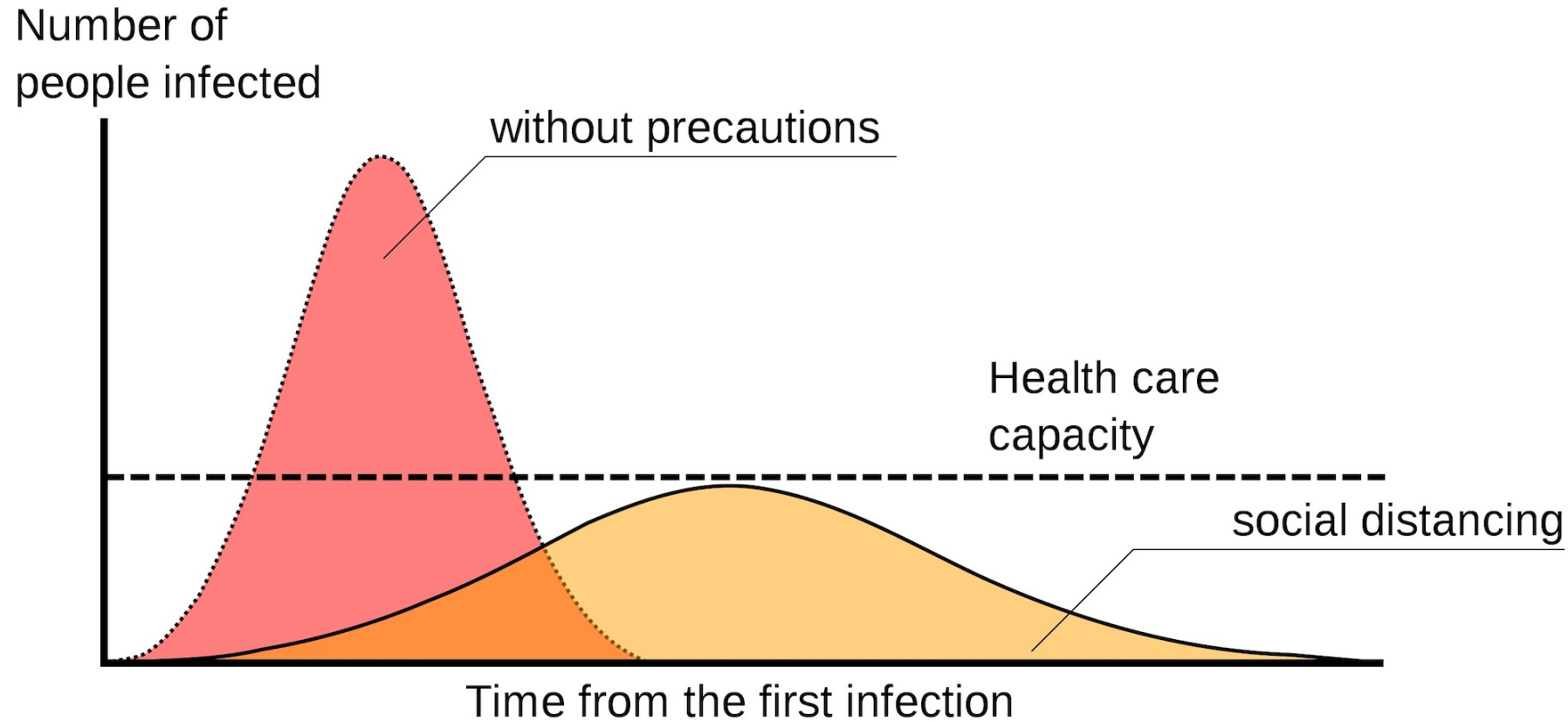


# Coping Skills for COVID-19: Resiliency While Socially Distant

**Larry Long, PhD, LP** (*he, him, his*)  
Director, Counseling & Educational  
Support Services  
Assistant Vice Chancellor for Academic  
and Student Affairs  
University of Kansas Medical Center

\* Special thanks to **Amy Bucher, PhD, LP** (Associate Professor, School of Psychology, Avila University) and **Monica Oh, PhD** (Postdoctoral Psychology Fellow-Multicultural Emphasis in KUMC Counseling & Educational Support Services) for providing content and feedback concerning this presentation.


# #Flattenthecurve




**The idea of slowing a virus' spread so that fewer people need to seek treatment at any given time is known as "flattening the curve."**

# Defining Terms

**Social Distancing** is a way to keep people from interacting closely or frequently enough to spread an infectious disease. Schools and other gathering places such as movie theaters close, and sports events and religious services are cancelled.



**Quarantine** separates and restricts the movement of people who have been exposed to a contagious disease to see if they become sick. It lasts long enough to ensure the person has not contracted an infectious disease.



**Isolation** prevents the spread of an infectious disease by separating people who are sick from those who are not. It lasts as long as the disease is contagious.

# Fear and Anxiety

**FEAR** is the emotional response to real or perceived imminent threat, whereas **ANXIETY** is anticipation of future threat (DSM-5)



# Common Psychological Reactions

## Fear and anxiety

- Feeling anxious or worried about yourself or your family members contracting COVID-19 or spreading it to others
- Concerns about obtaining food and personal supplies

## Depression and boredom

- Feelings of sadness or low mood
- Extended periods of time spent at home can also cause feelings of boredom and loneliness

## Anger, frustration or irritability

- Loss of agency and personal freedom associated with isolation and quarantine
- Anger or resentment toward those who have issued quarantine or isolation orders or if you feel you were exposed to the virus because of another person's negligence
- Uncertainty or frustration about how long you will need to remain in this situation, and uncertainty about the future

SOCIAL DISTAN~~S~~ING

SOCIAL DIS~~D~~ANCE~~E~~ING

Social Distance ≠ Social Isolation

Strategies for  
Resiliency  
While Socially  
Distant

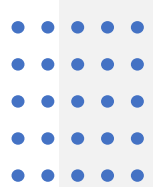
A piece of brown, textured paper is torn, revealing a white surface underneath. The word "Coping Strategies" is printed in bold black text on the white surface. To the right of the main tear, there is a separate, smaller piece of the same brown paper that has been rolled into a tube-like shape.

**Coping Strategies**

# Be informed, not flooded (Stimulus Control)

- Thought (and worry) triggers
  - External (e.g., news, emails, IM, text, calls, video Mtgs, etc.)
  - Internal (e.g., thoughts that lead to more worry)
- Pick two reliable informational sources to check only 1-2x per day
  - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/>
  - <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>
- When possible, set boundaries with friends, family, and important others about the amount of time daily spent discussing the pandemic
- Limit social media time, as Coronavirus posts are frequent





# Activate Your Brain Through Meaningful Activity (Behavioral Activation)

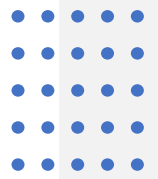
- Depression and anxiety tend to worsen when one does not engage in enriching activities
- Flex your adaptation skills by establishing a routine with values-based activities
- Create a **concrete, structured** schedule that you follow throughout the day
- [Exercise daily](#)
- Practice good [sleep hygiene](#)

**We've been on 20 walks today. Leave me alone.**

# Take Your Dog On A Walk

---





# Be Social From A Distance

- Set up regular days & times for online social “dates” with friends
- Play photo scavenger hunt or charades (via Zoom, Skype, or Facetime)
- Host a [Netflix Party](#)
- Host an [online karaoke party](#)
- Play [social games](#) on your phone
- Join-host an online [book](#) or journal club
- Engage in [virtual team building activities](#)

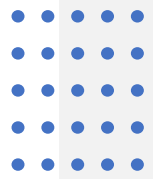
# Go Outside

Social distancing does not require you to become a shut-in

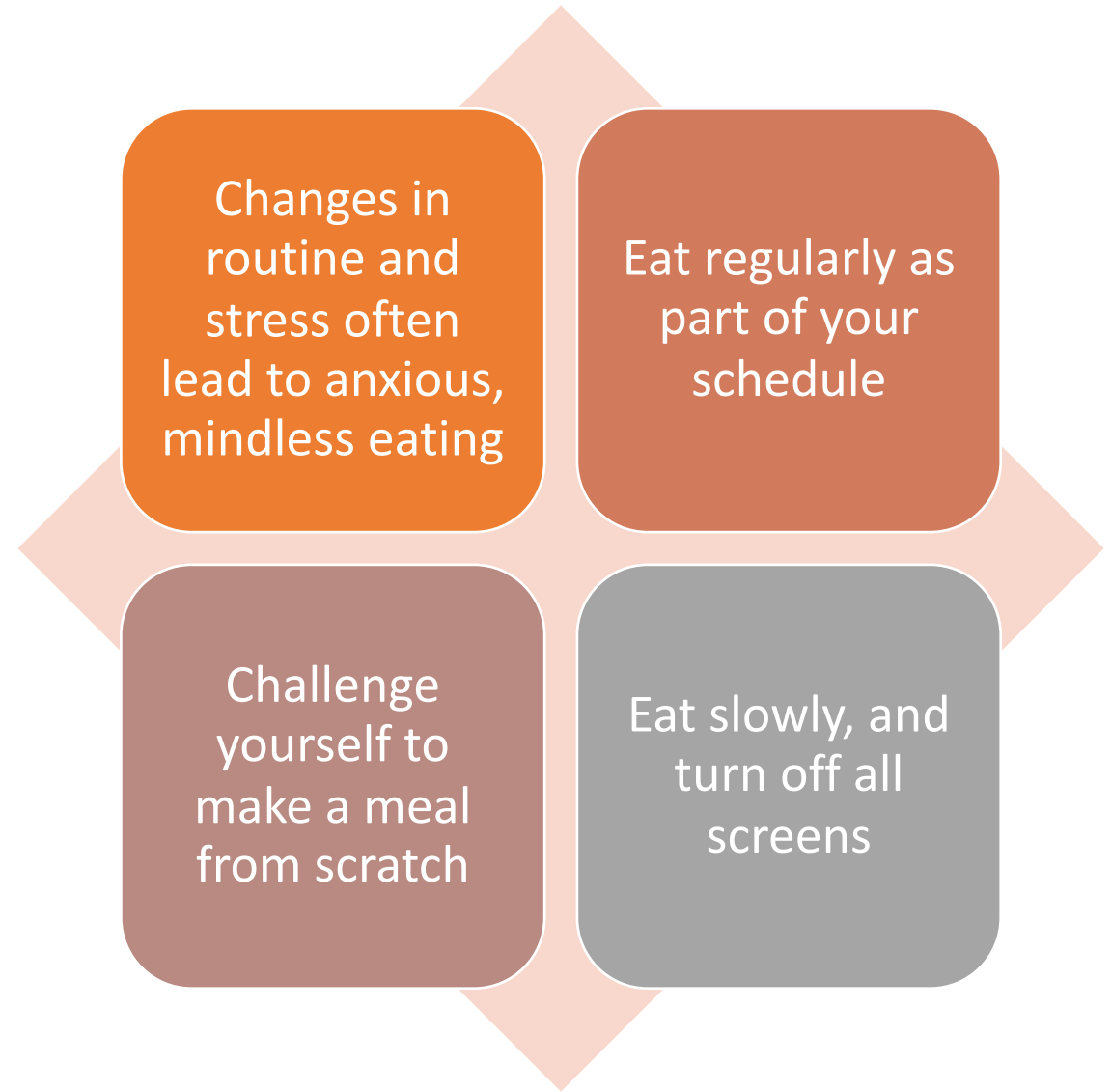
## Be in Nature:

- Set specific times where you'll walk, keeping 6 ft of distance from others
  - Breathe and be mindful of your surroundings
  - As you walk, do a grounding exercise: what 5 things do you see? Hear? Smell? Touch? Taste?
- Go on a run (keeping 6 ft distance from others)
- Open a window and get some fresh air





# Eat Mindfully and Deliberately



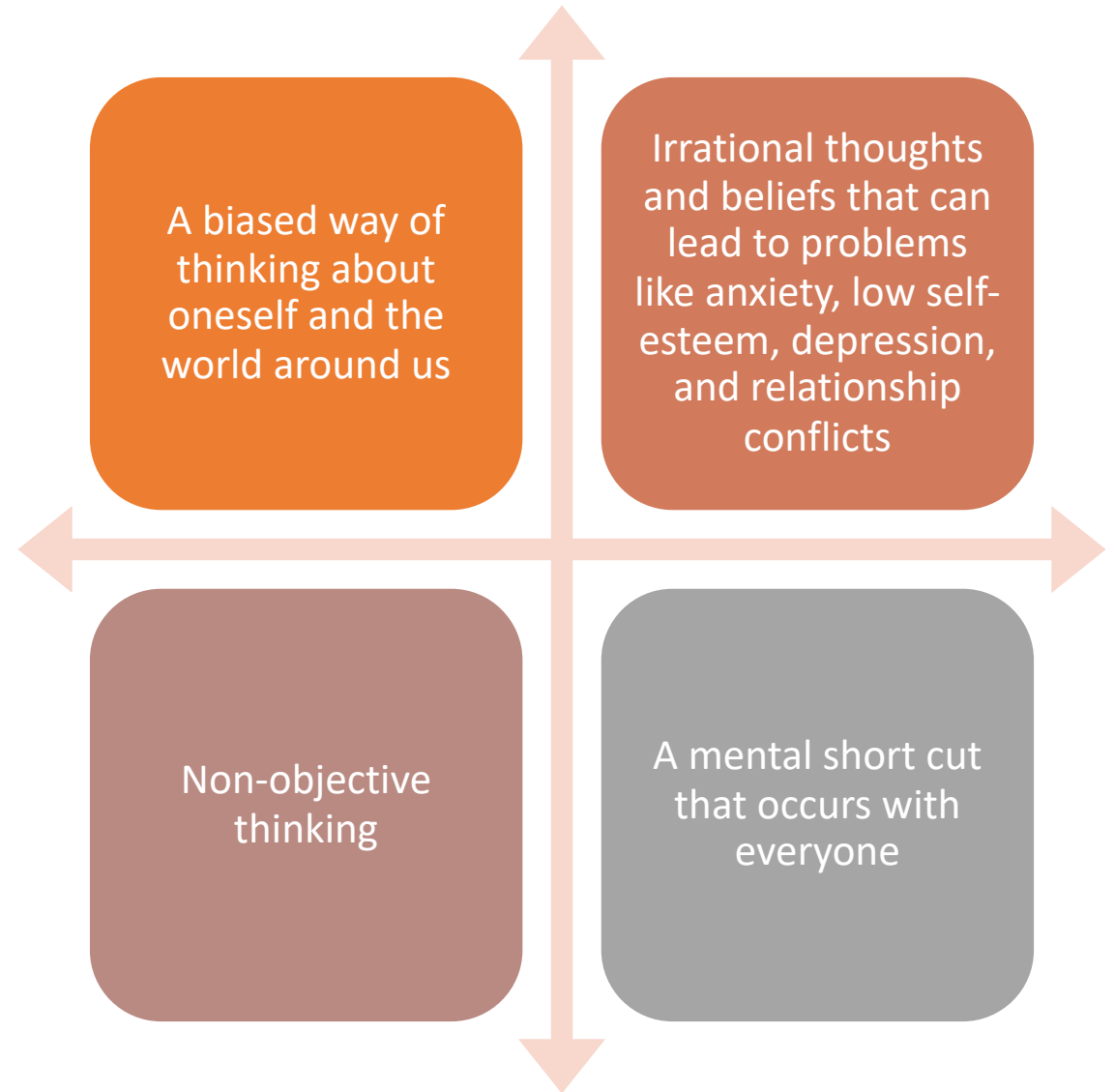


## Expand Your Horizons

- [Museum Virtual Tours](#) or [Museum Collections Online](#)
- [Live Virtual Concerts \(all genres\)](#)
- [Free Classes from Ivy League Schools](#)
- [Learn a language](#) (Duolingo)
- [Broadway Direct Guide to Online-Streaming Broadway Shows](#)
- [Go on a Home Safari](#) (Cincinnati Zoo) or to the [Zoo Live cams](#) (San Diego Zoo)

# Re-Tool Your Thinking (Cognitive Restructuring)

# What is a cognitive distortion?



All or nothing thinking

Over-generalizing

Negative filtering

Disqualifying the positive

Magnification (Catastrophizing)

## Common Cognitive Distortions

# All-or-Nothing Thinking

## Definition:

Seeing things in black-and-white categories

## Example:

- If I cannot workout for an hour, three times per week, what's the point of working out.

Consequences of these thoughts



**GO  
BIG  
OR  
GO  
HOME**



# Scaling Strategy





# Dynamic Strategy

## **A Dynamic Tension – the beauty of life's work**

Dynamic tension exists between a culture of productivity, multiple professional & personal roles, and the need for self-care.

# Other Common Cognitive Distortions

- **Overgeneralizing:** Seeing a pattern based upon a single event or being overly broad in the conclusions we draw
- **Magnification (catastrophizing):** Blowing things out of proportion

# Other Common Cognitive Distortions

- **Negative filtering:** Only paying attention to certain types of evidence
- **Disqualifying the positive:** Discounting the good things that have happened or that you have done for some reason or another

# Temporal Distancing and Perspective Taking

## **Five years from now... (Temporal Distancing)**

- “We’ve been through disasters before and have recovered”
- Believing in your resiliency and the resiliency of other humans

## **Perspective taking...**

- “While I feel sad and scared, at least I have a home to ‘shelter in place,’ have technology to connect with others, am currently in good health, etc”
- Think about the perspective of someone who may be less fortunate or privileged than you

# Shift Thinking to Internal Locus of Control

“What if?” → “What can I do right now?”

Use thought stopping  
and re-focusing  
techniques.

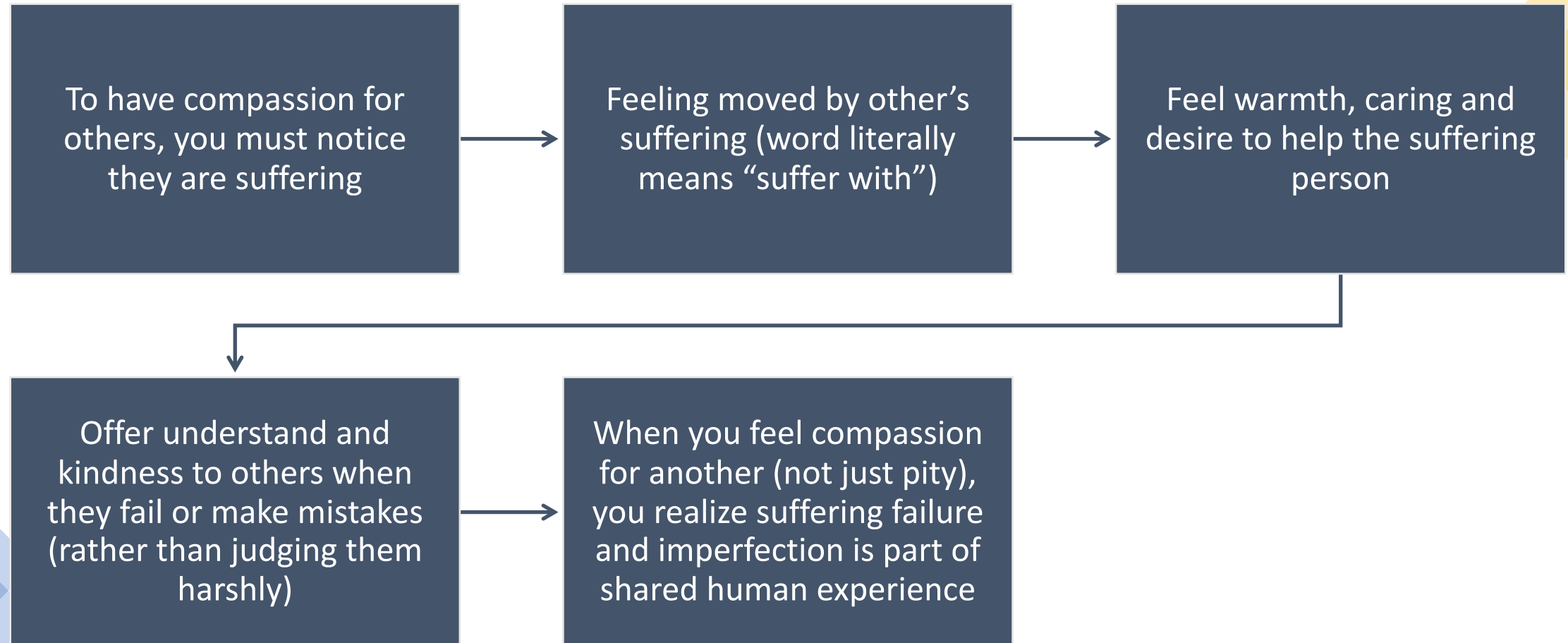
Shift your focus to what  
you have control over.





# Practice Self-Compassion

# What is compassion...





What is self-compassion?

ACTING THE SAME  
WAY TOWARDS  
YOURSELF

THREE ELEMENTS  
OF SELF-  
COMPASSION

# Self-kindness vs. Self-judgment

Being warm and understanding towards ourselves when we suffer, fail or feel inadequate



Rather than ignoring our pain or self-criticism



Recognize that being imperfect, failing, and experiencing life difficulties is inevitable – so self compassionate people can be gentle with themselves when confronted with painful experiences rather than getting angry when life falls short of ideals

# Common Humanity vs. Isolation

Irrational but pervasive sense of isolation (as if “I” were the only person suffering or making mistakes)

All humans suffer

Being human means being mortal, vulnerable, and imperfect

Suffering and inadequacy are part of shared human experience (not just something that happens to “me”)

# Mindfulness vs. Over-Identification

Balanced approach to  
(negative) feelings and  
emotions so they are  
not suppressed nor  
exaggerated

Hold thoughts /  
emotions with  
openness and clarity –  
in mindful awareness

We cannot ignore our  
pain and feel  
compassion for it at the  
same time

Mindfulness helps us  
not “over-identify” with  
thoughts and feelings

# Cognitive Defusion

- Cognitive Fusion:
  - Becoming entangled with our thoughts.
  - In a state of fusion a thought can seem like:
    - The absolute truth
    - A command you must obey or rule you have to follow
    - Part of your identity

# Cognitive Defusion

- Cognitive Defusion:
  - Observing our thoughts and seeing them for what they are – just products of our busy minds
  - In a state of defusion, you recognize that a thought:
    - May or may not be true
    - Is not a command you have to obey
    - Is not a threat to you
    - Is not something happening in the physical world
    - Is not part of your identity

# Cognitive Defusion

## How do I defuse?

- Label your experience accurately, for what it really is

## Examples:

- I'm having the thought that I am going to fail vs. I am going to fail
- I'm having the thought that I shouldn't have to ask for help vs. I shouldn't have to ask for help
- I'm having anxious thoughts vs. I am anxious

Engaging in cognitive defusion helps you to be more active



# Practice Gratitude

- [Research shows that giving thanks can make you happier](#)
- Practice strategies
  - Write a thank-you note
  - Thank someone mentally
  - Keep a gratitude journal
  - Count your blessings (identify 3-5 things daily)
- Examples



# Coping Resources Online

[KUMC Coping  
with COVID-19](#)

[American  
Psychological  
Association Help  
Center](#)

[CDC's Stress and  
Coping Guide  
During the  
Pandemic](#)

[7 Science-Based  
Strategies to  
Cope with  
Coronavirus  
Anxiety](#)

# Find a Community Mental Health Provider

[Psychologist locator](#) (American Psychological Association)

[Find a therapist](#) (Psychology Today)

[Find a marriage and family therapist](#) (AAMFT)

[Find a psychiatrist](#) (American Psychiatric Association)

[Membership director](#) (Greater KC Psychological Association)