

Welcome!



Elevate

Taking Your Relationship to the Next Level

Introduction



www.alabamamarriage.org

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Ground Rules



Establishing ground rules helps to
EMPOWER you as a group and
ALLOWS everyone to understand the
boundaries for group participation.

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Let's get to know each other!



- ✓ Your and your partner's name
- ✓ Where you are both from
- ✓ How long you've been together
- ✓ One thing you love about your partner

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Clear Expectations



I would like to walk away
from this experience with...



My Action Plan



What will you do to ELEVATE your love?

Empower Yourself

Lay the Foundation

Enlighten

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From Research to Relationships



#006

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Making Your Relationship Last

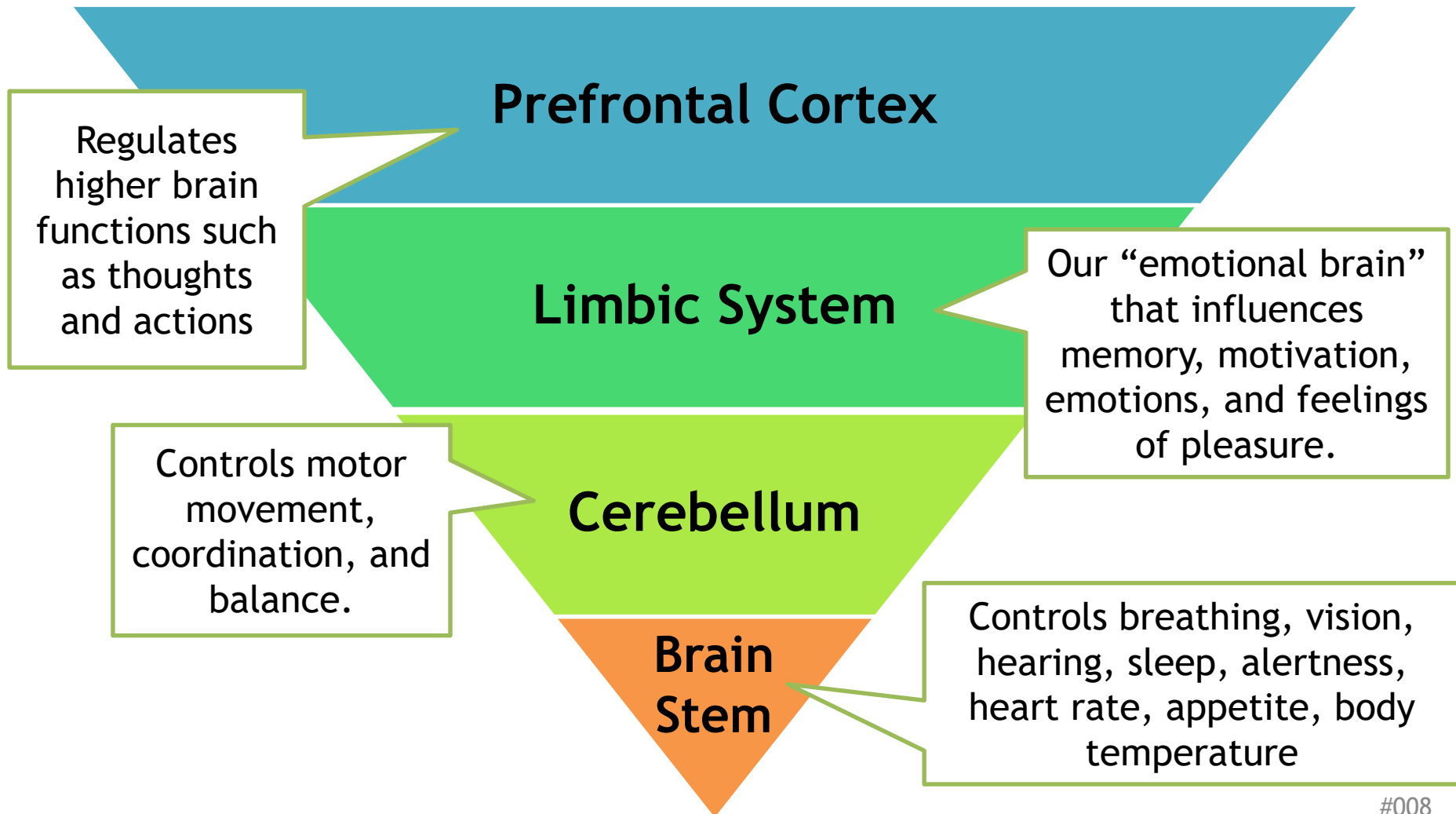


PROGRAM GOALS

- ✓ Understand how past and present experiences influence the body's reaction to and regulation of emotions and behaviors.
- ✓ Reinforce strategies you can practice to regulate your own physiological responses and actions in a relationship.
- ✓ Enrich the experiences you share together that influence the direction and health of your relationship.

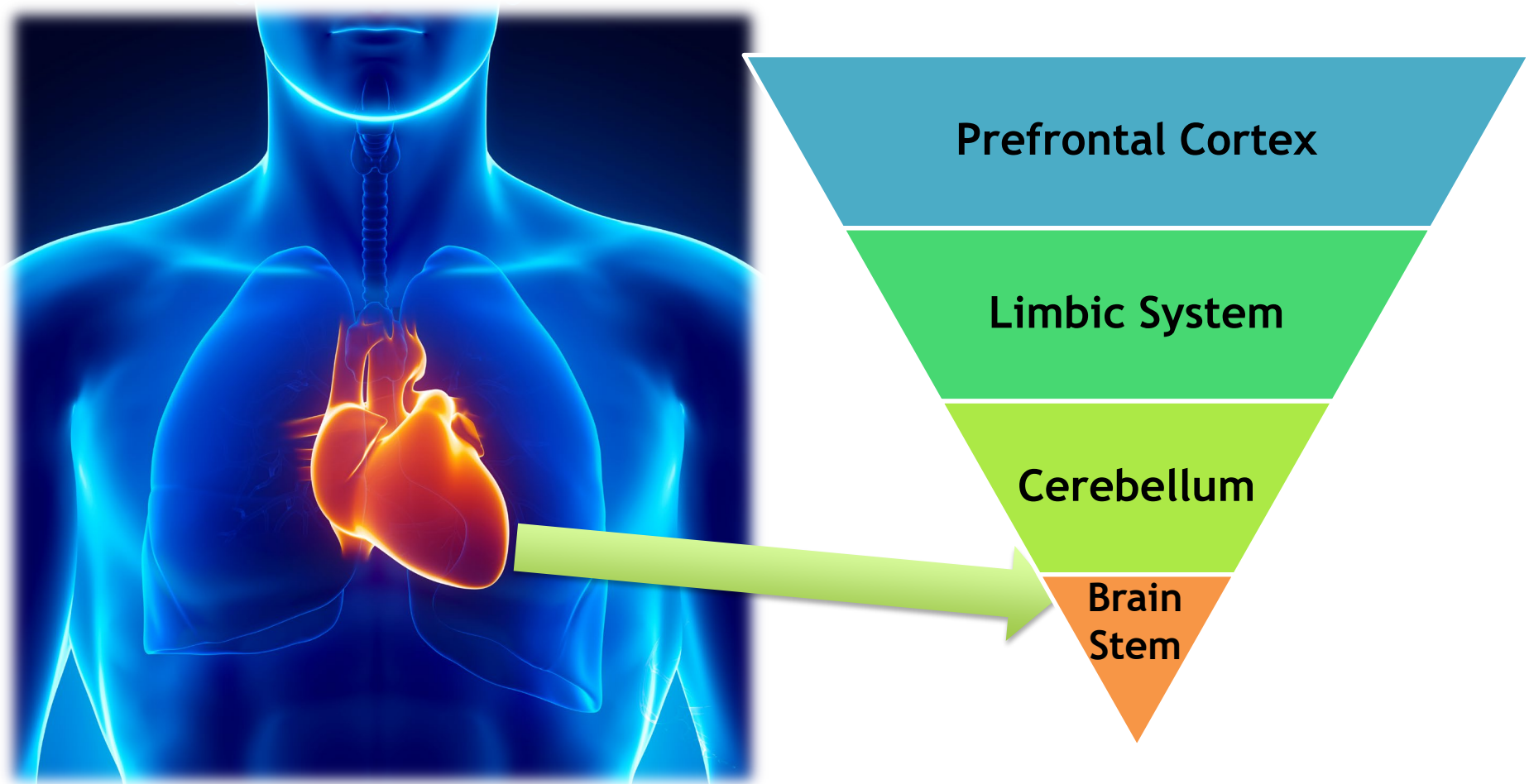
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Heart-Brain Connection



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Heart-Brain Connection



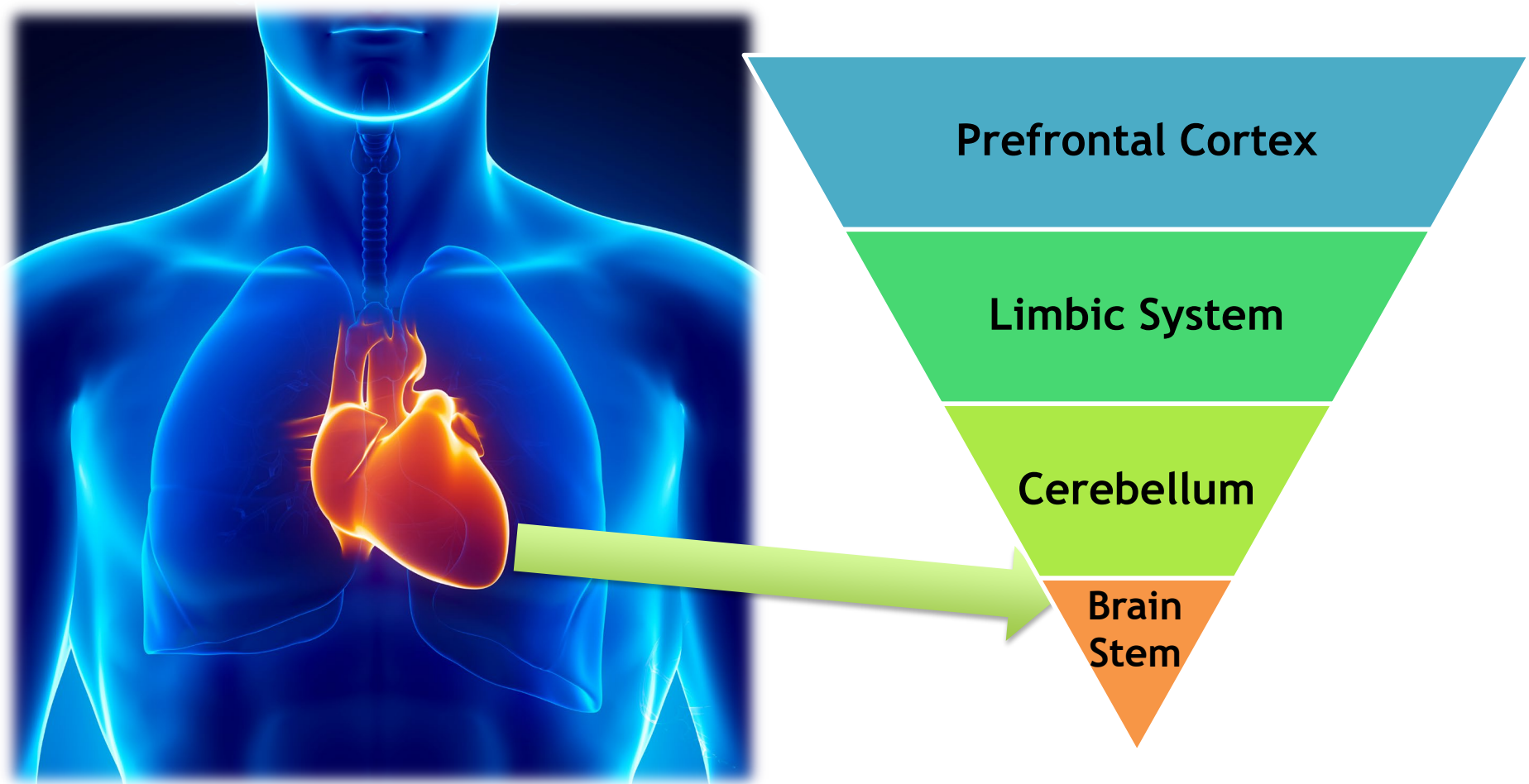
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Video: Brain Clip



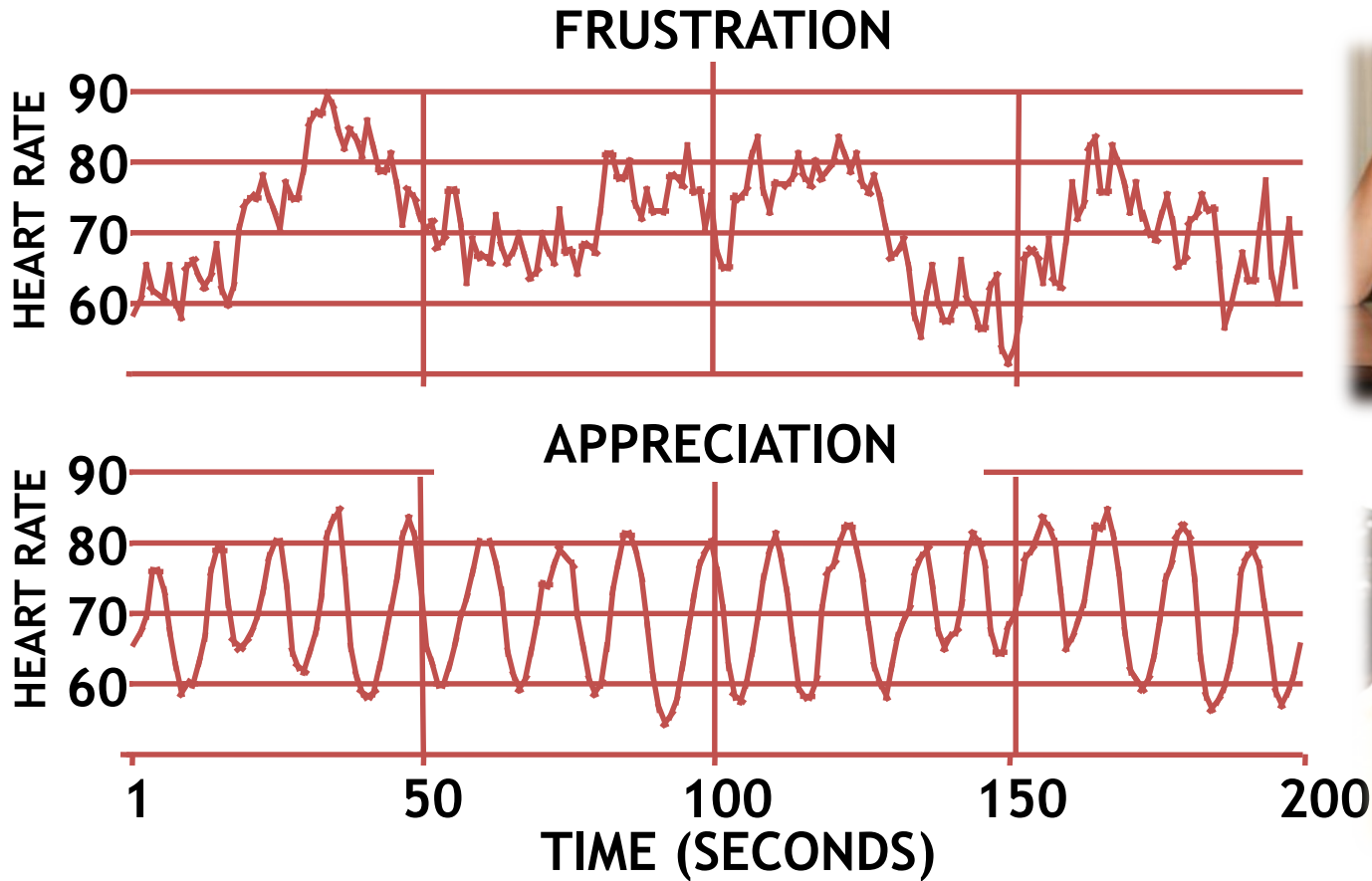
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Heart-Brain Connection



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Heart-Brain Connection



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Touch Changes the Heart



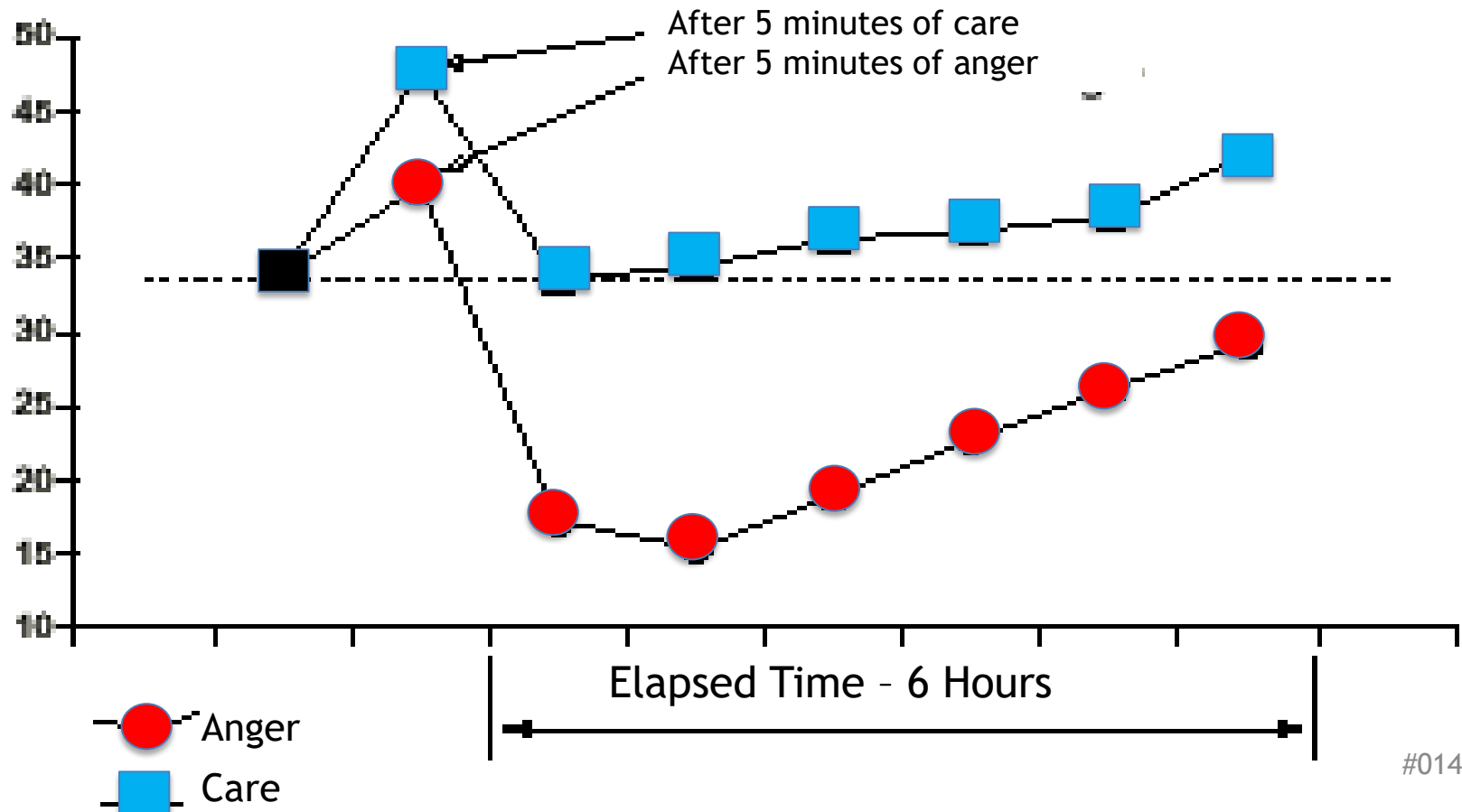
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Emotions, Heart, and Health



The Immune System: Anger vs. Care

IgA Concentration



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Your Love, Not Your Heart Rate



**EMPOWER
YOURSELF**



**LAY THE
FOUNDATION**



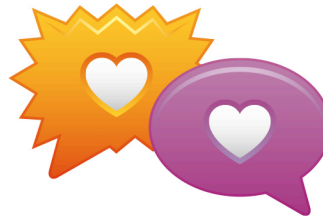
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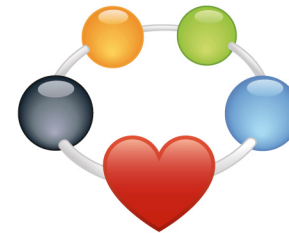
VALUE



ATTACH



TAME



ENGAGE



Tips For a Healthy Relationship



EMPOWER YOURSELF—Individual health impacts the health of couple relationships. Taking care of yourself first can help improve the wellness of your relationship. Below are some ways that you can *Care for Self* and help your relationship:

- Eat healthy and exercise regularly.
- Set regular sleep and wake times for yourself.
- Notice and appreciate the small, good things in your life to help you find greater happiness and satisfaction.
- Find ways to use your strengths to serve your community.
- Look for the positive meaning in your life.
- Learn to manage stress in more healthy, effective ways.



LAY THE FOUNDATION—Are you making deliberate and conscious decisions about your relationships? It is important to be intentional when establishing and nurturing healthy relationships. Here are some ways to show how you *Choose* to strengthen your relationship:

- Make the decision to enter into a relationship rather than sliding into one.
- Commit and provide effort in the relationship.
- Focus on each other's strengths, and what each of you brings to the relationship.
- Avoid thoughts and behaviors that could potentially be hurtful to one another.
- Find positive and effective ways to grow your relationship.
- Envision and set goals for a healthy future together.



ENLIGHTEN—How well do you know your partner? Sharing and developing an understanding with your partner creates stability and increases awareness of your partner and the relationship. Here are some ways you can get to *Know* your partner better:

- Ask about your partner's life, thoughts, and feelings to get to know them better.
- Be sensitive to your partner's worries and needs.
- Think back on positive experiences you have had together.
- Express sincere interest in what is happening in your partner's life.
- See situations through your partner's eyes to gain a better understanding of how they look at things.
- Discuss what you expect in a relationship with one another.



VALUE—Keeping a relationship healthy is the responsibility of each person in that relationship. What do you do to show support, affection, and respect for your partner? Here are some ways to show that you *Care* for your partner:

- Show respect by expressing caring actions towards your partner instead of crabby reactions when he or she has had a stressful day.
- When communicating, be open and listen to your partner.
- Focus on the good in your partner.
- Accept and value the differences that you and your partner share.
- Give love in the way your partner likes to be loved.
- Show appreciation as a way to make a deposit in your relationship account.
- To maintain a strong relationship, make time for togetherness and moments of connection.

Being a Mindful Couple



What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness is an open attention to and awareness of the present moment, both internally and externally. It is used to help individuals and couples pay attention to thoughts and feelings in the moment. This also helps one to act skillfully, instead of emotionally, in stressful situations.

Why is it important to practice mindfulness?

Research shows mindfulness can improve physical health (i.e., memory, pain, skin problems, headaches, etc.) and mental health (i.e., depression, anxiety, sleep, etc.). Generally, participating in mindfulness helps individuals cope with stress better, leading to decreases in overall stress.

Why is it important to practice mindfulness as a couple?

Practicing these exercises as a couple allows you to develop an understanding of thoughts and feelings in the present moment with your spouse or partner. Also this empowers couples to act skillfully and not emotionally in stressful situations. Research suggests practicing mindfulness combined with having a healthy intimate relationship and social support may be as important as diet and exercising when it comes to maintaining good health.

How do these practices help couples?

- Promotes unity, connection and closeness within relationships
- Allows couples to approach stressful situations as challenges
- Increases empathy in individuals
- Encourages acceptance and less avoidant behaviors
- Improves mental and physical health
- Permits couples to better cope with stressful situations

How does somebody practice mindfulness?

There are many ways to engage in mindful practice including meditation techniques (i.e., loving kindness, body scan, attitude change, etc.) and active techniques (i.e., yoga, mindful walking, mindful eating, etc.). *Some examples that you can practice are provided on the back.*

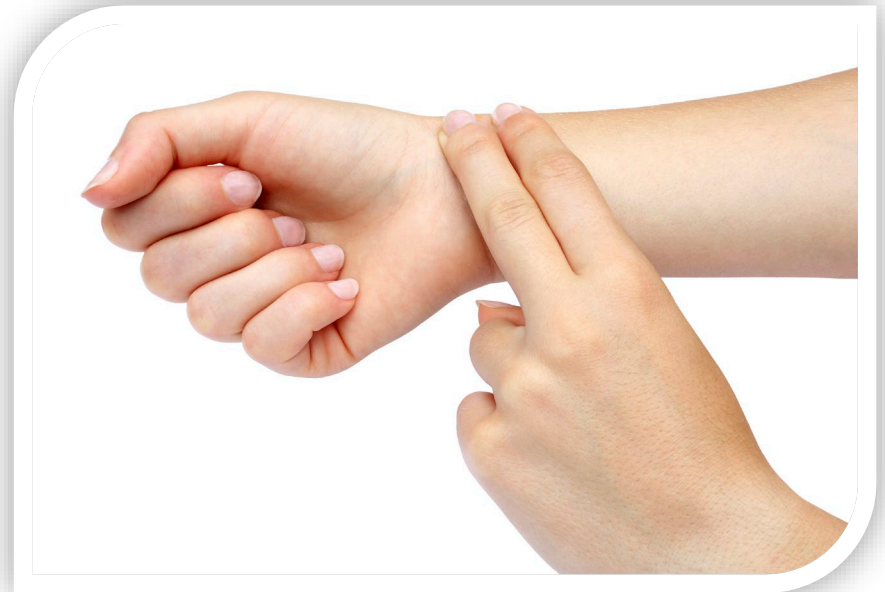
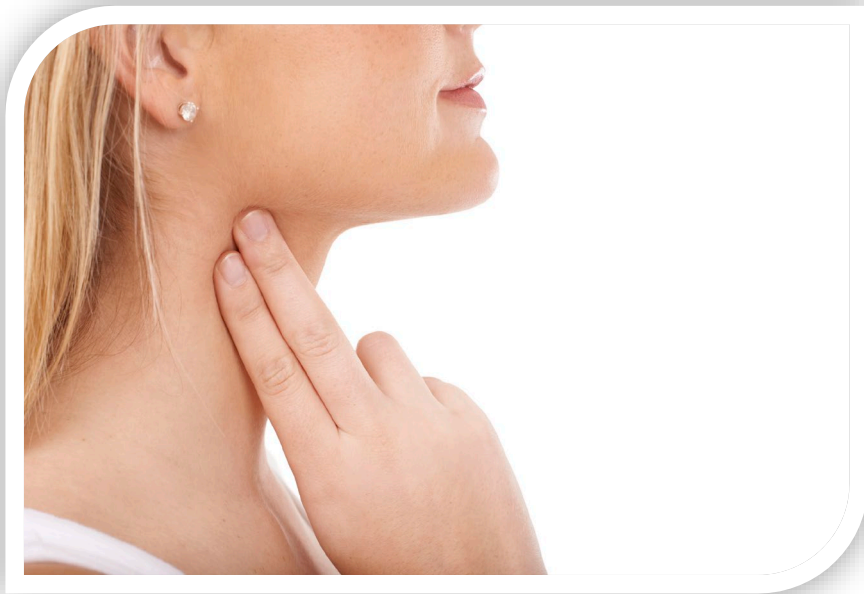


Where can I find further information about mindfulness?

- <http://marc.ucla.edu/>
- <http://www.umassmed.edu/cfm/index.aspx>
- *Full Catastrophe Living* by Jon Kabat-Zinn
- *Calming Your Anxious Mind* by Jeffrey Brantley

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Take Your Pulse



Heart-Brain Connection

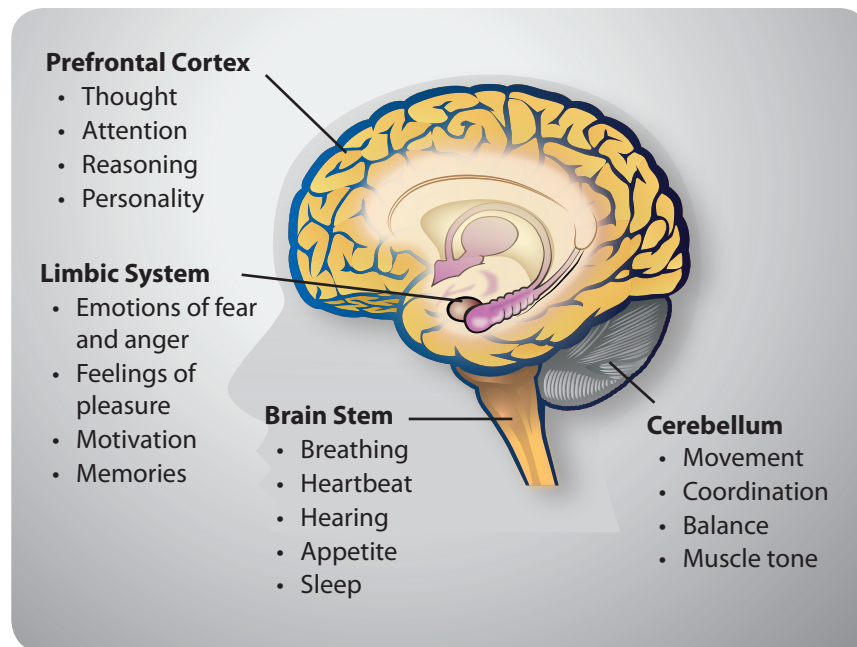


What is the heart-brain connection?

The brain's emotional reaction to something drives heart rhythm patterns. The variation in time between heartbeats should be steady instead of irregular; this is known as heart rate variability (HRV).

What are the areas and functions of the brain?

The brain is organized into four main areas and each area is responsible for different functions:



What is the optimal heartbeat for clear thoughts and actions?

The heart rate you experienced when your mother was carrying you. Beginning during pregnancy, a mother's heart instills a pattern in her child. The average resting heart rate is 80 beats per minute (BPM). For most people, throughout our lives, this maternal heart rate remains a soothing rate and is established as a key rhythm in life. A heart rate for healthy adults can vary between 60-100 BPM, so your specific soothing rate may be different.

How do emotions influence the heart-brain response?

Negative emotions can decrease the abilities of the immune system, increase stress levels, and put unnecessary strain on the heart's functioning. Positive emotions keep the heart at a healthier baseline rate and allow us to think more rationally than negative emotions would.

How does the heart-brain connection affect couples?

Learning the appropriate skills to cope with emotional distress can help couples decrease angry outbursts and increase communication since their minds and hearts remain calm. When your heart rate is lower you are able to access your highest levels of thinking in your prefrontal cortex. You will think before you act.

Heart-Brain Connection



	Pulse (15 seconds) x 4 = Heart Rate	Emotional State/Mood
Ex.	Pulse <u>20</u> x 4 = <u>80</u>	<i>happy</i>
1	Pulse _____ x 4 = _____	
2	Pulse _____ x 4 = _____	
3	Pulse _____ x 4 = _____	
4	Pulse _____ x 4 = _____	
5	Pulse _____ x 4 = _____	
6	Pulse _____ x 4 = _____	
7	Pulse _____ x 4 = _____	

Pulse	x4	Pulse	x4	Pulse	x4
15	60	19	76	23	92
16	64	20	80	24	96
17	68	21	84	25	100
18	72	22	88	26	104