



Mindfulness & Chronic Pain

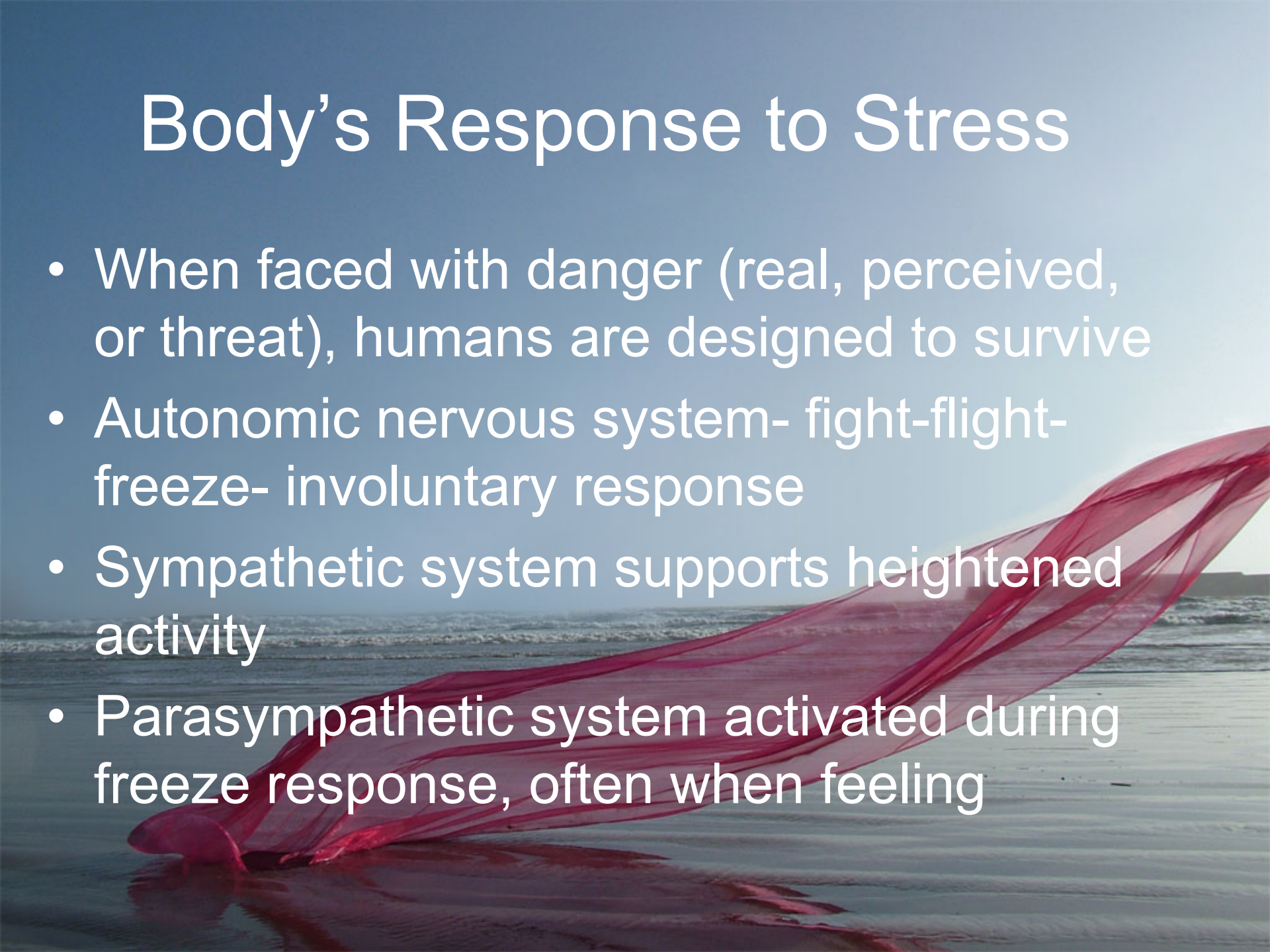
Beth Pillsbury, LICSW

"Healing comes out of the practice itself when it is engaged in as a way of being. From the perspective of mindfulness, you are already whole, so what is the point of trying to become what you already are? What is required above all is that we let go into the domain of being. This is what is fundamentally healing."

--From Full Catastrophe Living - Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain and Illness

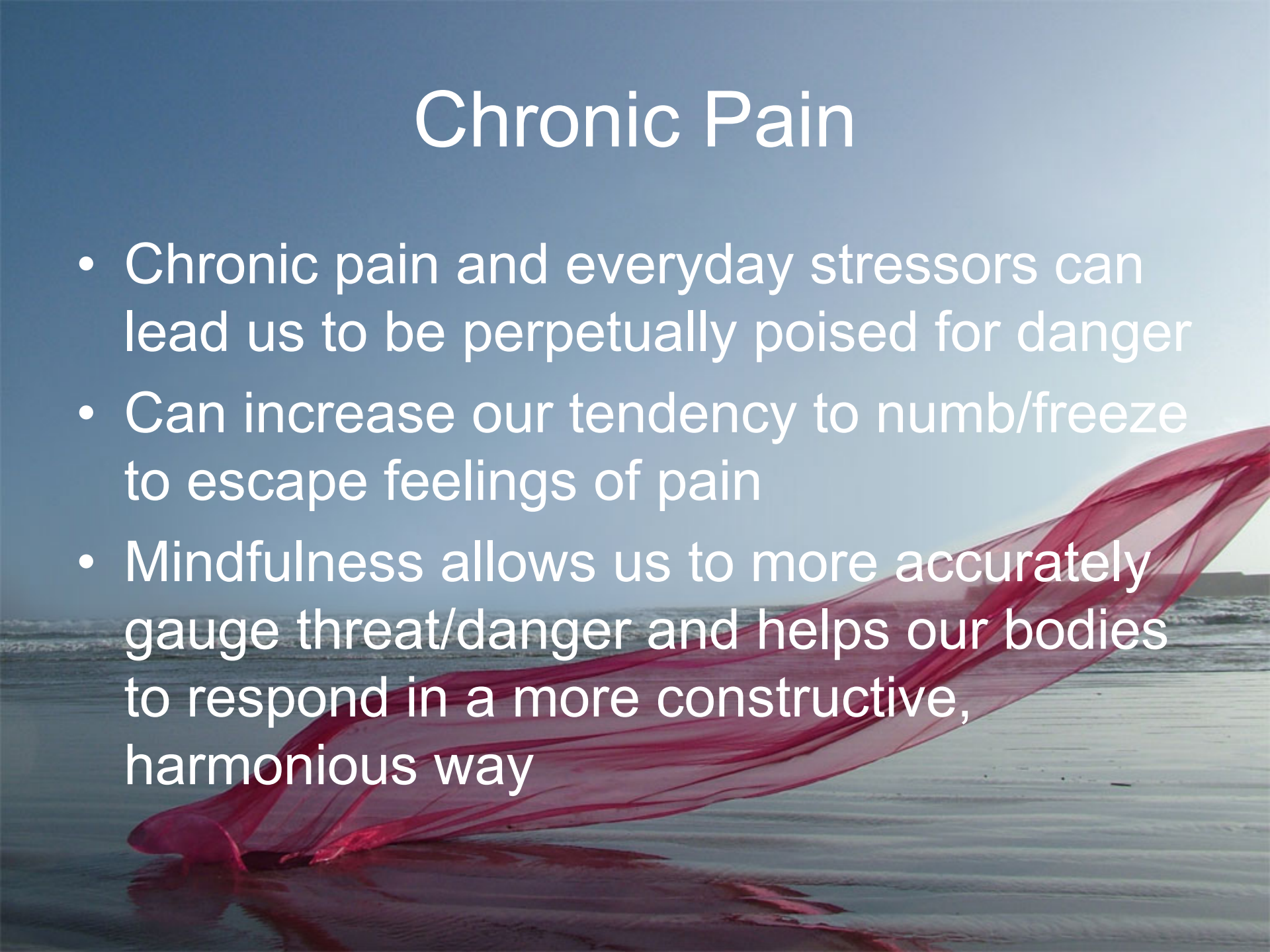
Body's Response to Stress

- When faced with danger (real, perceived, or threat), humans are designed to survive
- Autonomic nervous system- fight-flight-freeze- involuntary response
- Sympathetic system supports heightened activity
- Parasympathetic system activated during freeze response, often when feeling



Chronic Pain

- Chronic pain and everyday stressors can lead us to be perpetually poised for danger
- Can increase our tendency to numb/freeze to escape feelings of pain
- Mindfulness allows us to more accurately gauge threat/danger and helps our bodies to respond in a more constructive, harmonious way



What is Mindfulness?

- It is the intention to pay attention to each and every moment of our life, non-judgmentally. While there are many possible definitions, the key aspects of any definition of mindfulness involve purposeful action, focused attention, grounded in the current experience, and held with a sense of curiosity. We all have the capacity for mindfulness.

Mindfulness Concepts



- Beginner's Mind
- Nonjudgement
- Non-striving
- Equanimity
- Letting Be
- Self- reliance
- Self-compassion
- Critical Curiosity



Formal Practice

- Mindful Breathing (5-15 minutes)
- Body Scan (15-45 minutes)



Informal Practice

- Daily life mindfulness
- Bring the attitudes of mindfulness into your daily life
- Sensory mindfulness



Mindfulness Helps Treat

- **Chronic Illness & Pain**
- **Fibromyalgia**
- **Headaches**
- **Gastro-intestinal (GI) Distress**
- **Anxiety**
- **Asthma**
- **Grief**
- **Cancer**
- **Work, Family, and Financial Stress**
- **Heart Disease**
- **High Blood Pressure**
- **Depression**
- **Panic Attacks**
- **Eating Disturbances**
- **Post- Traumatic Stress (PTSD)**
- **Fatigue**
- **Skin Disorders**
- **Sleep Problems**

Resources

- **Books on Mindfulness:**

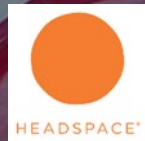
- Wherever You Go, There You Are- Jon Kabat-Zinn
- Full Catastrophic Living- Jon Kabat-Zinn
- Coming to Our Senses- Jon Kabat-Zinn
- Stahl and Goldstein, A Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Workbook. (includes CDs with body scan, breath awareness, etc.)

- **Guided Imagery:**

- Belleruth Naparstek: www.healthjourneys.com
- Variety of mindfulness exercises available for purchase through amazon or www.healthjourneys.com
- Has specific exercises for pain, migraines, fibromyalgia, stress, anxiety, depression, etc.

- **Apps:**

- Headspace- 10 free mindfulness sessions, 3-10 minutes, can subscribe after trial for fee
- Jon Kabat-Zinn Series (founder of MBSR)- for purchase- JKZ Series 1-3
- Breathe to Relax (free)



“The best way to capture moments is to pay attention. This is how we cultivate mindfulness. Mindfulness means being awake. It means knowing what you are doing.”

— Jon Kabat-Zinn