

Dealing with pressure and stress: Application of sport psychology for coaches



Program

- **Intro to how the mind works under pressure and stress**
- **What is mental toughness?**
- **Tools to cope with pressure and stress**
- **Reflections and questions**

Mental toughness is the ability to cope with pressure

Doubt and worry is a natural and inevitable part of elite sport. Therefore we define mental strength as the ability to act in accordance with motives and values, even when faced with difficult thoughts and feelings. Value clarification of athletes and coaches is an important part of our work.
(Team Denmark's sport psychology philosophy, 2016)

Why is it important?

Aiming high, goals, ambition, high expectations is part of everyday life

Perfectionism is a prerequisite for high performance and the podium!

The expectation of being a whole person (private life, work, family, friends)

Stress is necessary to perform!

The challenge: not to experience burnout and stress

Risk for burnout

Several important performances / a lot at stake

The role of a coach – situational, manager eller instructor?

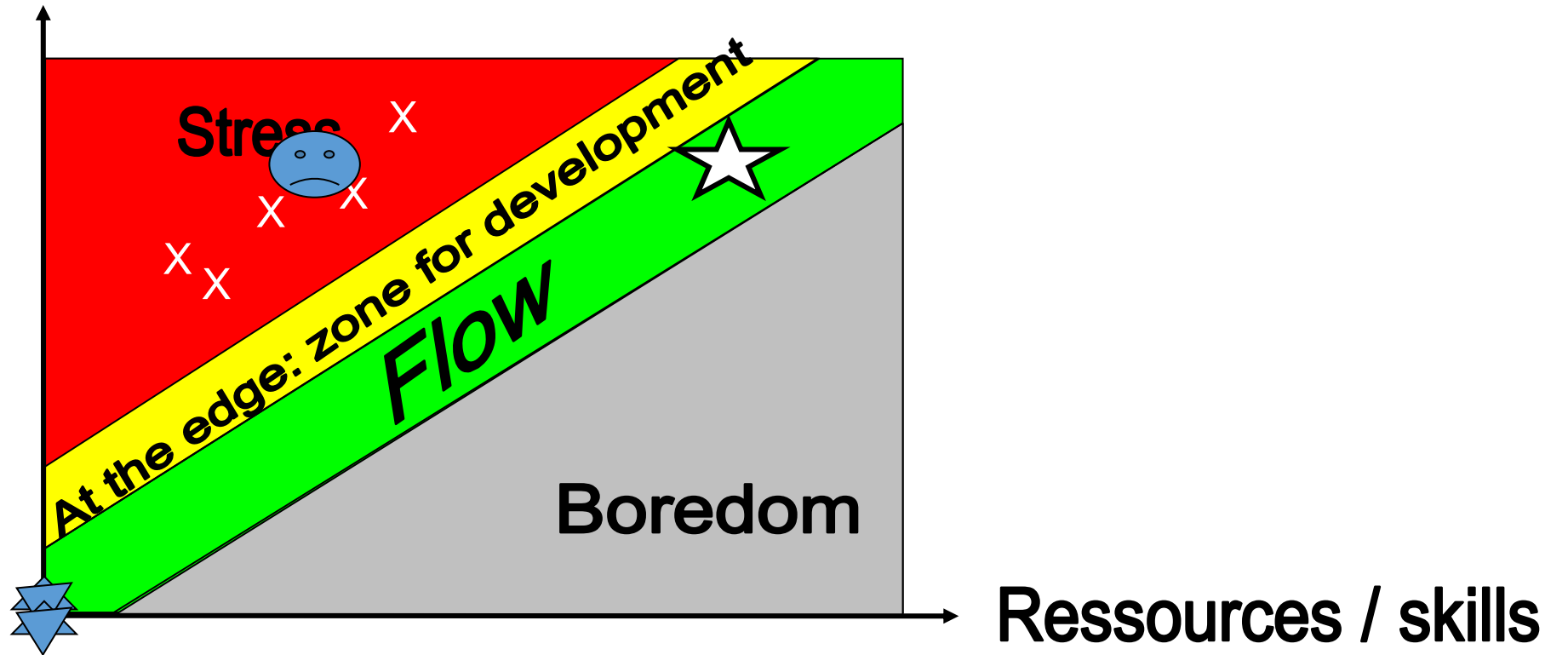
Long important periods of time

”The best in what I do!”

”The perfectionist”

”The busy one”

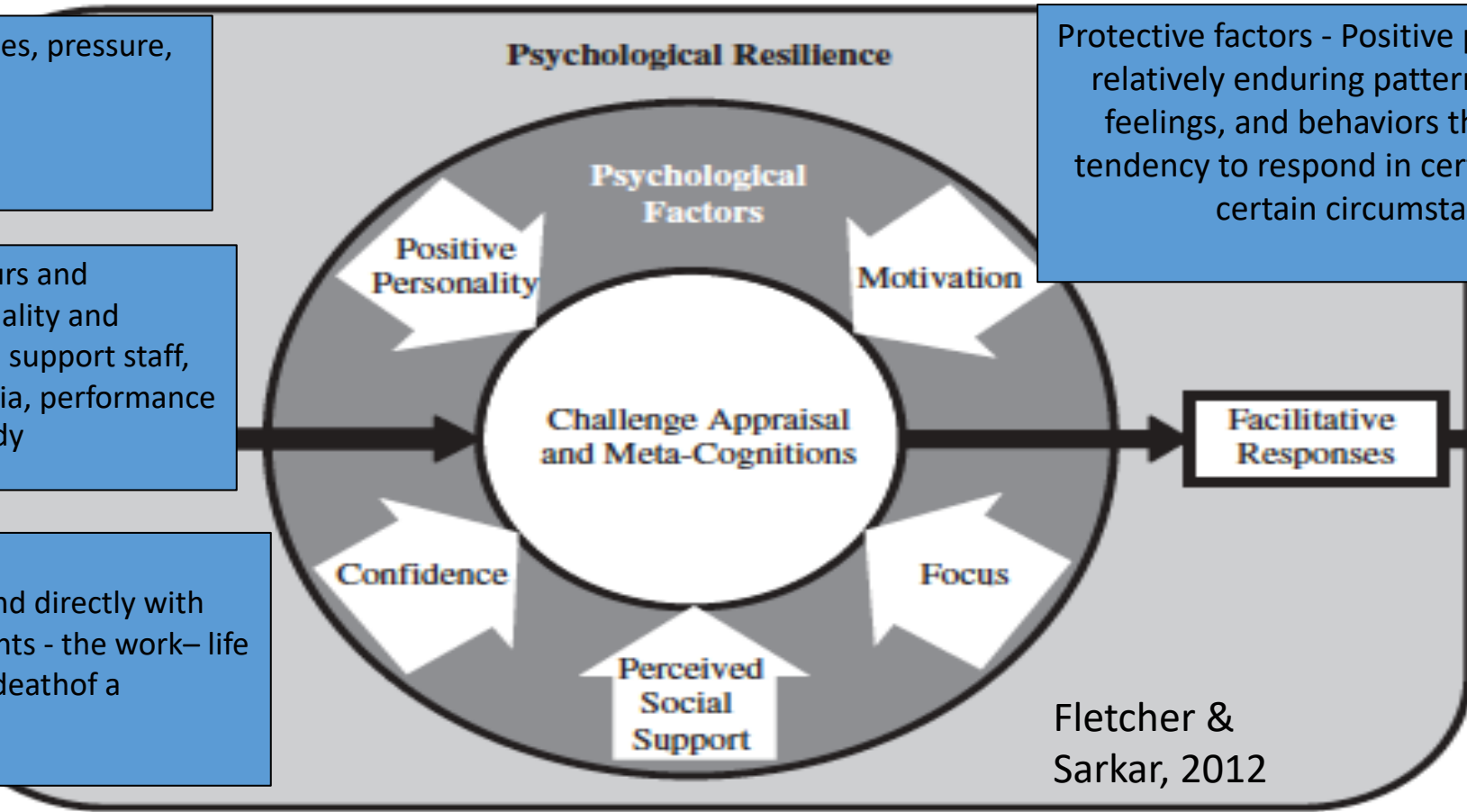
Degree of challenge:
Goals, expectations demands



Competition: preparation, injuries, pressure, underperforming, expectations, selfpresentation and rivalry

Organisation: coach's behaviours and interactions, the coach's personality and attitudes, external expectations, support staff, sports officials, spectators, media, performance feedback, and the governing body

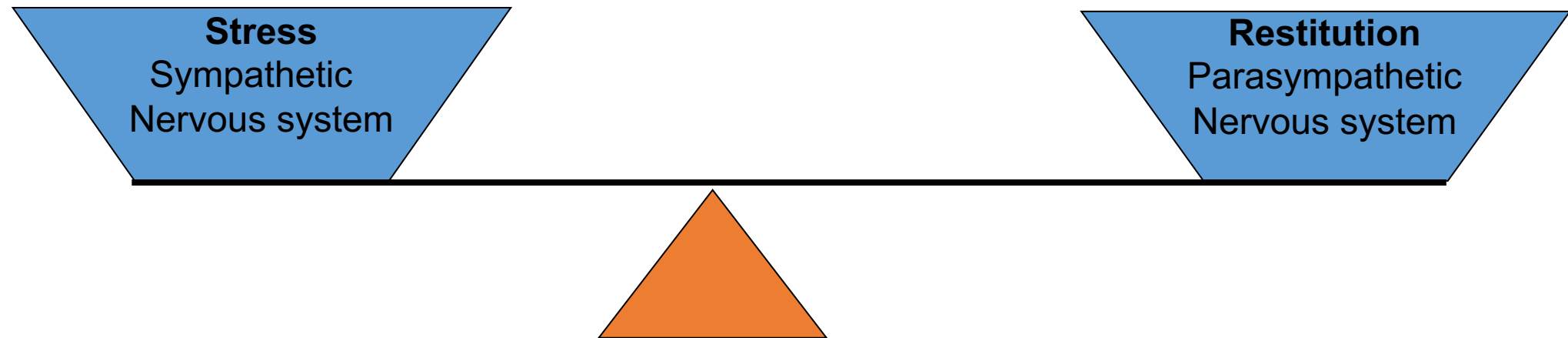
Personal: environmental demands associated primarily and directly with personal "nonsporting" life events - the work-life interface, family issues and the death of a significant other.

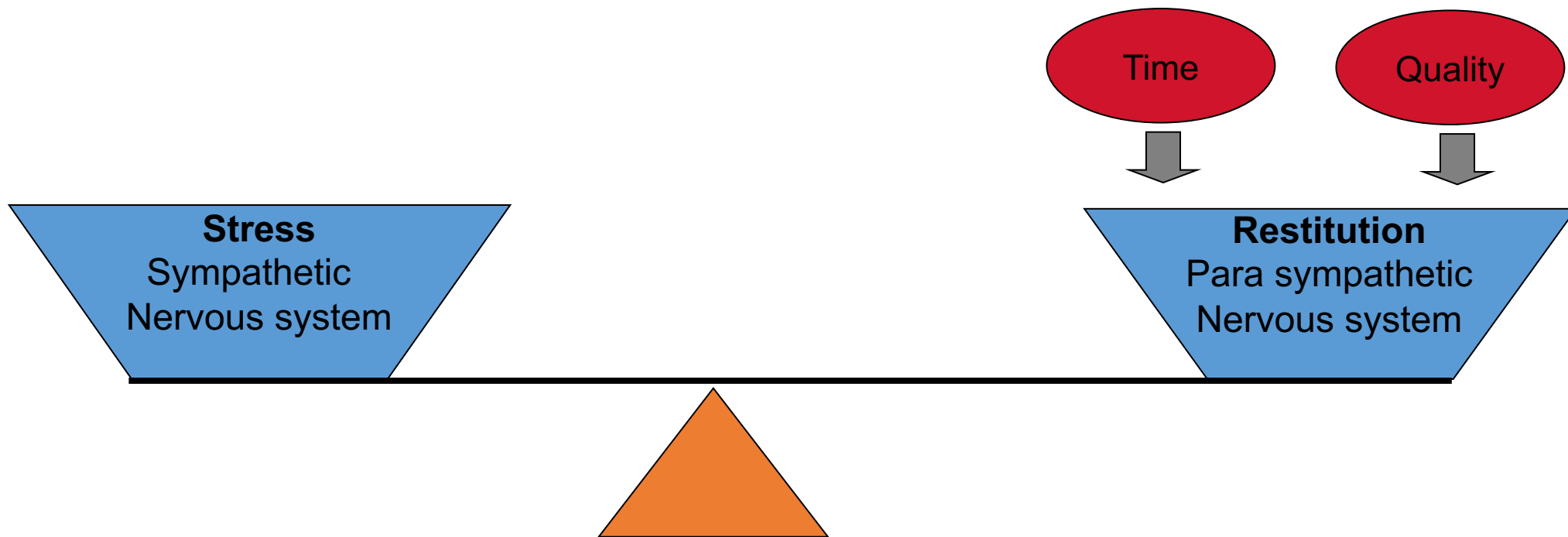


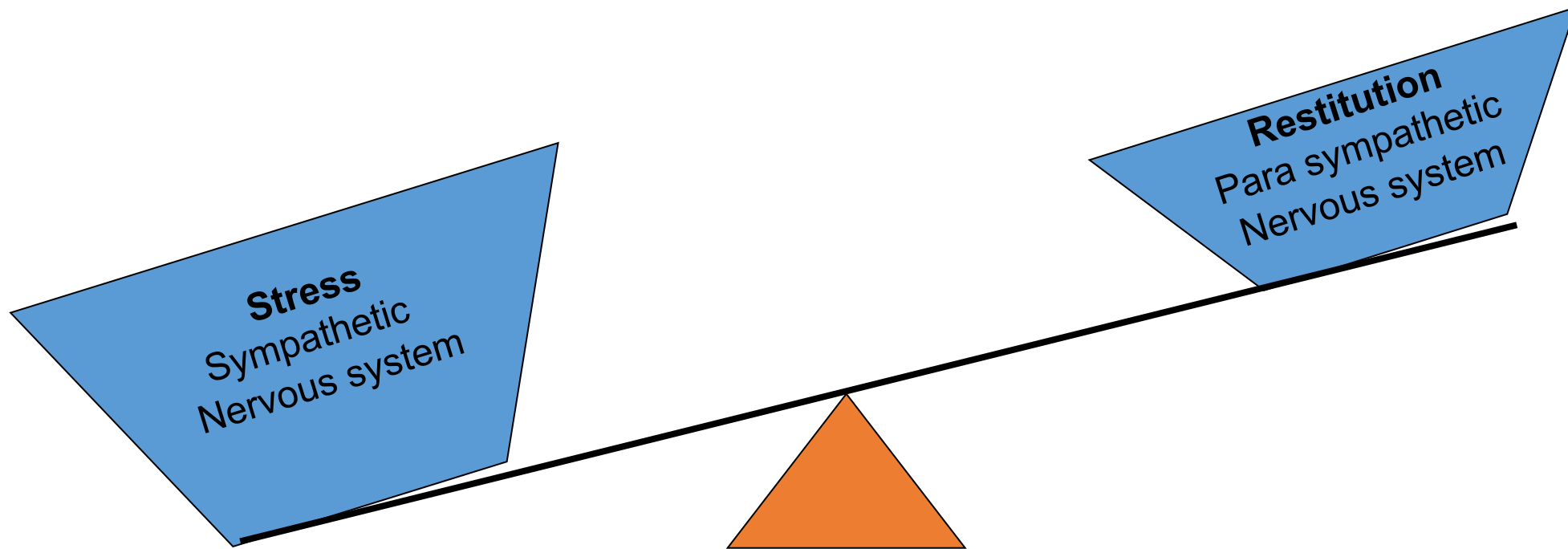
Protective factors - Positive personality: "the relatively enduring patterns of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that reflect the tendency to respond in certain ways under certain circumstances"

This indicated that the world's best athletes protect themselves from the potential negative effect of stressors by influencing their challenge appraisal and meta-cognitions. These constructive cognitive reactions promoted facilitative responses that appeared to be firmly embedded in taking personal responsibility for one's thoughts, feelings, and actions. In turn, positive responses led to the realisation of optimal sport performance.

Stress across time

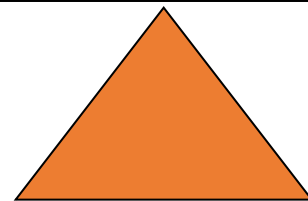




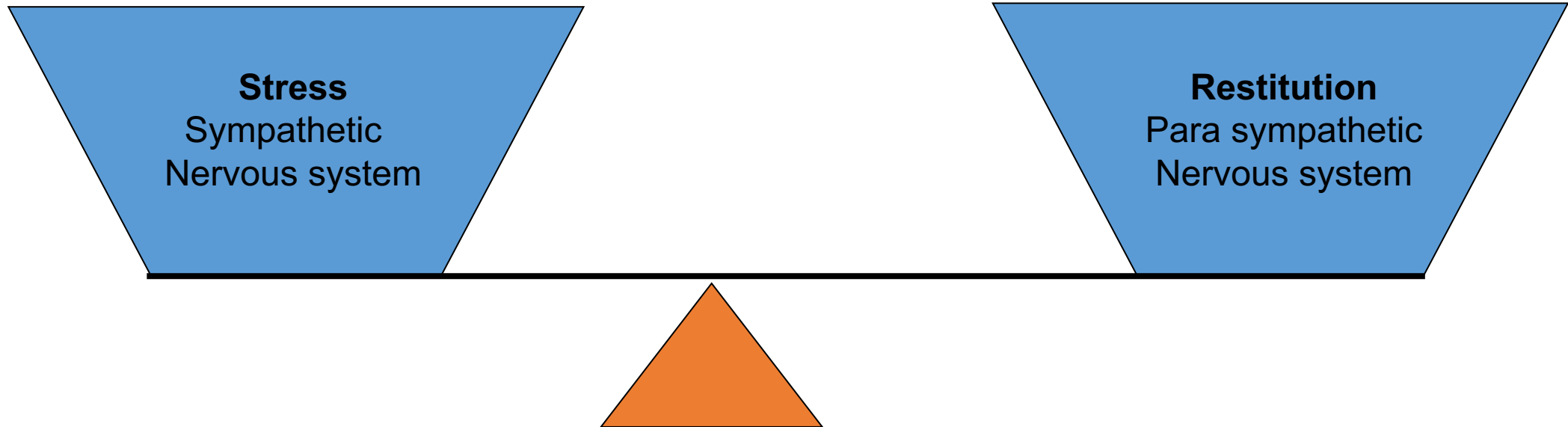


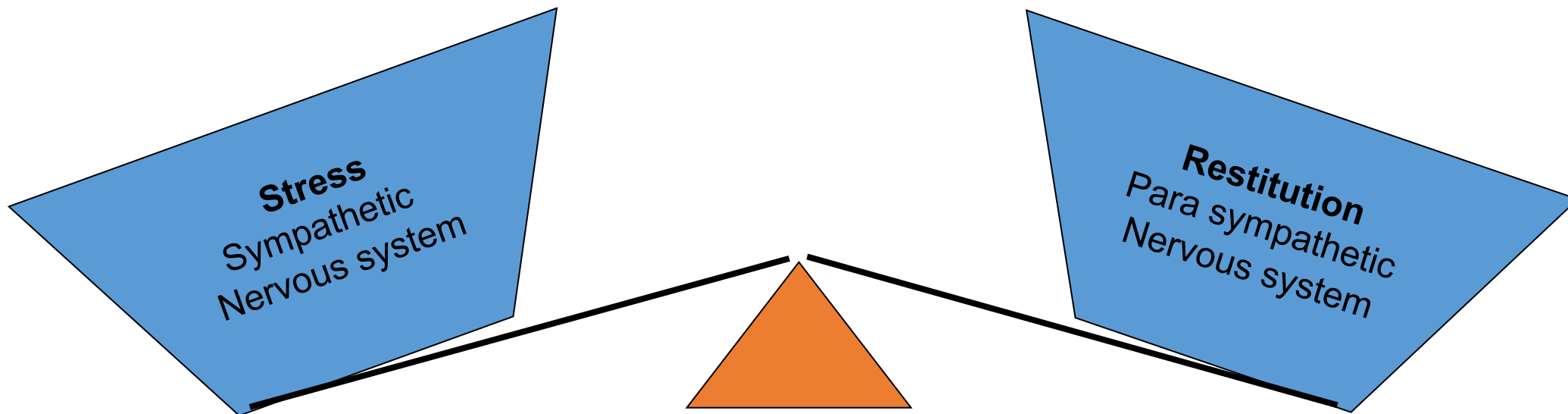
Stress
Sympathetic
Nervous system

Restitution
Para sympathetic
Nervous system



You are able to reduce burnout by emphasizing restitution!





Mental toughness

Consciousness on short term provides long-term energy

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How can you cope with stress and pressure?

1. step. Define your values
2. step. Know your reaction patterns
3. step. Work with yourself



1 skridt. Define your values

- During the difficult days, it might be that you experience thoughts and feelings, that makes you work less, reduce quality, give in to frustration or try to escape from a challenging situation. In those situations it is important to know your values, how am I as a person?
- What is important for me and my career, that I want to live by each day?

Examples of values:

- I am development oriented and challenge myself.
- I am performance oriented and perform at my best all the time.
- I am a team-worker.
- I take care of myself.
- I am curious, present and involve my athletes
- I am responsible.
- I appreciate and contribute to the the common good and cooperation



"Values are like a lighthouse, that shines and show the direction on the sea, especially when the wind blows and the storm rages. The purpose fo the lighthouse is to show you the direction towards what is important for your no matter the size of the waves and the current. I we do not aim our attention towards the lighthouse we might drift around and get pulled away from the direction that we wanted, wherever the waves might take us, while we wait for the storm to quiet down."

Examples of values

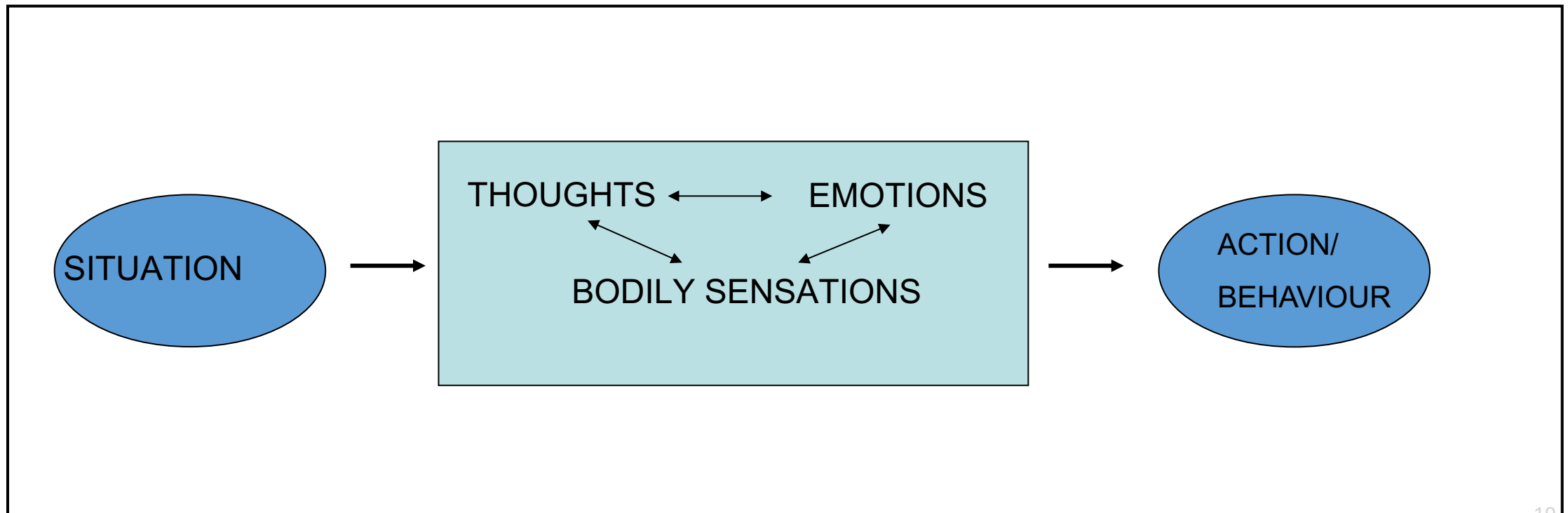
1. step. Define your values

– what are your values? Define them and discuss at the table.

- Courage
- Justice
- Tolerance
- Curiosity
- Discipline
- Openness
- Development
- Challenges
- Happiness
- Teamwork
- Family
- Play
- Trust
- Hard work

2. step. Know your reaction patterns

It is your interpretation and experience of a specific situation, that decides your actions. In other words, it is the thoughts, emotions and bodily sensations that affects your actions!



Mission

Values
"Brave"

Gameplan
"Stick to what I planned"



Reward

True to values, a good experience

Action

Stick to the plan, despite it is difficult

This is not going to work

It never worked before

I start to sweat

The difficult talk
"Under pressure"



Automatic pilot

Action
"Wraps up the meaning of the talk, talks fast and incomprehensive"

Reward
"Relief"
"I said it"

The price
I am not doing what is important for me to do

3 step. Work with yourself (3R process)

1. Registre:

- Where is your focus. Notice your thoughts, emotions and sensations. Accept the thoughts and emotions. Observe!

2. Release:

- Take a deep breath. Name the thought, observe it as just another thought. When you exhale, release the thought and emotion.

3. Re-focus.

- Create contact with what is important for you. Get in contact with your values. Focus on the tasks and the necessary actions and behaviour.
- Make a decision to move towards your values, accept the discomfort of the situation.

Discussion and exchange of experiences:

Reflect on the last 6 months. Find 1-2 challenging situations, in which you did not react the way you wanted to do. If you were to use the 3R process, what could you do in similar situations?

Rules for discussion: time for talking, time for listening, constructive dialogue, all needs to participate → synergy

3R process

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Where is your focus. Notice your thoughts, emotions and sensations. Accept the thoughts and emotions. Observe!

2. Release:

Take a deep breath. Name the thought, observe it a just another thought. When you exhale, release the thought and emotion.

3. Re-focus.

Create contact with what is important for you. Get in contact with your values. Focus on the taks and the necessary actions and behaviour. Make a decision to move towards your values, accept the discomfort of the situation.

3 STEPS for mental toughness and the ability to cope with pressure and stress

1. step. Define your values
2. step. Know your reaction patterns
3. step. Work with yourself

Sum-up

Short reflection with the person besides you: Which learning points, was important for you?

Questions and
comments?

Thank you for your
attention

