



Online Learning Experience

Beyond Graduation. **Beyond** Campus. **Beyond** Boundaries.

Positive Psychology: The science of finding the good in a time of uncertainty

Alie Kriofske Mainella, PhD



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G E O R G E F L O Y D

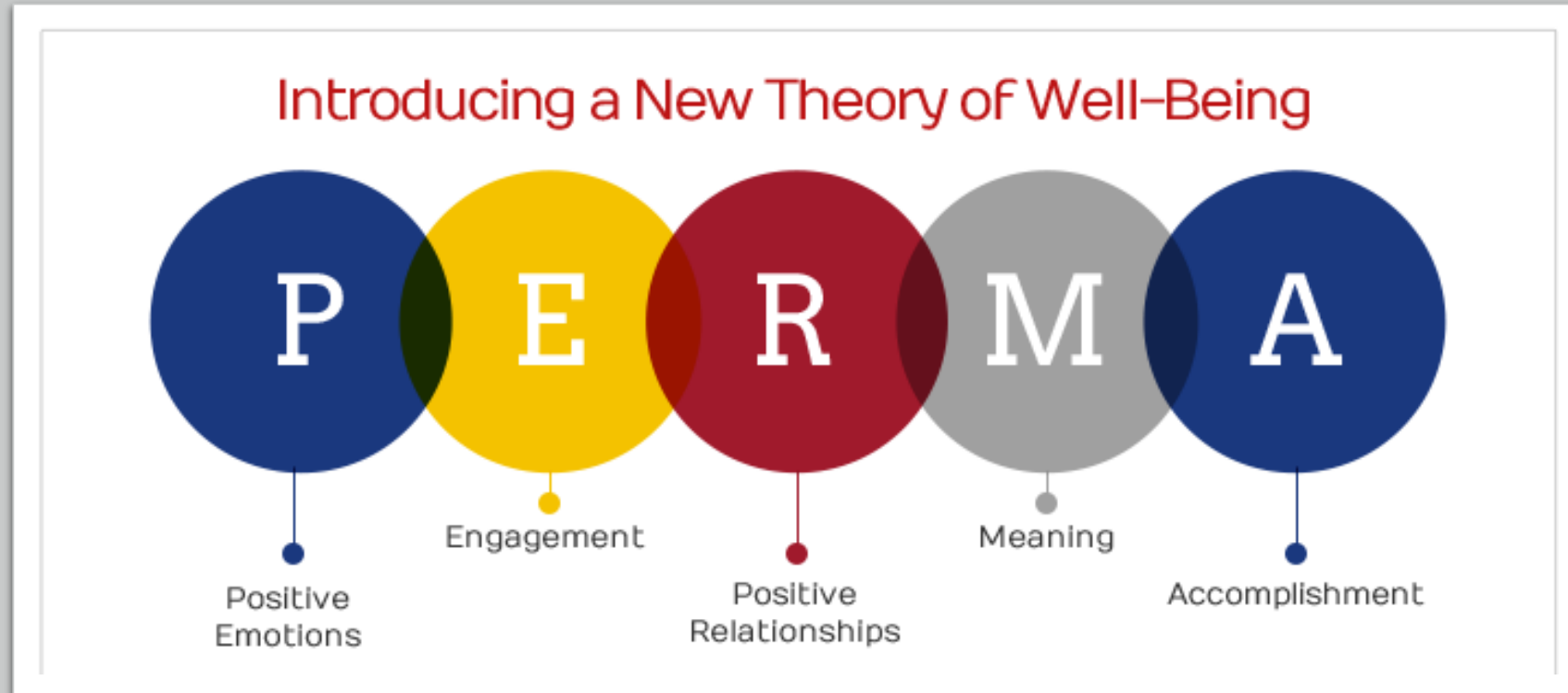
“This shouldn’t be normal in 2020 in America. It can’t be normal. If we want our children to grow up in a nation that lives up to its highest ideals, we can and must be better.”

Barack Obama



What is Positive Psychology?

- “Positive psychology is the scientific study of what makes life worth living” (Peterson, 2008)
- Traditional psychology asked, “What is wrong with people?” Positive psychology asks, “What is right with people?”
- Positive psychology offers a strengths-based approach toward well-being.
- Strength, in this context, is a capacity of feeling, thinking and behaving in a way that allows optimal functioning in the pursuit of valued outcomes (Linley & Harrington, 2006)

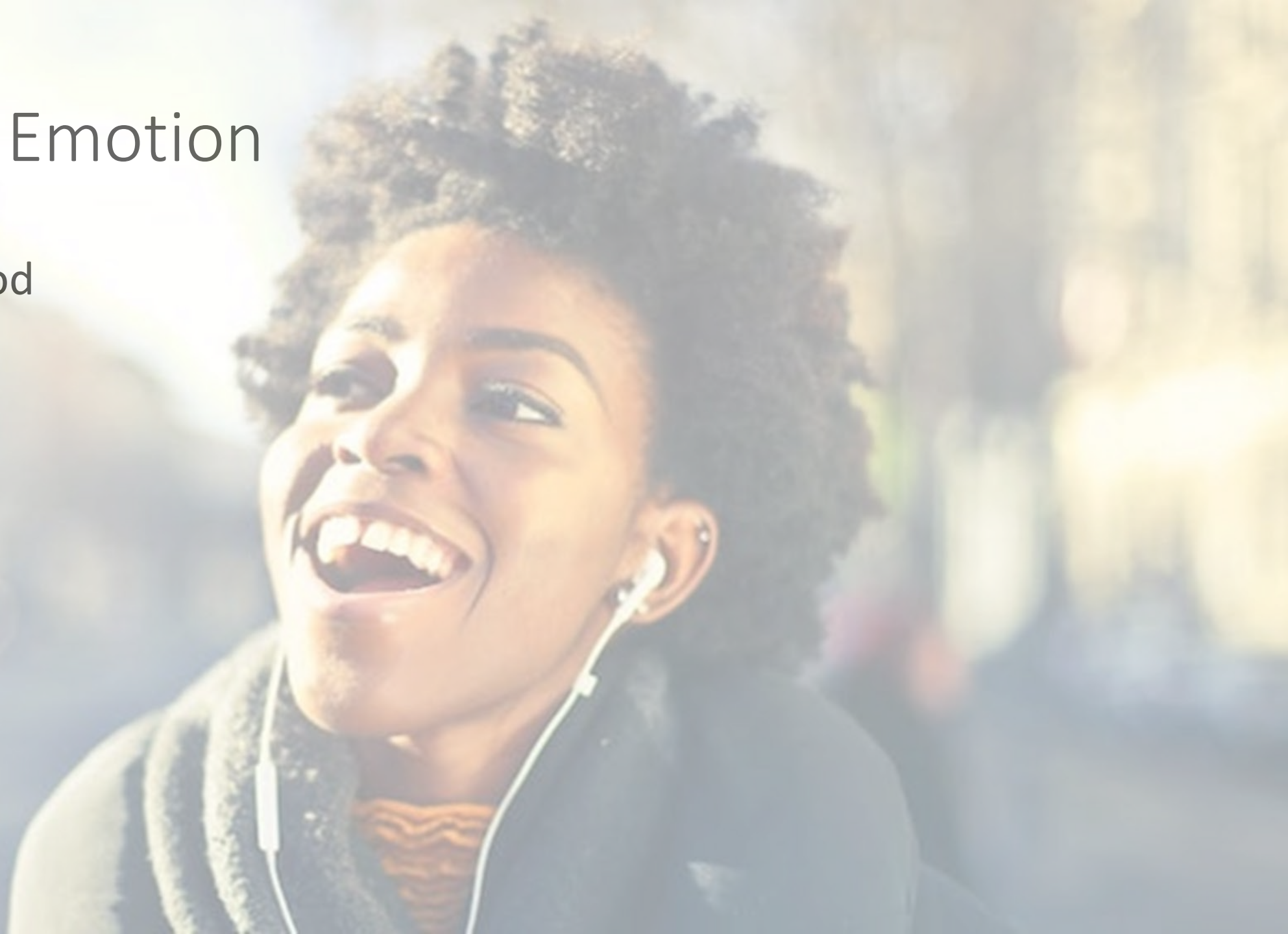


PERMA: A theory of well-being

- Well-being is not just about being happy all the time. It's about being authentic and cultivating these elements of PERMA in your life.

Positive Emotion

- Feeling good
- Happiness
- Joy
- Gratitude



Engagement

A person is sitting on the ground in a grassy field, playing an acoustic guitar. The person is wearing a light-colored t-shirt and dark pants. The background is a blurred landscape with trees and a bright sky, suggesting a peaceful outdoor setting. The overall tone is calm and focused.

- Finding flow
- Enjoyable activities
- A job you love

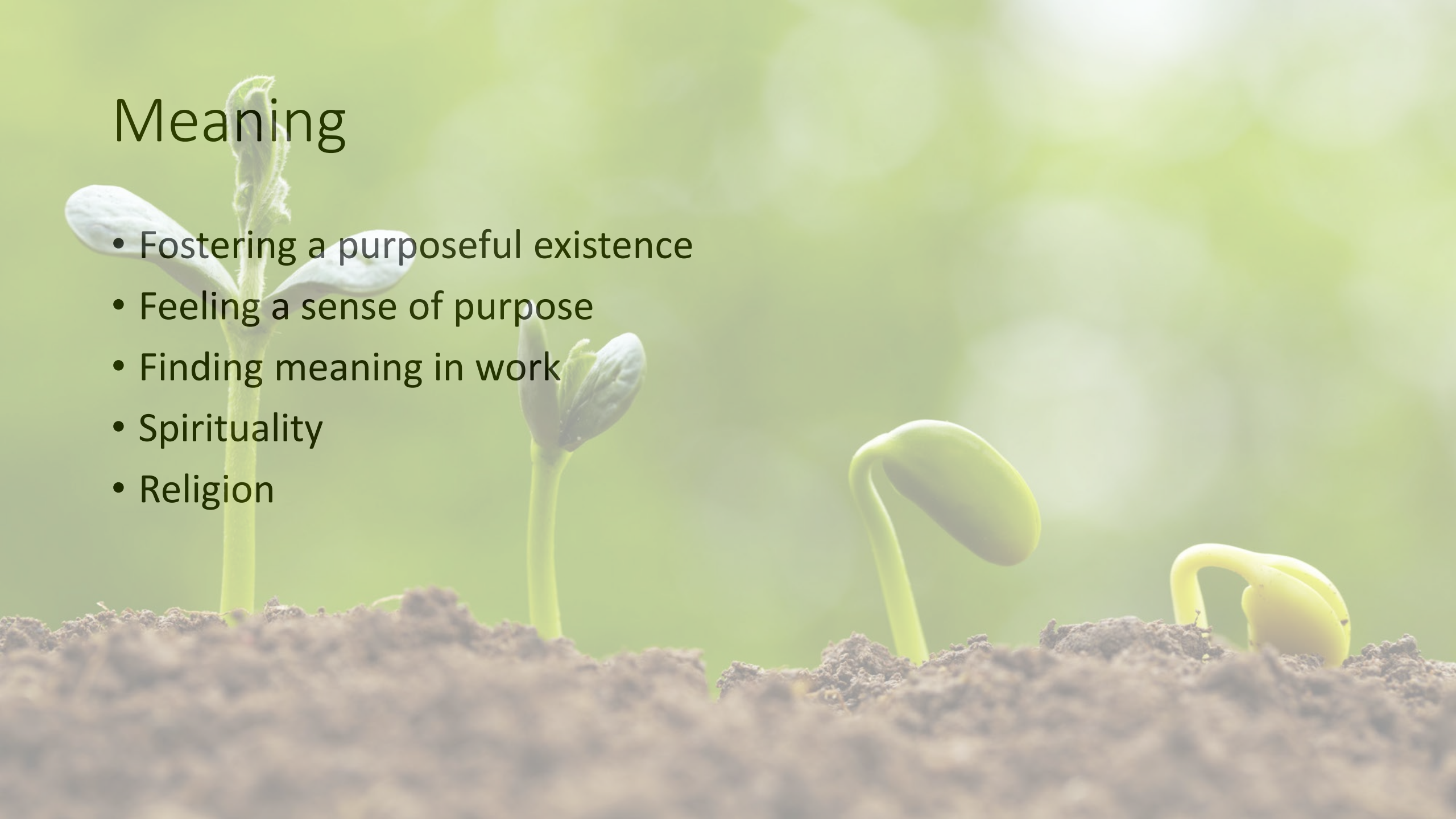
Relationships

- Nurturing authentic connections
- Love
- Connection
- Intimacy
- Emotional and physical interaction



Meaning

- Fostering a purposeful existence
- Feeling a sense of purpose
- Finding meaning in work
- Spirituality
- Religion



Accomplishments

- Having goals and ambition in life
- Achieving goals
- A sense of pride





Let's talk about how putting these five pieces together to lead to a purposeful life

Positive Emotions
Gratitude

Gratitude Activities



THREE GOOD THINGS



GRATITUDE LETTER

Three Good Things

- Get yourself a journal and for one week write down three good things that happened every day (Or do this once a week for six weeks)
- Dr. Seligman talks about this exercise [in this video!](#)
- Thinking of, writing down, and reflecting on three good things, *especially during this time*, can help curb depression.



Gratitude letter

- Think about someone to whom you are grateful, but to whom you never expressed the depth of this gratitude. Try to pick someone that is still alive and that you could see (6 feet away).
- Write the letter directly to this person; don't worry about your grammar or writing (write from the heart), be as concrete as you can and try to keep it to one page.
- Deliver the letter to the recipient. You can also do this over video chat if a socially distant visit isn't possible. Read them the letter out loud. After you have read it, be receptive to their reaction and talk about your feelings together. Then, leave them (or mail them) the letter.

The benefits of cultivating gratitude



Cultivating an attitude of gratitude can lead to a 23% reduction in stress hormone cortisol (McCraty et al., 1998)



Gratitude is also linked to healthier blood pressure and a stronger immune system as well as better sleep! (Emmons, 2007)



Participation in the gratitude letter writing activity led to reports of increased happiness for a whole month after the experience compared with those who did not write letters (Seligman et al., 2005)



People with gratitude are more likely to engage in prayer or other spirituality; People who are grateful are better able to deal with painful events or memories (Lopez, Pedrotti, & Snyder, 2015)



Engagement

Finding flow

Flow activities



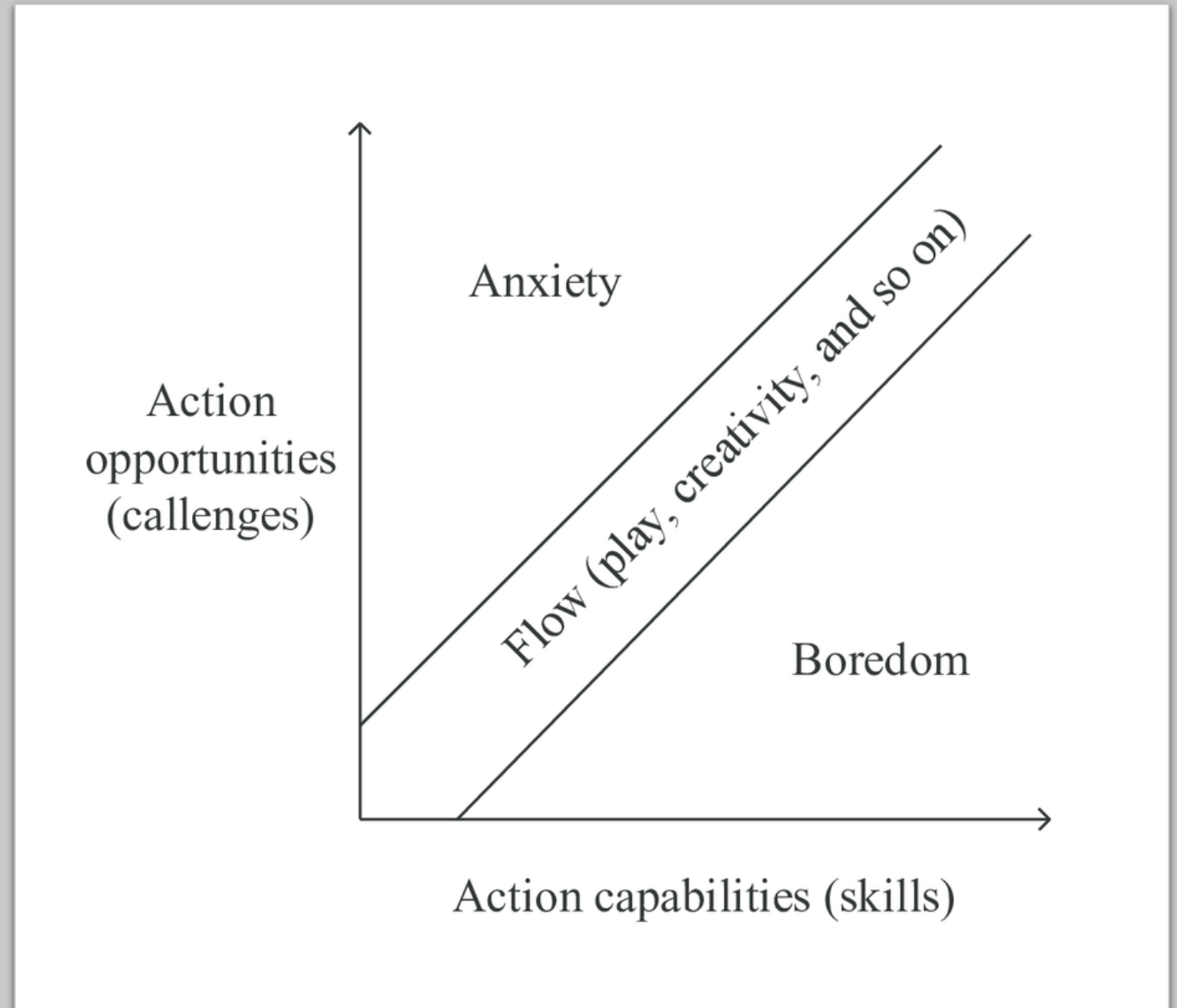
HONORING THE MUNDANE



ENGAGE IN AN ENJOYABLE
EXPERIENCE

What is flow?

- “The best moments in our lives are not the passive, receptive, relaxing times...The best moments usually occur if a person’s body or mind is stretched to its limits in a voluntary effort to accomplish something difficult and worthwhile.” (Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p3)
- We experience flow when perceived opportunities for action are in balance with our perceived skills
- Flow is subjective, requiring intense and focused concentration, includes loss of self-consciousness and is intrinsically rewarding





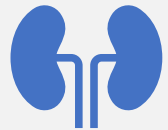
Honor the mundane by focusing
on your senses while doing an
everyday activity

- Take a walk alone with no phone and no music
- Purposefully notice the world around you
- How do your feet feel as they touch the ground
- What does the air feel like (with a face mask or without?)
- What do you smell?
- What do you see?
- What do you hear?
- Use all your senses to observe the world around you

Finding flow in an enjoyable and challenging activity

- Find yourself an activity that induces flow; create a ritual around it if you want; identify your own personal characteristics and skills around this activity
 - Play
 - Art
 - Pageantry
 - Ritual
 - Work

The benefits of flow



The surgeon general recommends taking a walk, which can reduce the risk of heart disease, diabetes and other health problems as well ease symptoms of chronic disease.



Mindfulness and flow state lead to lessened emotional reactivity to stressors and decreased rumination (Csikszentmihalyi, 2013)



Mindfulness (as in honoring the mundane) is correlated with lower blood pressure, increased tolerance for pain and possibly enhanced cognition and improved immune function (Kabat-Zinn, 2003)



People in a state of flow feel cheerful, creative, strong and satisfied; practicing activities that put one in a state of flow regularly leads to better coping and better performance (Csikszentmihalyi, 2013)



Relationships

Cultivating connection

Activities for cultivating connection



PRACTICING ACTIVE AND
CONSTRUCTIVE RESPONSE TO
BIDS FOR CONNECTION
TURNING TOWARDS



THE STORY I'M TELLING MYSELF

Bids for connection

- John and Julie Gottman, relationship researchers found that one key to a successful relationship is turning towards your partner's (or friend's or kids', etc.) BIDS for connection.
- A bid is anything big or small to lead to connection.
 - Look at the sunset!
 - Did you like the cookies I made?
 - Do you want to watch Insecure with me?
- In response to a bid, you can:
 - Turn against, turn away, or turn toward.
 - Example: "I like your shirt."
 - Against: Oh! NOW you finally notice what I'm wearing!
 - Away: Oh this? I just threw it on.
 - Toward: Thank you. (or smile, or I like this shirt too; thanks!)

<p>Active and Constructive "That is great. I know how important that promotion was to you! We should go out and celebrate and you can tell me what excites you most about your new job." (Nonverbal communication: Maintaining eye contact, displays of position emotions, such as genuine smiling, touching, laughing.)</p>	<p>Passive and Constructive "That is good news." (Nonverbal communication: Little to no active emotional expression.)</p>
<p>Active and Destructive "That sounds like a lot of responsibility to take on. There will probably be more stress involved in the new position and longer hours at the office." (Nonverbal communication: Displays of negative emotions, such as furrowed brow, frowning.)</p>	<p>Passive and Destructive "What are we doing on Friday night?" (Nonverbal communication: Little to no eye contact, turning away, leaving room.)</p>

ACTIVE CONSTRUCTIVE RESPONDING

	DESTRUCTIVE	CONSTRUCTIVE
ACTIVE	Deflates good news / Raises Alarm	Genuine interest / Amplifies the experience
PASSIVE	Ignores the event / Steals the conversation	Understated support / Conversation stalls

The story I'm telling myself

- When something bad or unpleasant happens, our brains naturally make up a story—usually a clear-cut story with a good guy and a bad guy (*think current political climate!*)
- Example: My introvert husband, in family social distancing for more than two months now, says, “I need to carve out a room for myself.” The story I tell myself: I have a room he doesn't; he resents me; well I have a full-time job and I'm sorry you're sick of hanging out with me...etc..etc..etc
- SO...anytime something happens that upsets you, ask yourself “What is the story I'm telling myself?”
- See more about the stories we tell ourselves in [this Oprah Winfrey interview with Brene Brown.](#)

Benefits of turning toward and changing your narrative

- In a longitudinal study on newly married couples, those that stayed married turned toward each other 86% of the time while those who got divorced averaged only about 33% (Gottman & Driver, 2012)
- Also, in relationships with more turning towards there is more trust, fondness and admiration as well as healthier conflict resolution (Gottman & Gottman, 2016)
- People who are skilled at recovering from setbacks and difficulties have the common characteristic of being able to recognize their own narratives and rewrite them (Brown, 2017)





Meaning

Write a 25-word life philosophy

Try a prayer, a spiritual exercise or a meditation

Meaning

- Meaning in life has three components

1. A meaningful life is one with a sense of purpose
2. A meaningful life is one that matters to you
3. A meaningful life makes sense to the person living it. It is comprehensible, characterized by regularity or reliable connections (King et al, 2006)



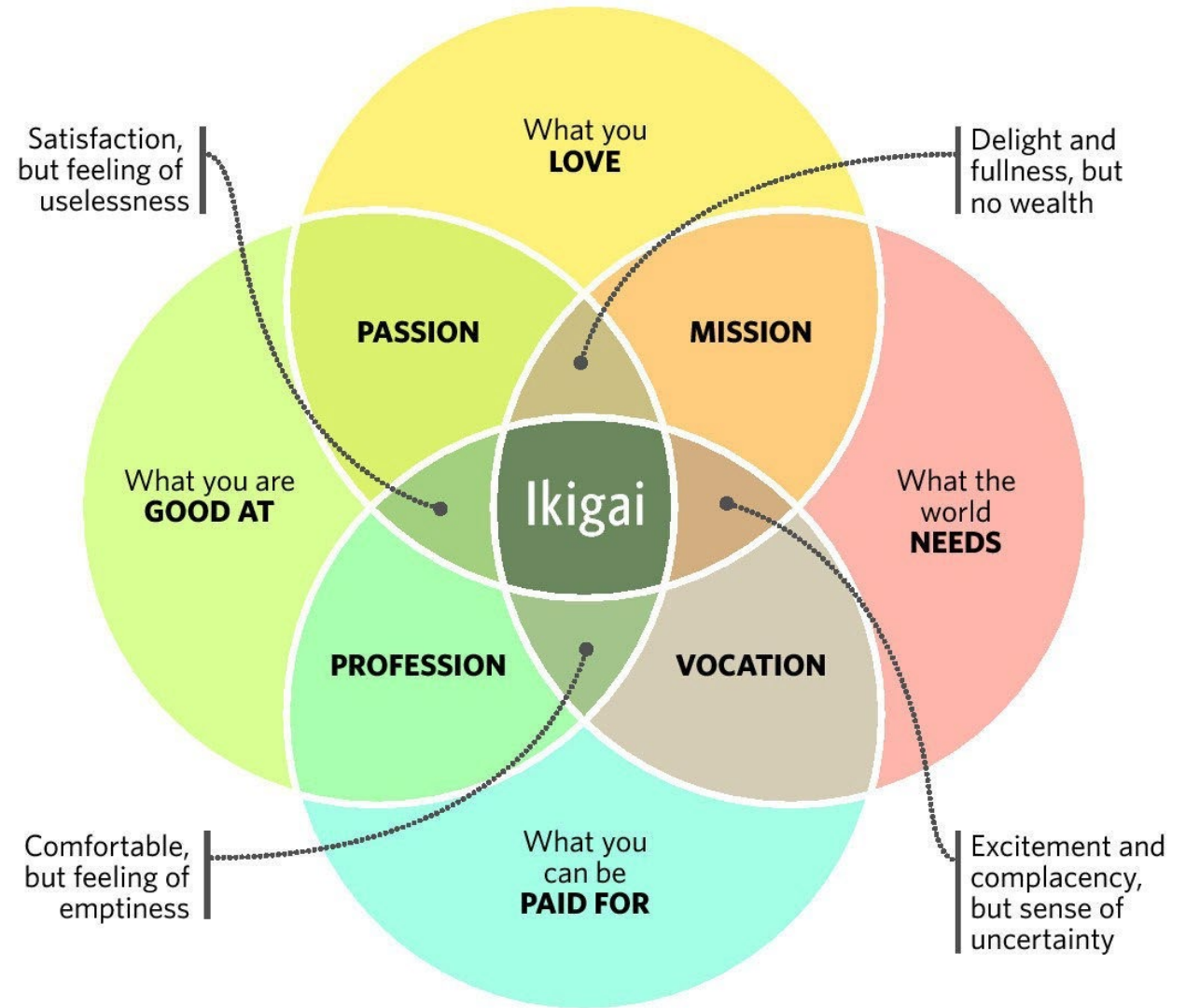
Existential

The diagram consists of two blue brackets on the right side. The top bracket groups the first two list items (1 and 2) and points to the 'Existential' label. The bottom bracket groups the third list item (3) and points to the 'Cognitive' label.

Cognitive

Ikigai

A JAPANESE CONCEPT MEANING "A REASON FOR BEING"



Ikigai "A reason for being"

SOURCE: dreamstime

TORONTO STAR GRAPHIC

Write a 25-word life philosophy

Live a life of service. Find humor everywhere. Always consider genuineness and kindness in actions and words. (Alie Kriofske Mainella)

- I asked Michael Dante, the director of the MU Faber Center for Ignatian spirituality to share his 25-word Ignatian philosophy and he delivered! :

“God is present and loving in the world. Ignatius attempted to live by discerning what God was doing and how he could further that movement.”

Try a prayer, a spiritual exercise or a meditation (or whatever works for you!)

- The Marquette University Faber Center for Ignatian Spirituality offers a video series of the Ignatian spiritual exercises. [You can access these videos here.](#)
- Try a mindfulness meditation guided by John Kabat-Zinn. [You can find it on YouTube, here.](#)
- Just create a comfortable quiet space for yourself to reflect and focus



Never be afraid to send prayers to others who are having difficult times in this living world because it provides you inner strength as well as the receiver. This is the type of strength needed today.

*-Tony Ten Fingers
Wanbli Nata'u
Oglala Lakota*

facebook.com/TonyTenFingers

Benefits of making meaning

Lower meaning is associated with people who feel lonely socially excluded or ostracized. (Check in on people in your life during these difficult times!)

Higher meaning is associated with positive mood and small experiences that enhance positive mood (like reading a funny comic or listening to music) is associated with more meaning!

When the world make sense, life feels more meaningful. (so if you're finding it more difficult right now, that's okay!)

Higher meaning in life is associated with decreased mortality, slower age-related cognitive decline, lower risk of suicidal ideation (even within the context of depression) AND being rated by others as more socially appealing.

Accomplishments

Use your strengths to reach your goals!

Use your strengths to reach your goals

Character includes two main elements
(Peterson & Seligman, 2004)

- Virtues: Core characteristics valued by moral philosophers, religious thinkers and everyday folk
- Character strengths: Psychological processes and mechanisms that define virtue

Virtues (encompassing 24-character strengths)

- Wisdom
- Courage
- Humanity
- Justice
- Temperance
- Transcendence

Take the values in action survey

- Go to www.viacharacter.org and take the VIA survey.
- Take a look at your top five and over the next week, use them to be
 - A better friend
 - A better family member
 - Take a look at your own privilege and help support racial justice
 - Cope with COVID and its impact on your life
 - To overcome and obstacle
 - To create a positive experience

Alie Kriofske Mainella

1: Humor 🤔

Liking to laugh and tease; bringing smiles to other people; seeing the light side; making (not necessarily telling) jokes.

2: Kindness 🤝

Doing favors and good deeds for others; helping them; taking care of them.

3: Forgiveness 🕊️

Forgiving those who have done wrong; accepting others' shortcomings; giving people a second chance; not being vengeful.

4: Love 💕

Valuing close relations with others, in particular those in which sharing & caring are reciprocated; being close to people.

5: Fairness ⚖️

Treating all people the same according to notions of fairness and justice; not letting feelings bias decisions about others; giving everyone a fair chance.



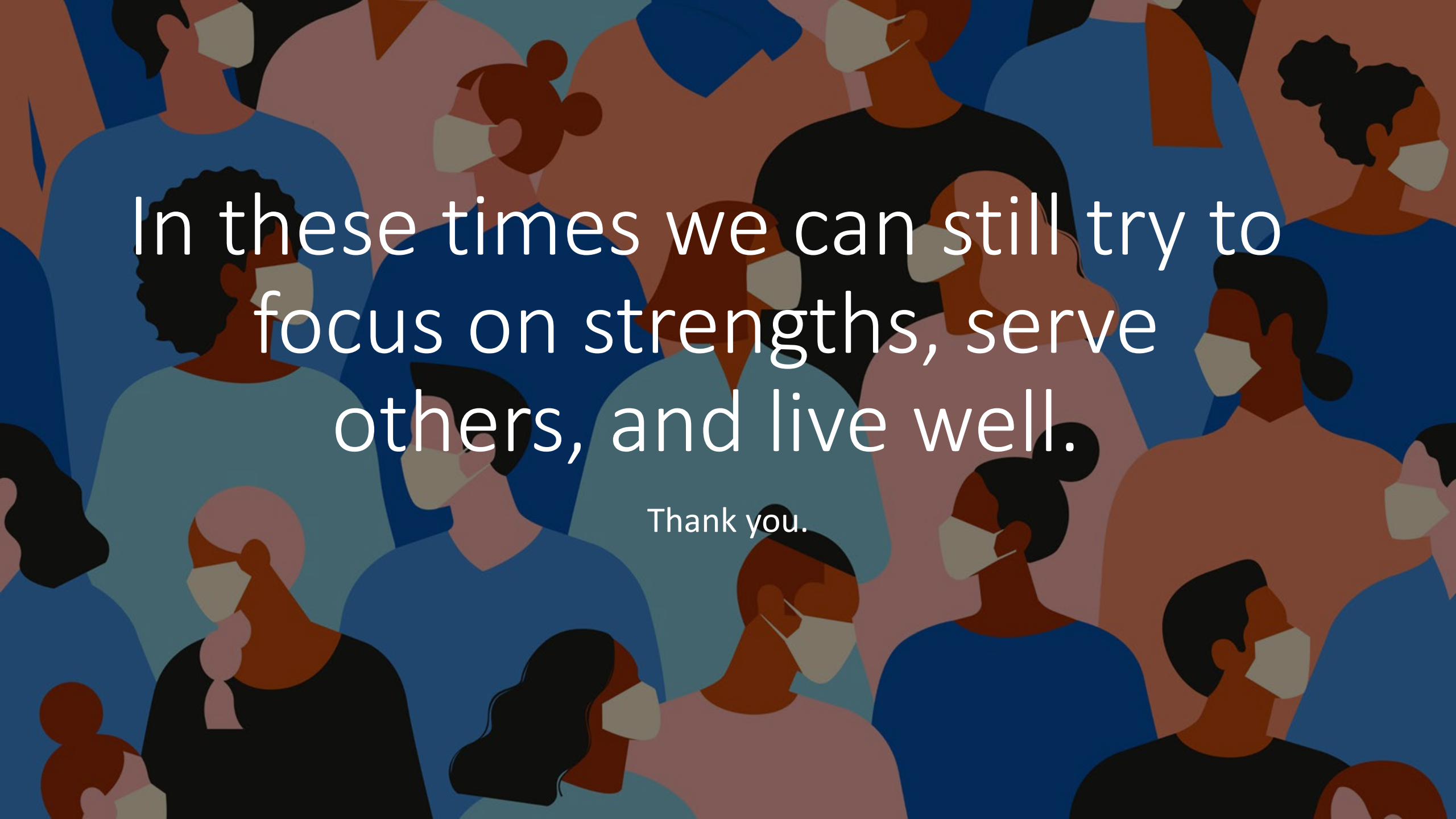
Strengths based living

- Once you know your character strengths, you can cultivate them, be proud of them.
- Knowing strengths helps people
 - Strengthen their relationships
 - Deal more effectively with problems
 - Boost confidence
 - Reduce stress
 - And...reach your goals (ACHIEVEMENT)



Putting it together

Though we are feeling a sense of collective, trauma grief, anxiety, and existential dread, we can take steps to focus on our strengths, positive emotions, our relationships, engagement, making meaning and reaching our goals



In these times we can still try to
focus on strengths, serve
others, and live well.

Thank you.