

Skills for Well-Being Group

Week 2: Physical Reaction to Stress - Stress and the
Body

Review from last week

- How did people get on with the Activity Diary?
 - Did you notice any links between behaviours and mood?
 - How was your balance between Achievement, Connection and Enjoyment scores?
- Did anybody have a chance to use the Five Factor Model?
- Any questions from last week?

Aims of Session 2

- Understanding the Physical Response to Stress (Fight or Flight Response)
- Learning how to respond to the physical symptoms of Stress through relaxation and breathing techniques

Five Factor Model

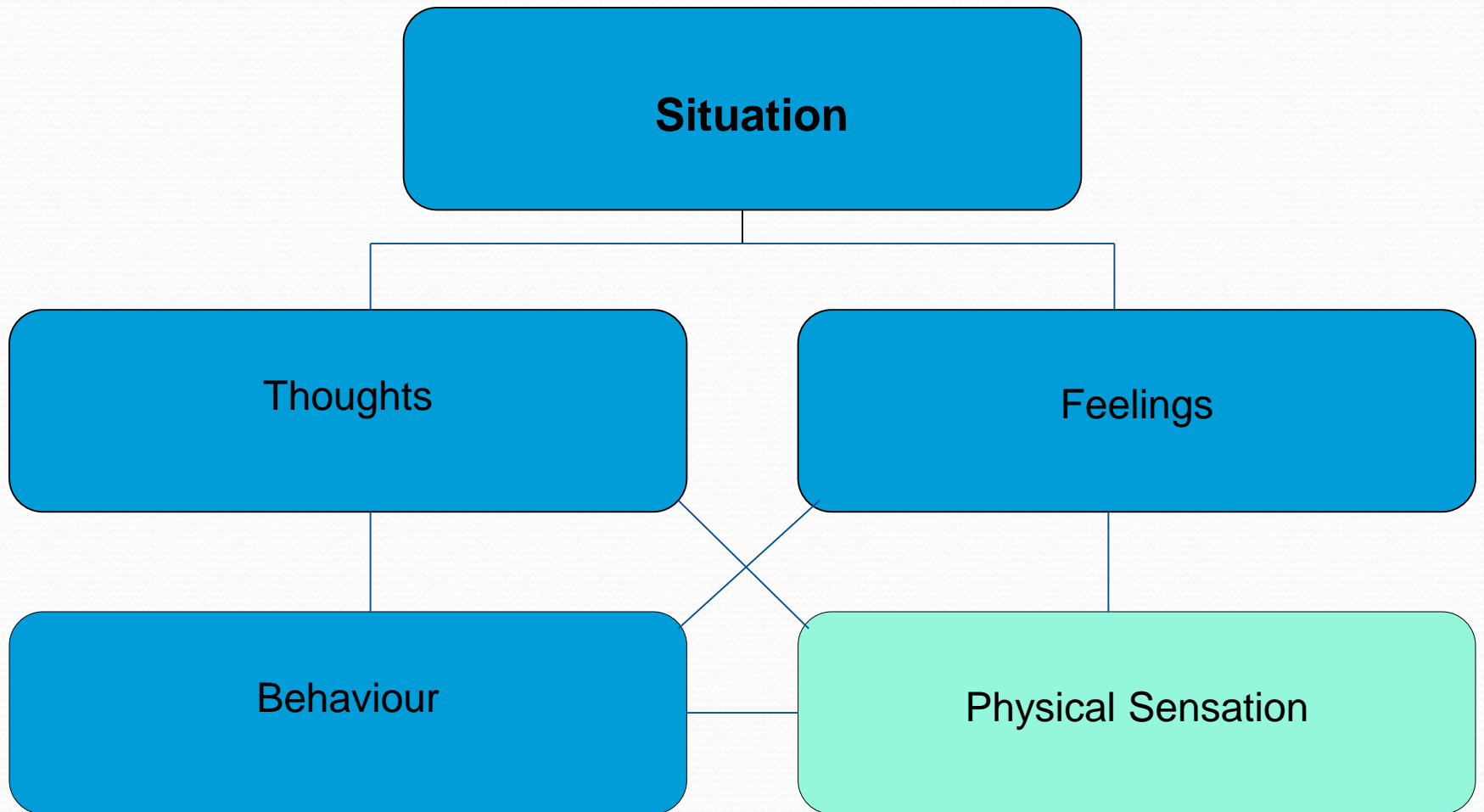
Situation

Thoughts

Feelings

Behaviour

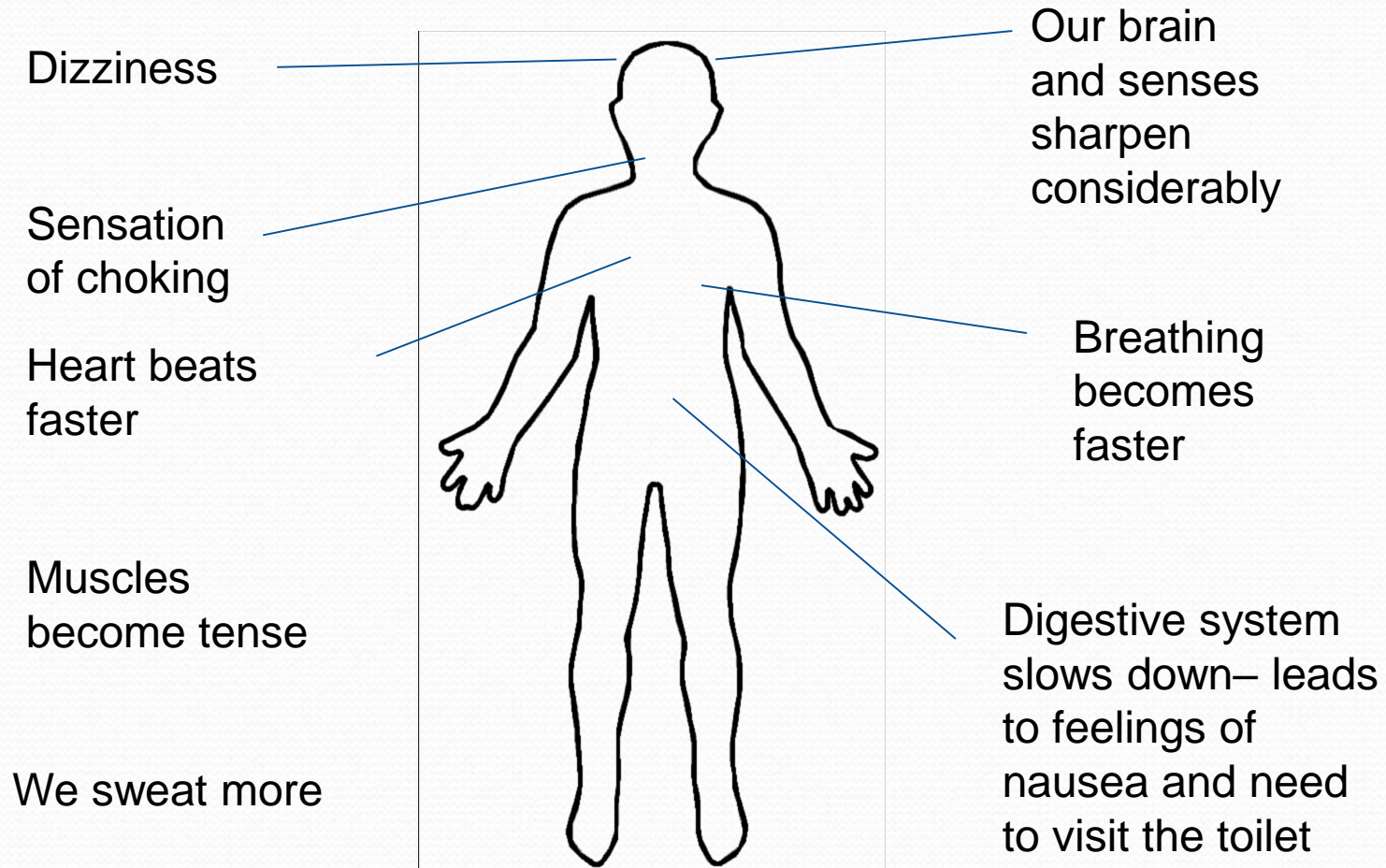
Physical Sensation



What is your physical reaction to
Stress?



Let's Look More Closely



All of this is very frightening and distressing

Fight/Flight response

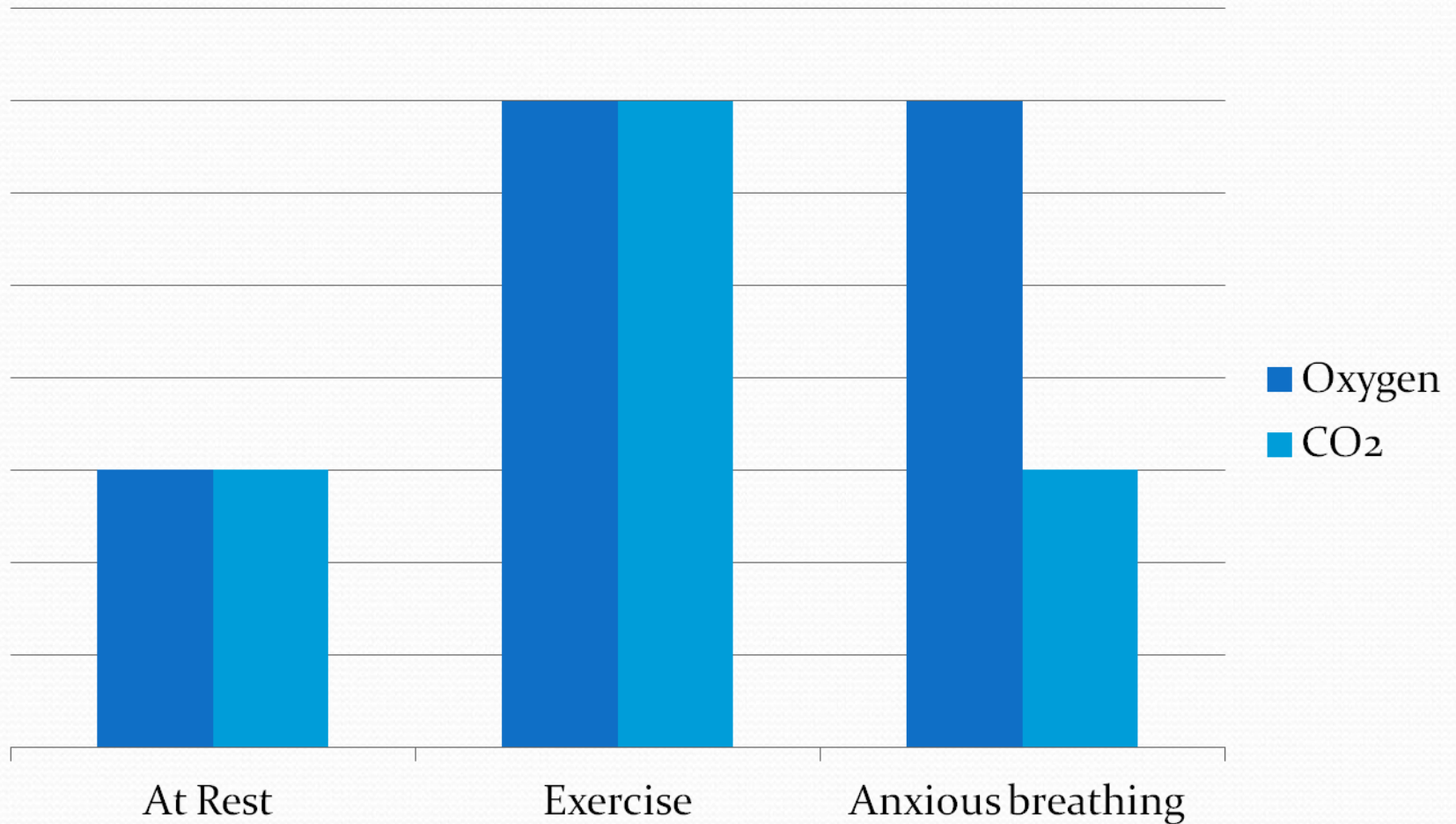
- Autonomic Nervous System speeds up
- Muscles Tense



Ways of Coping with Physical Symptoms of Stress

- Breathing Exercises
- Relaxation Techniques
- Self-care
- Social Support

Breathing – keeping a balance



Breathing Exercises

- When we are stressed we can breathe in a shallow way or we can “over breathe”. Both of which can cause a range of unpleasant sensations such as panicky feelings, dizziness, weak and trembling limbs or in extreme cases hyperventilation
- Being aware of our own breathing rhythm and slowing the breath down to gain control over it can relax the body when we are stressed
- Breathing exercises can be used anywhere and in any situation

Abdominal (Belly) Breathing



Break



Progressive Muscle Relaxation

- This technique is excellent for those whose anxiety is strongly associated with muscle tension
- Muscles can be relaxed by first tensing for a few seconds and then releasing the muscle.
- Relaxation is a skill, it takes practice!

5,4,3,2,1

- **5 - LOOK:** Look around for 5 things that you can see and name them
- **4 - FEEL:** Pay attention to your body and think of 4 things that you can feel/touch. For example, you could say, I feel my feet against the floor, I feel the chair, or I feel the material of my clothing.
- **3 - LISTEN:** Listen for 3 sounds. It could be the sound of traffic outside, the sound of typing or the sound of your tummy rumbling.
- **2 - SMELL:** Say two things you can smell or would like to smell or taste.
- **1 - TASTE:** Say one thing you can taste or would like to taste.
- **Focus on the Breath**

Applying Self-Care in Everyday Life

- Learning to recognise tension in our body and letting it go before it builds up
- Eventually you will be able to turn off the “flight or fight” response more quickly
- Use skills taught
- Use in increasingly difficult situations

Alternative Methods of Self-Care/Social Support



Alternative Methods of Self-Care/Social Support

- Yoga
- Tai Chi
- Gentle swim
- Walk in the countryside
- Massage
- Reflexology
- Aromatherapy
- Candlelit bubble bath
- Something creative e.g. baking, painting, reading writing
- Spending time with friends/loved ones
- Music
- Hobbies
- Mindfulness



Self Care

- When we have experiences which lead to us feeling stressed, we tend to also be neglectful of self and our needs.
- When our critical self is in charge, they are not interested in our needs.
- Self soothing is essential, not a weakness or indulgence.
- Oxygen mask analogy

Mental Capital and Wellbeing (Foresight Report –Mental Health 5 a day)

- Connect (utilise support network)
 - Keep learning
 - Take notice (be mindful)
 - Give (compassion/kindness)
 - Be active
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- <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/mental-capital-and-wellbeing>

Homework

- Practice Abdominal Breathing and Deep Relaxation exercises daily
- Practice other methods of relaxation covered
- Practice other methods of self care
- Continue to complete Activity Diary
- Note relaxation techniques on Activity Diary
- Notice how you feel before and after doing the exercises