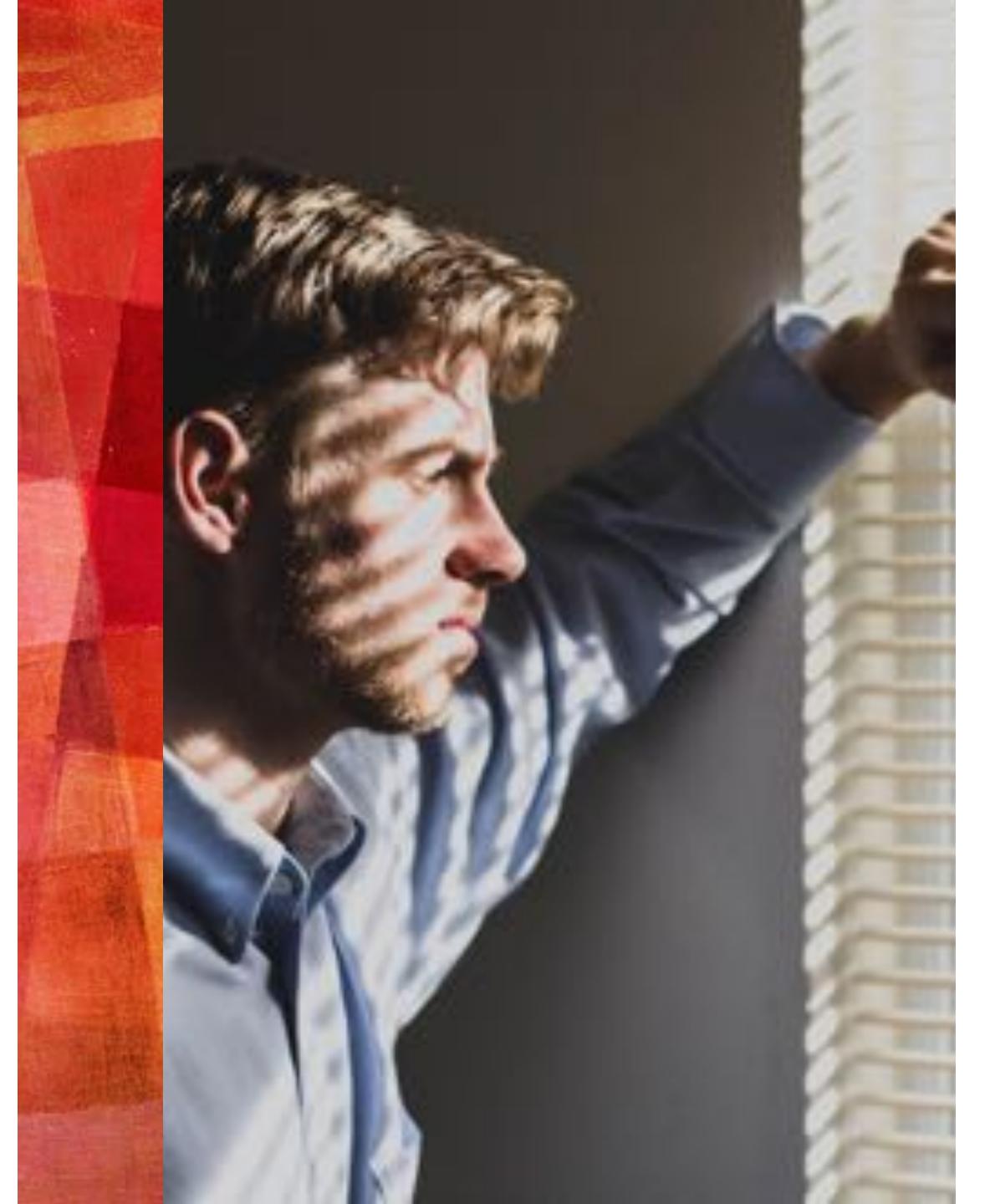


A WAY OUT OF LONELINESS

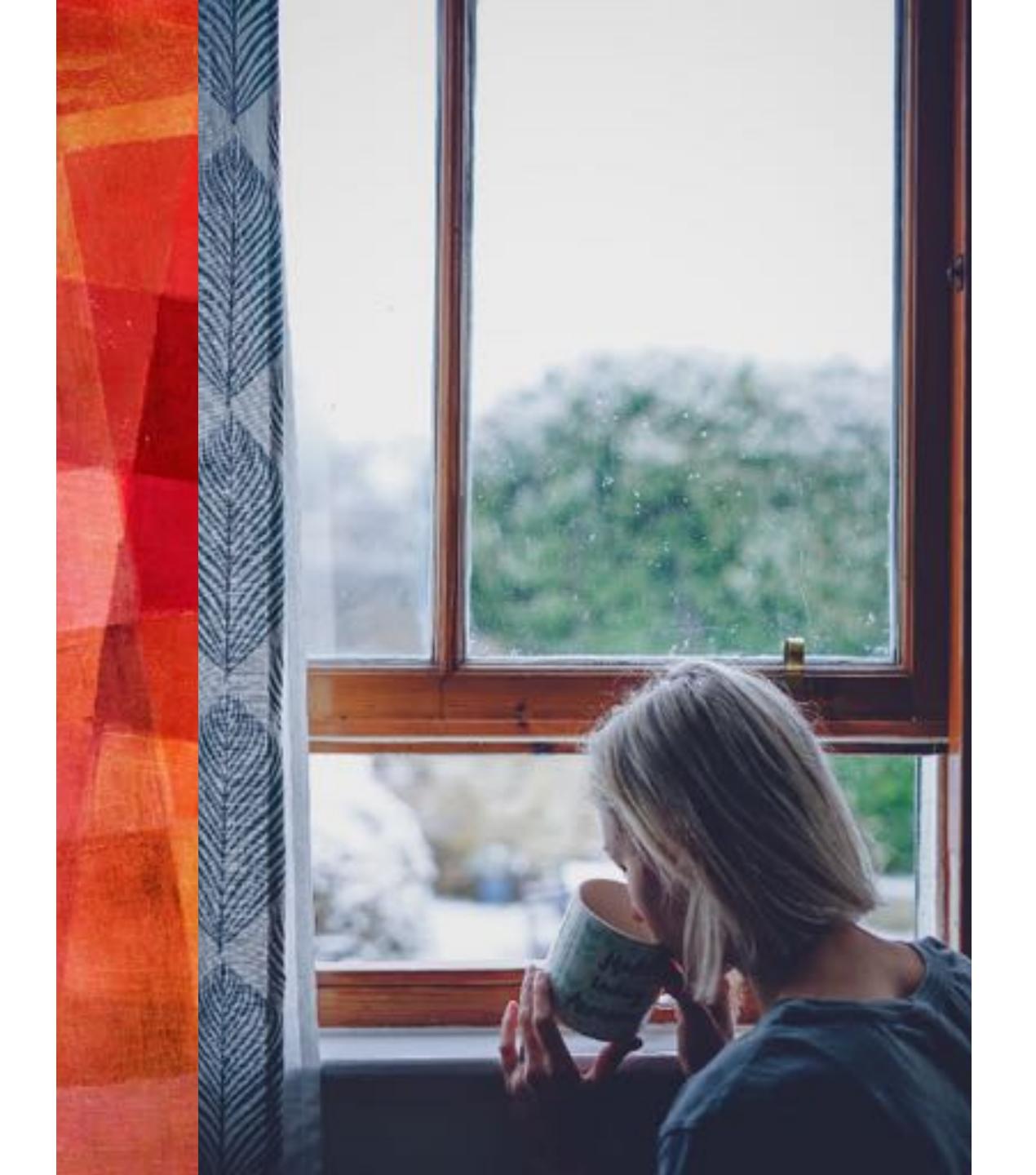
How to Feel Less Isolated and Alone

Lisa Firestone, Ph.D.



FEEL LONELY? YOU'RE NOT ALONE

- ➤ Over 1.5 billion people globally have been asked to stay home due to COVID-19 (as of 3/23/20.
- ➤158 million Americans have been told to stay home (as of 3/23/20.
- ➤ Loneliness may exacerbate the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Since the outbreak, phone calls to the National Suicide Prevention Hotline have gone up 300%.

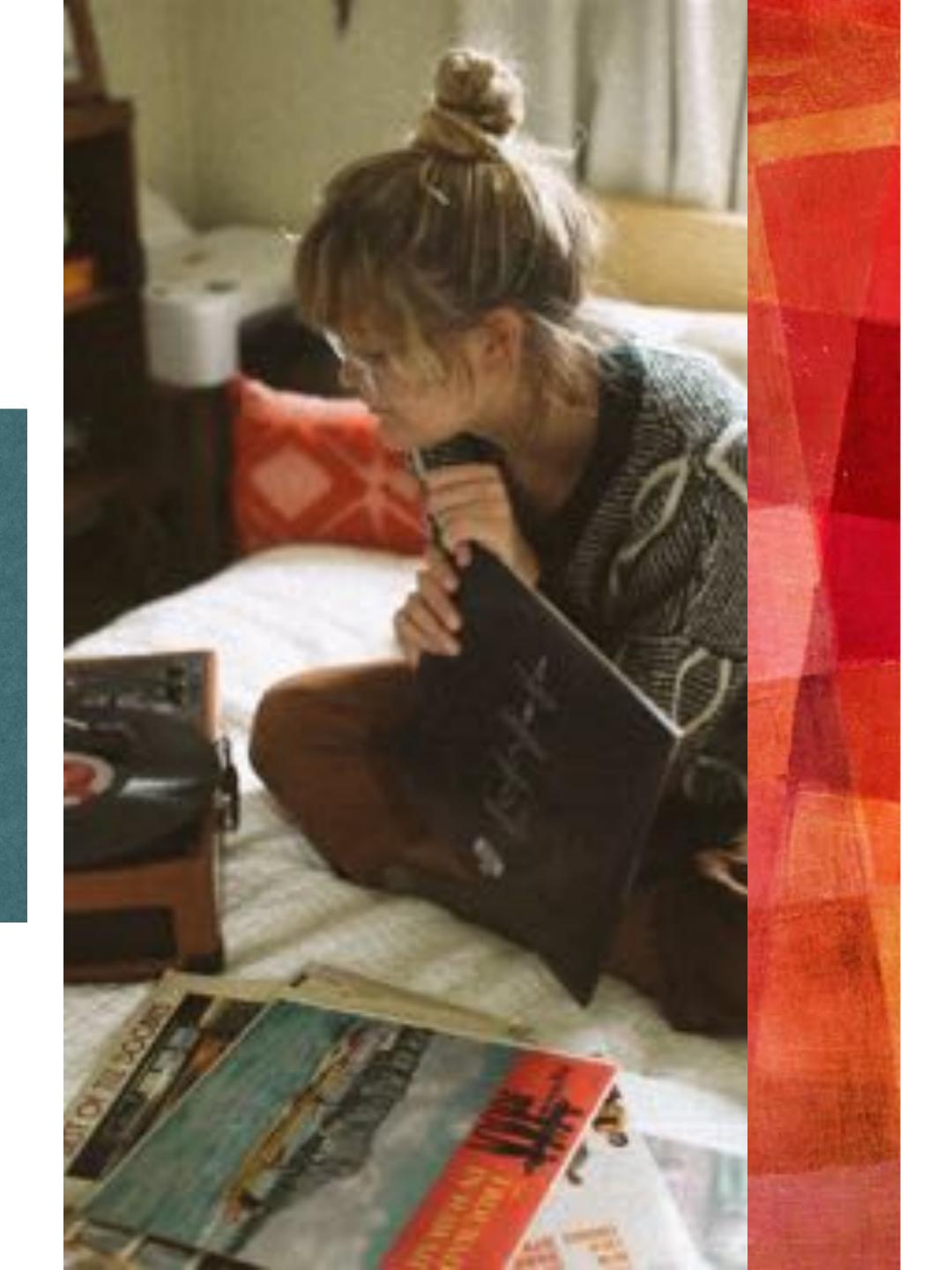


THE EPIDEMIC OF LONELINESS

- ➤ 61% of Americans over the age of 18 are lonely (79 percent of Gen Zers, 71 percent of millennials and 50 percent of baby boomers feel lonely.
- ➤ A U.K. study of millions of people found that one in 10 people didn't feel they had a close friend, while one in five never or rarely felt loved.
- ➤ In our research, we found that the most common negative thought people have toward themselves is that they are different from other people."

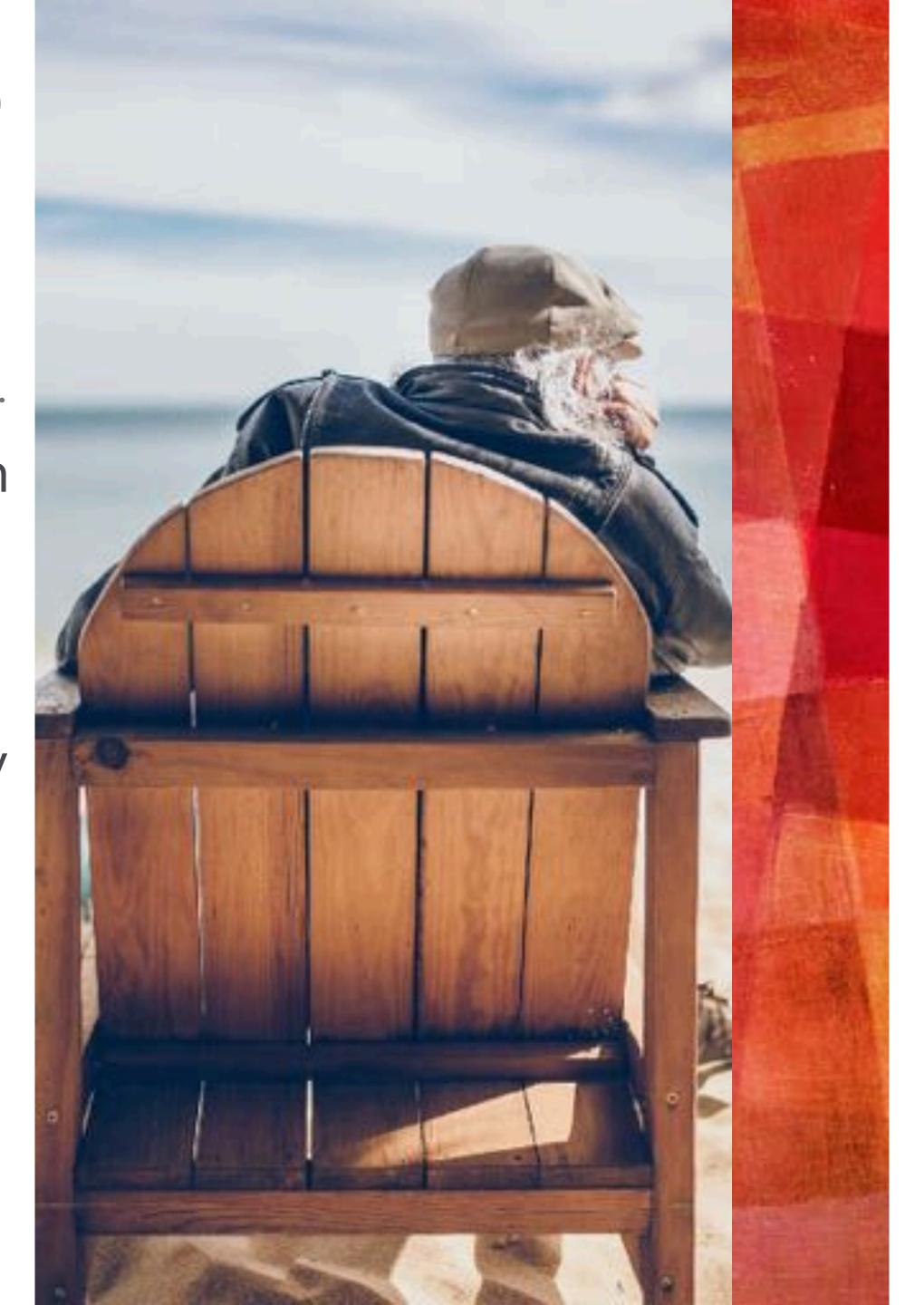
Anyone can feel lonely at any point **BUT**

loneliness can be a chronic condition with serious harmful effects on our mental and physical health.



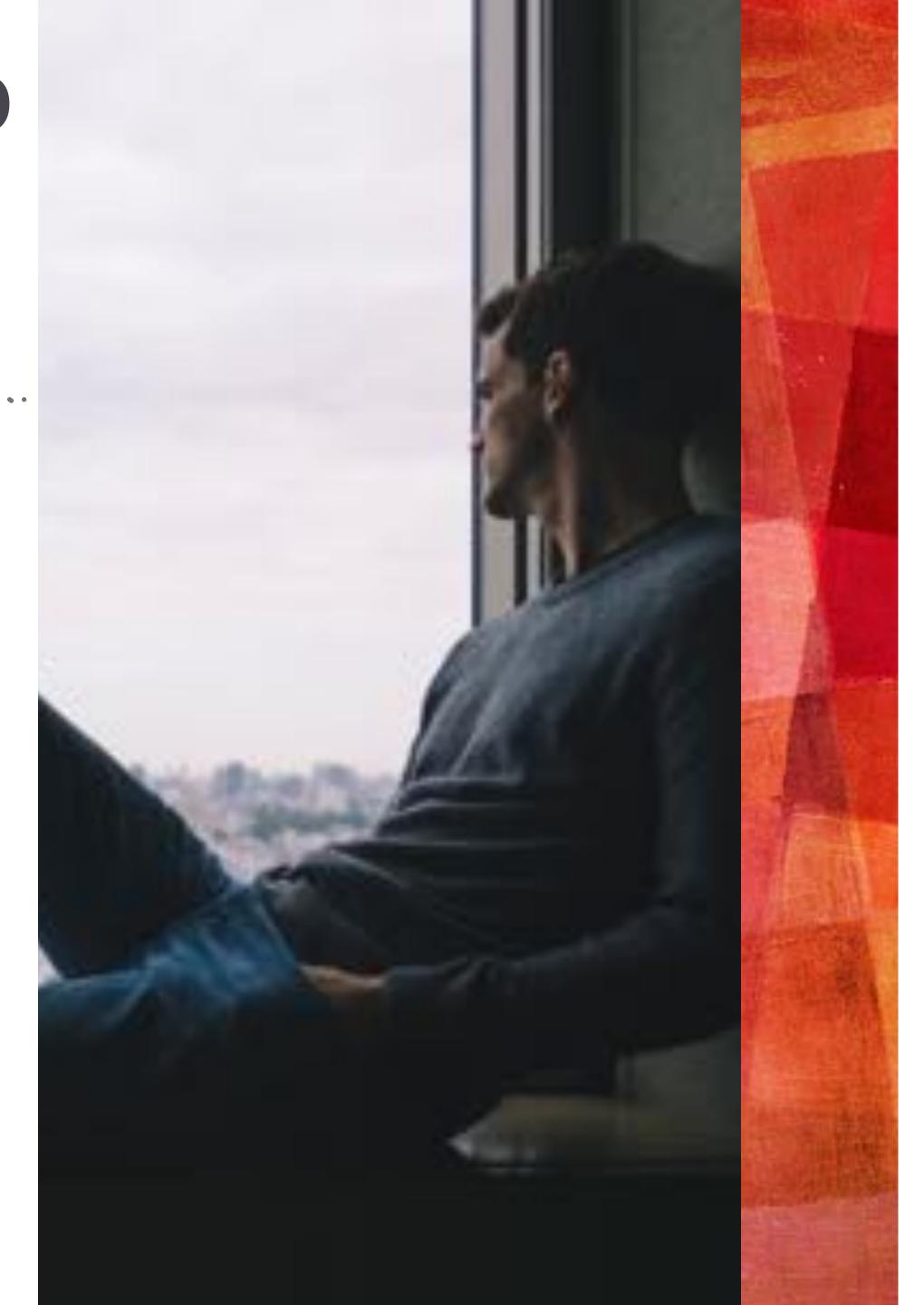
LONELINESS IS ASSOCIATED WITH A HOST OF NEGATIVE OUTCOMES INCLUDING:

- > Impaired executive control, self-regulation
- ➤ Substance abuse
- ➤ Depressive symptoms
- > Suicidal ideation
- Weakened health and increased morbidity and mortality
- > Increased vulnerability to other stressors
- ➤ Intense reaction to negatives
- > Reduced emotional boost of positives



LONELINESS IS ASSOCIATED WITH A HOST OF NEGATIVE OUTCOMES INCLUDING:

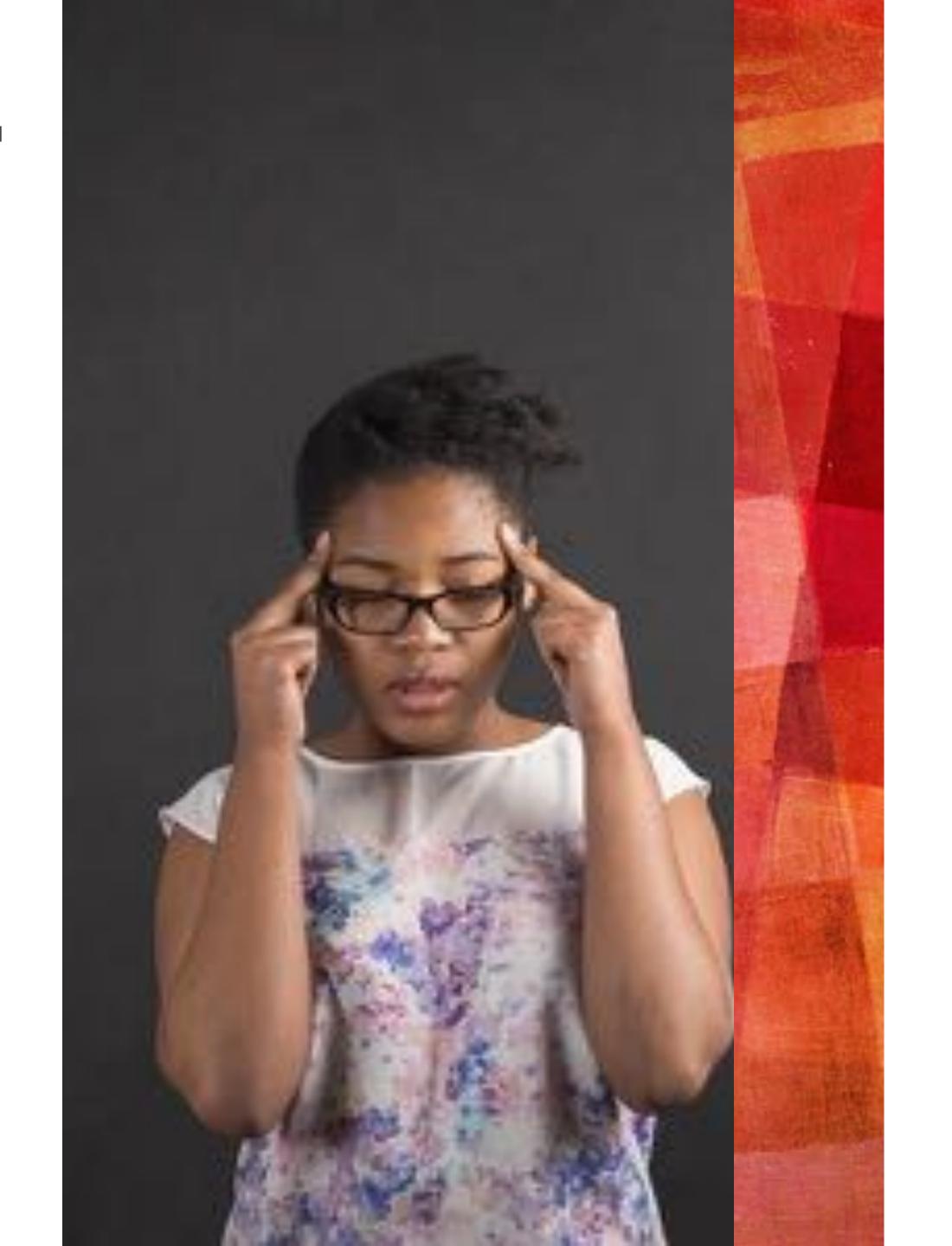
- ➤ Greater feelings of helplessness, threat
- ➤ Decreased sleep quality
- ➤ Diminished willpower to exercise and eat healthy
- > Focus on exclusion instead of inclusion
- ➤ Timidity
- ➤ Misremembering



CONSEQUENCES OF LONELINESS

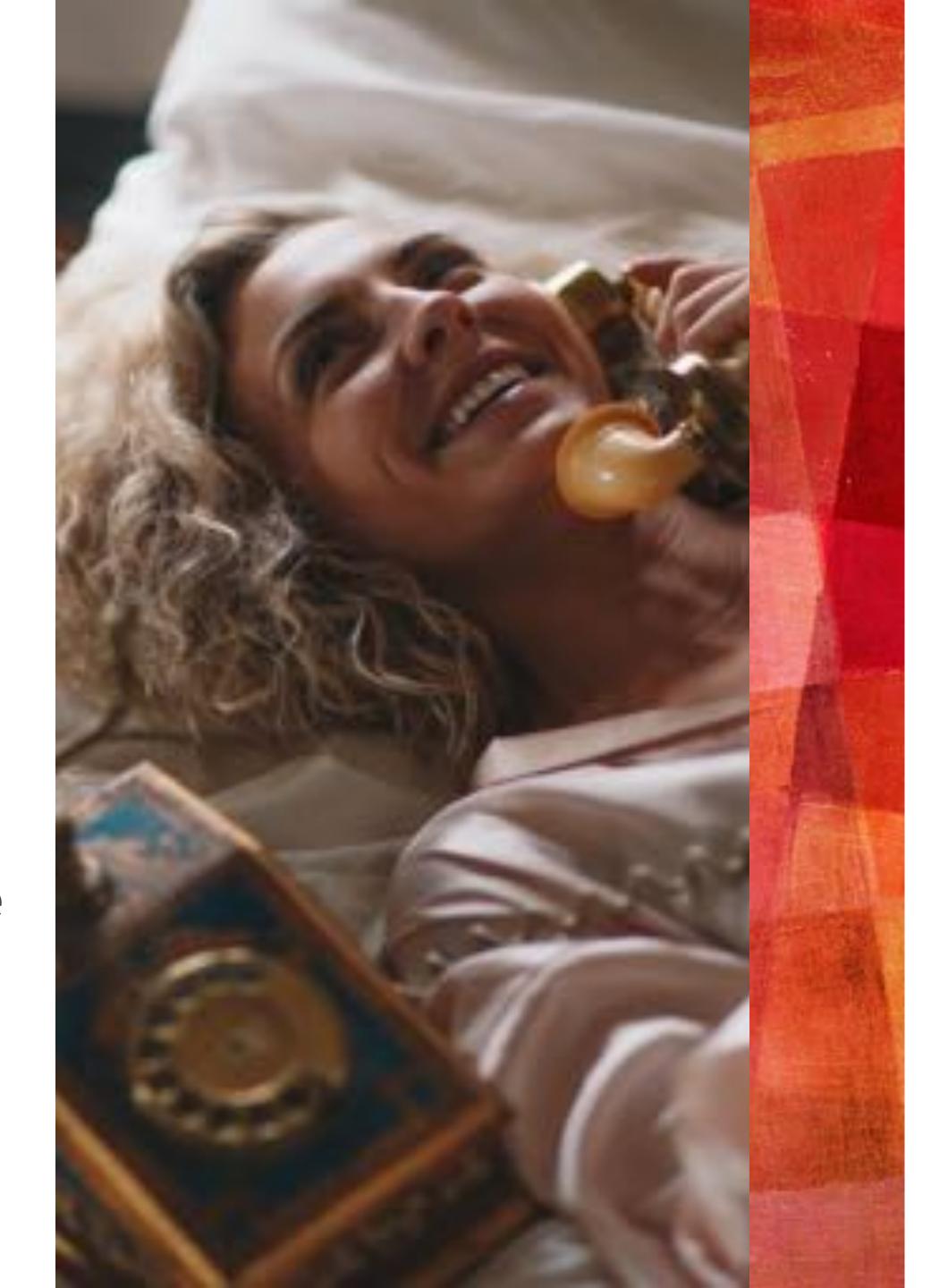
Perceptions of social isolation, or loneliness, increase vigilance for threat and heighten feelings of vulnerability while also raising the desire to reconnect.

Loneliness can hurt us now, because it impacts immunity and feelings of safety.



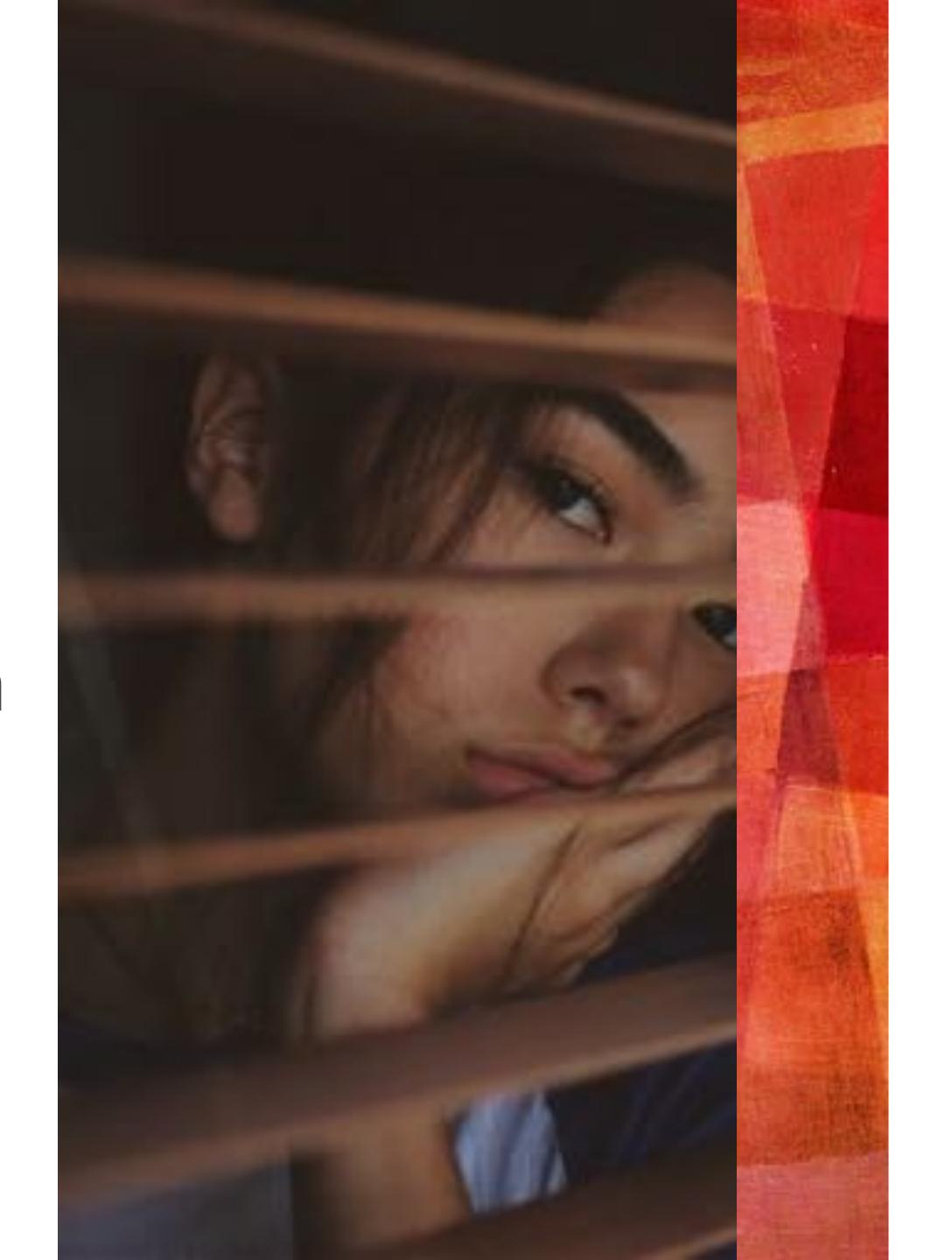
IMPORTANCE OF CONNECTION

- ➤ As a social species, humans rely on a safe, secure social surrounding to survive and thrive."
- > Seeking connection is a valuable mental health principle.
- ➤ Even in these difficult times where we cannot connect in the ways we are used to, we can work to find other ways.



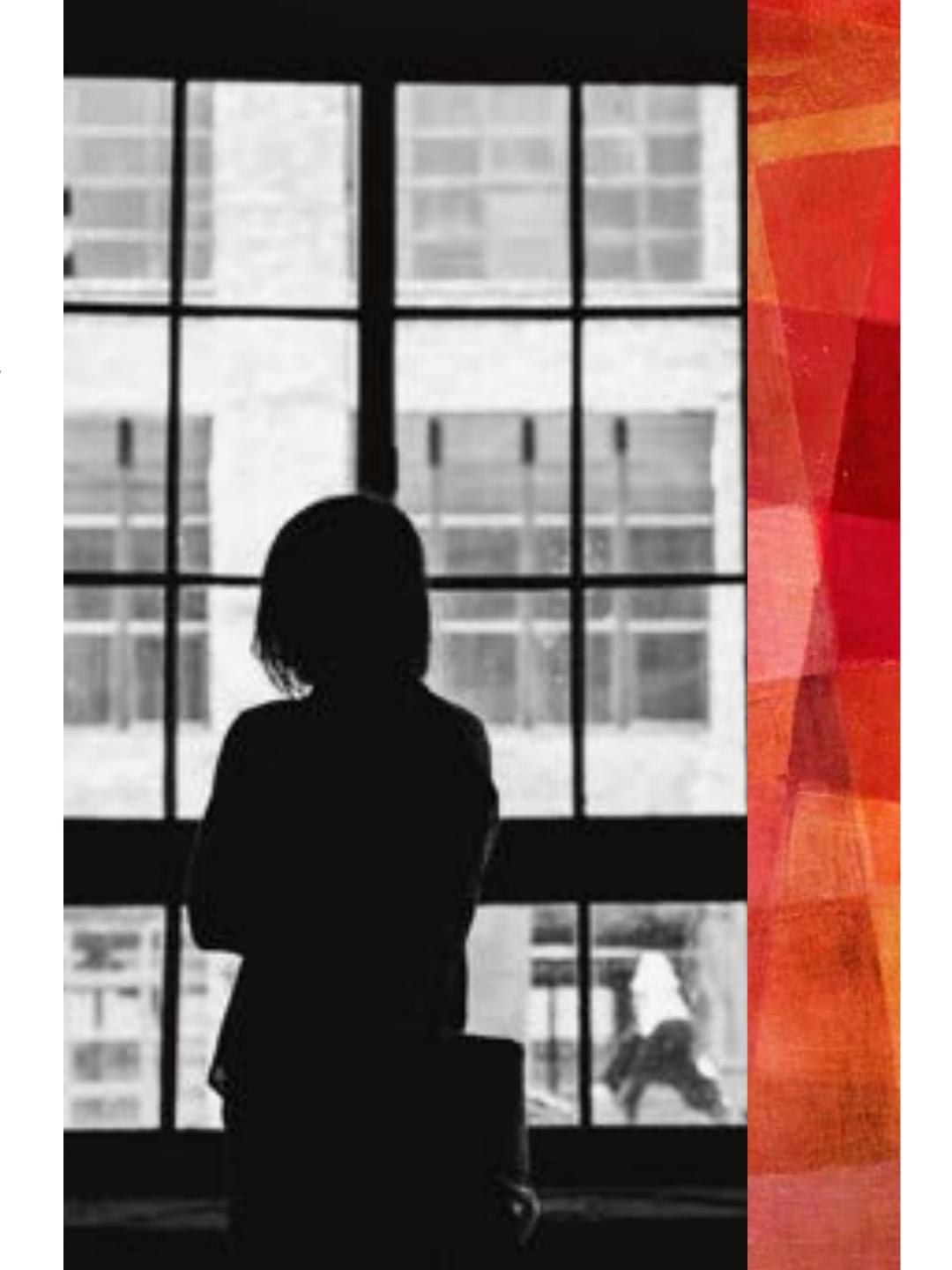
DEFINITION OF LONELINESS

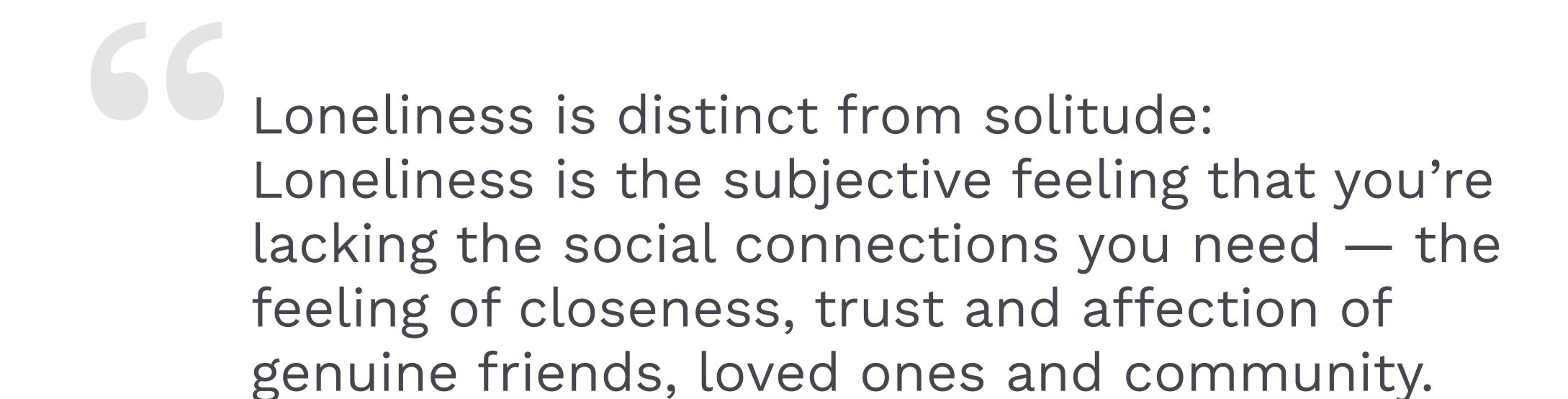
The distress that results from discrepancies between ideal and perceived social relationships



DEFINITION OF LONELINESS

- ➤ Complex set of feelings encompassing reactions to unfulfilled intimate and social needs
- Transient for some individuals but can be a chronic state for others
- ➤ Major risk factor for psychological disturbances and for broad-based morbidity and mortality



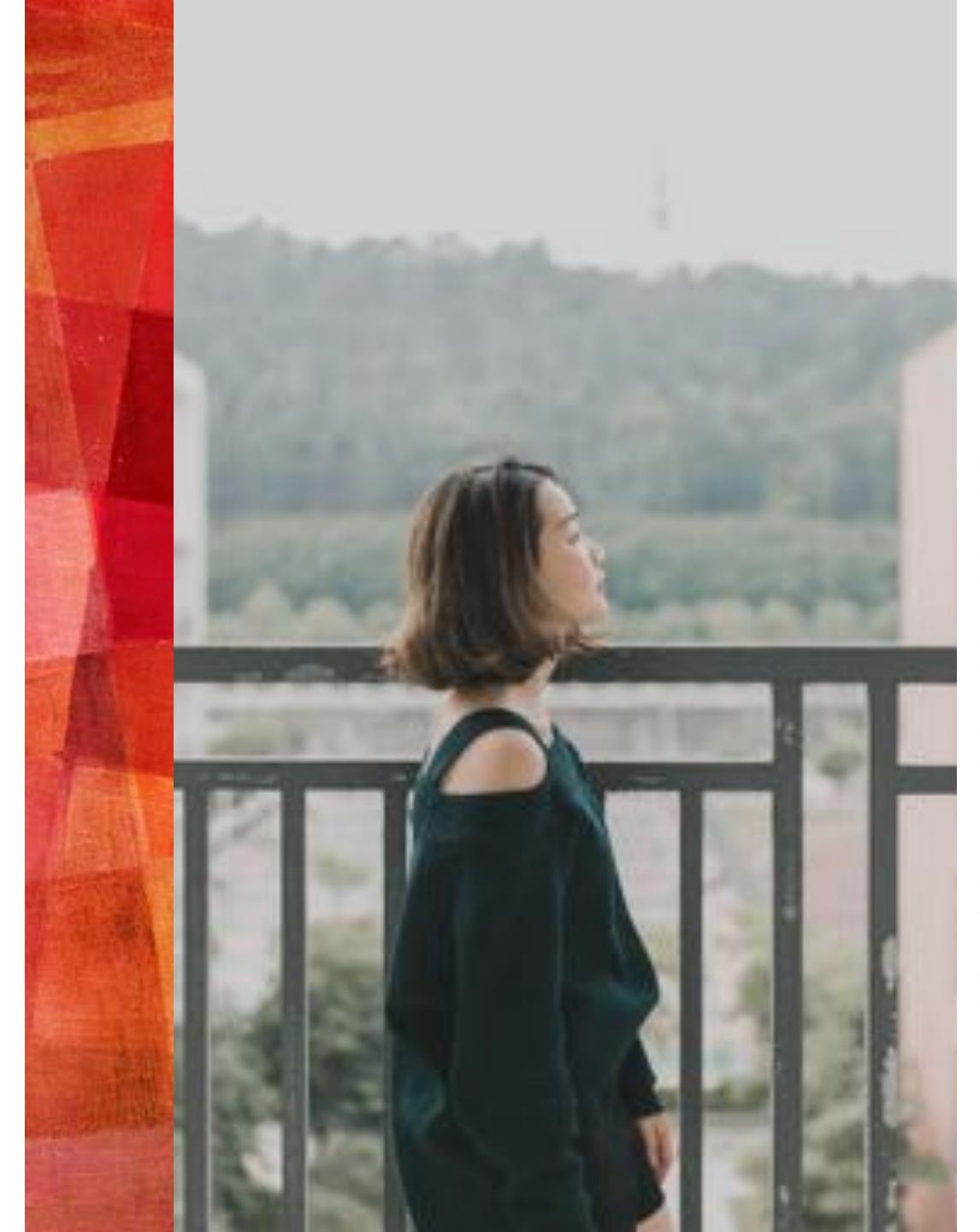


- Dr. Vivek H. Murthy

Former U.S. surgeon general and author of Together: The Healing Power of Human Connection in a Sometimes Lonely World



LONELINESS IS A STATE OF MIND



SATISFYING SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS VS. CHRONIC LONELINESS

- ➤ More positive outlooks on life
- ➤ More secure attachments
- ➤ More interaction with others
- ➤ More autonomic activation when facing psychological challenges
- ➤ More efficient restorative behaviors
- ➤ Lower cortisol levels throughout a day

Source: http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/10677643



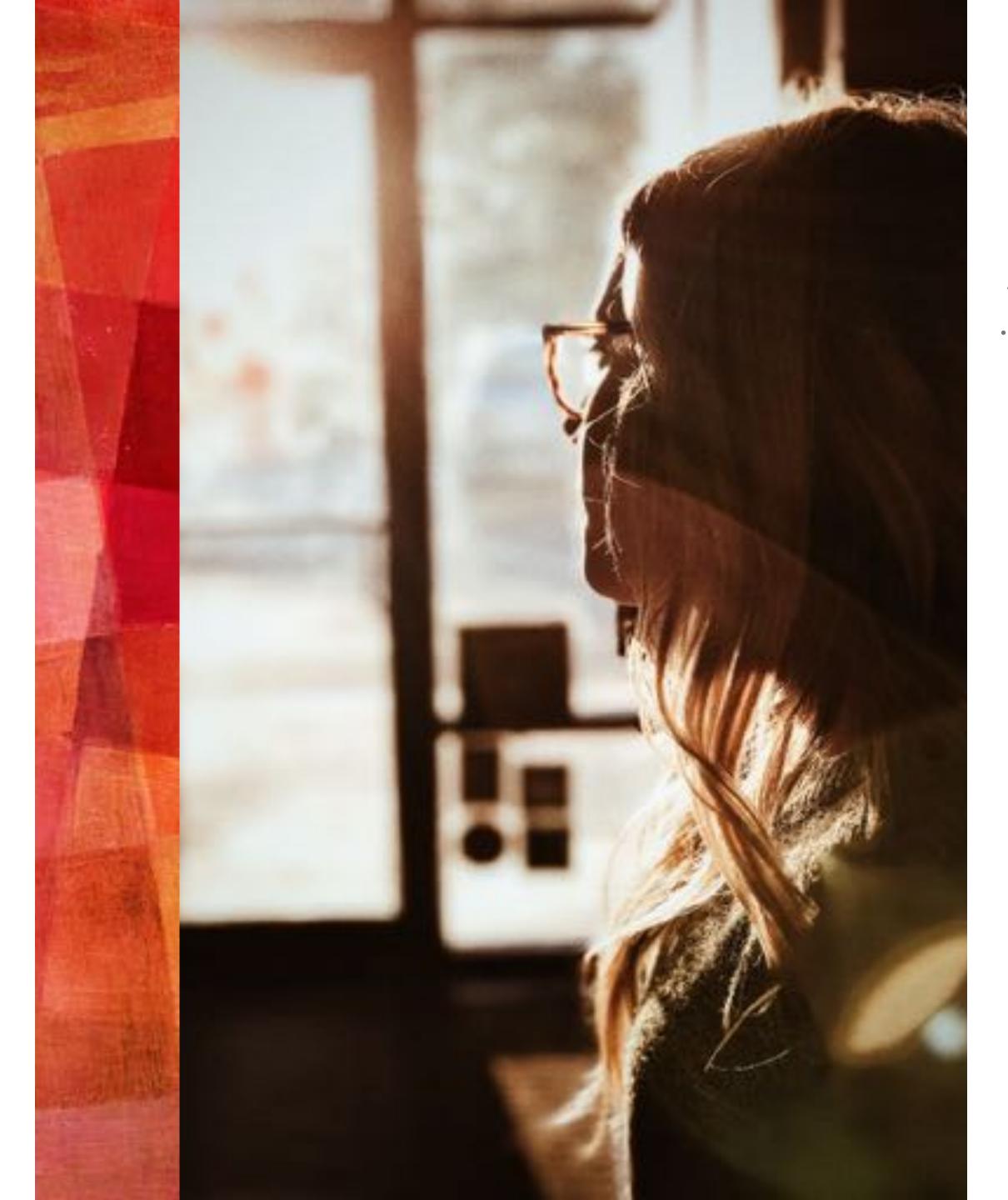
CAUSES OF LONELINESS

- **GLOBAL PANDEMIC!!!!**
- Social distancing
- Isolation
- Quarantine



CAUSES OF LONELINESS

- ➤ Heredity
- ➤ Environment (isolation, new location
- ➤ Circumstances (divorce, loss
- The way we think and feel about ourselves and the world around us



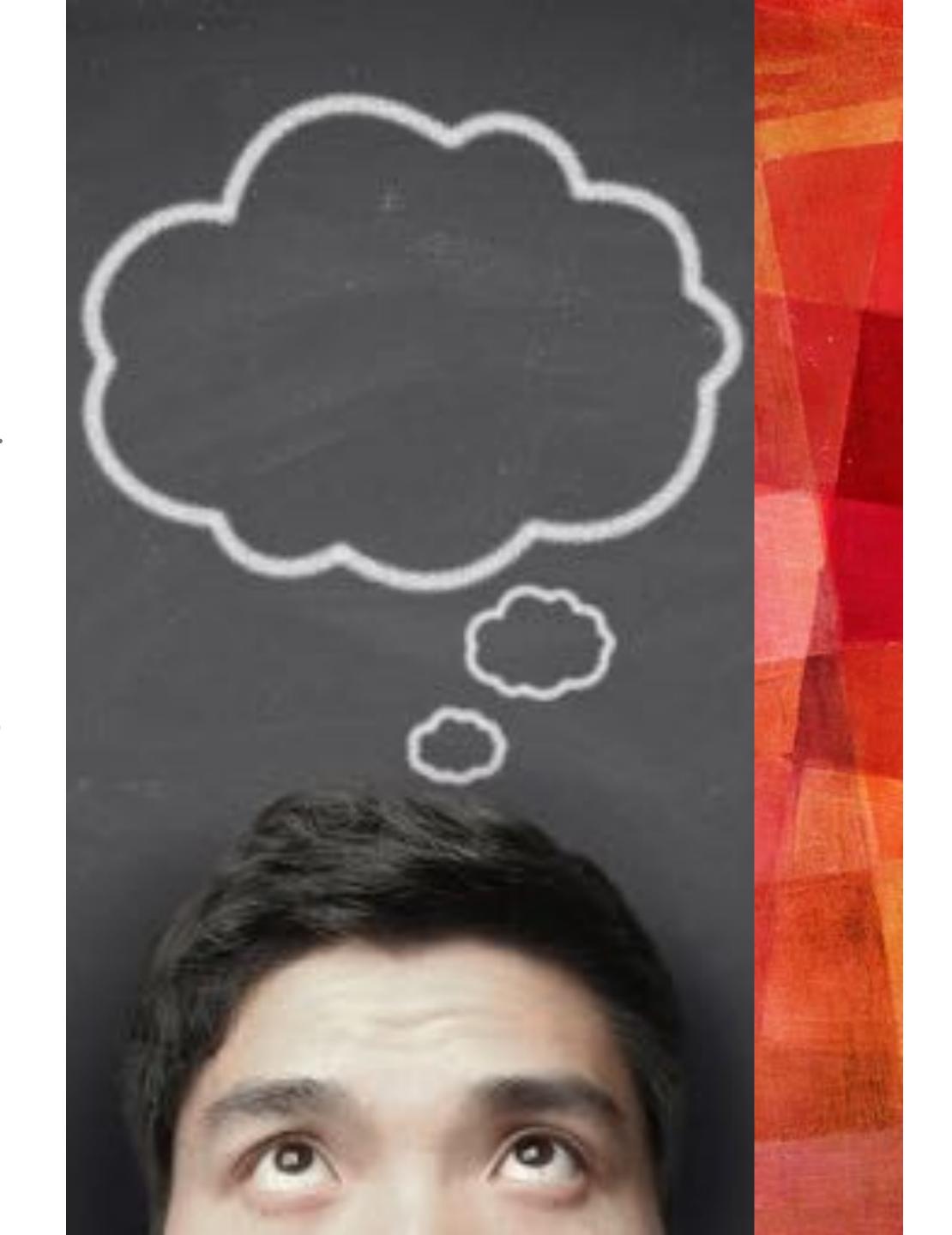
SEVERELY LONELY ADULTS OFTEN REPORT

- ➤ History of abuse
- ➤ Hostile/intrusive or withdrawn/ misattuned parents
- ➤ Disorganized or anxious ambivalent attachment style and problems with communication
- ➤ Internalization of parent/ attachment figures
- > Feelings of hostility or helplessness

Source: http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25782760

THE LONELY BRAIN

- > Structurally and biochemically different
- Suppressed neural response to positive images and events
- Less activity when attempting mentalization"





Lonely individuals are more likely to construe their world as threatening, hold more negative expectations, and interpret and respond to ambiguous social behavior in a more negative, off-putting fashion, thereby confirming their construal of the world as threatening and beyond their control.

- From "Loneliness" by John T. Cacioppo & Louise C. Hawkley

THE EFFECTS OF THOUGHTS

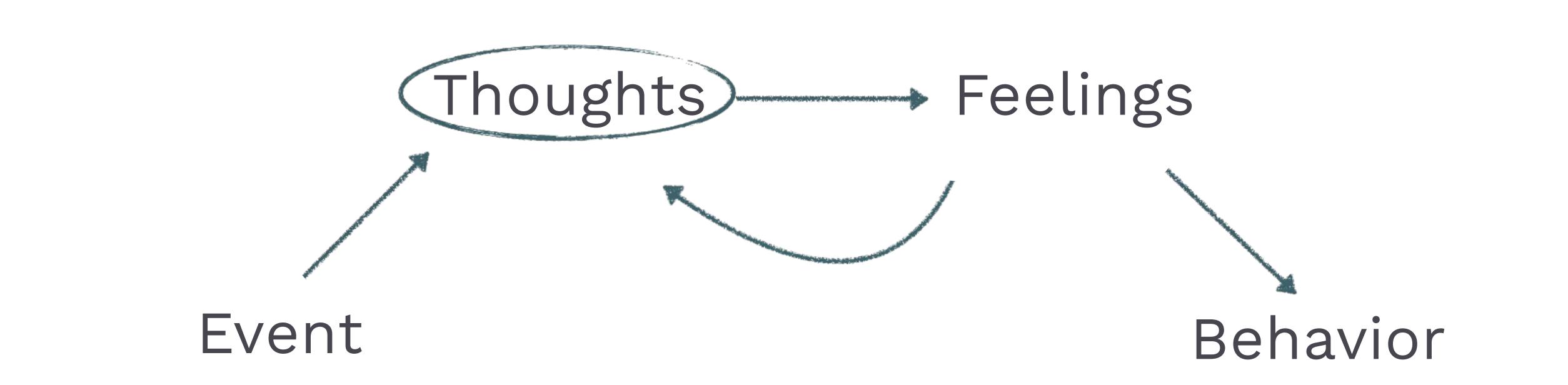
The way in which people construe their self in relation to others around them has powerful effects on their self concept and, possibly, on their physiology.



Source: http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/10677643

OUR APPROACH TO SELF-DESTRUCTIVE BEHAVIOR

How a person is thinking is predictive of how he or she is likely to behave.



LONELY INDIVIDUALS TYPICALLY:

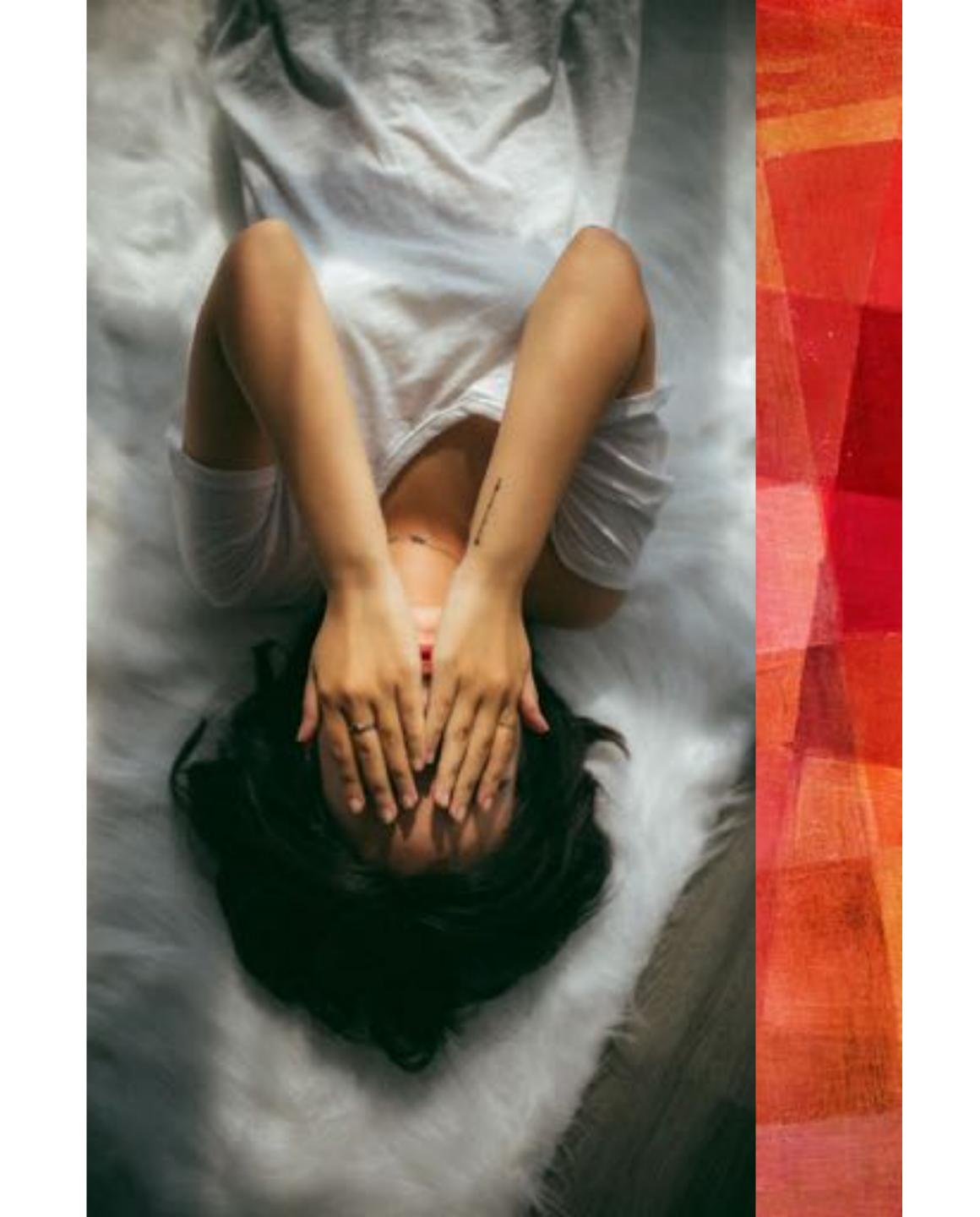
- > Fear negative evaluation
- ➤ Engage in overly cautious social behaviors that perpetuate their social isolation



THE LANGUAGE OF LONELINESS

The Critical Inner Voice

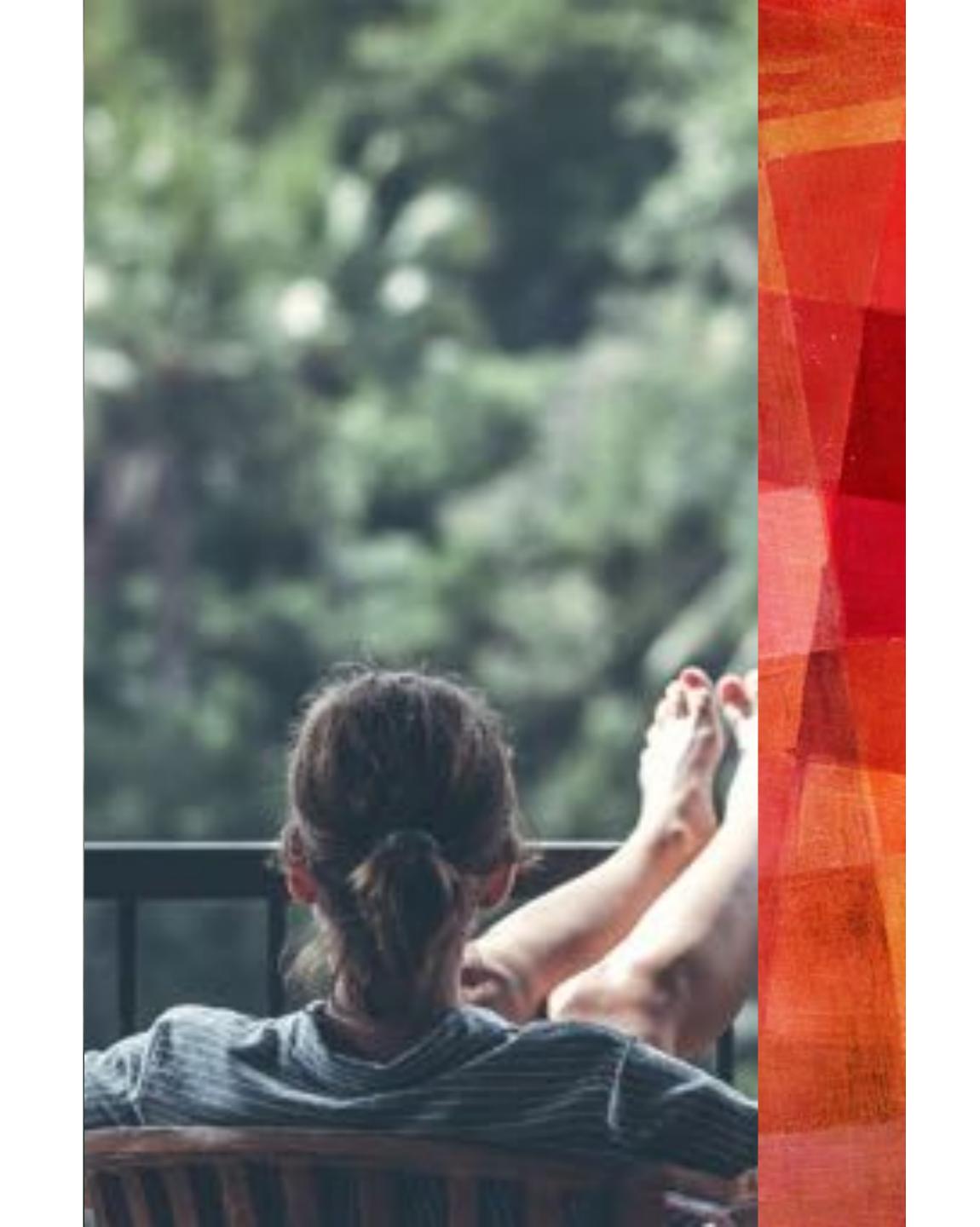
- ➤ The critical inner voice is a well integrated pattern of destructive thoughts toward ourselves and others.
- The nagging voices" that make up this internalized dialogue are at the root of much of our self-destructive and maladaptive behavior.



THE LANGUAGE OF LONELINESS

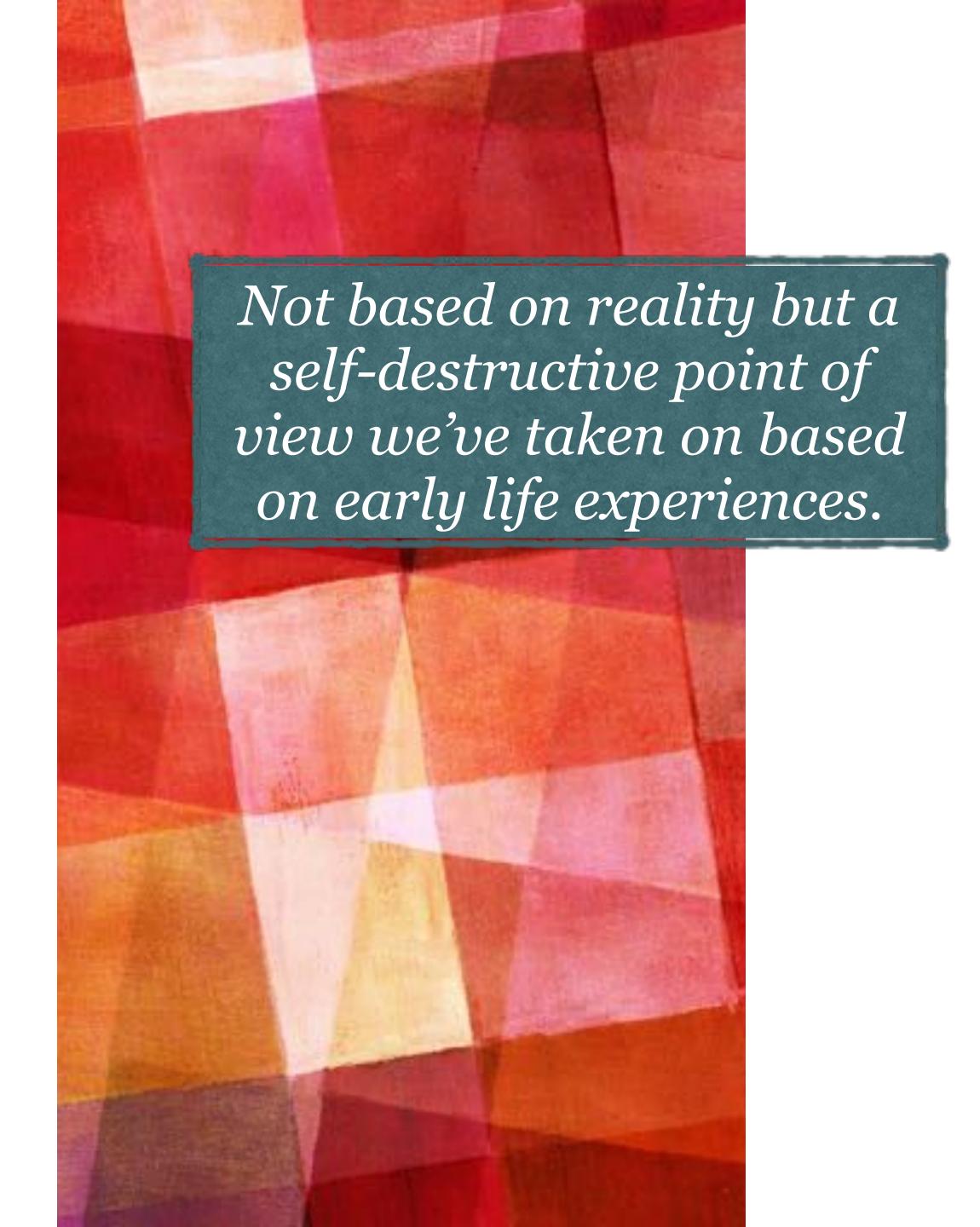
The Critical Inner Voice

- ➤ The critical inner voice is not an auditory hallucination; it is experienced as thoughts within your head.
- ➤ This stream of destructive thoughts forms an anti-self that discourages individuals from acting in their best interest.



WHERE DO THESE VOICES" COME FROM?

- ➤ How much of your negative feelings about yourself came from how you felt as kid?
- Did you often feel isolated or rejected, unseen or misunderstood
- ➤ Did you spend time on your own, feeling alone in your family or at school?



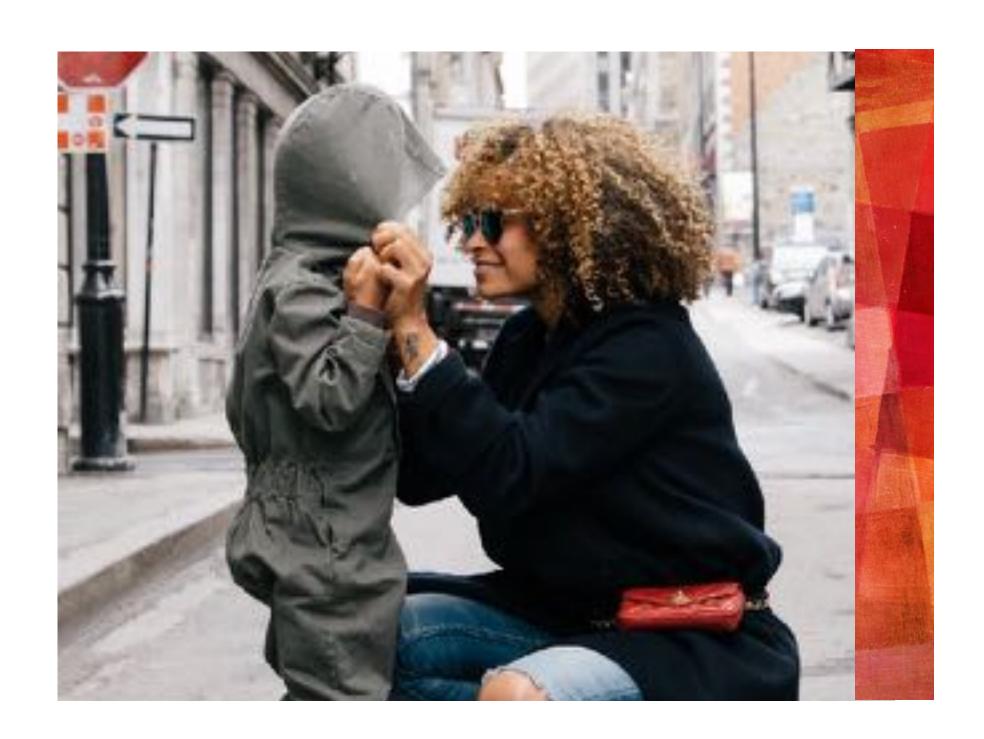
DIVISION OF THE MIND

Parental Ambivalence

Parents both love and hate themselves and extend both reactions to their productions, i.e., their children.

Parental Nurturance

Parental Rejection, Neglect Hostility





SELF SYSTEM

Parental Nurturance

Unique make-up of the individual (genetic predisposition and temperament); harmonious identification and incorporation of parent's positive attitudes and traits and parents positive behaviors: attunement, affection, control, nurturance; and the effect of other nurturing experience and education on the maturing self-system resulting in a sense of self and a greater degree of differentiation from parents and early caretakers.



PERSONAL ATTITUDES/GOALS/CONSCIENCE

Realistic, positive attitudes toward self

Realistic evaluation of talents, abilities, etc. with generally positive/compassionate attitude toward self and others



Needs, wants, search for meaning in life

Moral Principles

Behavior

Ethical behavior toward self and others

Goal-directed behavior

Acting with integrity

ANTI-SELF SYSTEM

- Unique vulnerability: genetic predisposition and temperament
- > Destructive parental behavior: misattunement, lack of affection, rejection, neglect, hostility, over permissiveness
- > Other Factors: accidents, illnesses, traumatic separation, death anxiety

The Fantasy Bond

(core defense) is a self-parenting process made up of two elements: the helpless, needy child, and the self-punishing, self-nurturing parent. Either aspect may be extended to relationships. The degree of defense is proportional to the amount of damage sustained while growing up.



ANTI-SELF SYSTEM

Self-Punishing Voice Process

Voice Process

Behaviors

Self-critical thoughts

Suicidal thoughts

Self-destructive thoughts

Addictive patterns and self-punishing thoughts after indulging

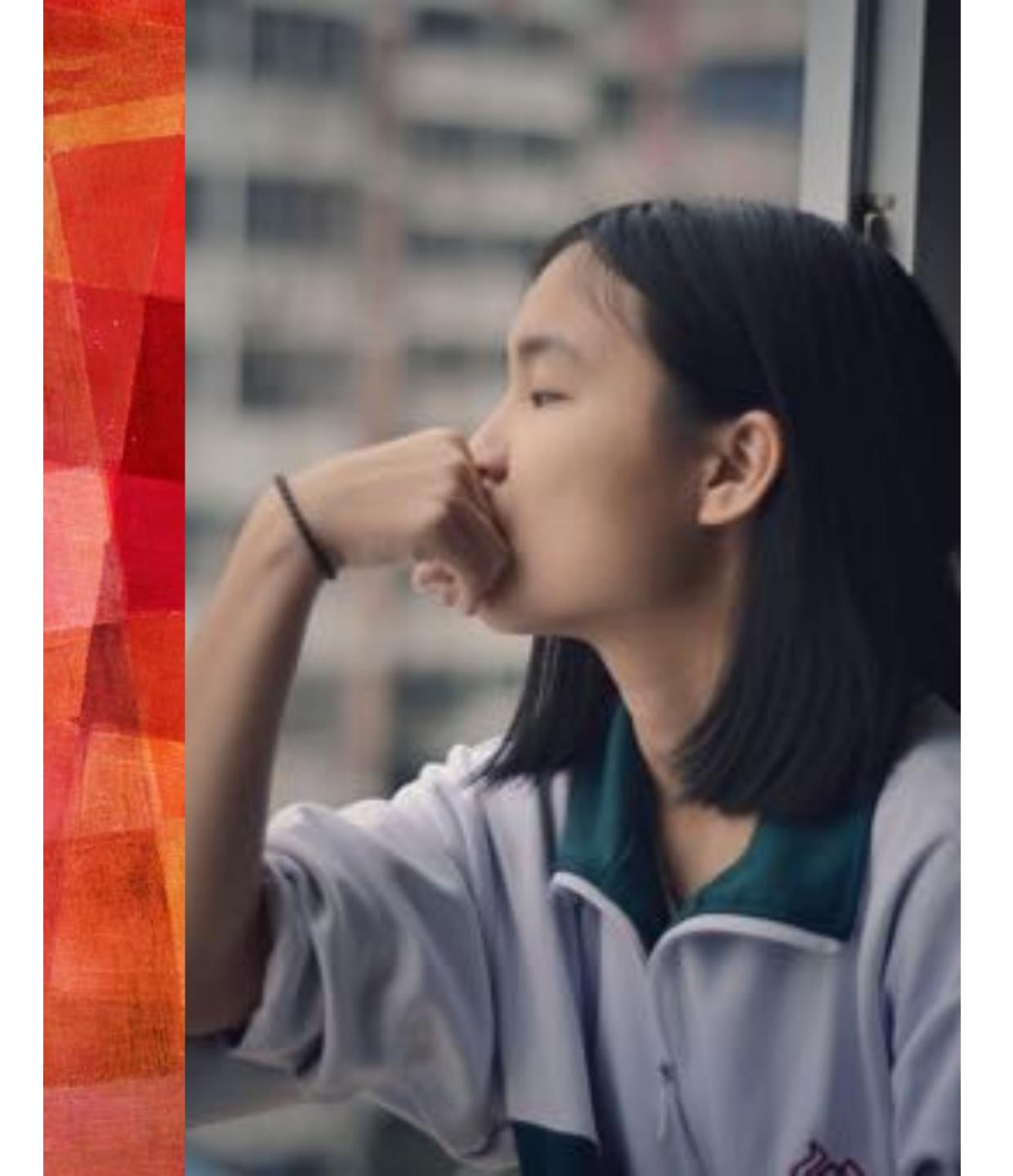
Suicidal thoughts

Jeopardizing actions like carelessness with one's body, physical self-harm and suicide

ANTI-SELF SYSTEM

Self-Soothing Voice Process

Voice Process	Behaviors
Self-soothing attitudes	Inwardness, self-limiting or self-protective actions
Self-aggrandizing thoughts	Building up yourself verbally
Suspicious or paranoid thoughts toward others	Feeling alienated from others, acting destructive toward others
Self-sabotaging thoughts	Addictive patterns, thoughts that lure you to indulge
Violent thoughts	Aggressive actions and actual violence



HOW DOES THE CRITICAL INNER VOICE AFFECT US?

- ➤ The critical inner voice is an internal enemy that can affect every aspect of our lives, including our selfesteem and confidence, our personal and intimate relationships and our performance and accomplishments at school and work.
- These negative thoughts undermine our positive feelings about ourselves and others and foster self-criticism, inwardness, distrust, self-denial, addiction and a retreat from goal-directed activities.

COMMON VOICES IN LONELINESS

You just don't belong anywhere.

You're a burden.

Just keep your feelings to yourself.

Nobody really likes you. You're unlovable.

You have nothing to offer.

Don't trust anyone.

Your life is so boring and empty. You deserve to be alone.

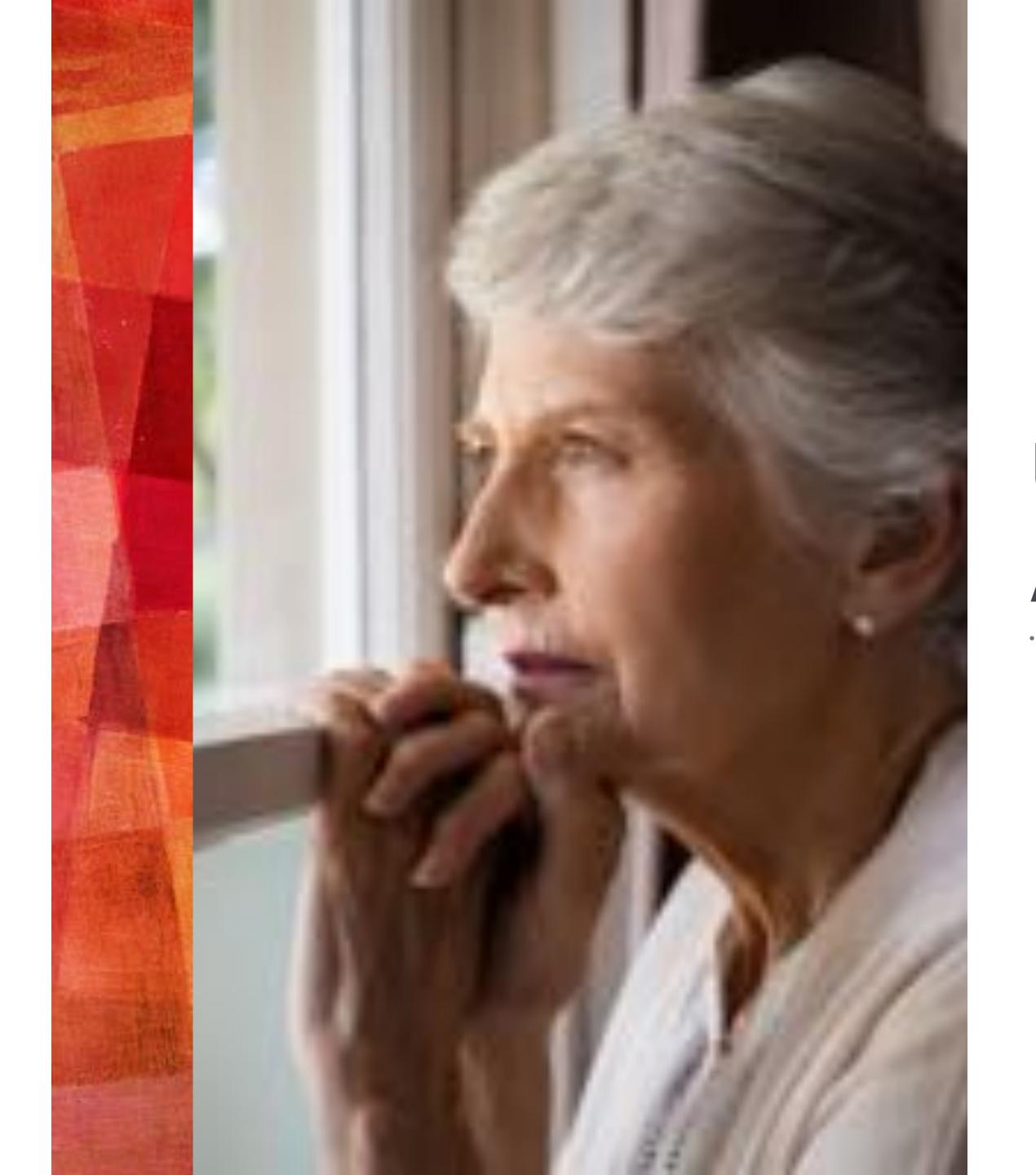
Just keep your feelings to yourself.

No one sees you.

Why would anyone want to know you? No one cares about you.

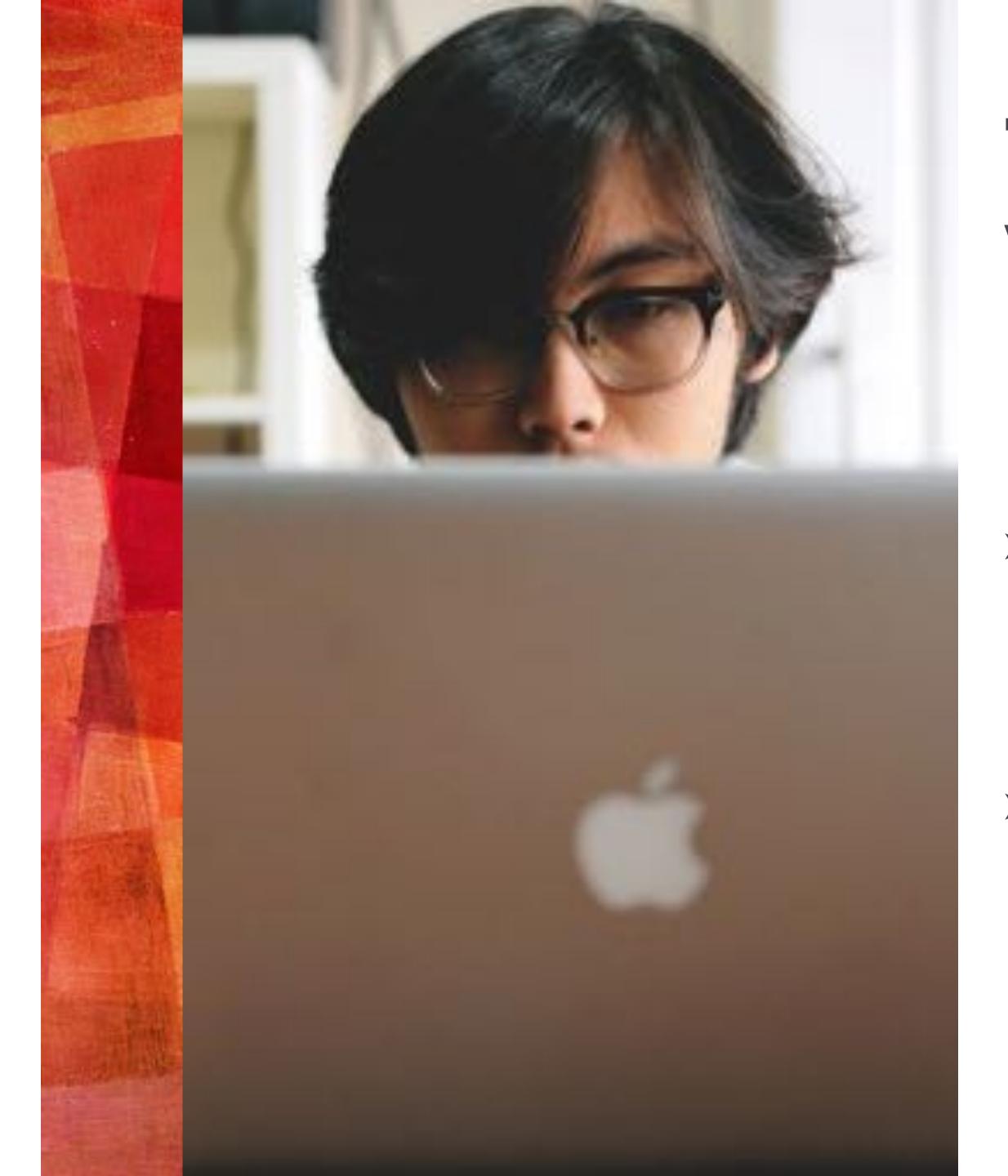
You're too awkward.

Don't reach out. You'll just get hurt.



HOW THE CRITICAL INNER VOICE LEADS US TO FEEL LONELY AND ISOLATED

When it comes to feelings of isolation, the voice can be an especially complicated and strategic enemy.

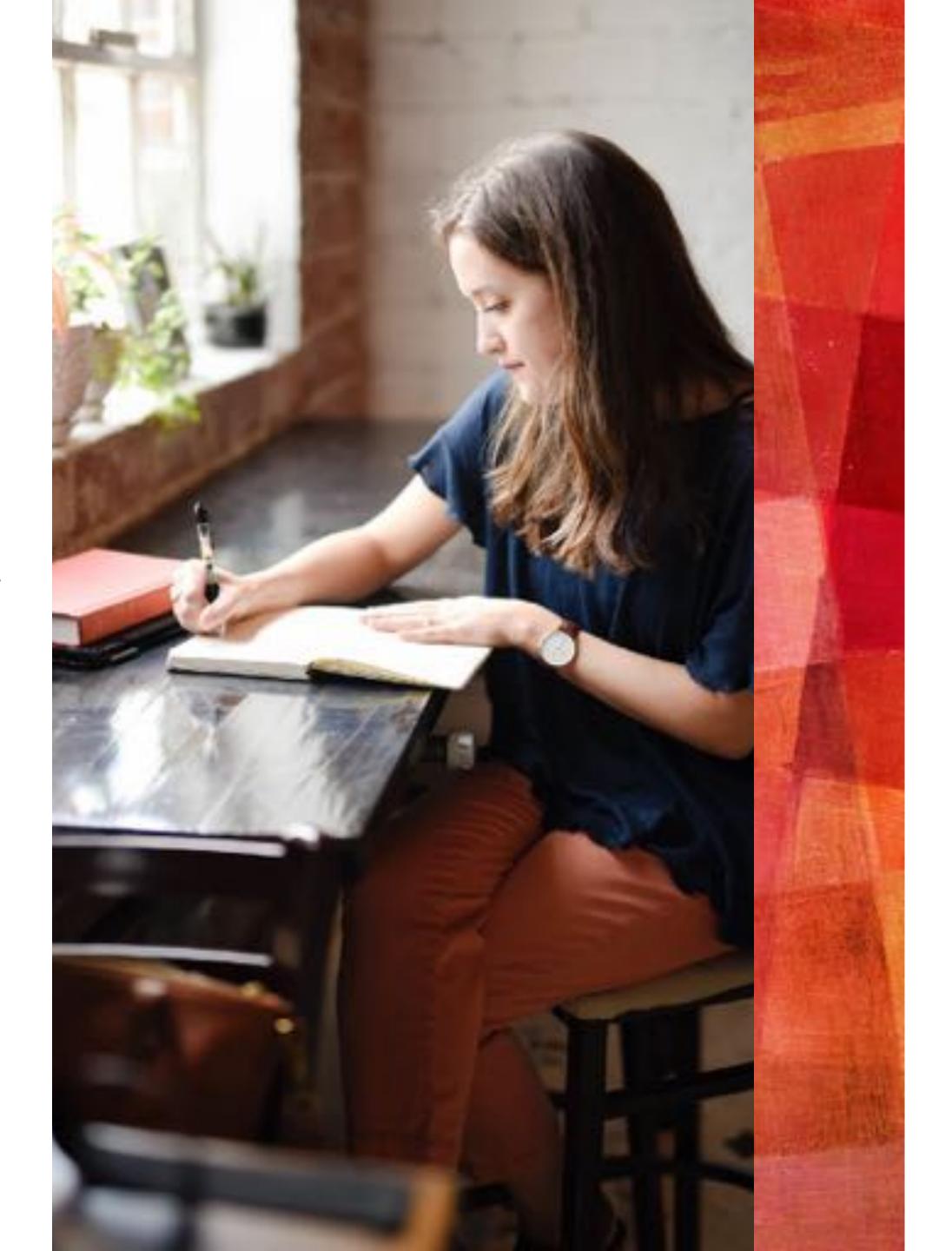


THE CRITICAL INNER VOICE DRIVES LONELINESS

- Lures us into not reaching out, with thoughts like, It's too much trouble. Just do something you enjoy, read a book, take a nap.
- ➤ Then, when we feel lonely, it attacks us. Nobody wants to hear from you. Just leave everyone alone. They have their own lives to deal with."

TREATING LONELINES

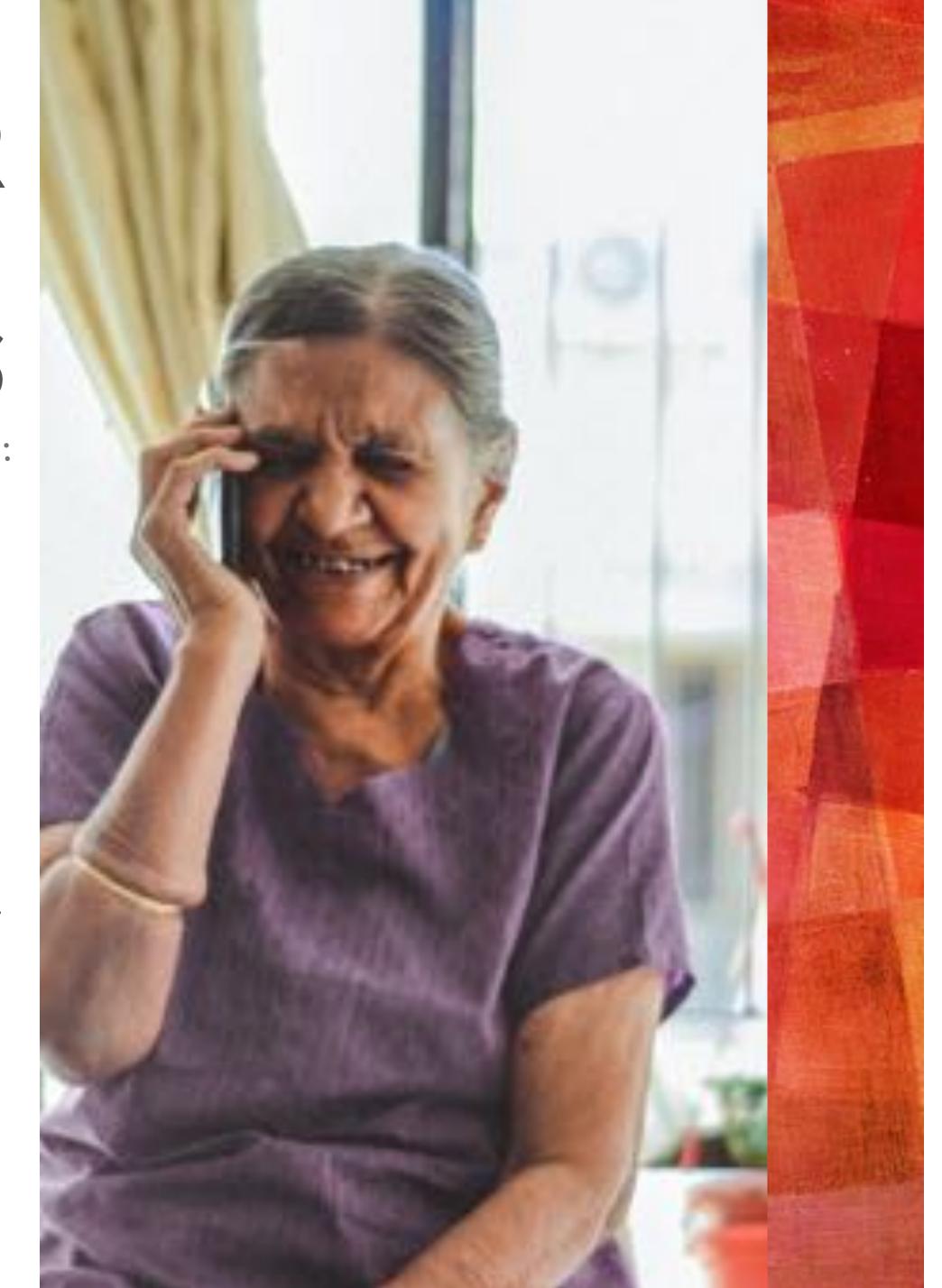
➤ How can we overcome the selfcritical thoughts and self-sabotaging behaviors that perpetuate a cycle of solitude?



4 STRATEGIES FOR TREATING LONELINESS

- 1. Improve social skills
- 2. Enhance social support
- 3. Increase opportunities for social contact
- 4. Address maladaptive social cognition

*most successful



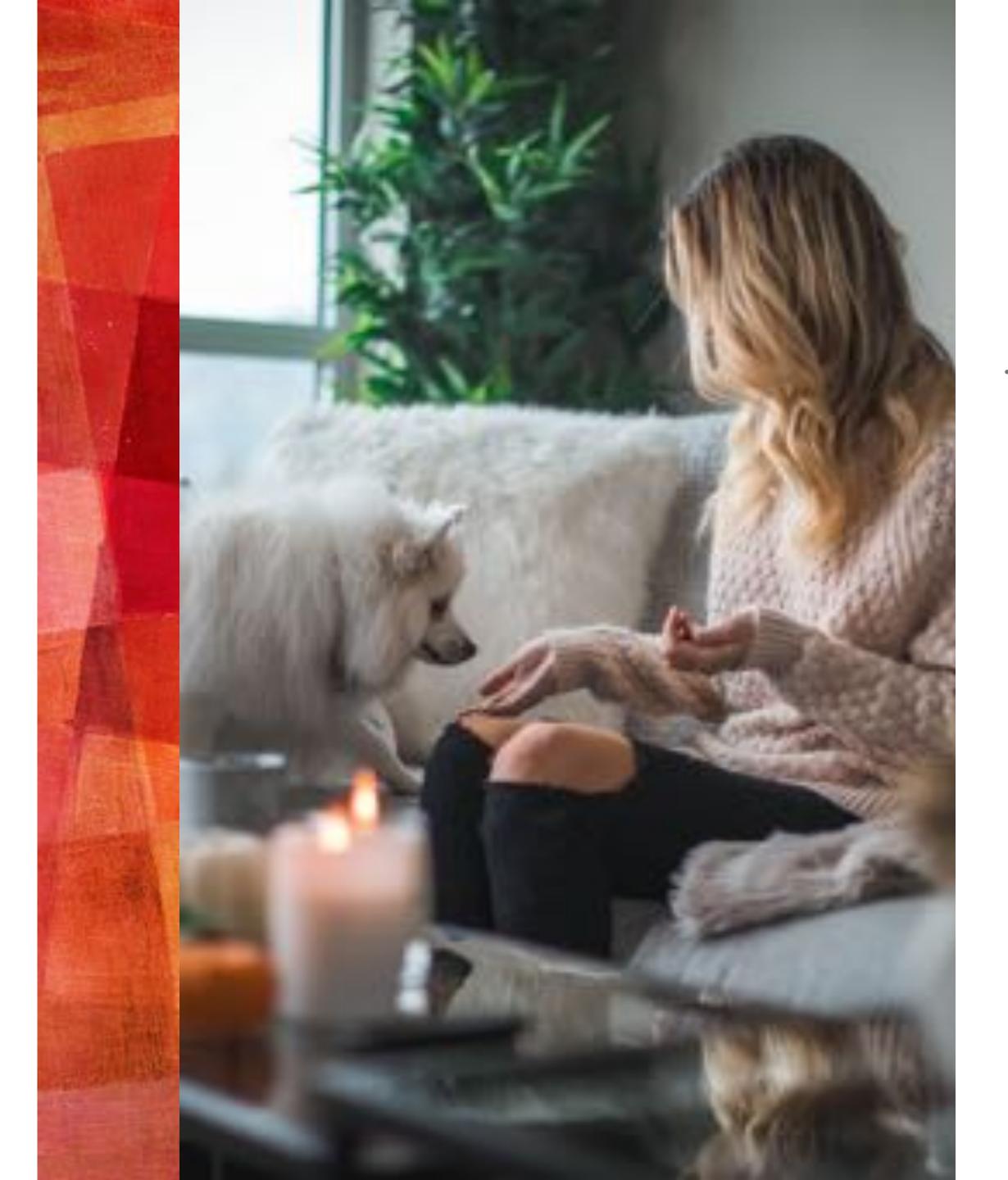
Source: http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20716644

IMPORTANCE OF COGNITIONS AND EMOTIONS



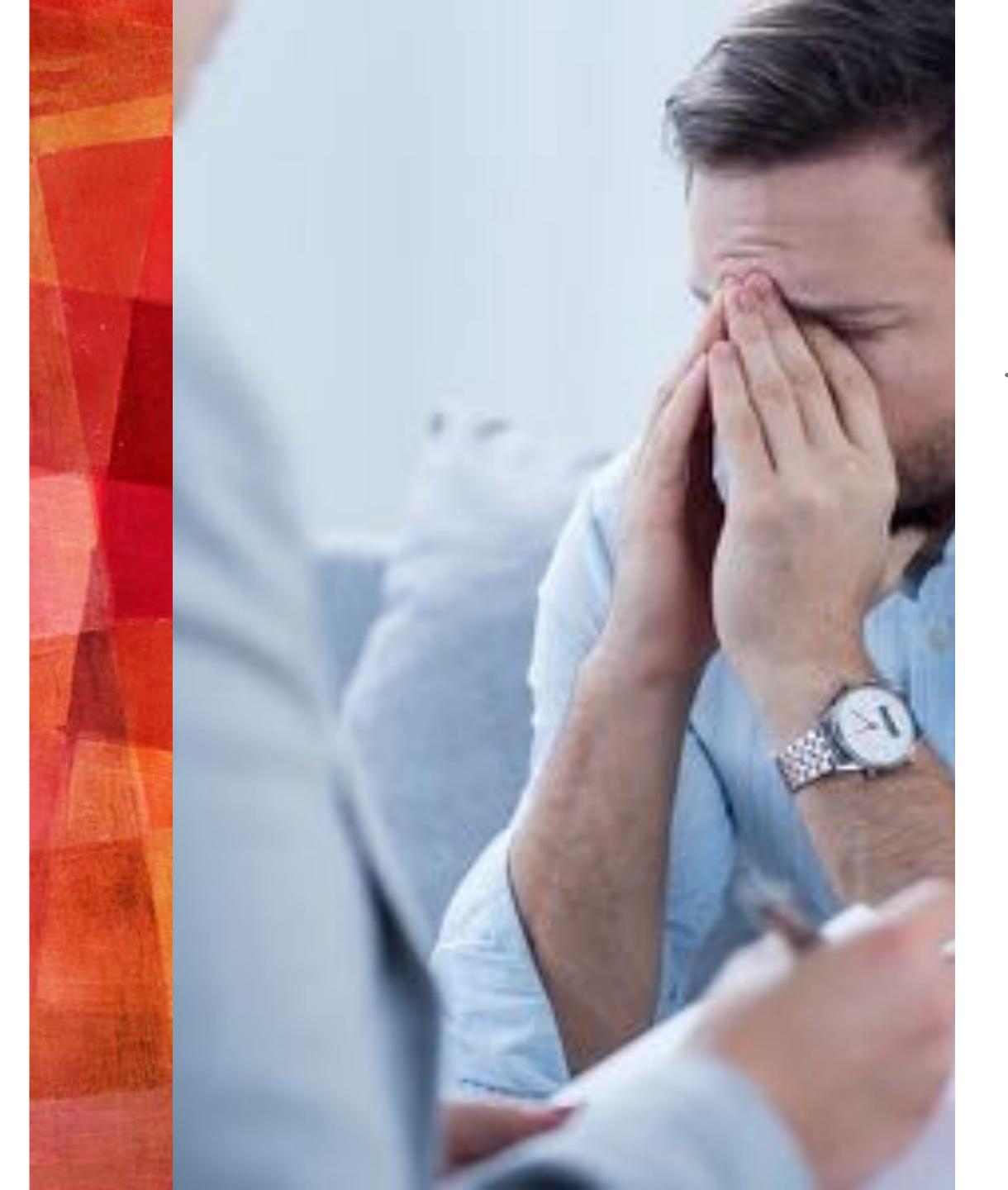
It is vital to be alert to both verbal and nonverbal cues from the patient, so as to be able to elicit hot cognitions"-that is, important automatic thoughts and images that arise in the therapy session itself and are associated with a change or increase in emotion. These hot cognitions may be about the patient herself (I'm such a failure", the therapist (He doesn't understand me", or the subject under discussion (It's not fair that I have so much to do". Eliciting the hot cognitions are important because they often have critical importance in conceptualization.

- Judith S. Beck Cognitive Therapy: Basics and Beyond



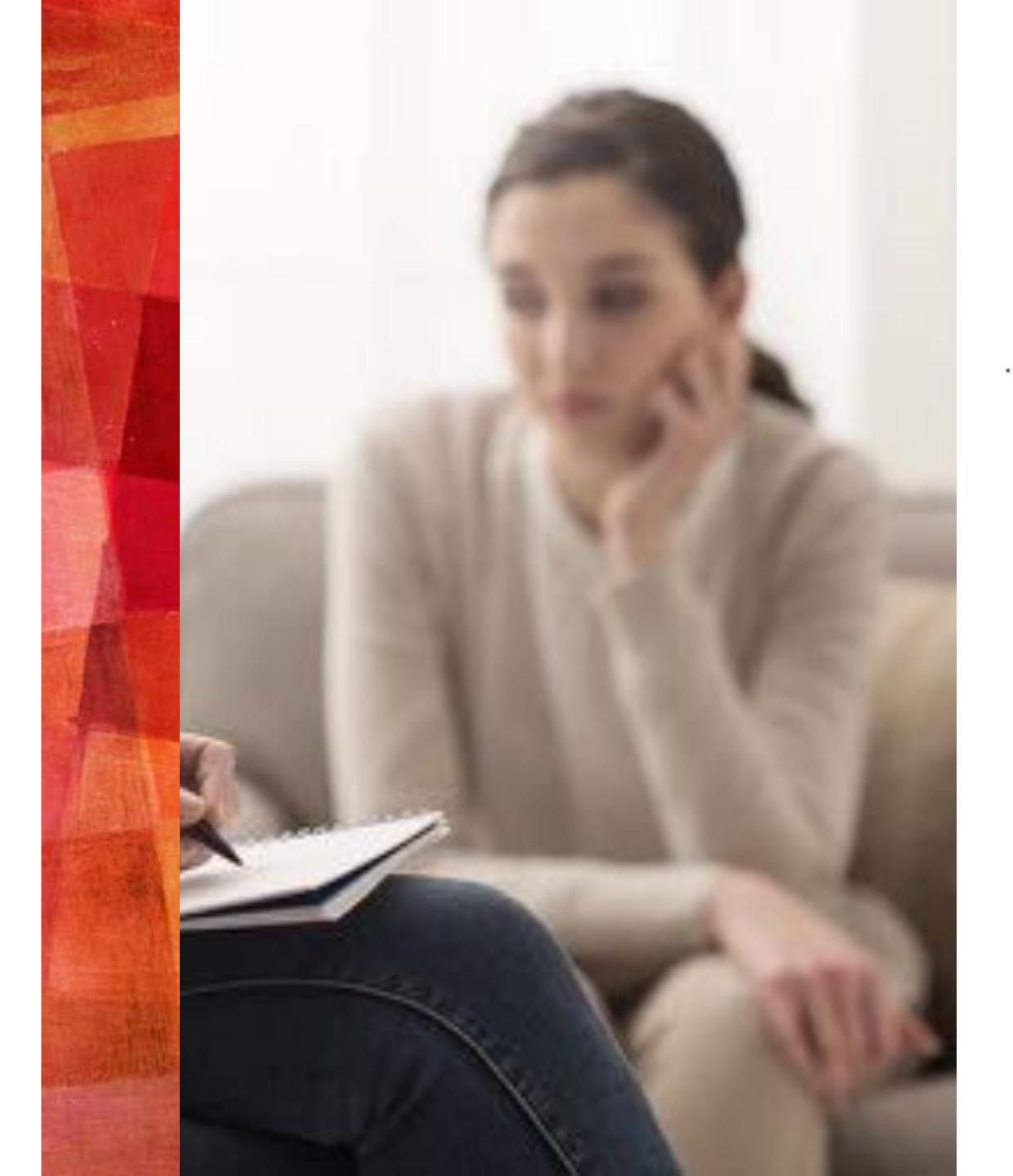
EMOTION FOCUSED THERAPY (EFT

➤ Facilitating Emotional Change: The Moment-by-Moment Process" by L. Greenberg, Rice, and Elliot (1993. Their approach, emotion-focused therapy (EFT, focuses primarily on eliciting emotion by directing the client to amplify his or her self-critical statements.



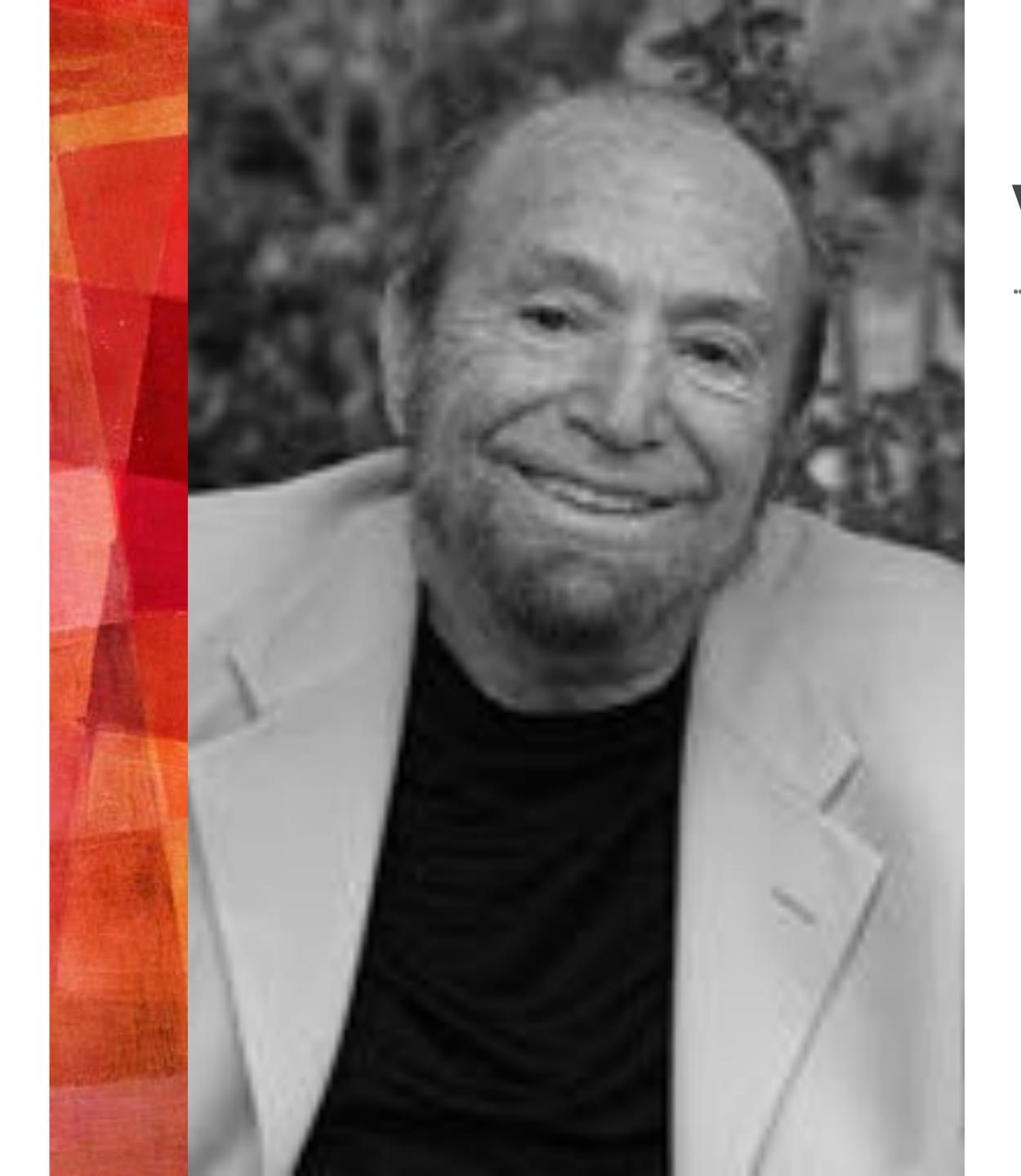
EMOTION FOCUSED THERAPY (EFT

➤ For example, if the client says you're worthless" or sneers while criticizing, direct the client to do this again...," do this some more..."; put some words to this..." This operation will intensify the client's affective arousal and help access core criticisms.



EMOTION FOCUSED THERAPY (EFT

➤ It is only then that they become accessible to new input and change". Greenberg et al. believe that Affect is thus a core constituent of the human self and establishes links between self and the environment and organizes self experience. In a sense, feelings are ultimately the meeting place of mind, body, environment, culture, and behavior"



VOICE THERAPY

Cognitive/ Affective/ Behavioral Approach

THE THERAPEUTIC PROCESS IN VOICE THERAPY

Step I

The person is articulates his or her self-attacks in the second person and expresses any feelings that arise.

Step II

The person discusses reactions to saying their voices. The person tries to understand the relationship between these attacks and early life experiences.

Step III

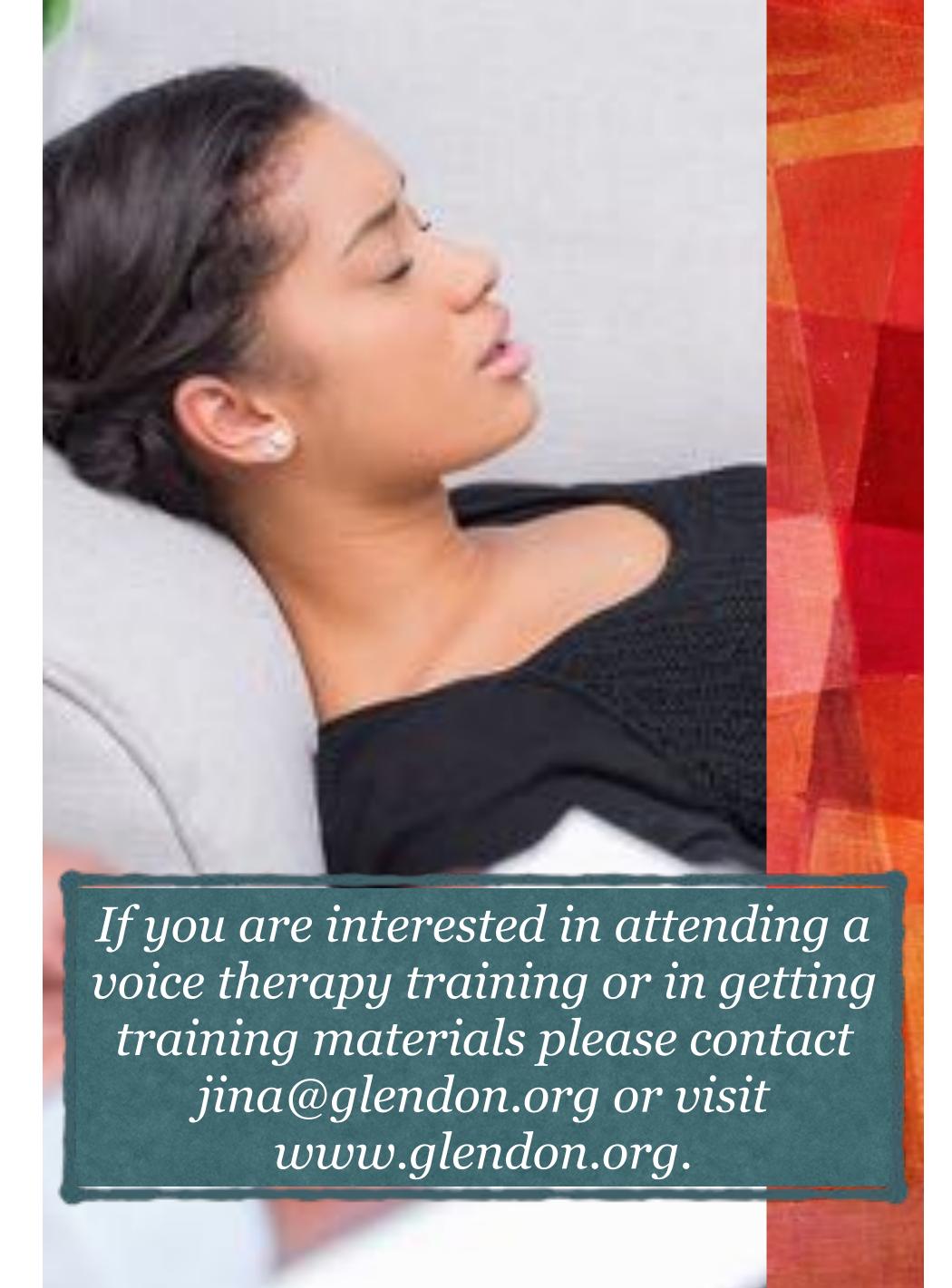
The person answers back to the voice attacks. The person makes a rational statement about how he or she really is.

Step IV

The person develops insight about how the voice attacks are influencing his or her present-day behaviors.

Step V

The person collaborates with the therapist to plan changes in these behaviors. The person is encouraged to not engage in selfdestructive behaviors and to increase the positive behaviors these negative thoughts discourage.



SELF

ANTI-SELF





CONQUER YOUR CRITICAL INNER VOICE EXERCISE: WHO IS THE REAL YOU?

In your journal, write down:

- > Times when you notice you feel the most yourself.
- ➤ Times when you notice yourself following in the footsteps of others (i.e. of parents or other influential figures .
- ➤ What are the things that light you up?
- ➤ What are the things you do to please or conform to the standards of others?
- ➤ Are there areas of your life in which you act either childish or parental?
- ➤ At what times do you lose your own point of view?

EXERCISE: YOUR CRITICAL INNER VOICE ATTACKS

Self-critical attacks as I" statements	Self-critical attacks as you" statements
➤ Example: Nobody likes me"	➤ Example: Nobody likes you"

EXERCISE:

KEEPING A JOURNAL: YOUR CRITICAL INNER VOICE/ THE REAL YOU

Critical inner voice as you" statements

- No one is thinking about you."
- ➤ You're too awkward. You don't add anything to the situation."

The real me as I" statements

- My friends care about me and would be glad to hear from me."
- ➤ I may be shy at times, but I'm interesting and kind. People enjoy my company."

EXERCISE: A PLAN FOR ACTION

Actions dictated by my critical inner voice:

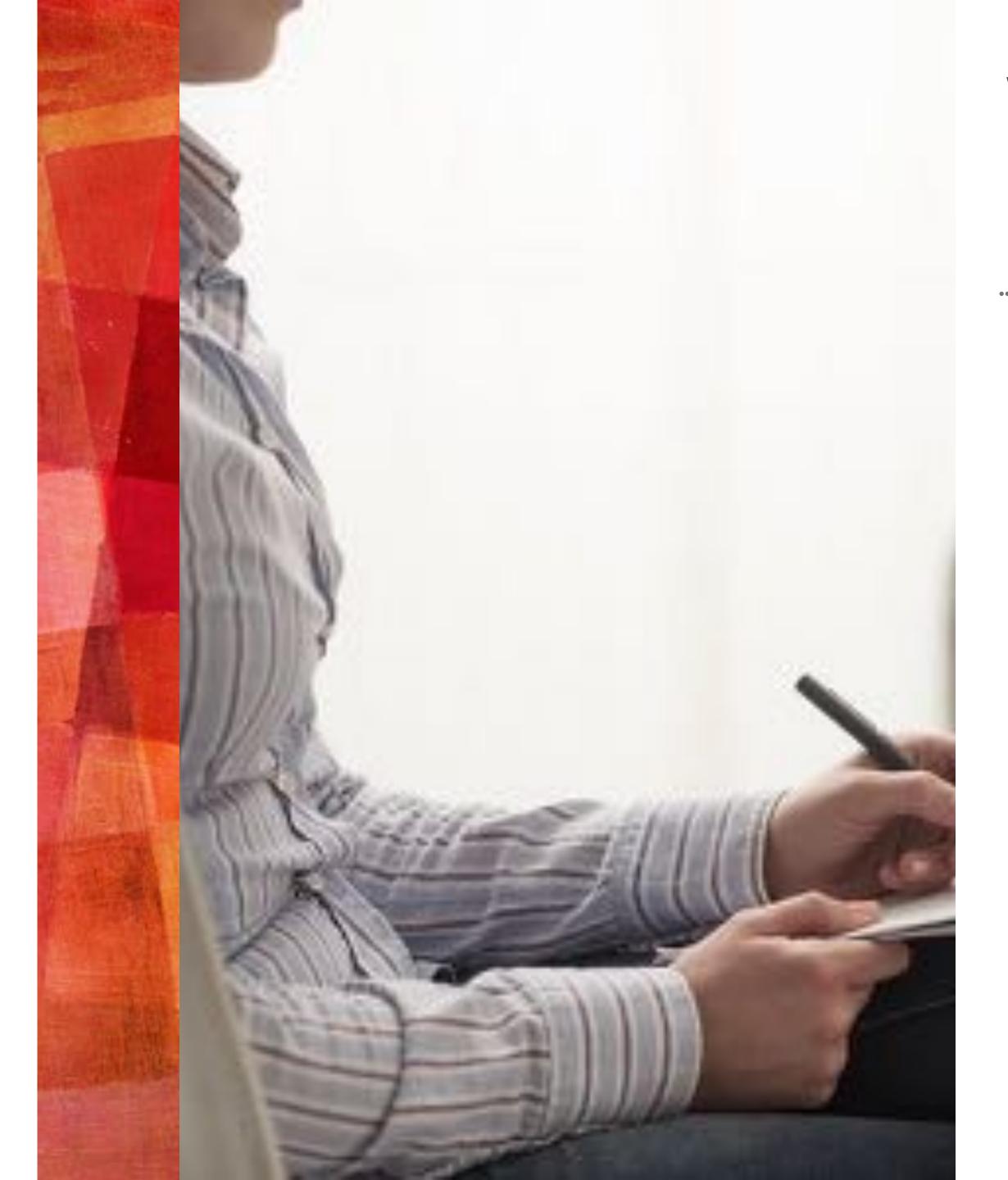
- Don't reach out. You'll only bother people."
- You can't trust anyone, so don't get too close."

Actions to take that reflect the real me

- ➤ It matters to me to connect. People care about me, and I'm going to make contact."
- I want to stay vulnerable in my close relationships."

When we learn to overcome the "critical inner voice" that tells us we are different in some basic, negative way, we can build more satisfying and meaningful connections.

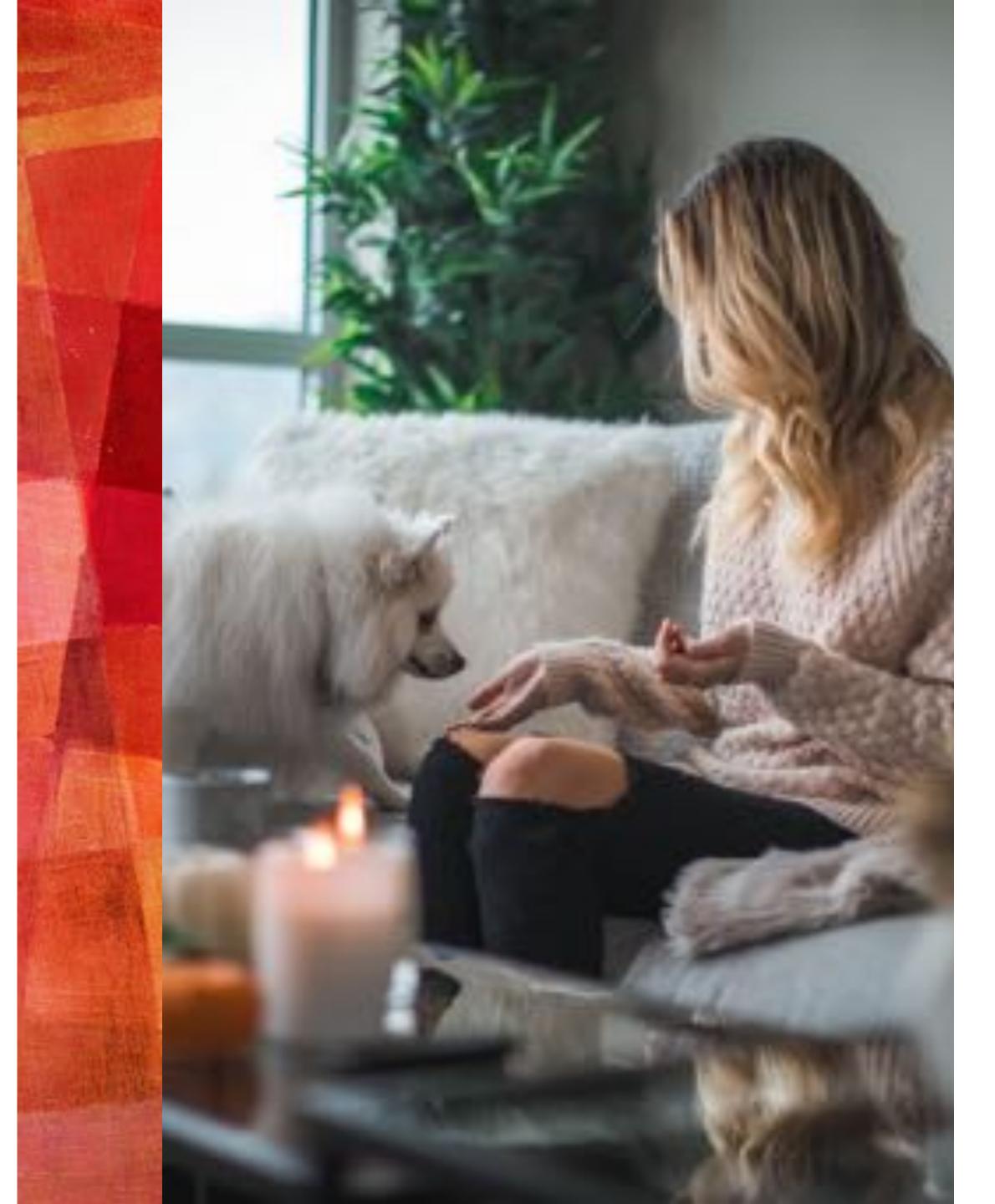




WHAT THERAPISTS CAN DO:

- > Challenge misguided cognitive beliefs
- ➤ Offer reality-oriented feedback
- > Provide validation and sense of safety
- ➤ Enhance ability to mentalize
- ➤ Improve attachment style (create a secure attachment
- > Teach emotional communication
- ➤ Help get in touch with anger that underlies loneliness

Source: http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25782760

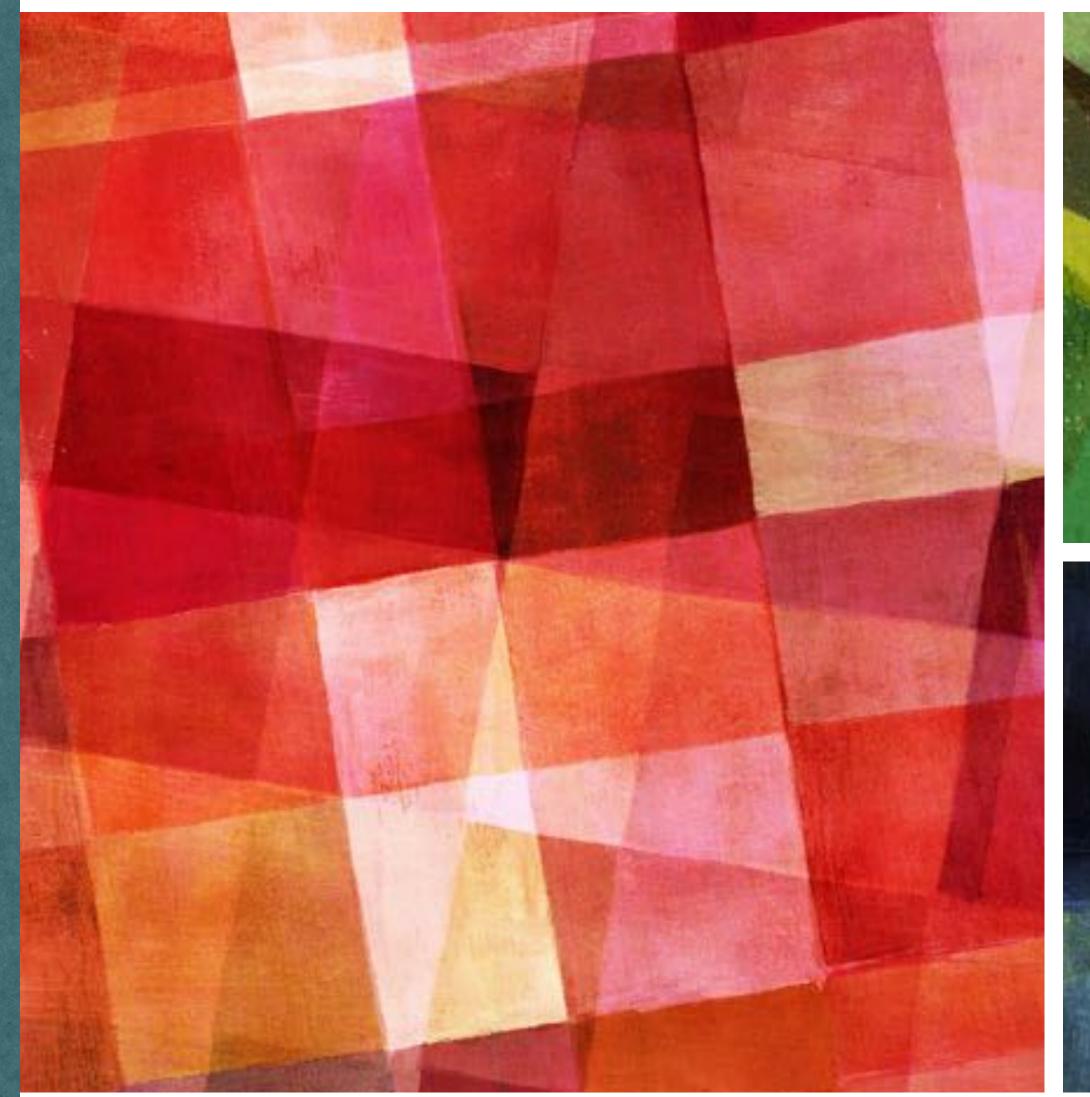


LONELINESS INTERVENTIONS

- ➤ People can reduce their social avoidance by countering their critical thoughts.
- ➤ When people were primed to feel more acceptance, they were able to be more outward.

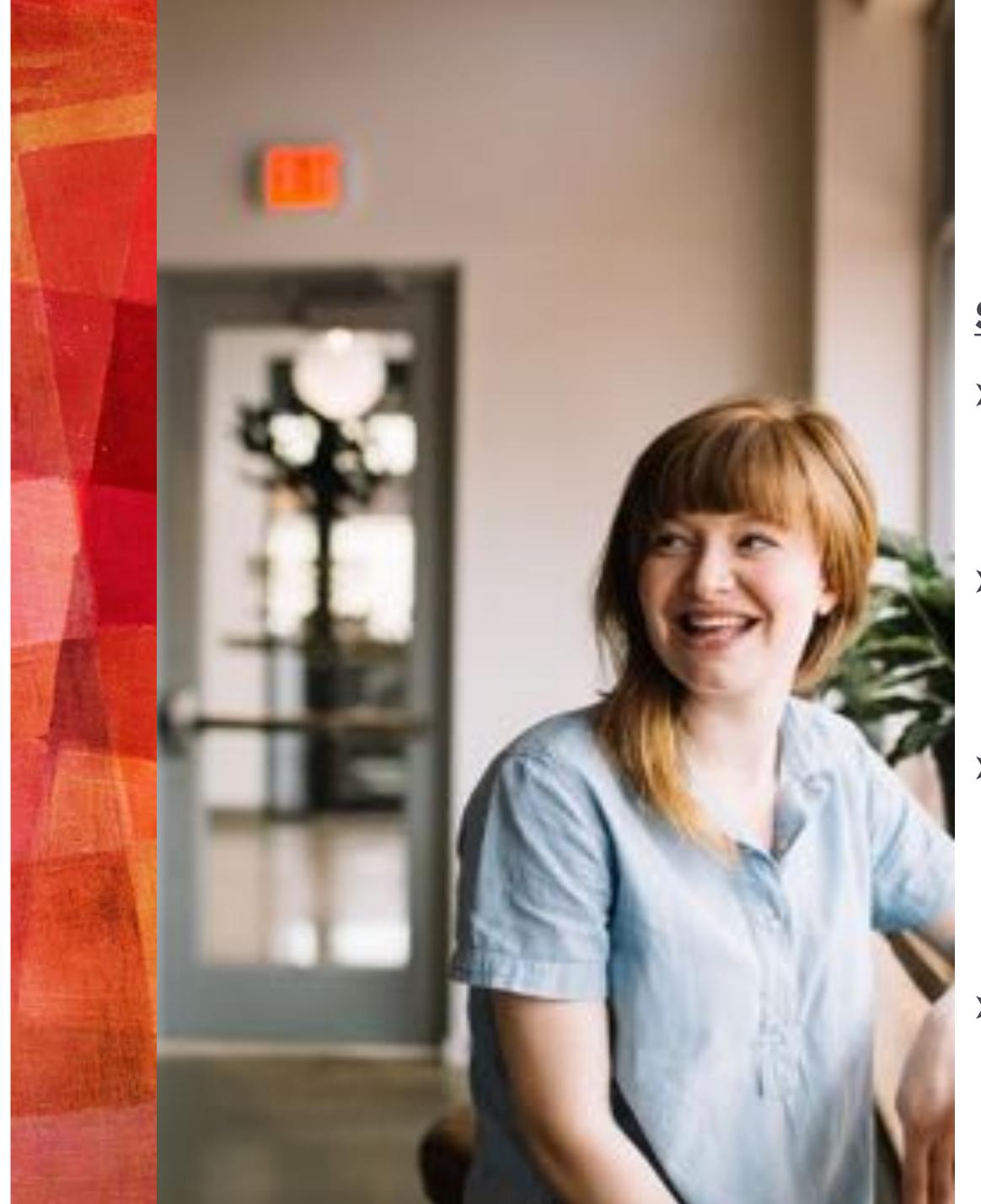
Source: http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20817823

Curious Open Accepting Loving







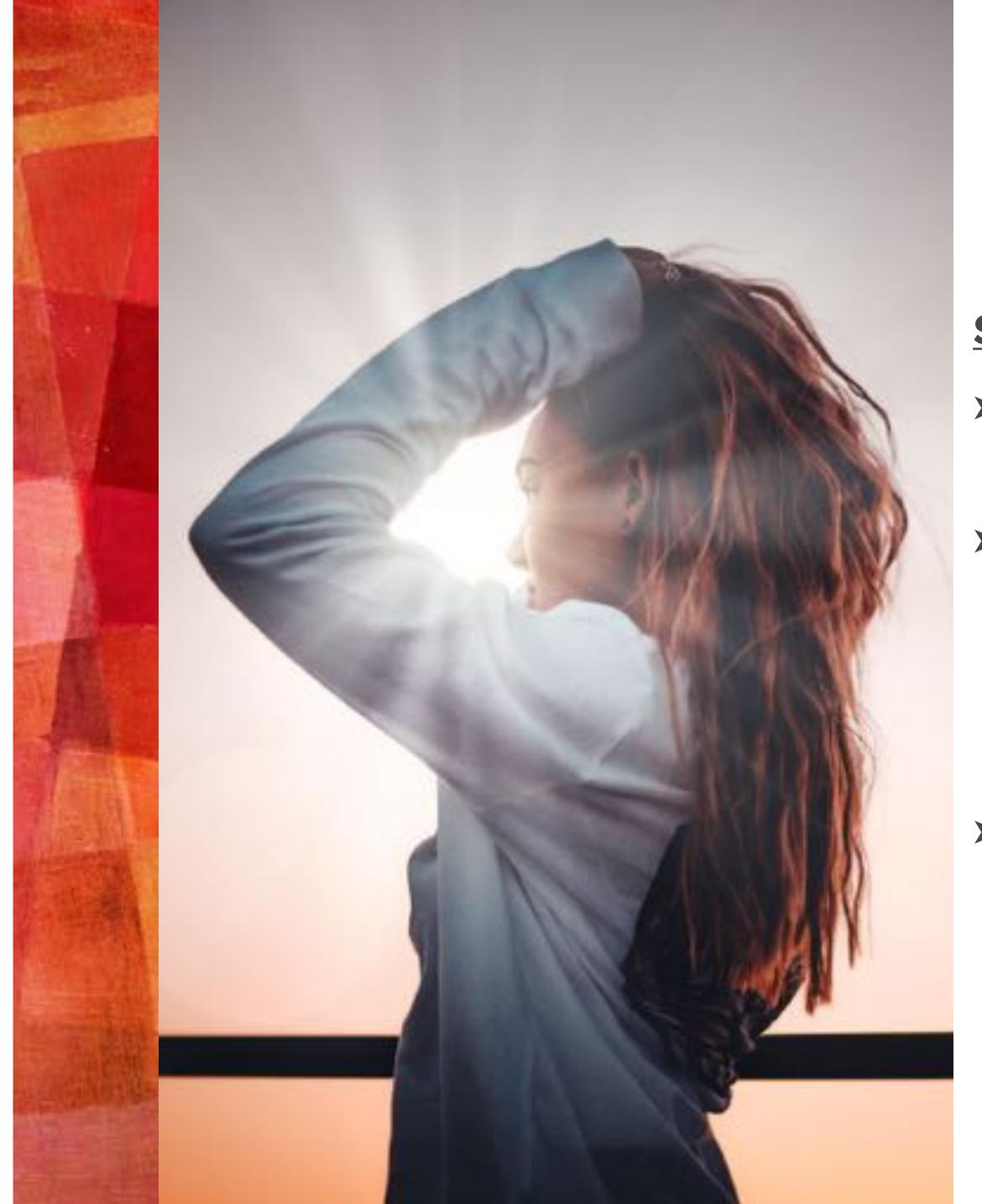


SELF-COMPASSION VS SELF-ESTEEM

Research from Dr. Kristin Neff:

Self-Esteem

- ➤ Self-esteem refers to our sense of selfworth, perceived value or how much we like ourselves.
- Low self-esteem is problematic, however trying to have higher self-esteem can also be problematic.
- The need for high self-esteem may encourage us to ignore, distort or hide personal shortcomings so that we can't see ourselves accurately.
- Our self-esteem is often contingent on our latest success or failure, meaning that our self-esteem fluctuates.

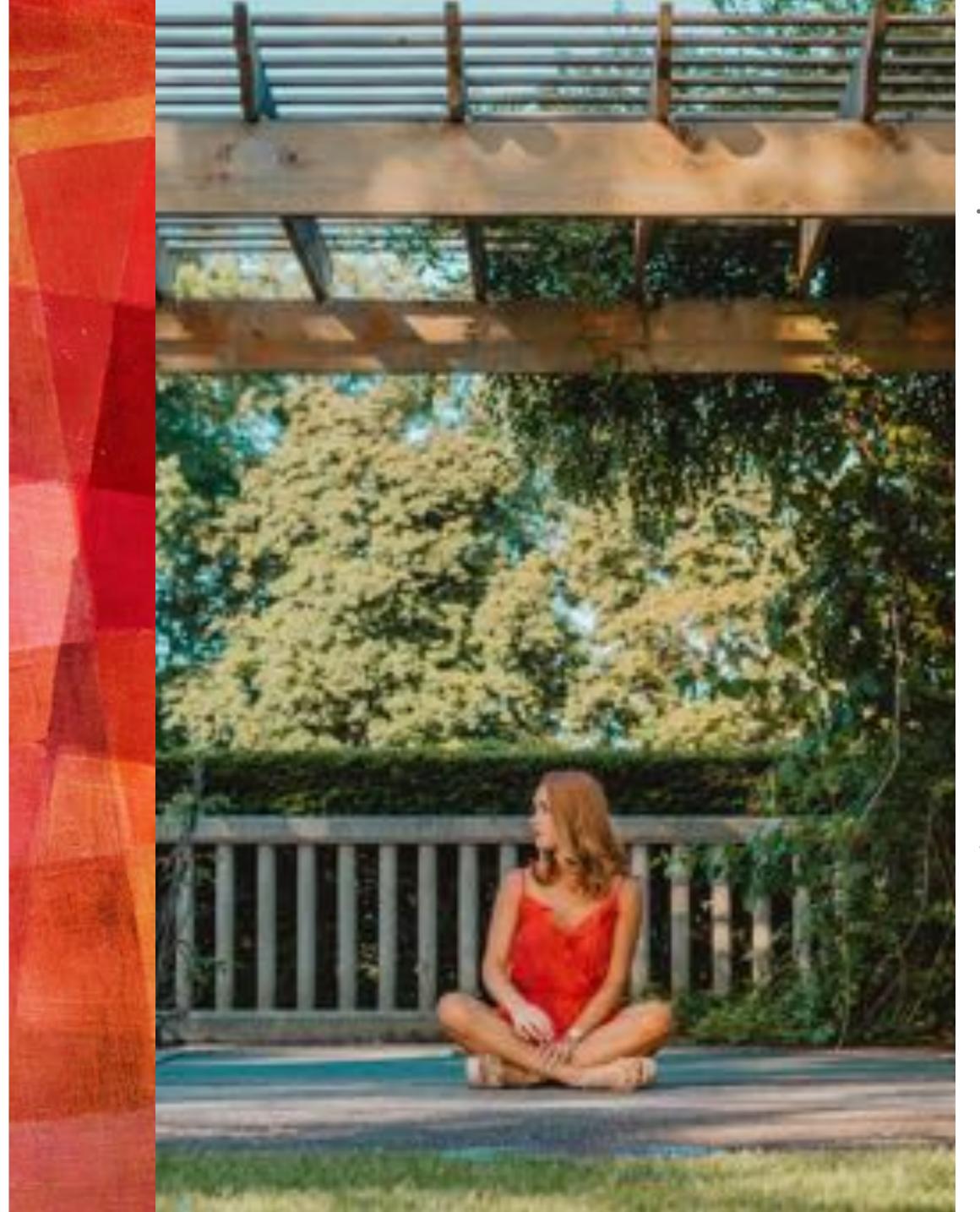


SELF-COMPASSION VS SELF-ESTEEM

Research from Dr. Kristin Neff:

Self- Compassion

- > Self-compassion is not based on self-evaluations.
- People feel compassion for themselves, because all human beings deserve compassion and understanding, not because they possess some particular set of traits.
- ➤ Research indicates that in comparison to self-esteem, self-compassion is associated with greater emotional resilience, more accurate self-concepts, more caring relationship behavior, as well as less narcissism and reactive anger



SELF-COMPASSION

Being touched by and not avoiding your suffering"

From Kristin Neff:

- > Self-compassion is not based on self-evaluation.
- ➤ It is not a way of judging ourselves positively; it is a way of relating to ourselves kindly.

Three Elements:

- 1. Self-kindness Vs. Self-judgment
- 2. Mindfulness Vs. Over-identification with thoughts
- 3. Common humanity Vs. Isolation



BENEFITS OF SELF-COMPASSION

- ➤ Mechanism for change
- ➤ Lowers stress
- Buffers against negative social comparisons

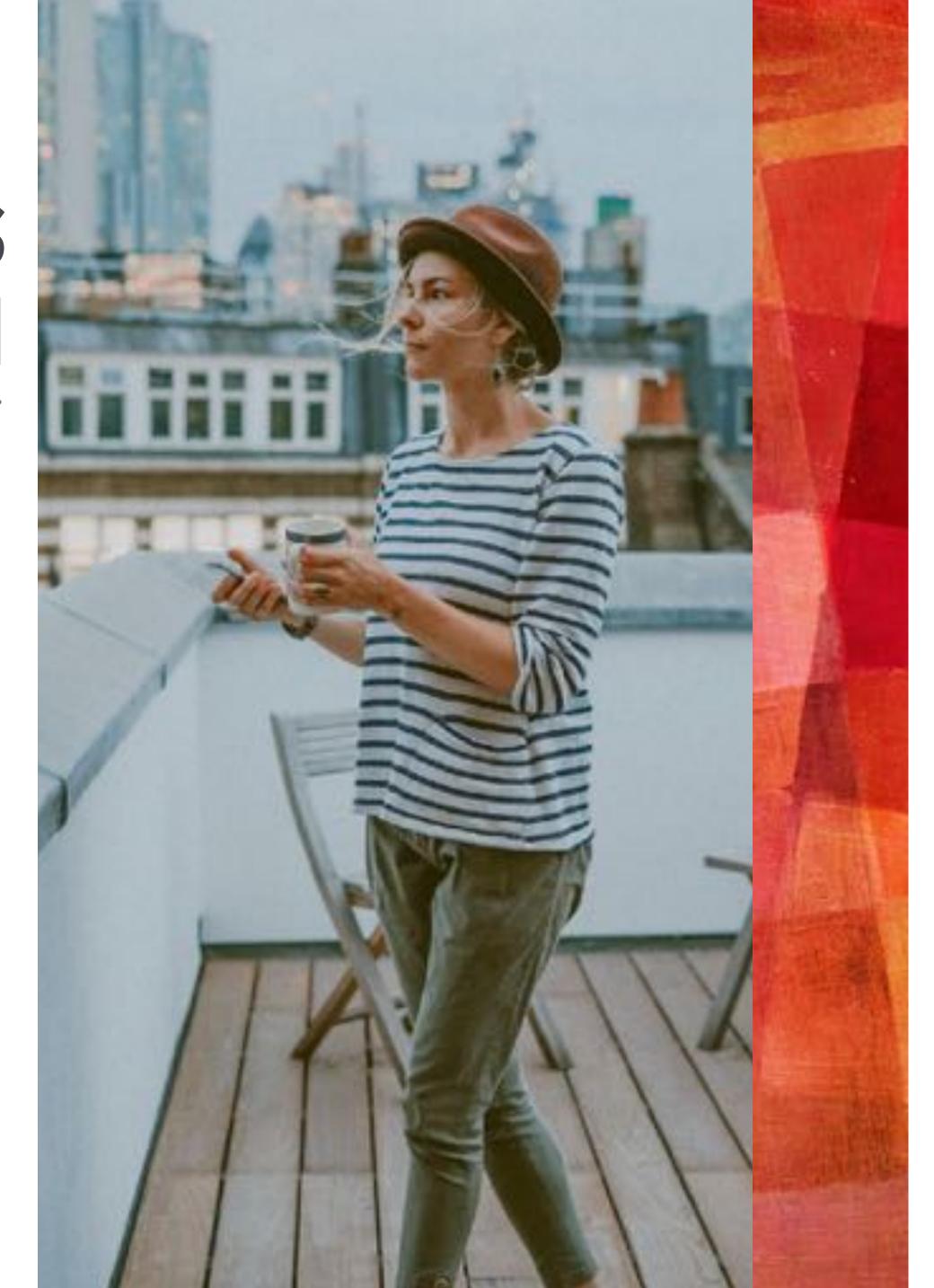


STUDIES SHOW THAT SELF-COMPASSION HAS A POSITIVE ASSOCIATION WITH:

- * Happiness
- * Optimism
- * Positive affect
- * Wisdom
- * Personal initiative
- * Curiosity and exploration
- * Agreeableness
- * Conscientiousness
- * Extroversion

OVERCOMING FEELINGS OF ISOLATION

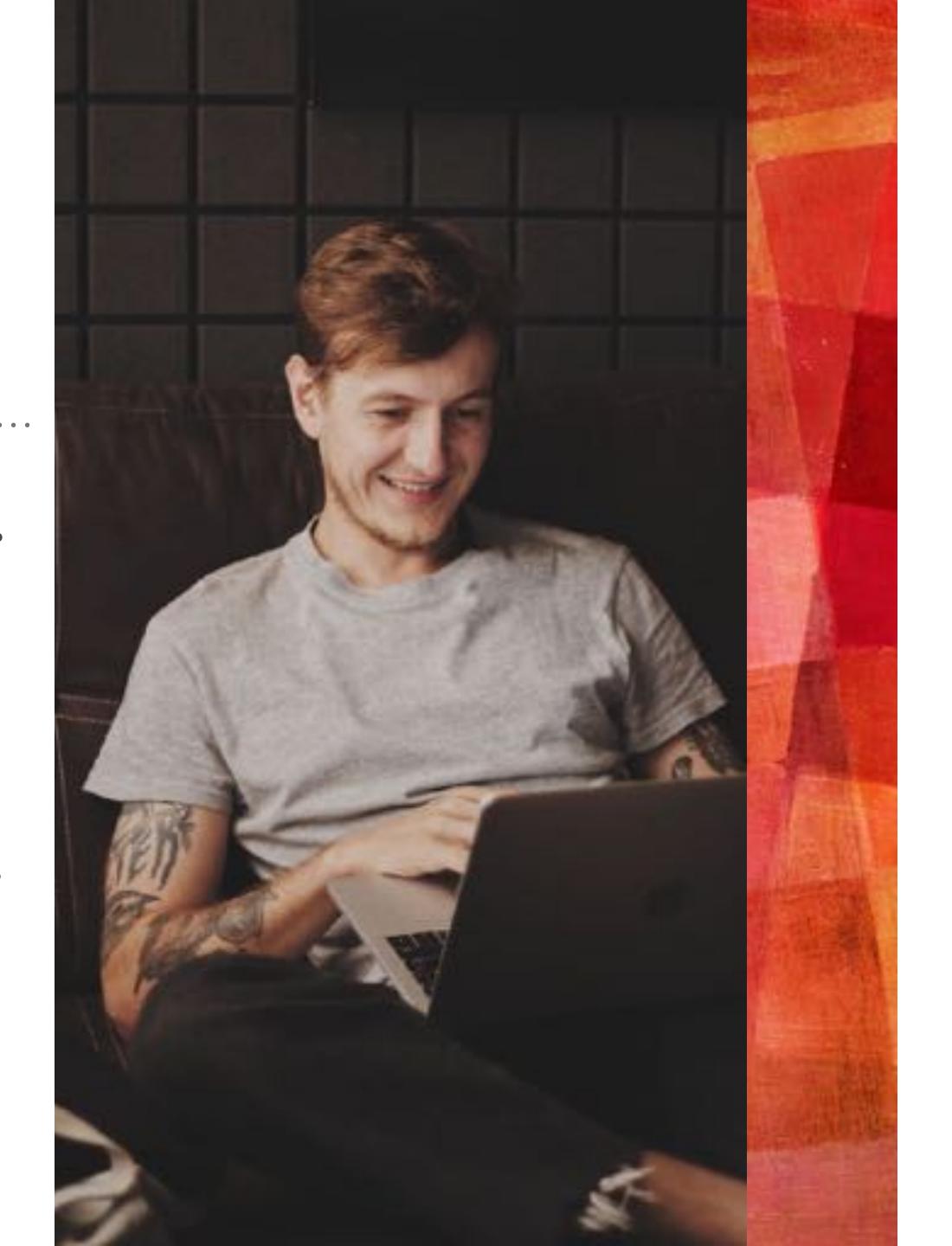
- Do not allow your voices" to manipulate your behavior.
- Acknowledge feelings of loneliness and isolation without judgment (i.e. I feel alone right now, but I'm not going to give in to my inner critic."
- Make your actions meet your words.
 Reach out.
- Connect virtually. Try calling or texting a friend or going online.



COMMUNICATION DURING COVID-19

From PsychAlive, Verywell Mind, Thrive Global

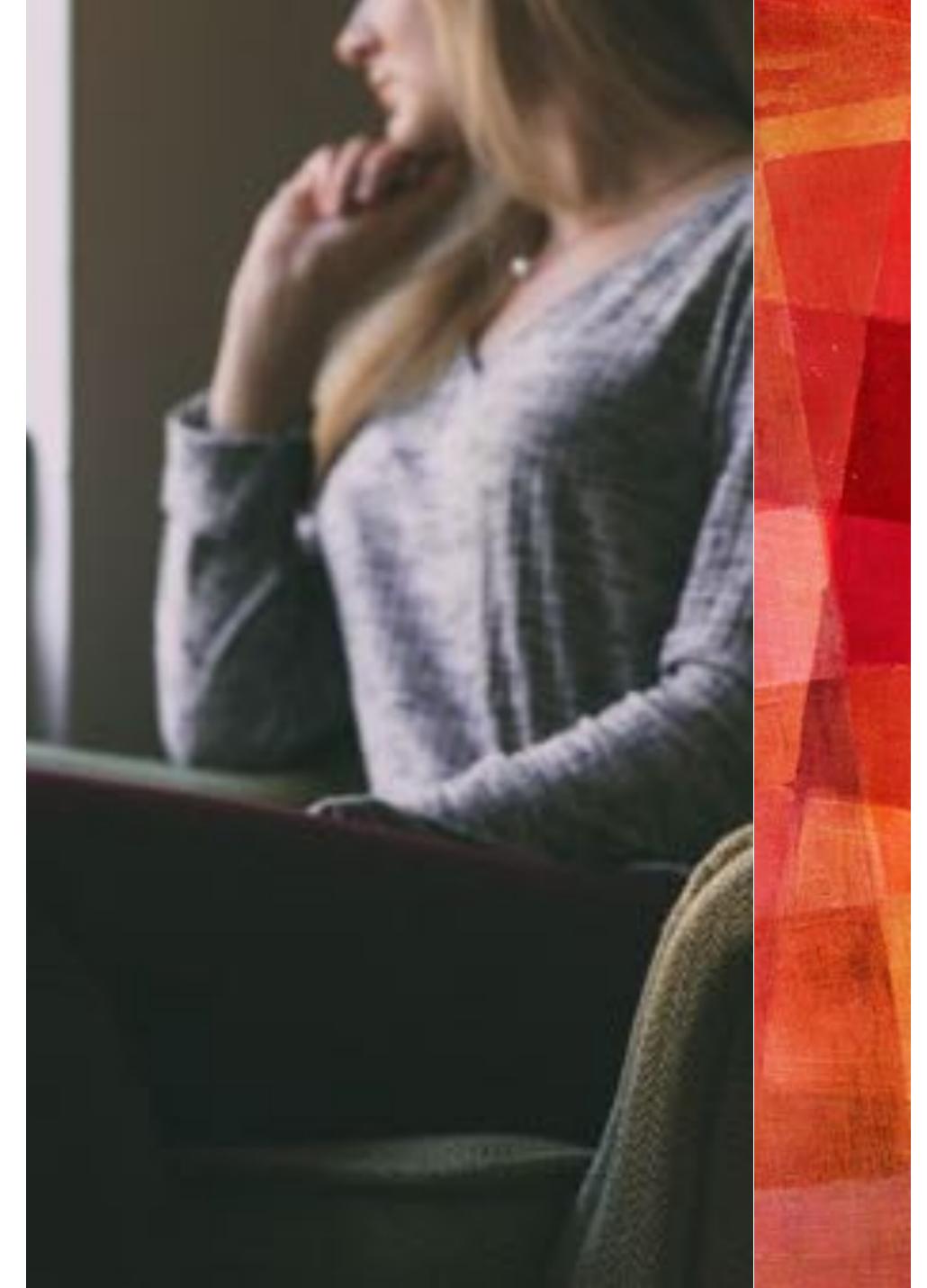
- > Cultivate a connection mindset.
- > Reach out virtually.
- > Check in on others.
- ➤ Get creative about how to engage in activities with others.
- > Share how you're feeling.
- Try virtual therapy.



SEKING THERAPY

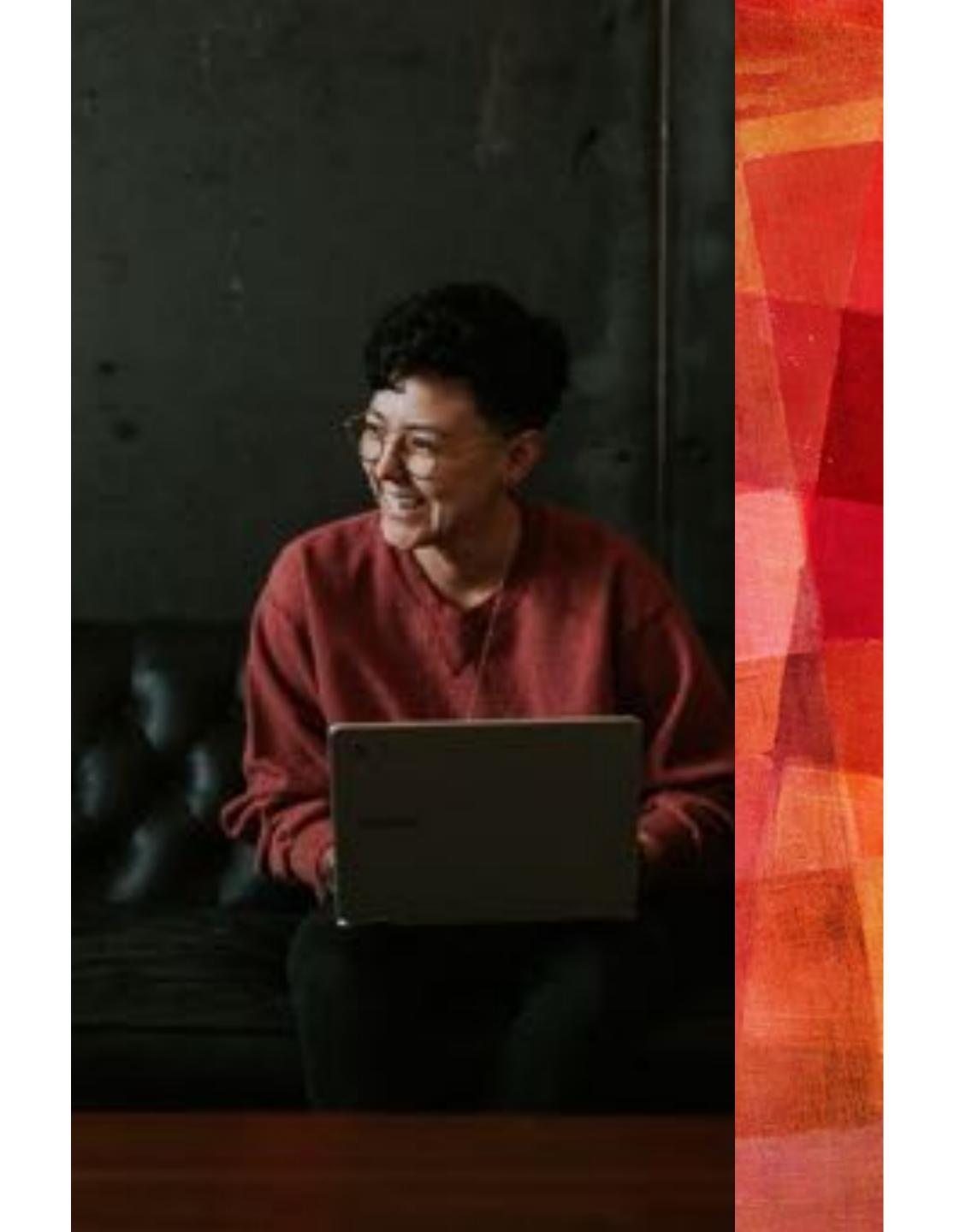
From Verywell Mind

If you find yourself with very poor mental health while isolated during coronavirus and aren't able to pull yourself out of feelings of anxiety, depression, or fear, it is important to reach out for help. Consider calling a crisis line or an online therapy service to find out about options.



SELF-CARE DURING COVID-19

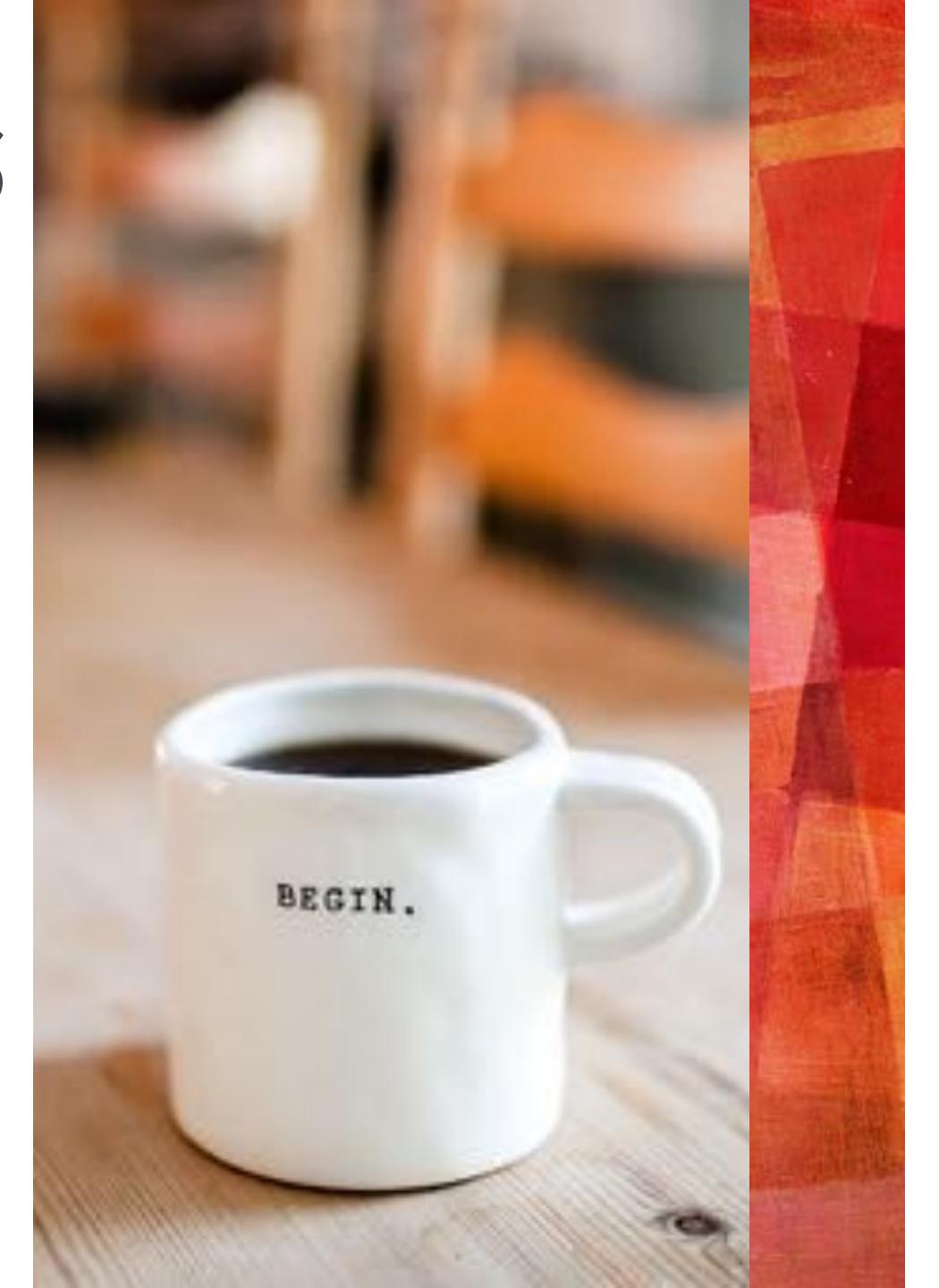
- Practice self-compassion be a friend to yourself.
- > Stay optimistic.
- Allow yourself to feel sad and miss people.
- > Don't dwell in your head.
- > Silence your inner critic.



HELPFUL ACTIONS

From PsychAlive, Verywell Mind, Thrive Global

- ➤ Keep to a schedule.
- > Stay informed, but take breaks.
- > Do something meaningful.
- Find sources of comfort specific to you.
- ➤ Be creative.
- > Seek distraction.
- > Plan for the future.
- > Stay active try online yoga and workout classes.
- > Play music.
- ➤ Learn something new.
- > Set aside time each day for a quiet period. .
- > Pause to be grateful.
- > Serve others.



GENEROSITY AND VOLUNTERING

- One way to counteract feeling hopeless is to think outside of ourselves.
- ➤ Believe beyond all doubt that you have something to offer.
- Volunteering gives you the opportunity to connect with new people.
- Even little acts of generosity can have a significant impact on mood.
- ➤ Generosity, as a principle, can lead to stronger self-esteem, which then leads to more social behavior.



WHAT CAN PEOPLE DO TO MINIMIZE THE RISK OF BEING LONELY WHEN CUT OFF FROM DIRECT HUMAN CONTACT?

Helping another person can be an incredibly powerful experience that not only forms a connection between people but also reaffirms to ourselves that we're bringing value to the world. Reach out to your neighbors and ask how they're doing, how you can assist in a big or small way. Many people will be struggling during this crisis. They won't have the help they need, the income or emotional support to get through it.

Dr. Vivek H. Murthy, the former surgeon general of the United States and author of Together: The Healing Power of Human Connection in a Sometimes Lonely World

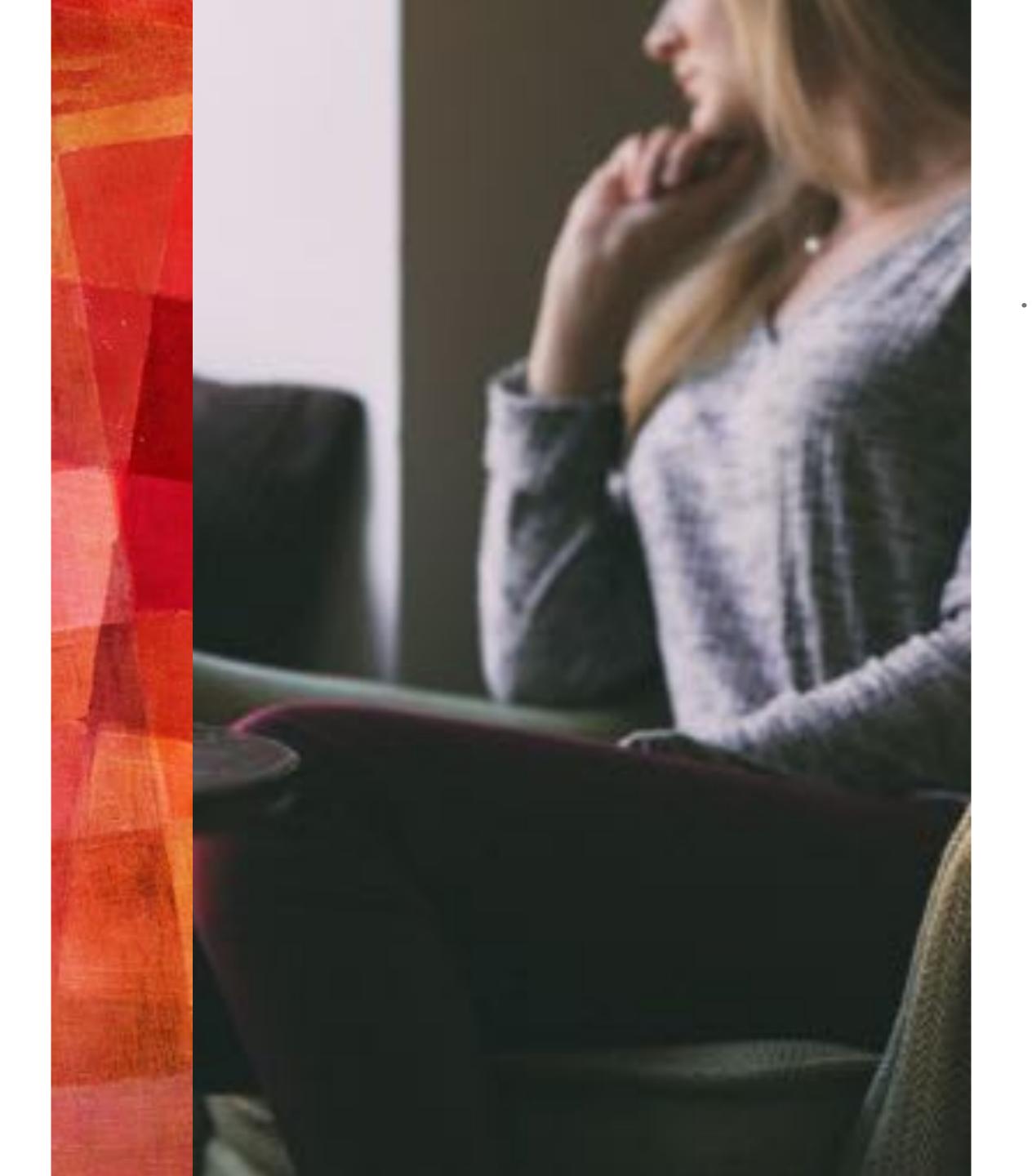
PREVENT LONELINESS WHILE SOCIAL DISTANCING

Kasley Killam

> Face-to-face from afar: video chat

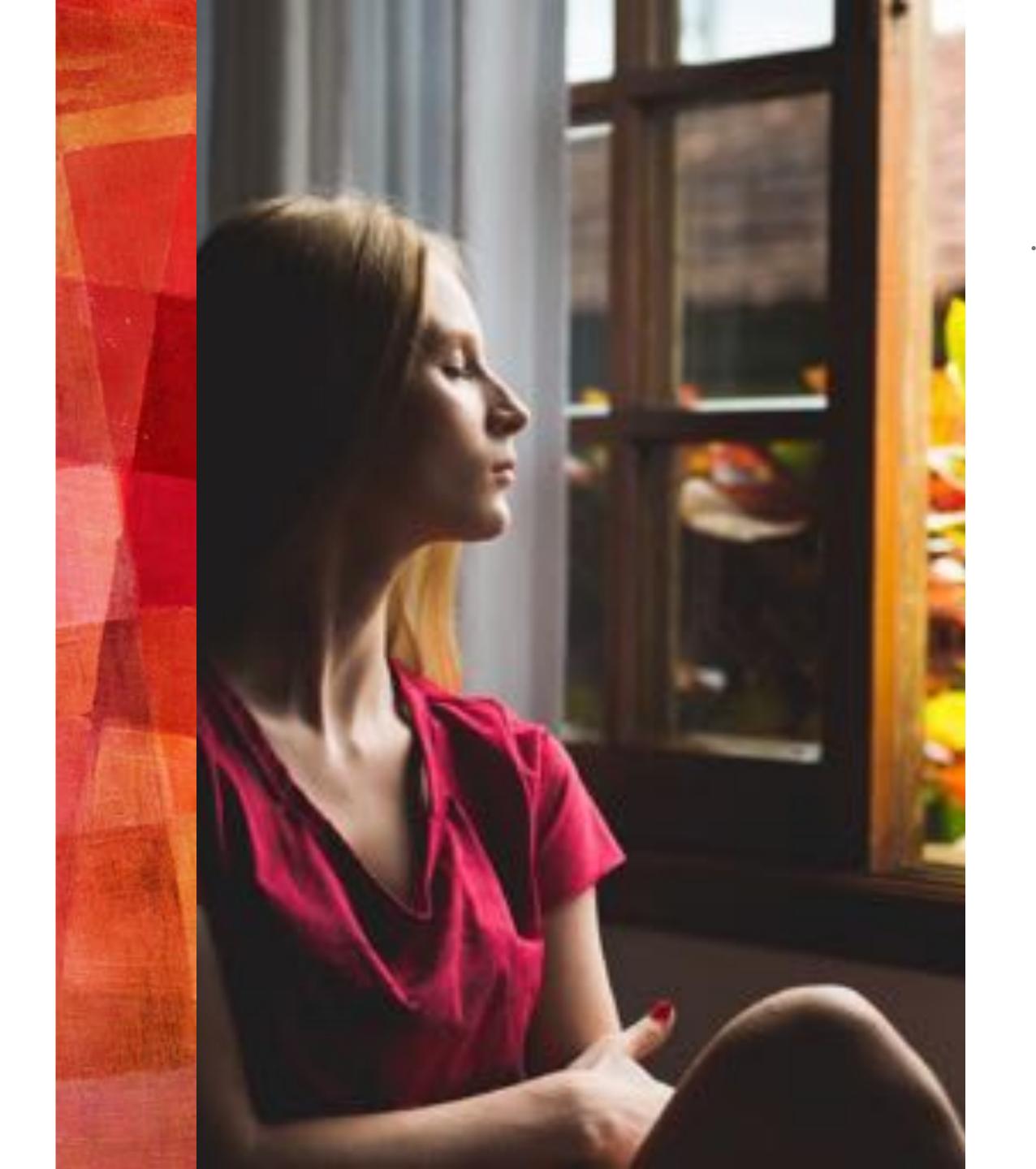
- > One-minute kindness: take a moment to comment or express kindness on social media, or by text or email
- Cultivate your community: connect online with people with similar interests
- ➤ **Deepen or broaden:** nurture your existing relationships or form new ones
- ➤ **Use a tool:** new apps and social platforms are being designed to help us optimize our online interactions





DBT SKILLS

- > Mindfulness Skills
- ➤Interpersonal
 Effectiveness Skills

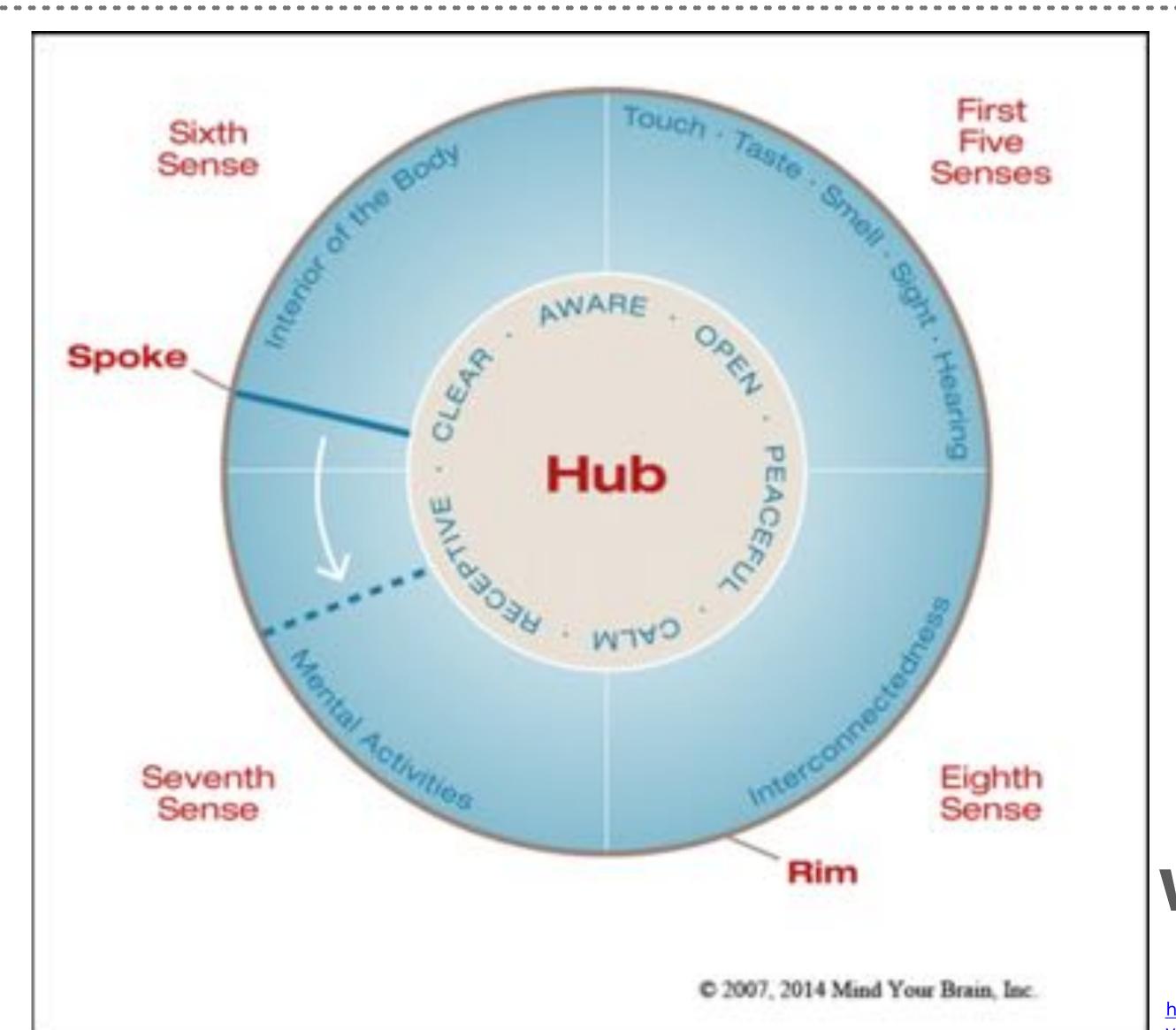


4-7-8 BREATHING

Been shown to help relieve stress, lower blood pressure, and induce sleep

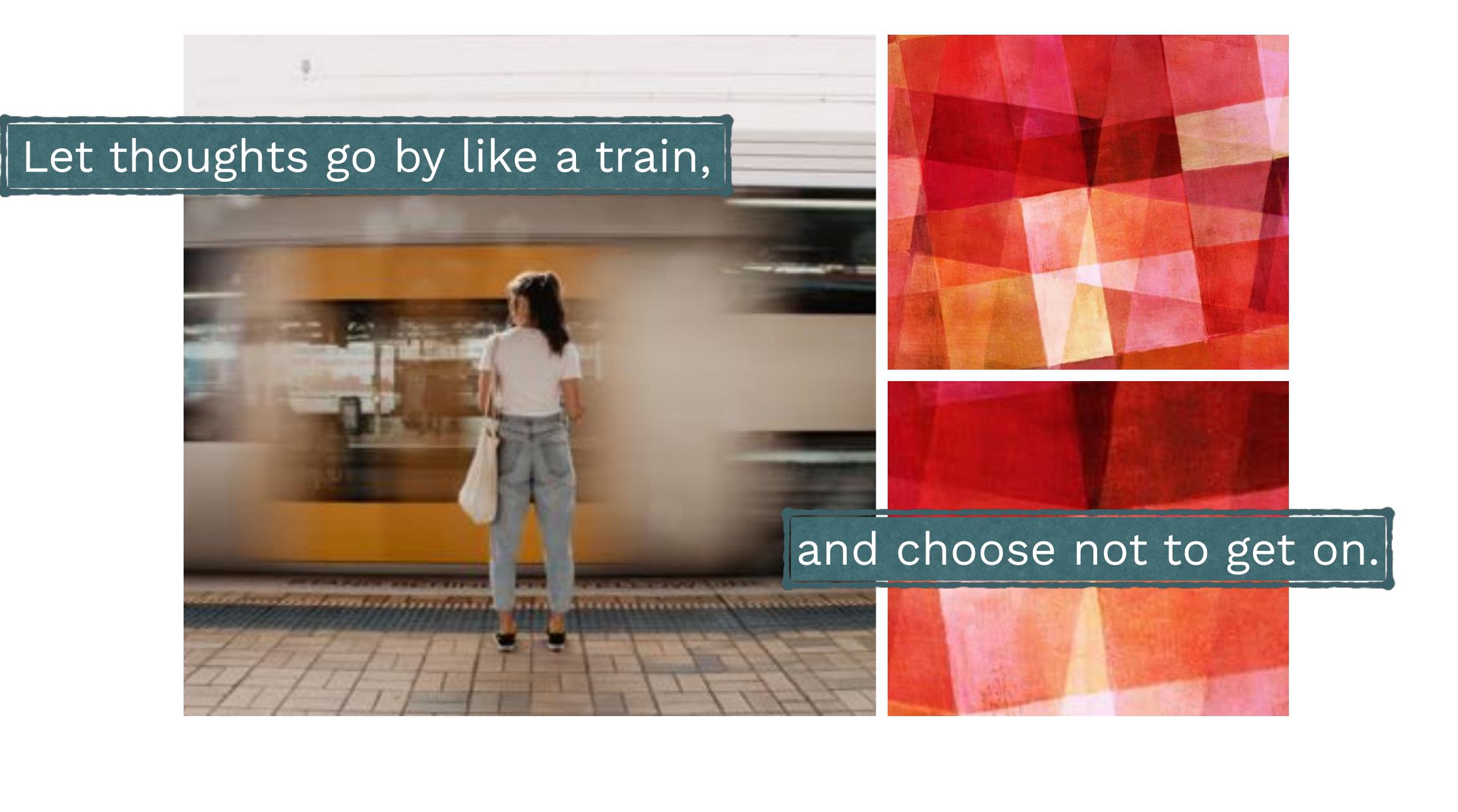
- > **Step 1:** Put the tip of your tongue to the top of your mouth just behind your two front teeth.
- > Step 2: Breathe in through your nose for four seconds.
- > Step 3: Hold your breath for a count of seven seconds.
- > Step 4: Breathe out through your mouth for eight seconds.
- > Step 5: Repeat at least five times.

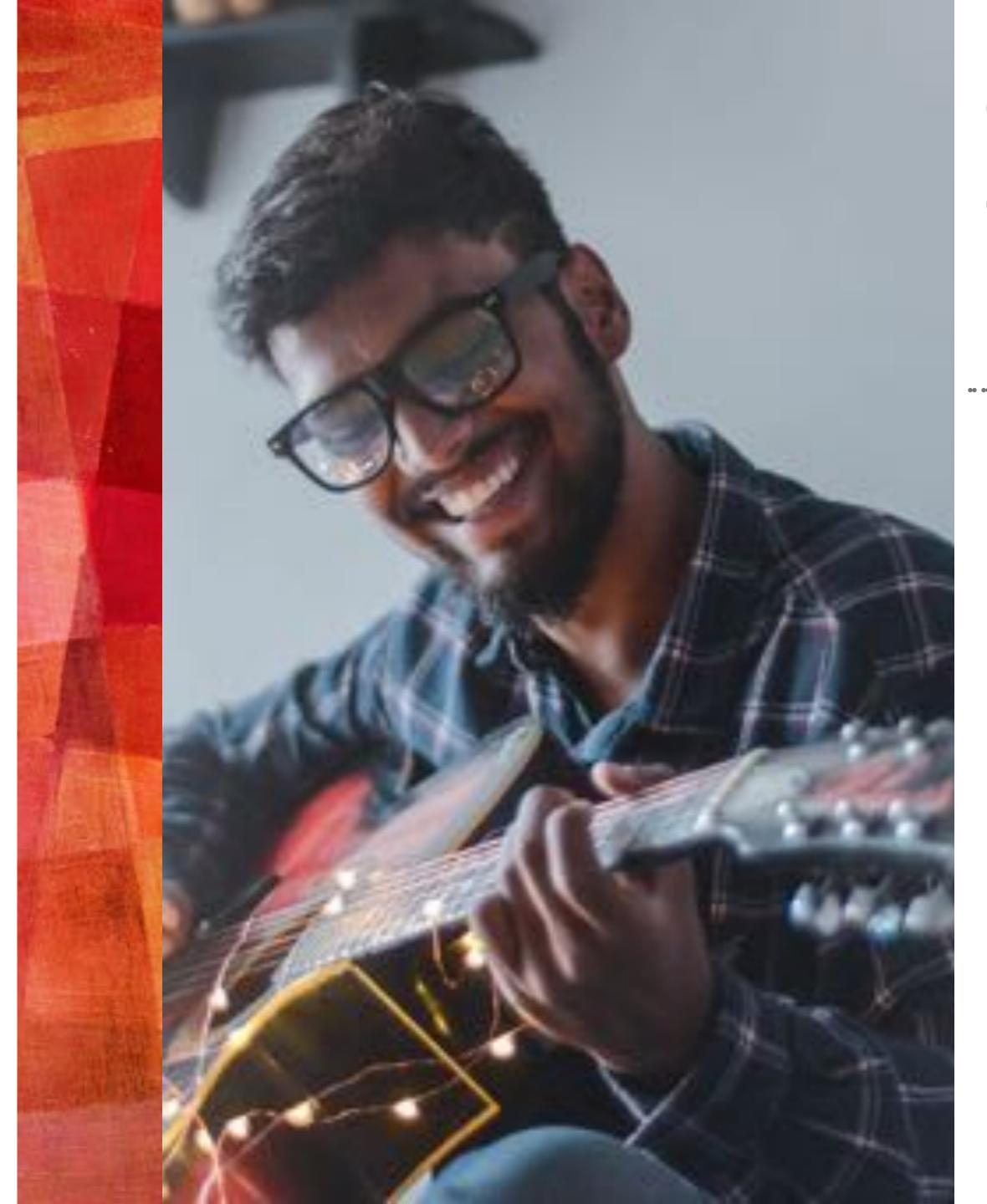
WHEEL OF AWARENESS



WATCHH AT

https://www.youtube.com/watch?
v=ODlFhOKahmk





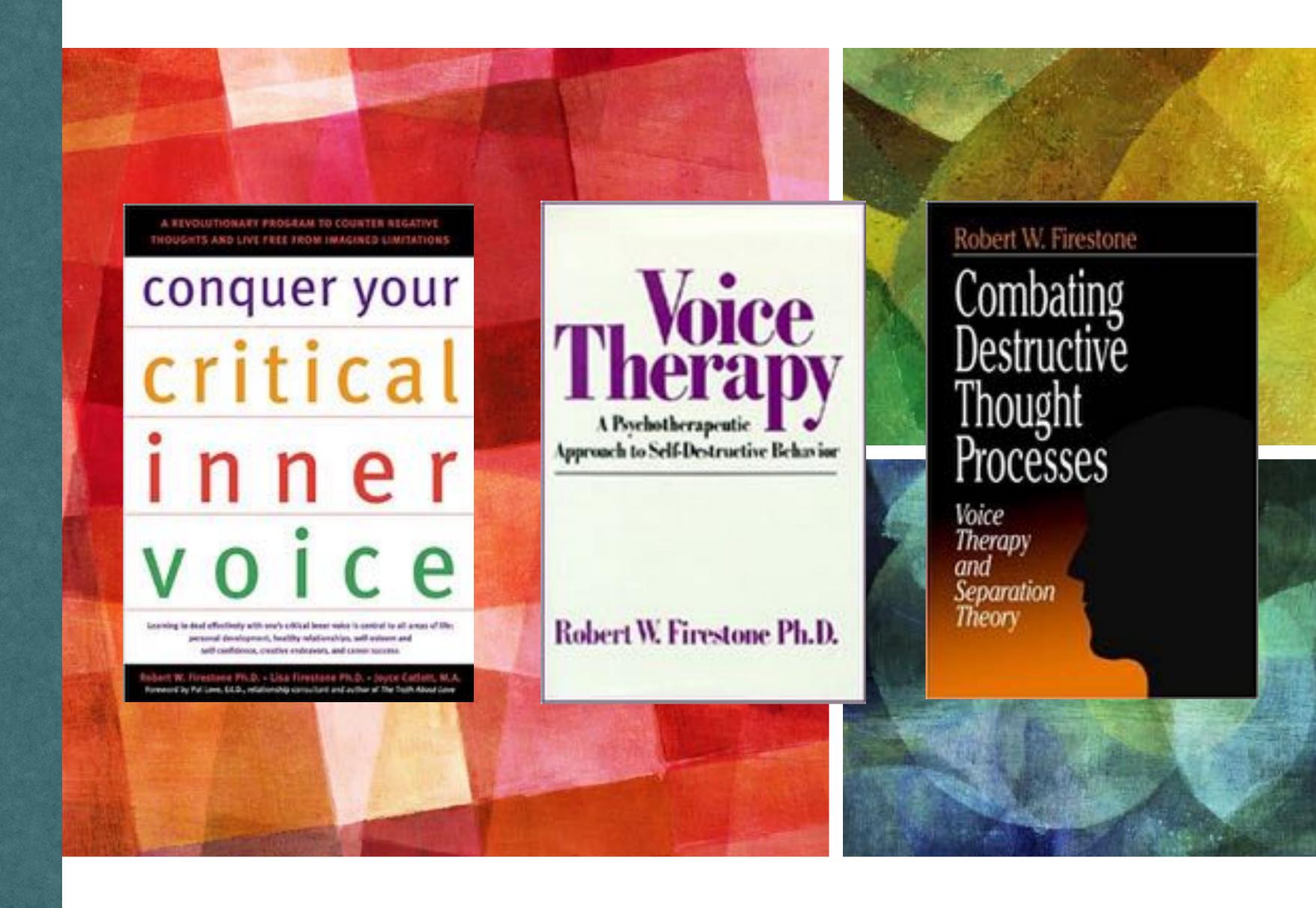
GUIDELINES FOR CONTINUED PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- ➤ Be aware of the fear that accompanies change.
- > Realize that psychological pain is valid.
- ➤ Develop a more realistic view of your parents.
- ➤ Differentiation unlearn old behaviors, learn new behaviors.
- ➤ Become more aware of specific defenses against feeling.
- > Recognize the value of friendship.



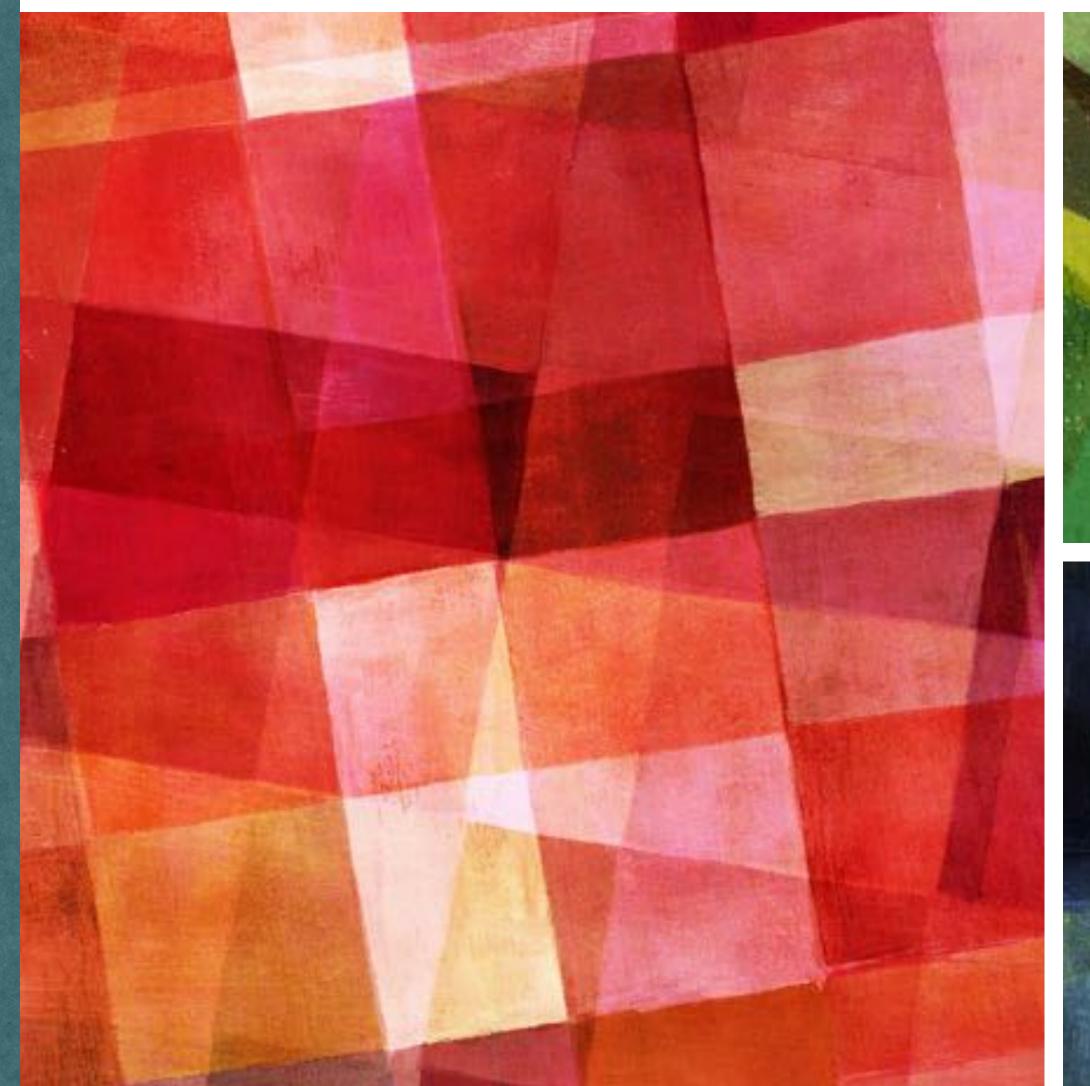
A human being is a part of a whole, called by us 'universe', a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest... a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty. Nobody is able to achieve this completely, but the striving for such achievement is in itself a part of the liberation and a foundation for inner security.

-Albert Einstein



ECOURSES

See all online courses at ecourse.psychalive.org

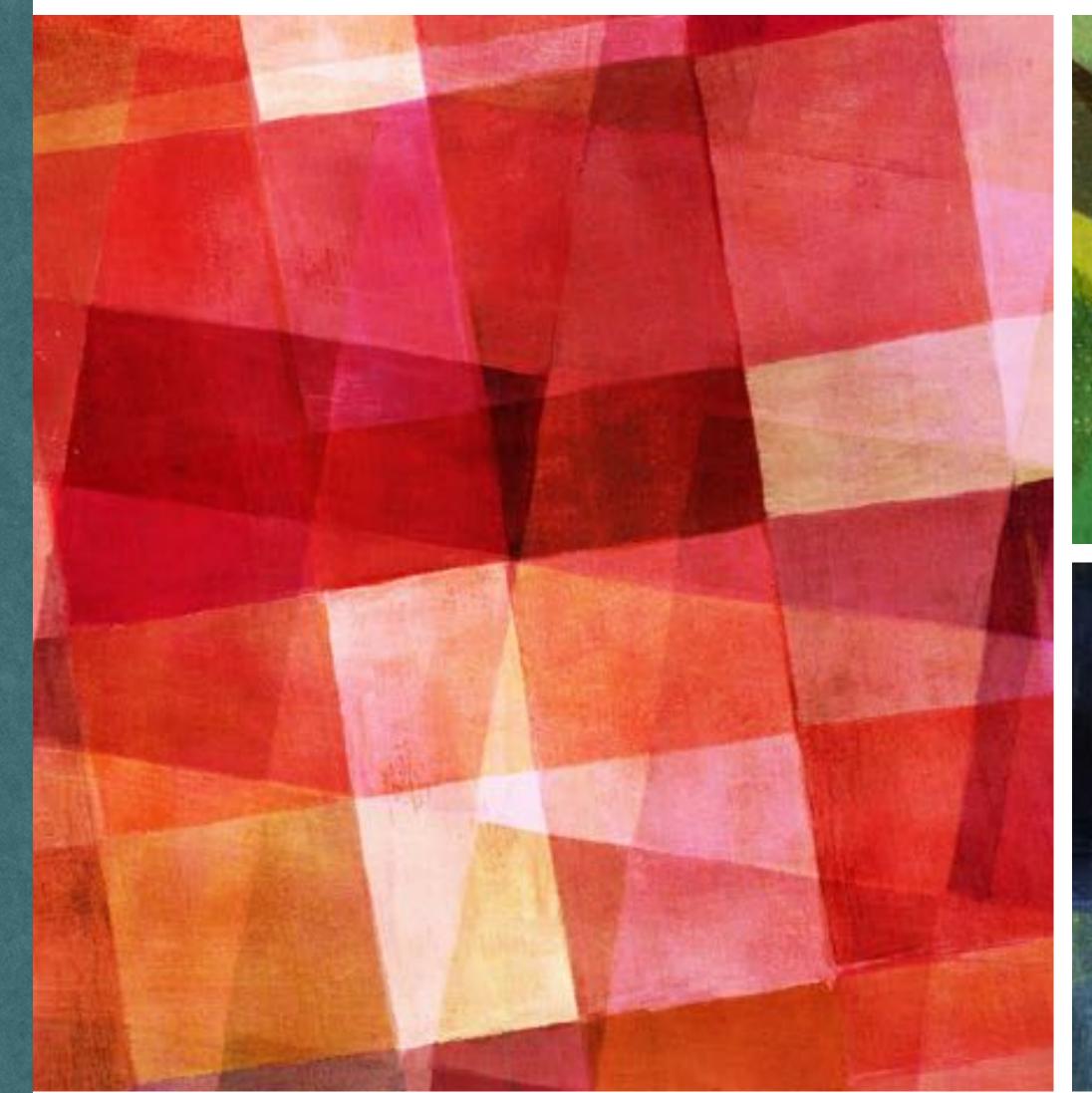






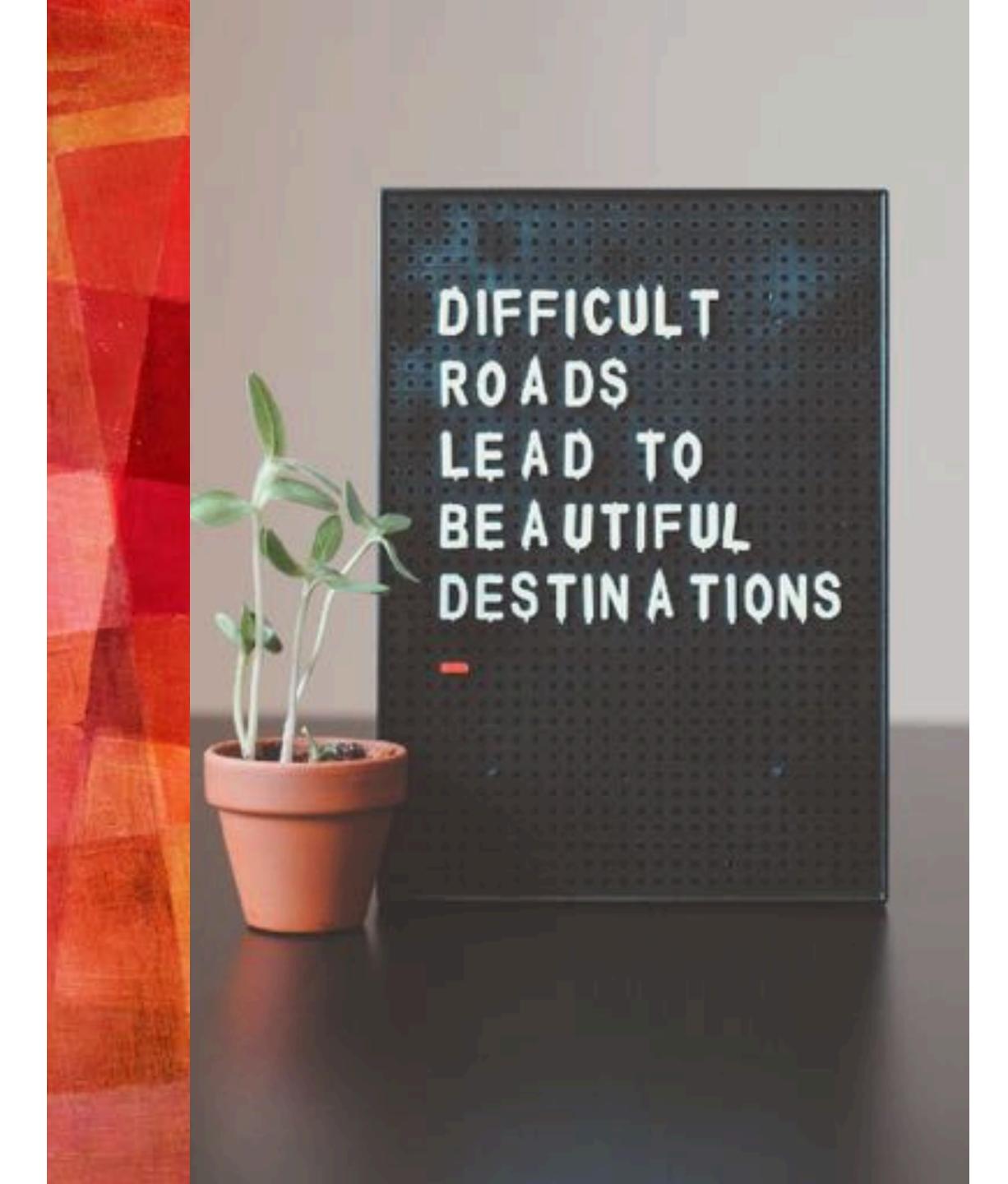
WEBINARS

See all upcoming and archived free and CE webinars at psychalive.org



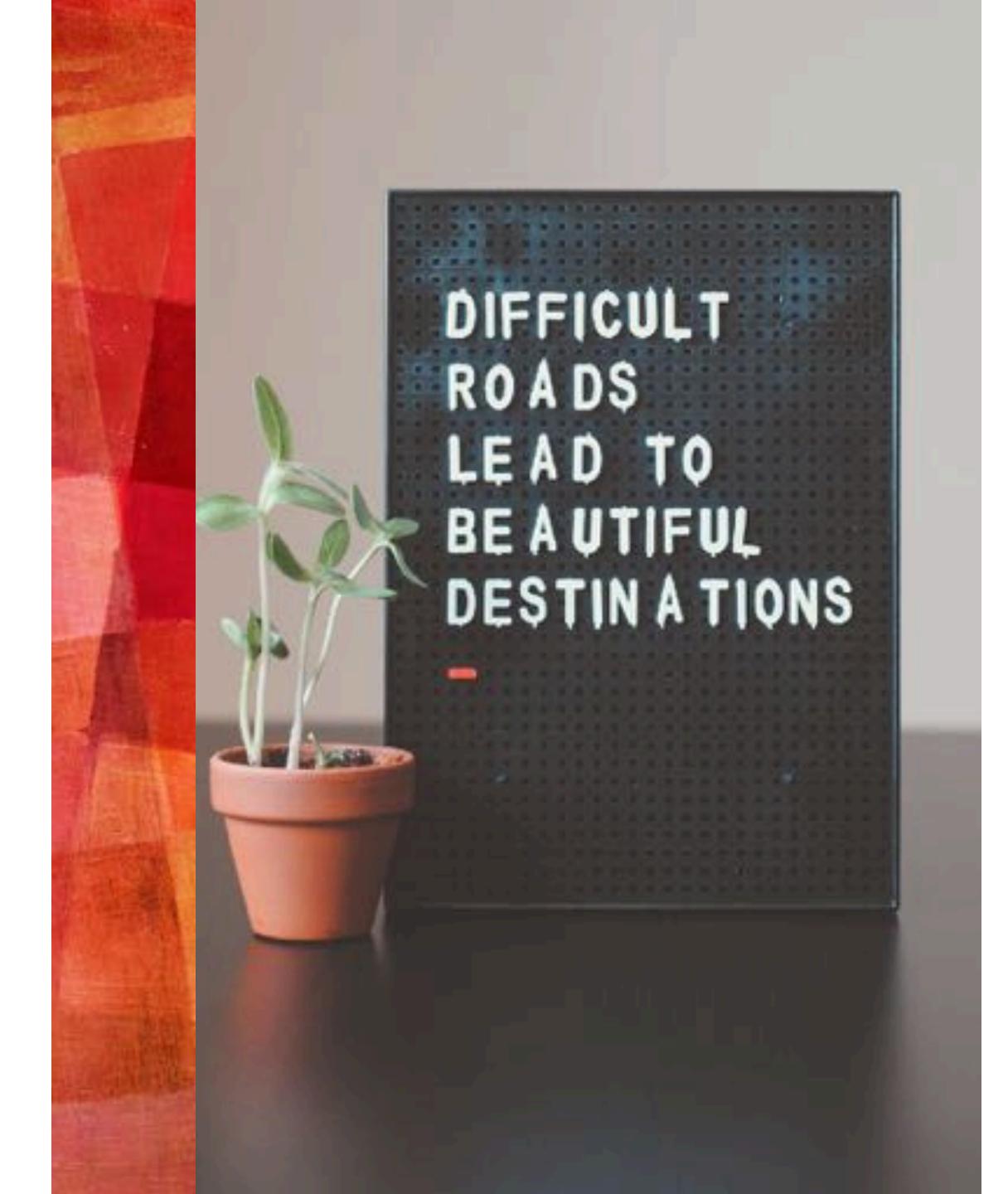






CE INFORMATION

CE's for this Webinar are optional and sold separately through R. Cassidy Seminars. A link to purchase will be emailed to registrants following the live Webinar. For those purchasing this Webinar as an archived recording, a link to purchase CE's was provided with your purchase confirmation. All registrants can earn 3 CE's by watching the Webinar and completing a reading assignment.



THANKYOU!

CONTACT:

Lisa Firestone, Ph.D.

Director of Research and Education - The Glendon Association

Senior Editor - PsychAlive

Email: glendon@glendon.org

Phone: 800.663.5281

www.Glendon.org www.PsychAlive.org