

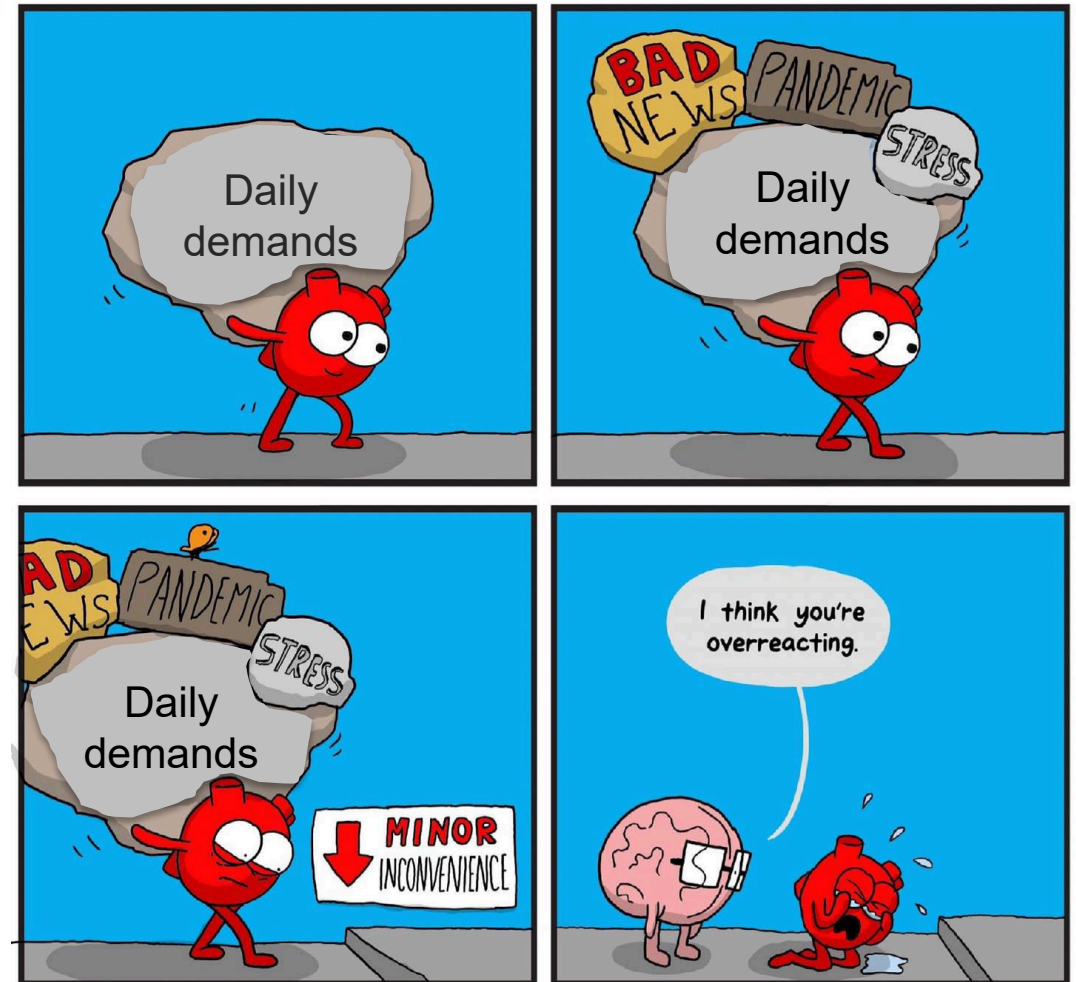
## Supporting Yourself and Others with ~~Post-~~ Pandemic Stress



Alyson K. Zalta, Ph.D.  
Dept. of Psychological Science  
[azalta@uci.edu](mailto:azalta@uci.edu)

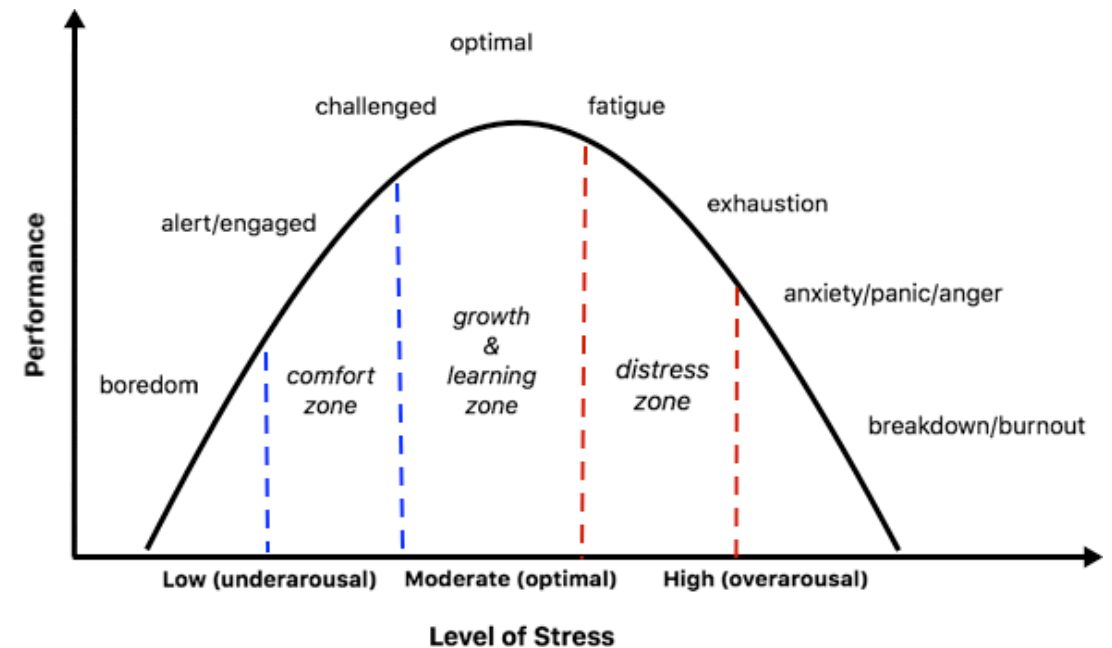
## Pandemic stress takes many forms

- Workplace challenges
- Childcare issues
- Missed opportunities
- Loss of loved ones
- Decision making around risk
- Dealing with uncertainty
- Interpersonal difficulties
- Isolation
- Limited availability of support



# Anxiety: The “What if” Monster

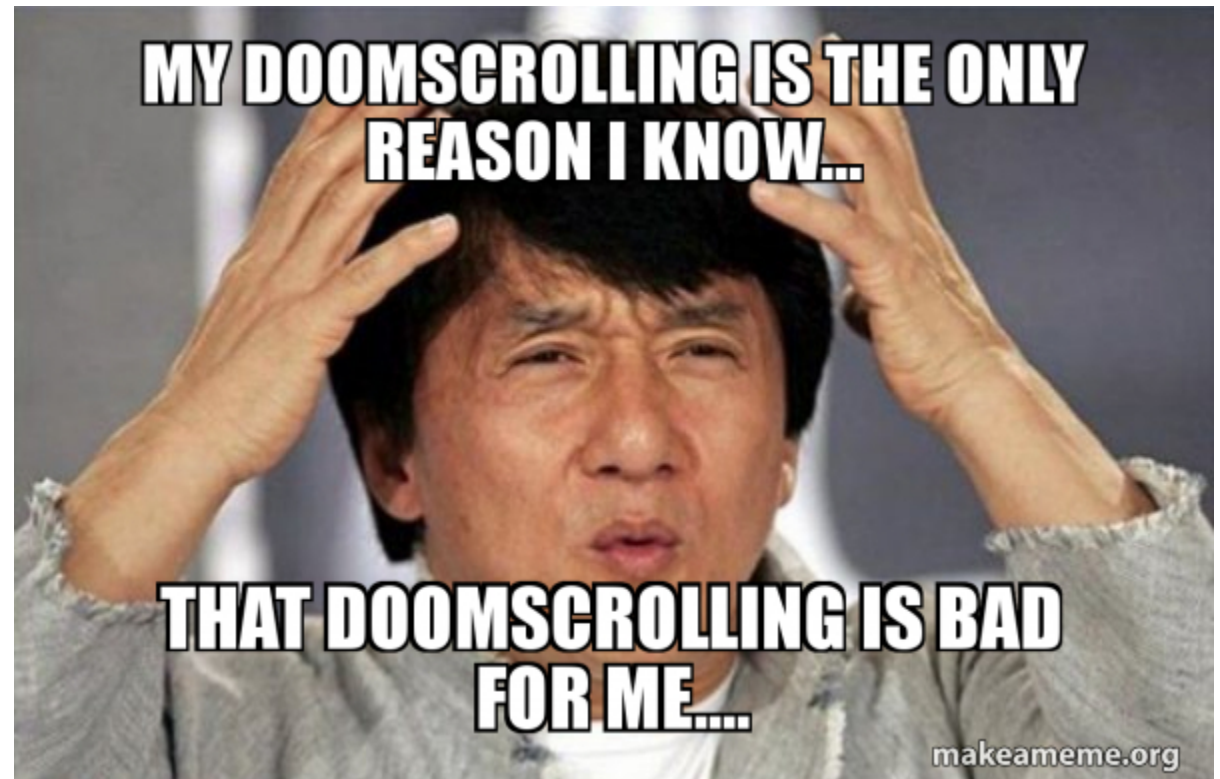
- Everyone experiences stress
- Some stress is normal and even helpful
- Excessive stress leads to breakdown
- Anxiety myths:
  - Worrying helps me to prepare
  - Worrying helps me to prevent bad things from happening
  - Worrying will protect me emotionally if bad things do happen
  - Worrying shows that I care about people



**What can I do to manage my stress?**

## Decrease things that make you vulnerable to stress

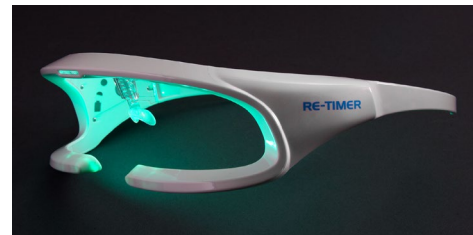
- Sleep deprivation
- Doomscrolling
- Substances
- Hunger / poor nutrition
- Isolation
- Avoidance





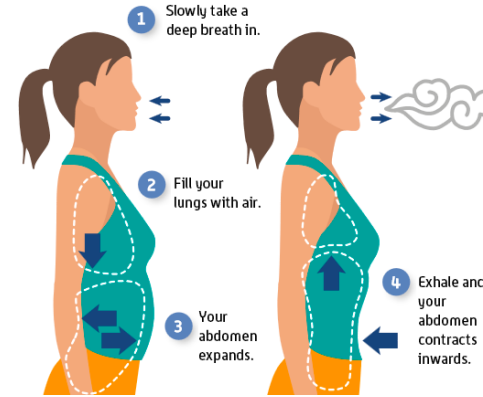
## Establish your routine

- Many people broke their routines during the pandemic
- Return to work is likely to force changes in routines (both positive and negative)
- Routines are important for mental health and help to maintain your circadian rhythm
- Routines include:
  - Sleep/wake times
  - Eating
  - Physical activity
  - Social interaction



## Practice your portable coping tools

- Find strategies that can come with you wherever you go
- Find strategies where brief bursts can alleviate stress
- Try something several times before you decide if it works for you
- But if something doesn't work, move on to the next thing!
- Ideally, come up with a few things that help
- Important to practice these skills when you are NOT stressed

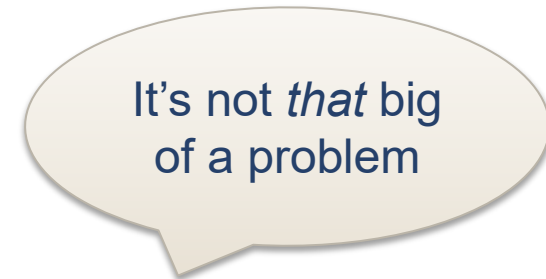


**How do I help others with their stress?  
Especially when I have my own?!**



## How to support others: The Don'ts

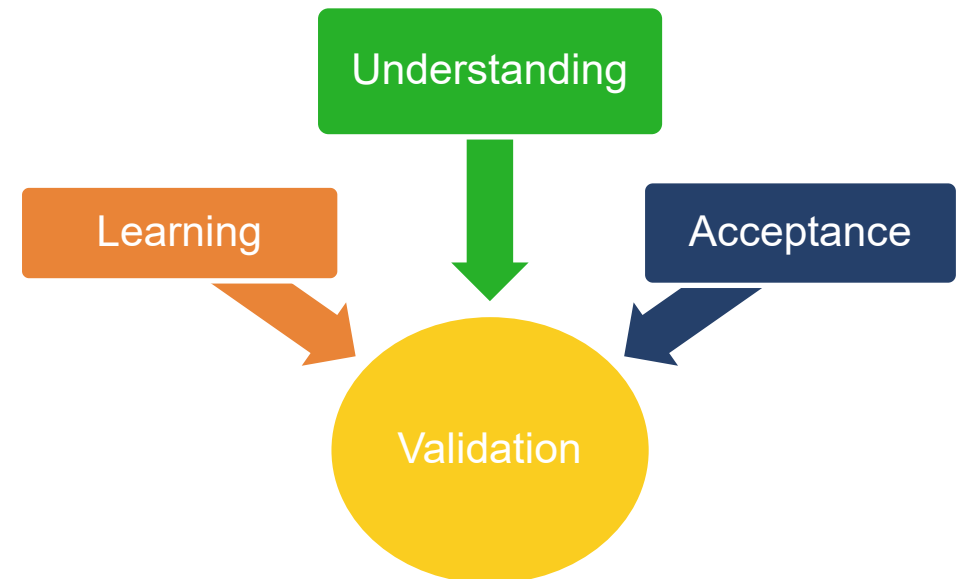
- “Should” all over the person
  - Instead, ask questions!
- Minimizing
  - This often starts with with “at least....”
  - A person’s experience is valid even if there are others who have it “worse”
- Compare stressors / make it about you
  - Stress is not a competition!
- Make assumptions



# How to support others: The Do's #1

## *Validate their experience*

- Seek to learn about / understand their experience
  - What is/was that like for you?
- Validate emotions
  - That must have been \_\_\_\_\_
  - I can understand why you feel \_\_\_\_\_
- Normalize reactions
  - Anyone who experienced what you did would feel this way
  - It's natural to \_\_\_\_\_ based on what you experienced



## How to support others: The Do's #2

*Express empathy and caring*

- 4 components of empathy
  - Perspective taking
  - Staying out of judgment
  - Recognizing emotion in other people
  - Communicating that emotion
- I'm here for you
- “How can I best support you?”



## How to support others: The Do's #3

### *Build hope*

- That things can get better with time
- That they are capable of coping
- That they have people who care about them
- That there are ways of getting help



## How to support others: The Do's #4

### *Share resources*

- Online resources
- Professional options – it works!
- Support groups
- Crisis support



**The OC WARMLine** *Available 24/7*  
Emotional Support & Resources 24/7

**Call, Text or Chat: (714) 991-6412**  
**Toll Free: (877) 910-9276**

The NAMI-OC WarmLine is a free and confidential telephone service providing emotional support and resources to Orange County residents.

If you, a family member, or a loved one are experiencing mental health concerns, substance abuse, loneliness or are in need of community resources, The OC WarmLine is for you!

### Contact Your GuidanceResources® Program

Call: 844.UCI.EAP3 (824.3273)

TDD: 800.697.0353

Online: [guidanceresources.com](http://guidanceresources.com)

App: GuidanceResources® Now

Web ID: UCIEAP3

First-time users, Click "Register" and enter  
Organization Web ID: UCIEAP3



myStrength offered  
free by UCI

## UCI Faculty/Staff Support Services

<http://www.wellness.uci.edu/faculty-staff-mental-health-insert-2019.pdf>

<http://www.wellness.uci.edu/SSIHIWellbeing.pdf>



## Questions?



azalta@uci.edu