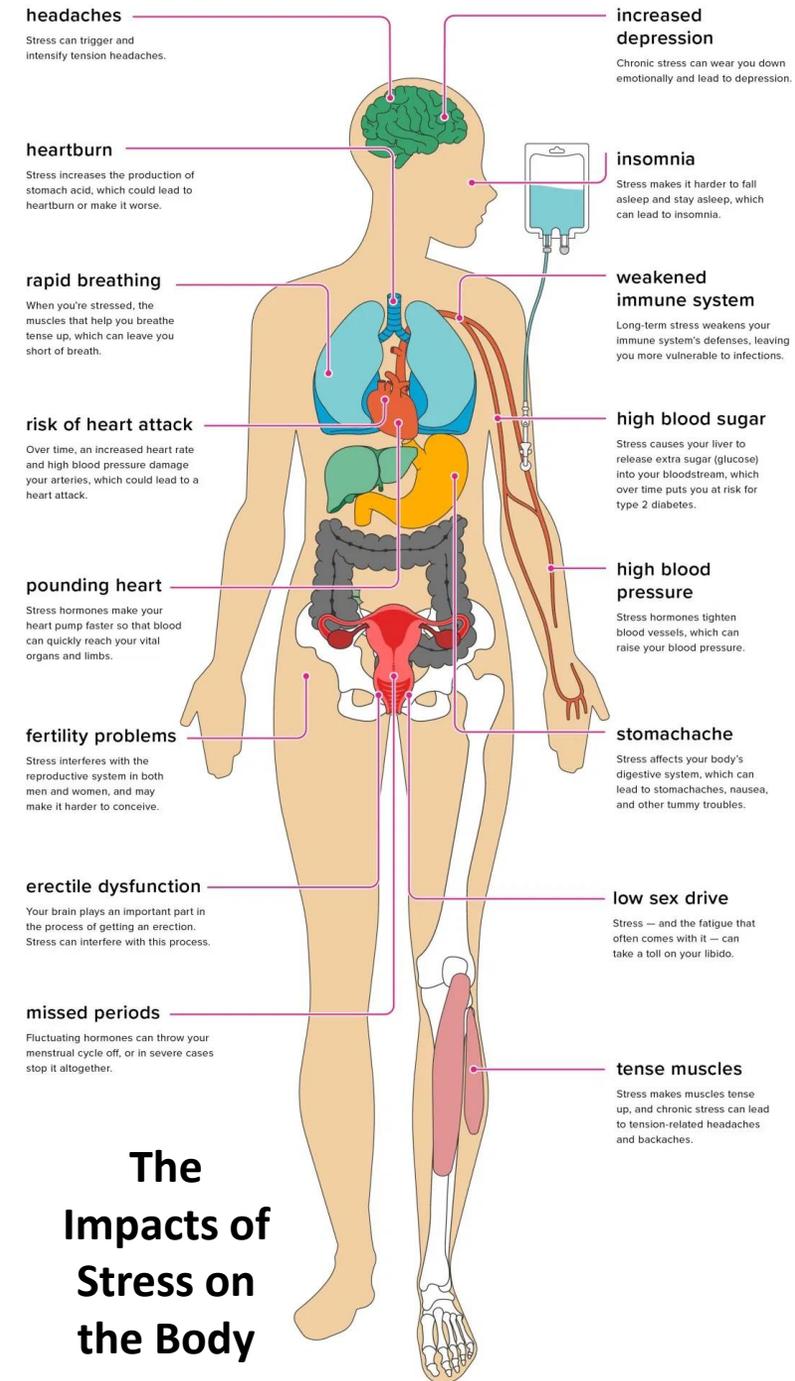
2. McEwen BS. Protective and damaging effects of stress mediators. N Eng J Med. 1998;338:171-9.

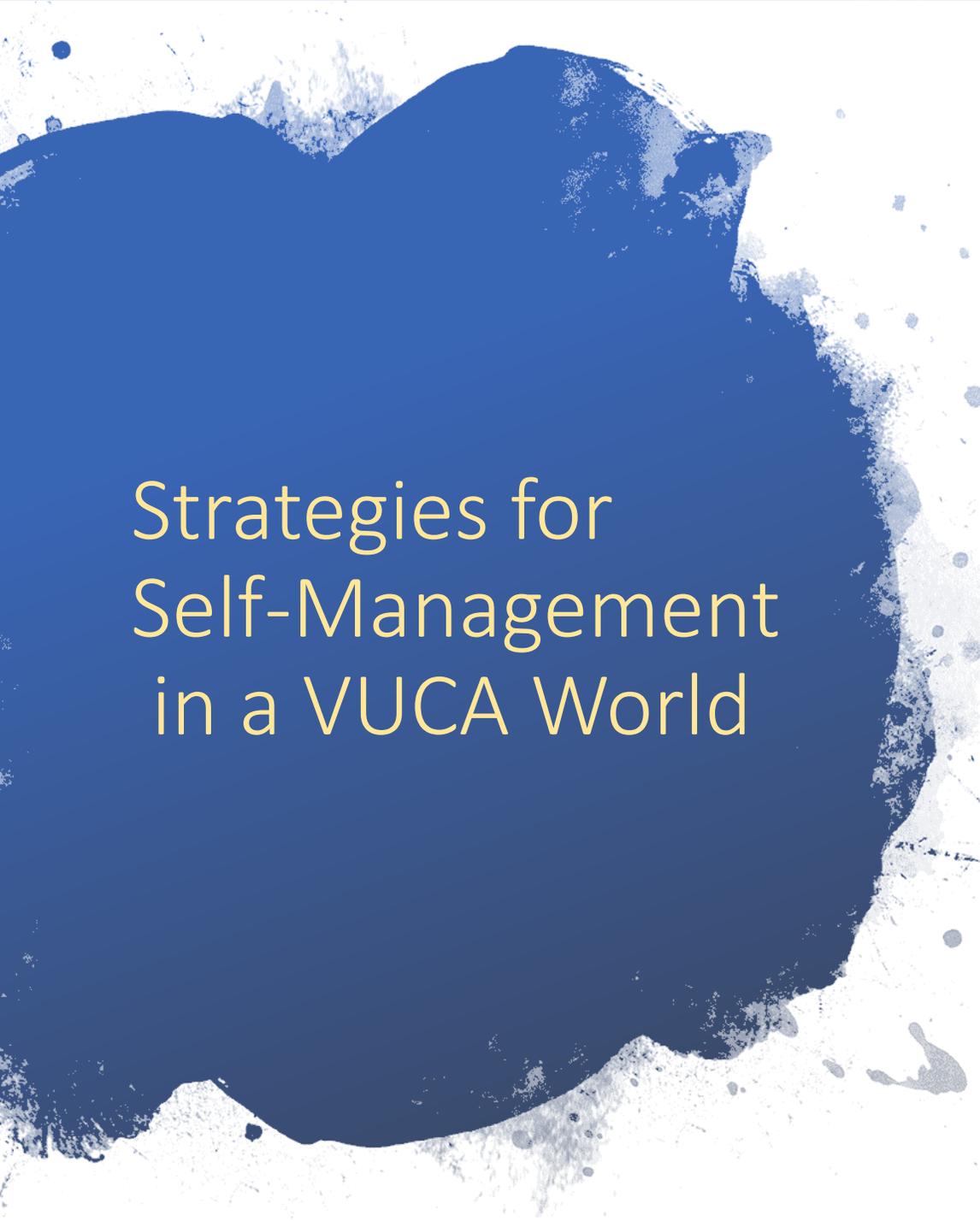
HPA Axis Hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis



- HPA is the cornerstone of allostasis
- Chronic stress impairs the function of the HPA axis, leading to chronic high levels of cortisol
- High cortisol levels suppress immune function
- It is helpful to work to mitigate the impacts of short-term stress as well

Chronic stress “programs” your body to show wear and tear (chronic disease)





Strategies for Self-Management in a VUCA World

Strategies for Self-Management in a VUCA World

- Structure your time to create routine and familiarity
- Compartmentalize your worry
- Allow time to adjust to the new practices
- Practice compassion with yourself

Practice Compassion with Yourself

Put on your own mask first

Address your own needs so that you will be in a better position to help others

- Actively employ stress management activities
 - Yoga, meditation, journaling, music, art, etc.
- Invest time in relationship with family and friends, both together as possible and virtually
- Invest in self-care (good nutrition, adequate sleep, routine exercise, routine play)
- When life is “interrupted” it makes good sense to reevaluate and even redefine goals, personally, professionally, and in work contexts



Stay abreast of developments but don't overwhelm yourself with news



“In times of stress, the process of sound decision making can suffer. A preoccupation with events may lead to a short-term focus and a reactive posture.” --Edward L. Baker, JPHMP, 2020

Stay connected to friends and family



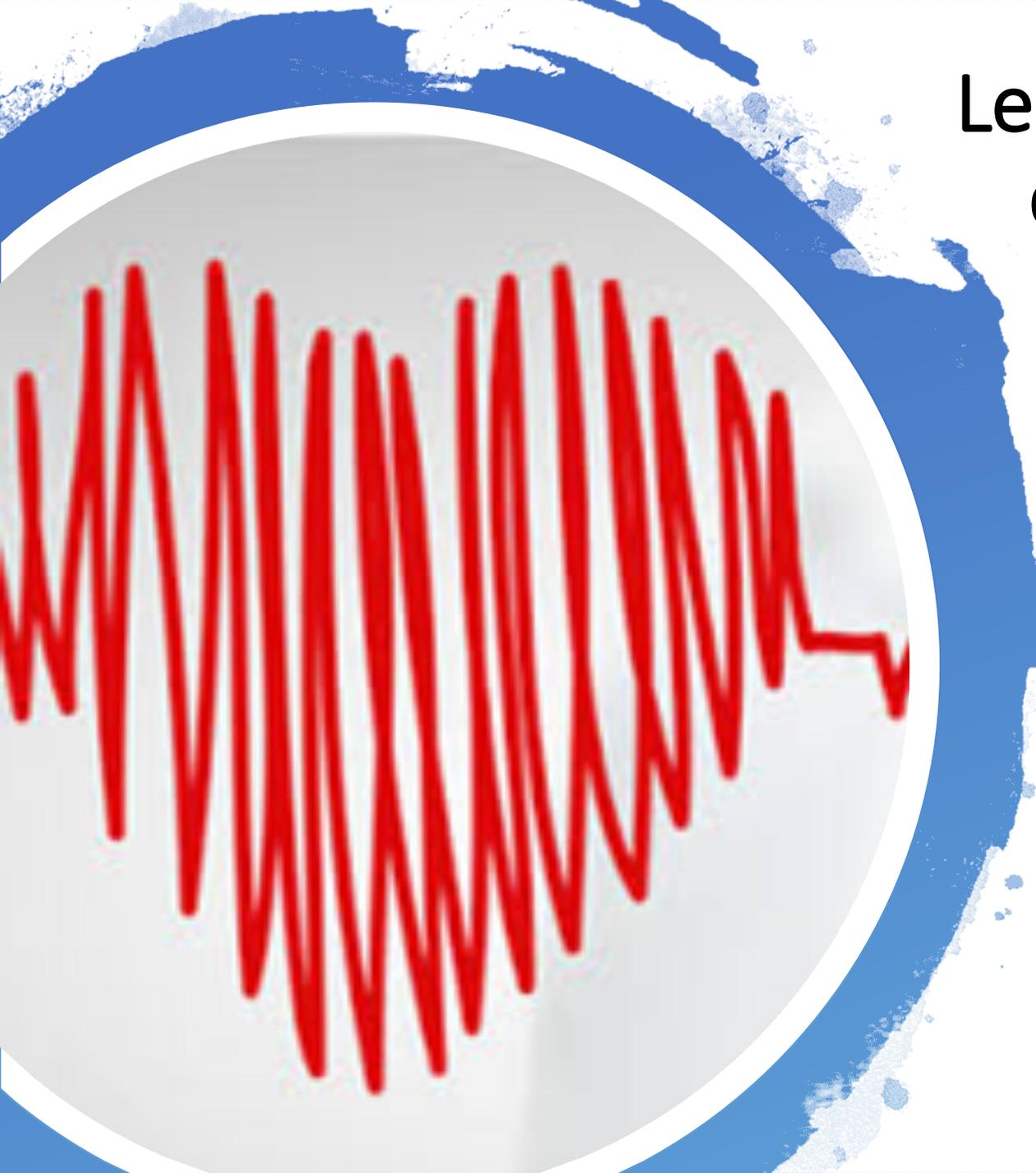
Feelings of isolation during social distancing and quarantine can significantly heighten stress. Staying connected to others is important and requires creativity and deliberation

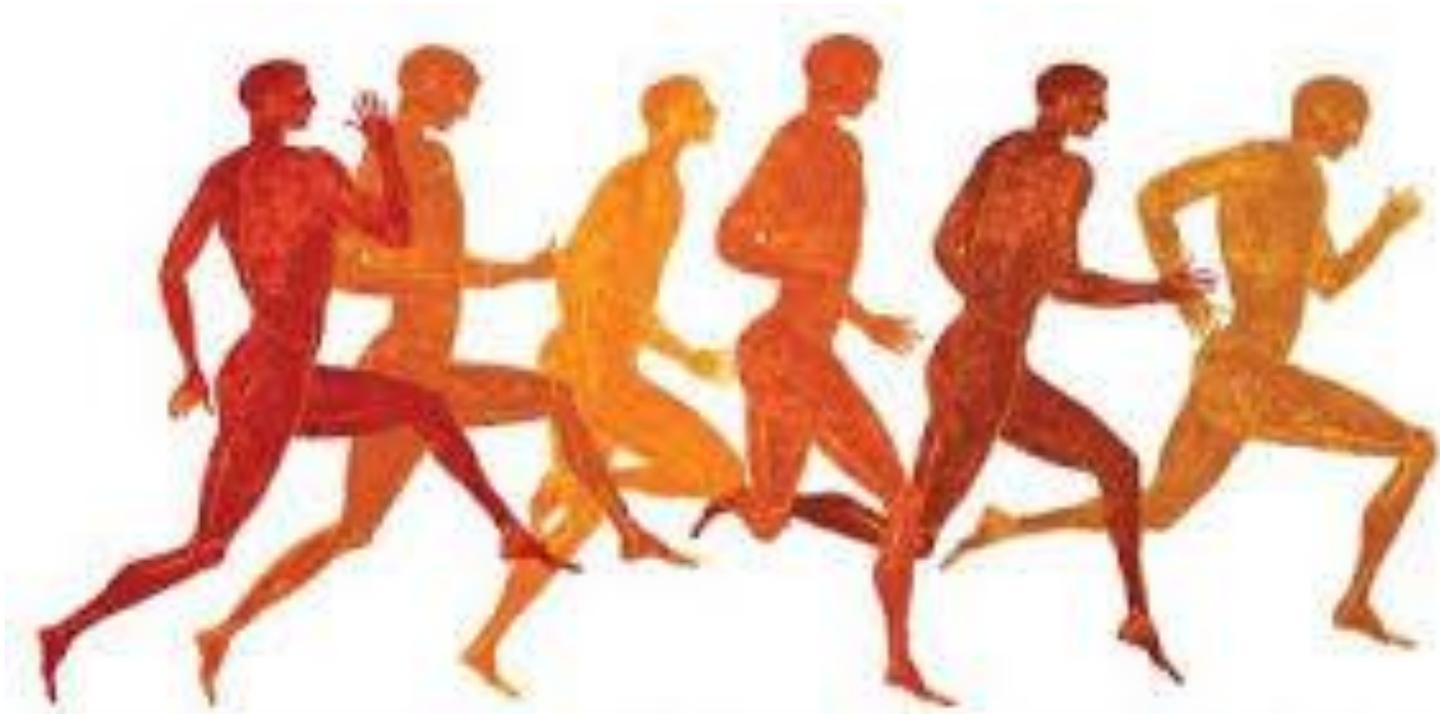


Leaders need to take care of the team



- In suddenly “distributed work” environments and telework conditions, people will be struggling to balance work and family responsibilities
- Lines will blur between work and home time—people will tend to work around the clock and even beyond normal routines
- Re-evaluate practices, processes and priorities
- Over-communicate
- Reinforce their need for self-care
- Practice compassion with team members





MARATHON OF THE SPIRIT

Energy is vital:
COVID-19 is a marathon of
spirit

- Emergencies drain the collective energy of the workforce, stretching them to the limit
- Leaders need to monitor their own energy level and that of team members
- Leaders should separate issues into 3 categories:

- 1) **Must do**
- 2) **Good to Do**
- 3) **Nice to do**

Want to preserve team energy? These questions can help:

To what extent am I focusing the finite energy of my team on those “must do” priorities using a daily virtual huddle to assemble and plan together?

In what ways am I modeling self-care and encouraging others to do so?

What systems are in place to monitor burnout and other signs of energy depletion and then to act accordingly?

To what extent are we reaching out to those with expertise and experience in dealing with these kinds of crises or with talents that could augment our team and supplement staff capacity?





“Great leadership usually starts with a willing heart, a positive attitude, and a desire to make a difference.”

-Mac Anderson

Extraordinary times are the crucible
for great leaders

Share with us how you're coping! What ideas would you like to share with others? Write to us: Claudia_Fernandez@WeTrainLeaders.com or Ruben@WeTrainLeaders.com