

Roadmap to Resilience

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Mind-Mood Matrix

ACTIVITY SHEET



During any given situation, our experience can be broken down into what we think, how we feel, what happens in our body and how we respond. Research suggests our emotions are not so much governed by the situation, rather, it is our personal thoughts that serve as a filter and give meaning to the situation.



SESSION OBJECTIVES

This session is designed to help you understand:

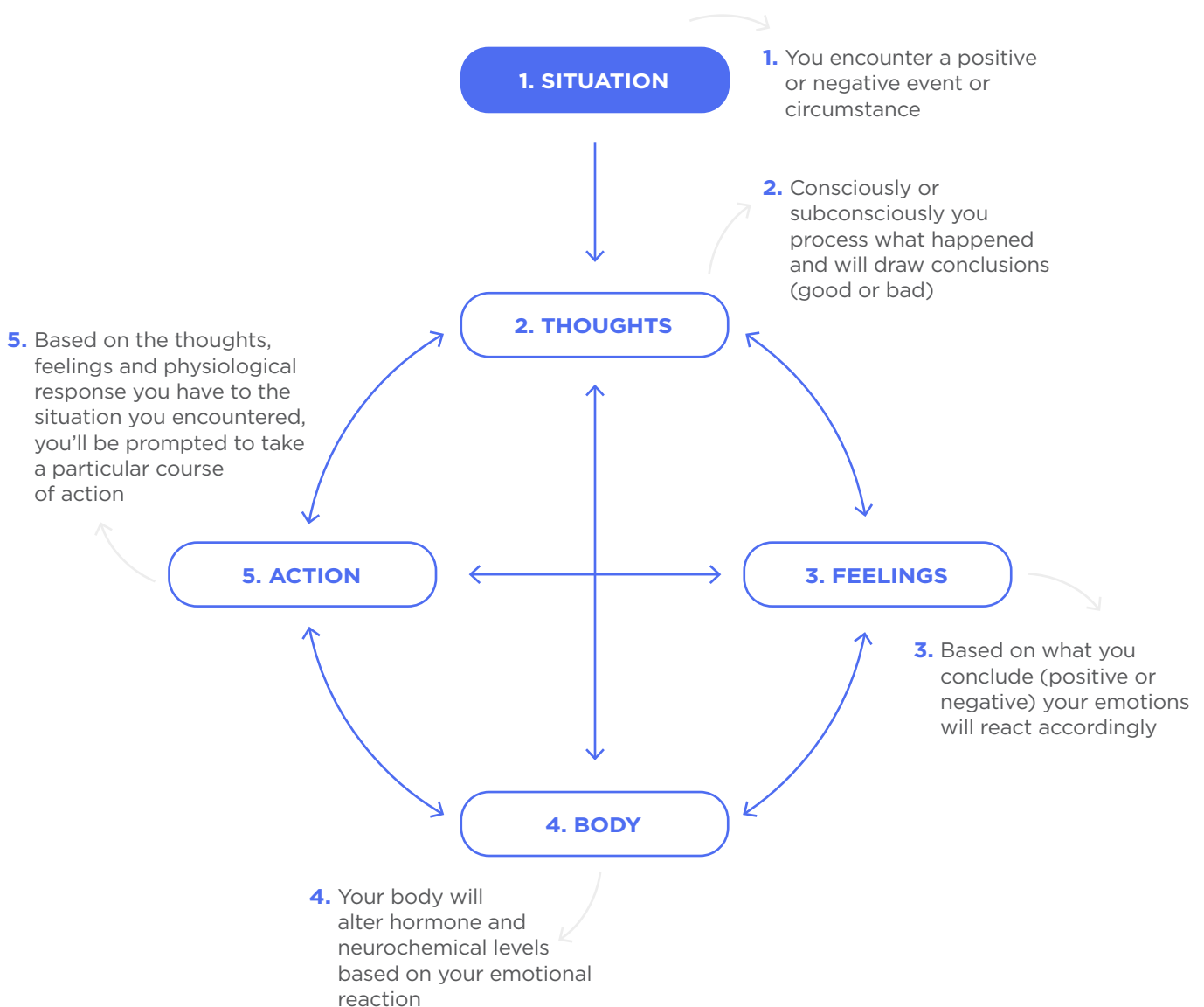
- (a)** how thoughts influence feelings, physiology and actions
- (b)** how in turn actions, physiology and feelings can influence thoughts
- (c)** how to take charge of the thought-feeling-body-action cycle

The Matrix

Every now and again, you might find yourself getting caught up in 'the heart of the emotion'. How did you get so worked up? To make sense of the emotional matrix, you'll typically look for an event, situation or circumstance to justify why you feel so flustered. However, while the situation may be the trigger, it's not the reason why your mood went into meltdown. Rather, there is a psycho-physiological symphony at play.

Here is how it works:

THOUGHT-FEELING-BODY-ACTION CYCLE



**SCENARIO:
THE SETTING**

Going to work in the morning, Juan had a thousand things on his mind. The last thing he saw as he rushed out of the house was the frustrated look on his wife Evita's face, as she broke into an argument with their 10-year-old daughter. As he ran to the car, Juan glanced at his watch and was alarmed to see how late it was. Juan reversed out of the driveway and into a sea of oncoming traffic. The pressure was on and he knew that it wouldn't let up all day. There were important meetings and deadlines to meet. His mind was so clouded that he didn't even notice the beautiful blue-sky day.



Q: SITUATION

What is the setting that may predispose Juan to encounter stress?

1. Running late for a busy day	2. His wife Evita is feeling frustrated	3. Didn't notice the nice day	4. Many things on his mind	5. All of the above
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Q: THOUGHT

What thoughts may contribute to Juan's rising stress levels?

1. What? Is that the time already? It can't be. Really?	2. I must do this. Mustn't forget that. Now, where's my...	3. Knowing my luck, the traffic will likely be slow	4. She doesn't look happy - I'm out of here	5. All of the above
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**SCENARIO:
THE EVENT**

Irritation and worry seemed to ebb away at Juan as he thought about arriving late for his first meeting. He noticed that his heart was racing. His brow was creased with tension and there is an uneasy feeling in the pit of his stomach. Suddenly a car cut him off in traffic. He reacted before he had time to think – cursing the other driver for their ‘incompetent driving’. A second later he felt slightly foolish, but justified all the same, because the other car was in error.



Q: FEELING-BODY

Due to irritation and worry, what was likely happening in Juan’s body?

1. Juan’s breathing became shallow, making his heart race	2. Started to crave coffee to sustain the day’s busy pace	3. Stress hormones released, giving Juan additional energy	4. Both 1 and 3
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Q: ACTION

Why did Juan curse the other driver?

1. Juan’s immoral behaviour is a reflection of his unrefined spiritual life	2. Juan’s actions were impulsive – fuelled by unhelpful thoughts, feelings and hormones	3. It’s important to teach incompetent drivers a lesson, or they’ll remain ignorant	4. Built-up frustration needs to be released – better words than physical violence
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HOW IT WORKS

for the technically minded



BRAIN

When Juan is irritated or worried, a small part in his brain called the Amygdala (in the limbic system) releases a protein messenger (neural peptide) instructing his adrenal gland to secrete a stress hormone called Cortisol (Glucocorticoids).



BIOLOGY

Cortisol works to break down fatty acids – giving Juan the energy he needs to deal with his heightened stress. If Juan remains in a state of emotional stress throughout the day, additional cortisol will be released to maintain his chronic state of arousal.



BUILD-UP

Over time, Juan's excessive cortisol levels will increase the amount of free fatty acids in his body, which in turn will clog his arteries and force his heart to work harder. Juan's white blood cells will start breaking down, and ultimately weaken his immune system.




BREAKDOWN

Cortisol is toxic to Juan's brain (in particular, his Hippocampus which is associated with learning, memory, and regulating stress). If Juan's hippocampus cannot effectively down regulate cortisol, his problems will be further exacerbated.

Reversing the cycle

To effectively manage stress, you need to reverse the thought-feeling-body-action cycle. However, it's extremely hard to think positive, helpful and constructive thoughts when your emotions and biology are working against you. While renewing your mind is indeed the 'holy grail' of life-transformation, to be successful in reversing a toxic-cycle, start by taking action. Certain actions change your biology and enhance the way you feel. When you feel good, it's easier to exercise authority over your thoughts.

A woman with dark hair in a ponytail, wearing a light pink long-sleeved shirt and black leggings, is boxing in a gym. She is wearing black boxing gloves and has a joyful expression, smiling broadly. In the background, another woman in a pink tank top is also boxing. The gym has a dark background with a punching bag visible on the left.

**IT'S EASIER TO ACT
YOUR WAY INTO
FEELING THAN IT IS
TO FEEL YOUR WAY
INTO ACTION.**



From the list of actions below, identify the kinds of activities that best suit you. Circle the relevant **ACTIONS** on the left that would bring about a biological change, enhance the way you feel and put you into a better frame of mind.

ACTION	BODY	EMOTION	THOUGHT
WALKING SWIMMING PILATES SPORT RUNNING CYCLING	Activating the body's sympathetic nervous system, burning up stress hormones, releasing positive brain chemicals	STRESS RELEAVING	CLARITY OF MIND
DANCING WORSHIPING SINGING PRAYING BEING STILL JOURNALING	Activating the body's parasympathetic nervous system, lowering the heart rate, bringing about homeostasis	PEACE AND HARMONY	RATIONAL THINKING
SOCIALISING LAUGHING PLAYING READING COMEDY SERVING	Releasing 'feel-good' hormones and brain-chemicals, and changing brain-wave electrical activity	JOY AND COMFORT	UPLIFTING THOUGHTS

