

# SPARTAN Resilience

## Navigating the Election with Mindfulness

MSU Fall Extension Conference 2024



University Health and Wellbeing  
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

# SPARTAN Resilience

**Be Here Now**

**Make any changes that best support your ability to be fully present here with us today.**



University Health and Wellbeing  
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

# Lisa Laughman she/her/hers

Coordinator, Spartan Resilience Education  
MSU Division of University Health and Wellbeing

**36** years of clinical social work  
experience

**29** years learning and teaching  
the principles and concepts in our  
resilience training model

**20** years of service as an MSU  
Employee Assistance Counselor

## **My own body of evidence**

12 presidential elections in my adult life

Photo credit: Karen Pace



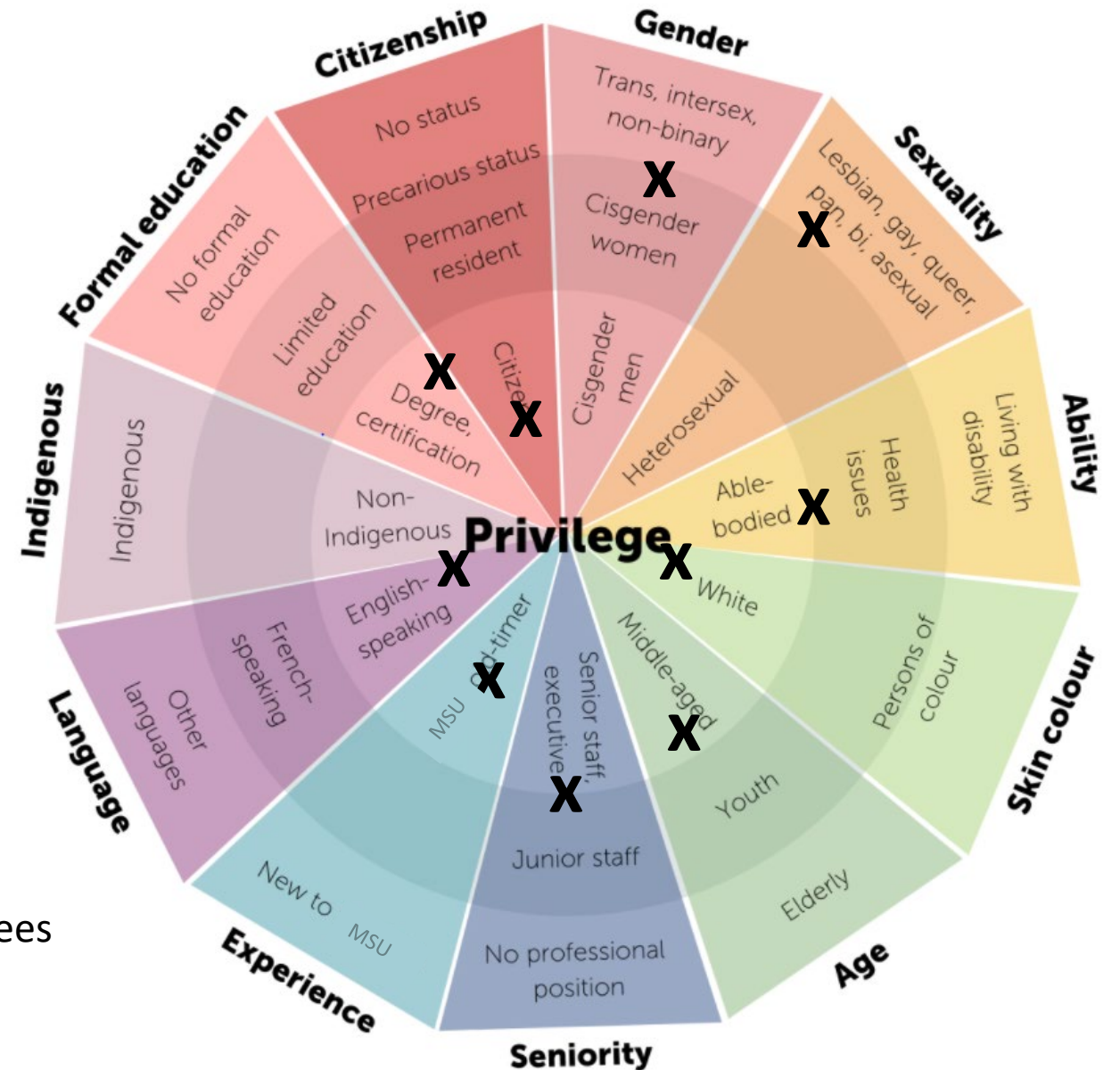
# How I enter the space today...

## Non-target Group Identities

– supported and uplifted by the systems we live in  
white, non-indigenous, middle class, middle age, college degree, member of a union

## Target Group Identities

– not supported and often marginalized identities  
*lesbian, non-traditionally female, invisible mental health disability, do not have a PhD, am not an executive leader*



The Power Wheel – from the Canadian Council for Refugees

<https://ccrweb.ca/en/anti-oppression>

# In support of safer learning and working spaces

**Listen to  
Understand**

**Stories stay.  
Lessons leave**

**Recognize  
power**

**Take care of  
yourself as  
needed**

**One mic,  
one voice**

**Response  
over reaction**



**Curiosity  
before  
judgment**

**Allow for  
both/and  
thinking**

**Be present**  
*Be kind, simply  
begin again*

**Take space  
Make space**

**You gotta  
name it  
to tame it**

**Wisdom and  
capacity for  
growth exists  
in all of us**



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# SPARTAN Resilience

How do we navigate all this???

Moving  
Through  
Your Day  
With Your  
Witness Self  
Activated

Grounding  
Practices

Making  
Space for  
Human  
Emotions

Strategies  
for  
Navigating  
Uncertainty

# A personal message from Dr. Kristen Neff

Professor, University of Texas – Austin  
Co-founder: Center for Mindful Self



Dear friends,

**There is a lot to make us anxious in the world right now.**

As I write this, it's a month until the US elections, the consequences of which will be felt around the globe. Extreme weather events are happening more and more frequently. Wars are raging that are causing millions untold suffering.

**Sometimes, these feelings of anxiety feel like they will engulf us, making it hard to function in daily life.**

# A message from Dr. Kristen Neff

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## **There's nothing wrong with anxiety.**

The feelings of tenseness and nervousness, rapid breathing and heart rate, and sense of impending danger are all **perfectly appropriate** if we're in the path of a Category 5 hurricane, for instance.

But if we're so knocked off balance by the anxiety that we can't take effective action, we can't care for ourselves or others.



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There is a simple practice we can do when feeling anxious that helps us to stay centered and grounded.

***We can focus on the sensations in the soles of our feet touching the earth.***

We can feel the tingling, the pressure, the temperature variations that arise. We can do this if we're standing, sitting, or walking. We can do it with our shoes on or shoes off.

**There is research that indicates doing so helps us to calm down when perturbed.**

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Putting our attention on the soles of our feet is a mindfulness practice because it involves **stabilizing our focus on a single object, having the effect of settling our minds.**

It can be easier to do when we're anxious than other mindfulness practices like meditating or taking deep breaths because it takes so little effort.

**Your feet are already there;  
you just need to feel them.**

# A message from Dr. Kristen Neff

Professor, University of Texas – Austin  
Co-founder: Center for Mindful Self



When we shift our focus from our apprehensive thoughts to the soles of our feet, we're **moving our attention as far away from our agitated brain as is humanly possible.**

We become less caught by the storyline of our dread and worst-case scenario thinking.

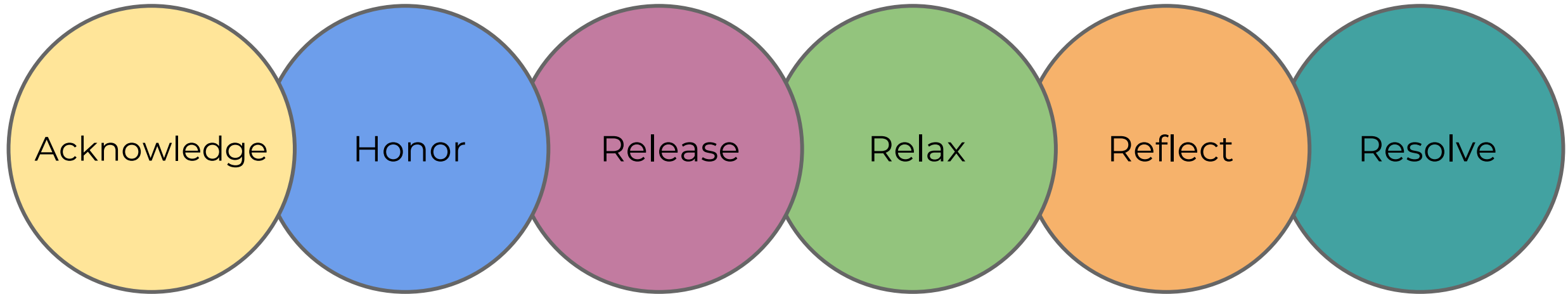
The earth also helps us to hold some of the fear and anxiety we're experiencing, and Mother Earth is much bigger and capable of holding difficult emotions than we are.



This mindful moment has been brought to you by

mindful **STATE**

## The Spartan Resilience 6-Word Framework



**Moving  
Through  
Your Day  
With Your  
Witness Self  
Activated**

- What do I mean by “your witness self”?
- Why would moving through your day from this vantage point be helpful related to the election?
- What can your witness self use as an anchor, compass or guide?
- How can you use utilize your witness self to help you navigate tough times/hard things?



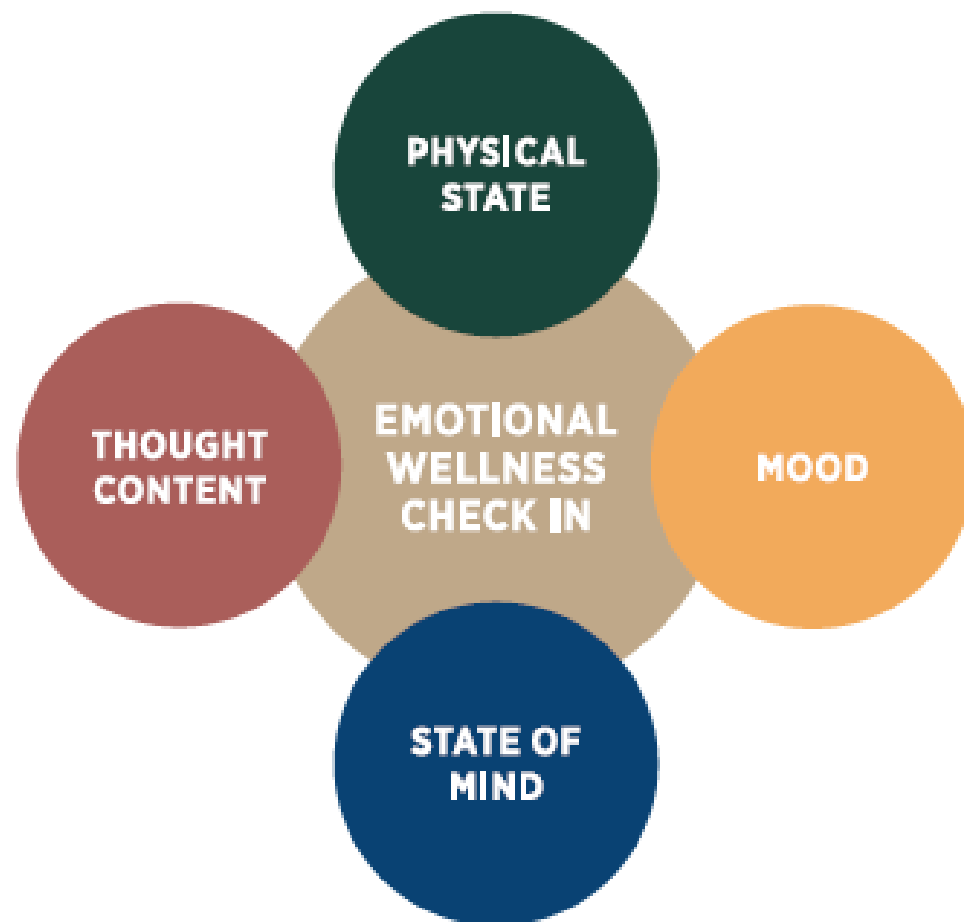
# Wake Up The Witness Self

You are holding your flashlight of attention and can direct it wherever you want.

What you shine your attention on comes to life physiologically in your body.



# Check-In With Yourself



**SPARTAN** Resilience



# Data you can use in real time



“I need to tend to this before I deal with that.”

**SPARTAN** Resilience

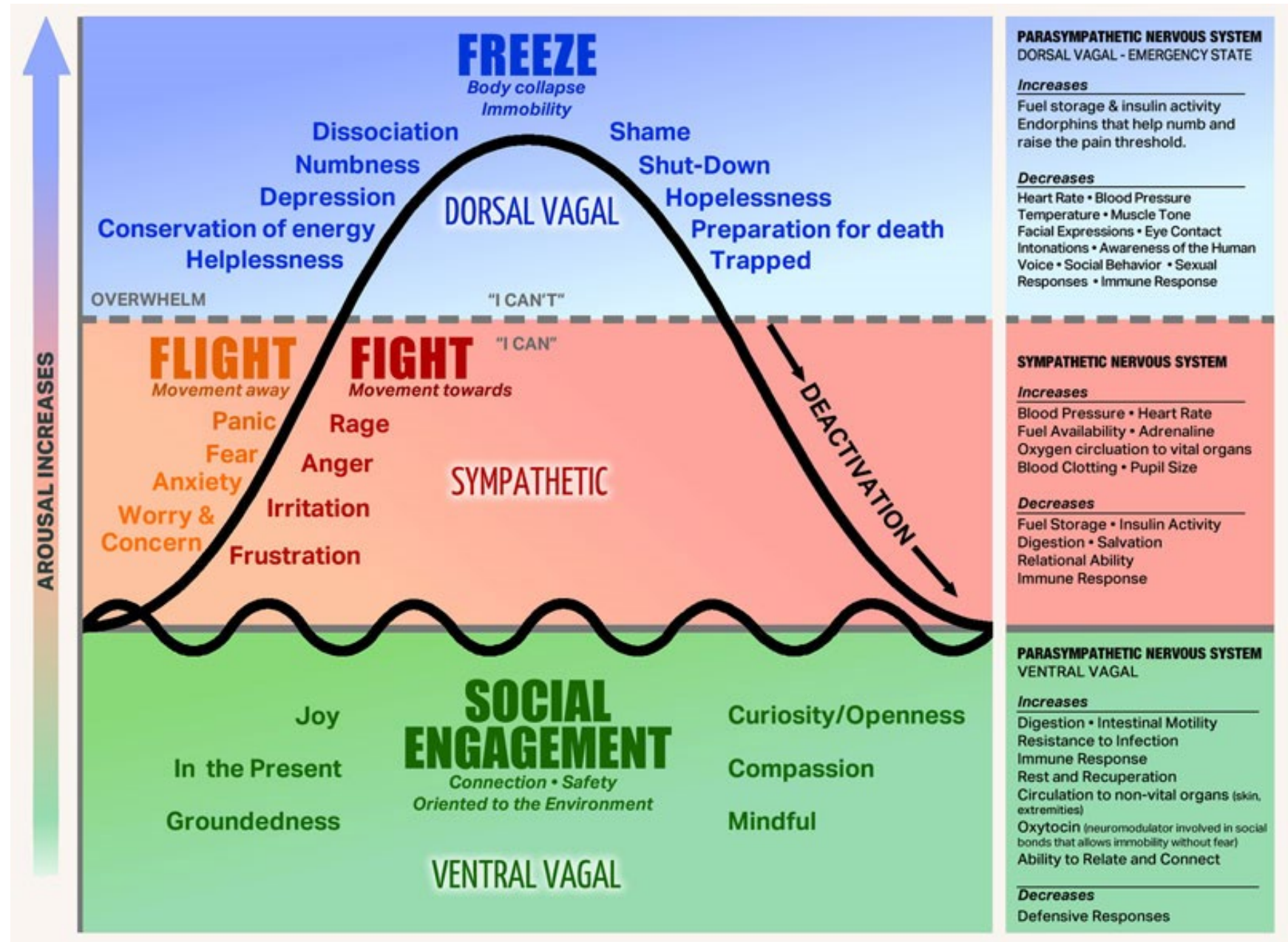


# Wake Up The Witness Self

Notice your stress  
response



Our main objective is to navigate the election from the **lowest effective level** of stress response possible.





# Wake Up The Witness Self

Notice if your  
behavior is lined up  
with your values.



Having values does not make life easy...



but they will help you find  
your way forward in the hard.

*What 2-3 values  
will you choose  
to help you  
navigate the  
election?*



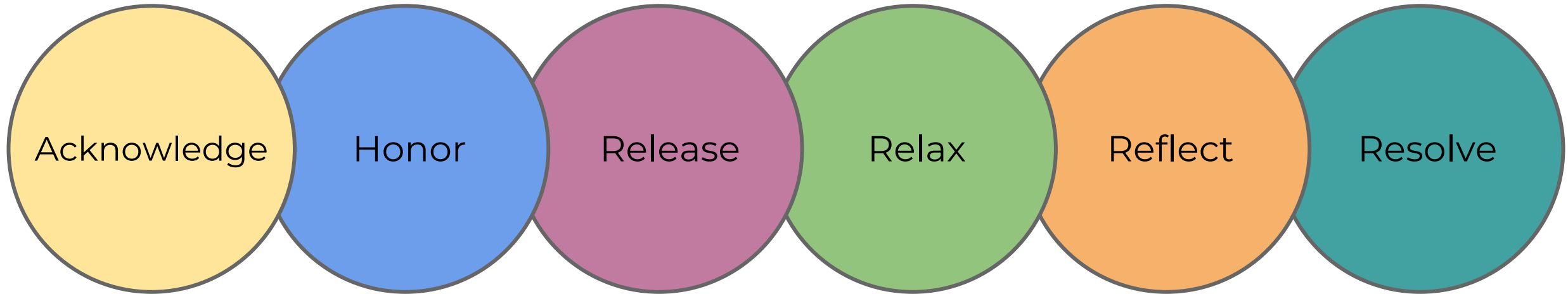
# Boundaries Are Key

- Boundaries with your self
- Boundaries with others
- Boundaries with social media/media
- Boundaries re: your resources:  
time, money, social capital



Ask yourself:      what's too much?  
                          what's not enough?  
                          what feels most right for me?

## The Spartan Resilience 6-Word Framework

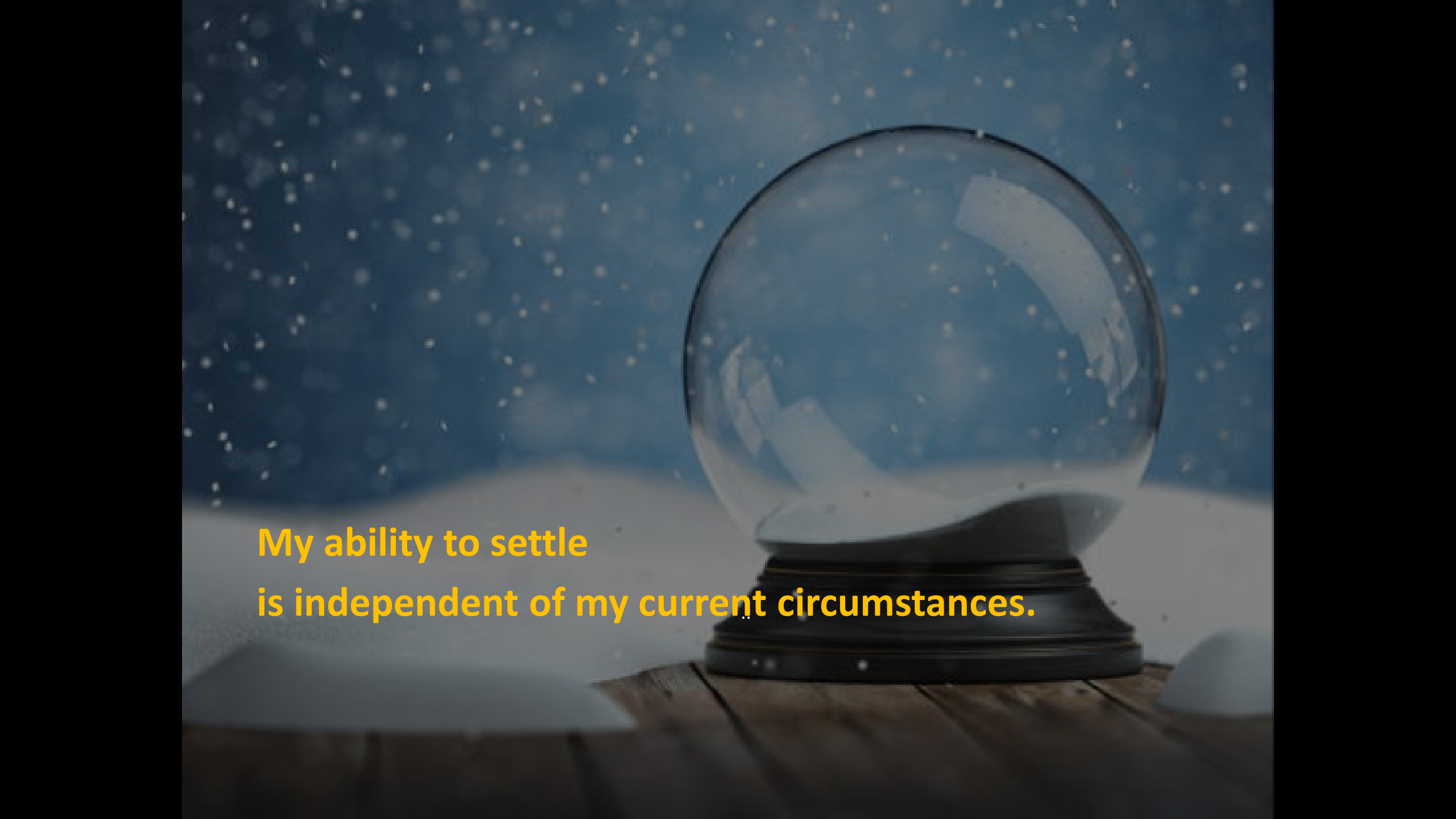







## Grounding Practices

- Settling the Breath - **Return to Point**
- Orienting to the Presenting Moment  
**What 5 Things, What is moving/still, Go Green, Go White**
- Tapping or Bilateral movement  
**Butterfly Hug, Arm Swipe**
- Ventral Vagal Reset
- Anchoring/Savoring/Gratitude  
**Filling Up Your Awe Reservoir**
- Self-Compassion Mantra
- Soothing Gesture – Comforting Language

A snow globe sits on a wooden surface, with snow falling around it. The globe is clear and contains a small white figure. The background is a soft, out-of-focus blue and white, suggesting a snowy or winter scene. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

**My ability to settle  
is independent of my current circumstances.**



“You are not your  
thoughts and feelings.

You are the entity  
within which your  
thoughts and feelings  
arise and dissipate”.

Michael Neill

**Making  
Space for  
the Full  
Range of  
Human  
Emotions**



# What we've learned to do with our emotions that is not helpful...

## **Emotional Suppression**

Ignoring, denying, pushing emotions away, stockpiling stress and pain. Not allowing emotions to be seen or felt.

## **Emotional Dysregulation**

Emotional reactivity, can be triggered by trauma or exacerbated by chronic low levels of invalidation. Your nervous system being hijacked by an emotional experience.

## **Experiential Avoidance**

Low tolerance for an unpleasant emotions so intense that you actively avoid any experience that could possibly bring you that emotion.

## **Disregard for the Humanity of Others**

looking away, minimizing, deflecting, excuse making, defending with "intent" rather than acknowledging and honoring the "impact" of hurt/harm

# Making space for unpleasant, but necessary emotions

Sadness

Shame

Helplessness

Anger

Vulnerability

Embarrassment

Disappointment

Frustration

Trauma

Grief/Ambiguous Loss

Sorrow

Fear

Overwhelm

Rejection

1 choice

8 emotions

90 seconds

Joan Rosenberg – Emotional Mastery

# IMPORTANT TAKE AWAY...

Every feeling has a beginning, a middle, and an ending.

**Allow yourself to  
“Move all the way through the tunnel”.**

**Ideas to  
help you  
navigate  
the not yet  
known**

**We don't get to  
know, right now!**

**It is ok not to know.**

**We can help ourselves  
stay grounded in the  
not yet known.**



The background is a vibrant teal color, densely populated with numerous speech bubbles. Each bubble is a different color, including shades of yellow, pink, orange, and light grey. Inside each bubble is a dark blue question mark. The bubbles are scattered across the frame, creating a sense of movement and inquiry.

Let the Question Marks Float



Pick it up, Put it down

**Keep Your Feet  
In The River**



The image features a dark, textured vertical bar in the foreground, possibly representing a beam or a path. The background is heavily blurred, showing a central light-colored beam that tapers towards the top. To the right, there are faint, out-of-focus red and white horizontal bands. The overall scene suggests a focus on a narrow path or a specific point of interest in a complex environment.

Find the Beam  
Stay on the Beam



**No one has to go it alone.  
We were never meant to.**

**Brené Brown**

**Share your story with  
those who have earned  
the right to hear it.**

**Spend time reflecting on our common humanity.  
Notice how easily we “other” people.**

**Be with your people in the not yet known.  
Do things with your people that help you release stress  
and be more grounded, more of the time.**

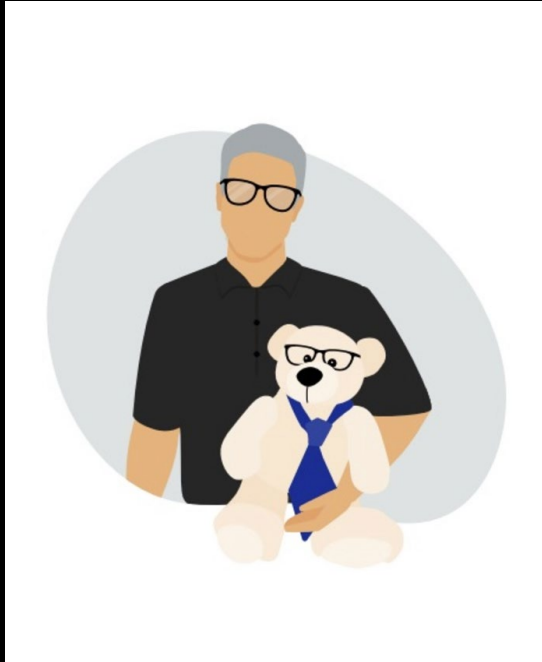
# Introducing the Spartan Resilience Education Certificate

- ✓ Complete all 8 courses to earn certificate
- ✓ Attend live webinars or watch recordings off-line
- ✓ After watching all sessions, complete the participant survey for the course
- ✓ You will be prompted to send an email to [spartanresilience@msu.edu](mailto:spartanresilience@msu.edu)
- ✓ We will track your course completion and send you a certificate once you have attended all 8 courses

Supervisors encouraged to support employee attendance



# Deepening Your Essential Skills Learning Community



This healing-centered learning community meets the **second and fourth Thursdays of each month** from 12:30-1:30 pm, via zoom.

Sessions are facilitated by:

**Lisa Laughman,**  
**Coordinator of Spartan Resilience Education**

Use QR code to register



# MSU Grief and Loss Support Sessions

**Joining our trauma-informed, healing-centered community will give you the opportunity to:**

- Share your unique grief journey.
- Receive empathy and non-judgmental support.
- Gain resources to support healthy grieving.
- Learn core resilience skills and strategies
- Gain basic education re: grief, ambiguous loss, tasks of mourning, and transformational grief practices.



**Sessions are drop-in and free of charge  
Come when you need to.  
Use QR Code to enroll.**

