

# Solutions:

## Support with Emotional and Binge Eating

### Session 11: Managing My Stress and Stress Eating

# Check-In

- What is a success and a challenge from the past week? How did you support yourself through those experiences?
- Did you attempt to use your lapse management plan from last week's lesson? How did it go?
- How can the group support you this week?

# Quote of the Week

It's not stress that kills us, it is our reaction to it.

– *Hans Selye*

# Managing My Stress and Stress Eating

If we can better understand stress and how it affects us, we can better understand how it's connected to our stress eating and how to manage it effectively.

We want to learn how to manage stress from two different angles:

- Developing stress management strategies that reduce dependence on food when you're activated.
- Lifestyle changes you can make to reduce stress produced and dependence on emotional eating.

# Understanding Stress

- Stress is the emotional and physical response to pressures from internal and external environments.
- Stress cannot be avoided and is fundamentally necessary for survival. However, at certain levels it can begin to damage health, relationships, and enjoyment of life.
- Stress causes both physical and emotional symptoms that are different for each of us. Many impulsive and compulsive behaviors are an attempt to cope with stress, including overeating, smoking, drinking, shopping, gambling, etc.

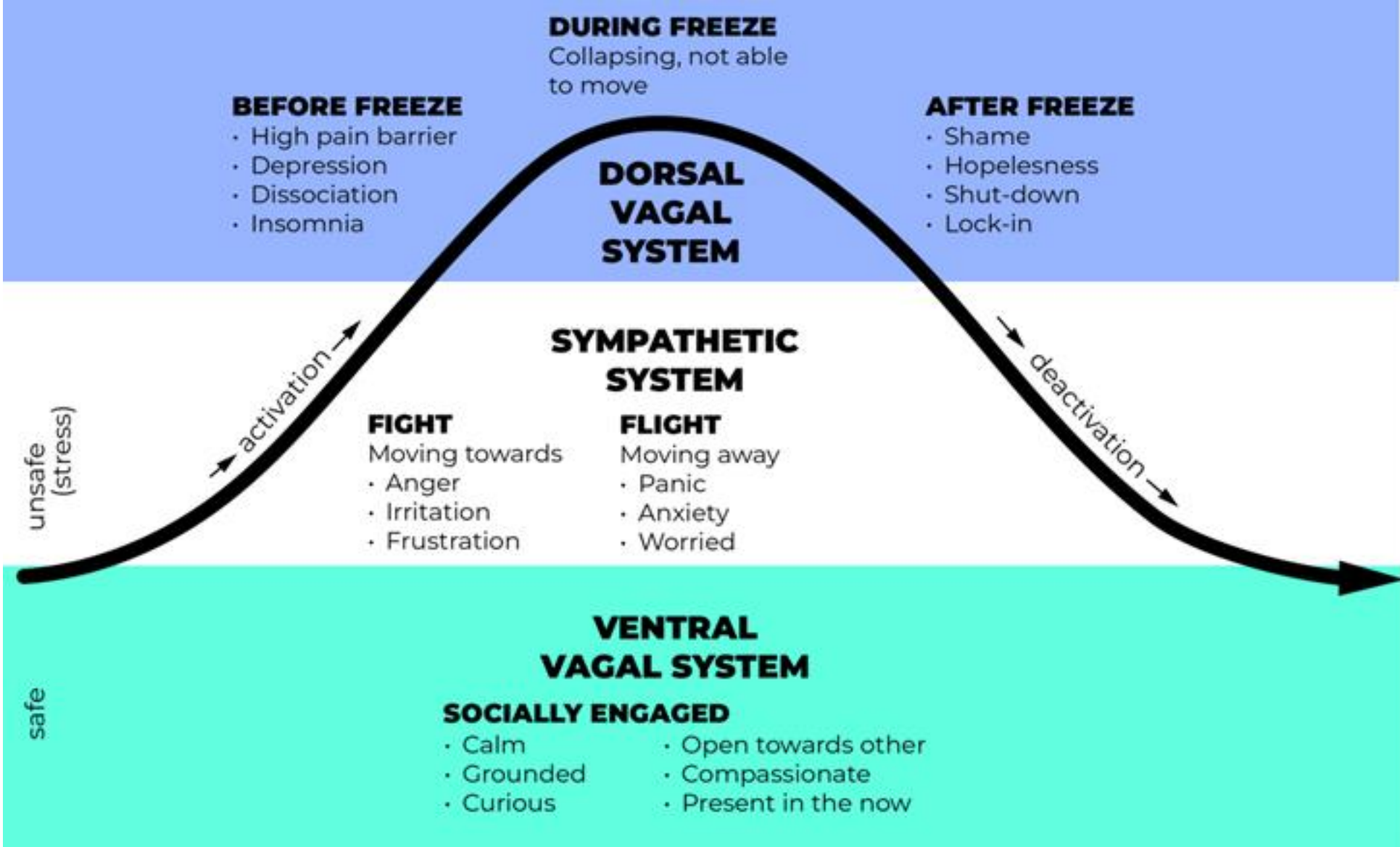
# Understanding Stress

Your stress response (fight/flight/freeze) has evolved to help you successfully react to stressful situations.

- **Actual Threats**- events that are actually threatening to your wellbeing/survival
- **Perceived Threats**- events that you perceive and experience as threatening, even though they aren't an actual threat to your wellbeing/survival

# Understanding Stress

- When the amygdala fires up and the sympathetic nervous system is activated, the body pumps out the stress hormones adrenaline, noradrenaline, and cortisol to prepare the body for fight/flight/freeze.
- Our stress response has not evolved to tell the difference between actual and perceived threats, resulting in chronic stress. Maladaptive coping responses to stress and chronic stress also activate the sympathetic nervous system, thereby prolonging the activated state in addition to any future stressors.





# How Stress Can Harm

- More frequent activation of the sympathetic nervous system results in an increased “allostatic load”, meaning the parasympathetic nervous system is less effective at returning your body to a physiological state of safety.
- Studies indicate that physical changes associated with chronic stress may significantly contribute to America’s leading causes of death; heart disease and cancer.
- It is estimated that two-thirds of all doctor visits are stress-related.

# Negative Effects of Chronic Stress

- Chronic fatigue, digestive upsets, headaches, and back pain.
- Diminished or impaired immune response.
- Increased blood pressure and increased risk of heart attack and stroke.
- Increased incidence of autoimmune diseases such as arthritis and asthma.
- Dependence on potentially compulsive behaviors such as overeating, smoking, drinking, and drug abuse.
- Diminished sexual desire and an inability to achieve orgasm.
- Chronically elevated cortisol levels cause fat to be deposited as visceral fat in the abdomen.

# Personal Signs of Stress

- Changes in behavior
- Changes in thoughts
- Changes in feelings and emotions
- Changes in physical health and bodily functions

# Personal Signs of Stress

## Changes in Behavior

- Problems sleeping
- Overeating or bingeing
- Excessive drinking or using drugs
- Changes in sexual desire
- A strong need to *get away*

## Changes in Thoughts

- Distracted easily
- Difficulty remembering things
- Negative thinking patterns
- Obsessions and ruminations
- All-or-nothing thinking; Catastrophize
- Inaccurate perceptions of experiences, including body image

# Personal Signs of Stress

## Changes in Feelings

- Irritable
- Anxious
- Worried
- Sad or melancholic
- Tense
- Angry
- Helpless
- Hopeless
- Depressed

## Changes in Physical Health/Body Functions

- Backaches or neckaches
- Migraines
- Muscular tension
- Nervous stomach
- Other digestive problems
- Breathing problems
- Frequent urination or urge to urinate
- Chronic tiredness or fatigue
- Dizziness

# Discussion Questions

- What are your five most common personal signs of stress?
- What can you do to increase your awareness of your stress warning signs?

# Discussion Question

What coping skills and strategies can you use to manage stress when you're activated?

*(Think of ideas that are calming, soothing, relaxing, or distracting.)*

# Discussion Question

What lifestyle changes can you make to minimize the occurrence of stress?

*(Think of ideas that improve the ease, balance, and enjoyment of life- setting boundaries, simplifying or organizing a space, more time for hobbies/interests, regular self-care, adequate sleep, engaging in connections with others, etc.)*



# Helpful Ideas

- Read *Learning to Manage My Stress and Stress Eating, 101 Ways to Cope with Stress, and Ten Immediate Steps Toward Better Health*.
- Use the suggestions to create a stress management and lifestyle change program you can and will use to help manage stress eating.

Any last thoughts or questions?

