

BRIDGING SYMPTOMS & STORIES

A MindBody Workbook for Understanding Your Chronic Disease



DR. HOWARD CHRISTIAN

Copyright © 2025 by Howard Christian Ph.D.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form without written permission from the publisher or author. Howard Christian Ph.D. asserts the moral right to be identified as the author of this work.

Disclaimer

This book is intended for informational purposes only for individuals seeking guidance on health and well-being. It is not a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always consult a physician or qualified health professional regarding any medical condition. Never disregard professional medical advice or delay seeking help because of something you have read in this book. While this book contains information about emotional, mental, and physical well-being based on the author and others' experiences, the author is not a health professional, and the information is not intended as a substitute for professional medical or psychological advice. If you are experiencing mental health issues, such as depression, anxiety, or suicidal thoughts, consult a qualified mental health professional immediately. Statements in this book have not been evaluated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and are not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease. This book does not provide specific medical or psychological diagnosis or treatment. Individual results may vary, and no guarantees of effectiveness are made. External links within this book may direct readers to third-party websites over which the author and publisher have no control and for which they are not responsible for any information or claims made therein. Readers should exercise discretion in accessing external resources. The author and publisher assume no responsibility for any health consequences resulting from the application or reliance on the information provided. By using this book, you accept full responsibility for your actions and decisions. This book may be updated periodically. While efforts are made to keep content current, the author and publisher make no guarantees regarding the accuracy, completeness or reliability of the information, and they disclaim all warranties. To the fullest extent permitted by applicable law, the author and publisher disclaim all liability for any direct, indirect, incidental, special, consequential, or punitive damages arising from or relating to your use of this book or any information contained herein. The views expressed in this book are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of any organizations or institutions the author may be affiliated with. By reading this book, you acknowledge that you have read and understood this disclaimer and agree to accept its terms.

First edition 2025 Mediscinz Communications Ltd

ISBN 978-0-9922536-2-2

HOWARD *Christian*
WELL-BEING NAVIGATOR AND AUTHOR



howard@howardchristian.com

Tired of the endless cycle of illness and symptom management?

Discover a transformative process that unlocks your bodymind's innate healing power—leading to lasting remission.

Stop accepting limitations and take charge of your well-being journey.

Unlock your power today.

Chronic diseases interweave physical symptoms with emotional and psychological experience in a complex web we most often fail to “see” let alone understand. The symptoms of illnesses such as acid reflux disease, allergies, arthritis, asthma, cancer, chronic migraine, diabetes, eczema, heart disease, inflammatory bowel disease, psoriasis, and many others manifest as pain, fatigue, discomfort, inflammation and impaired functioning. In this “physical” understanding of our disease, we are all on the same page.

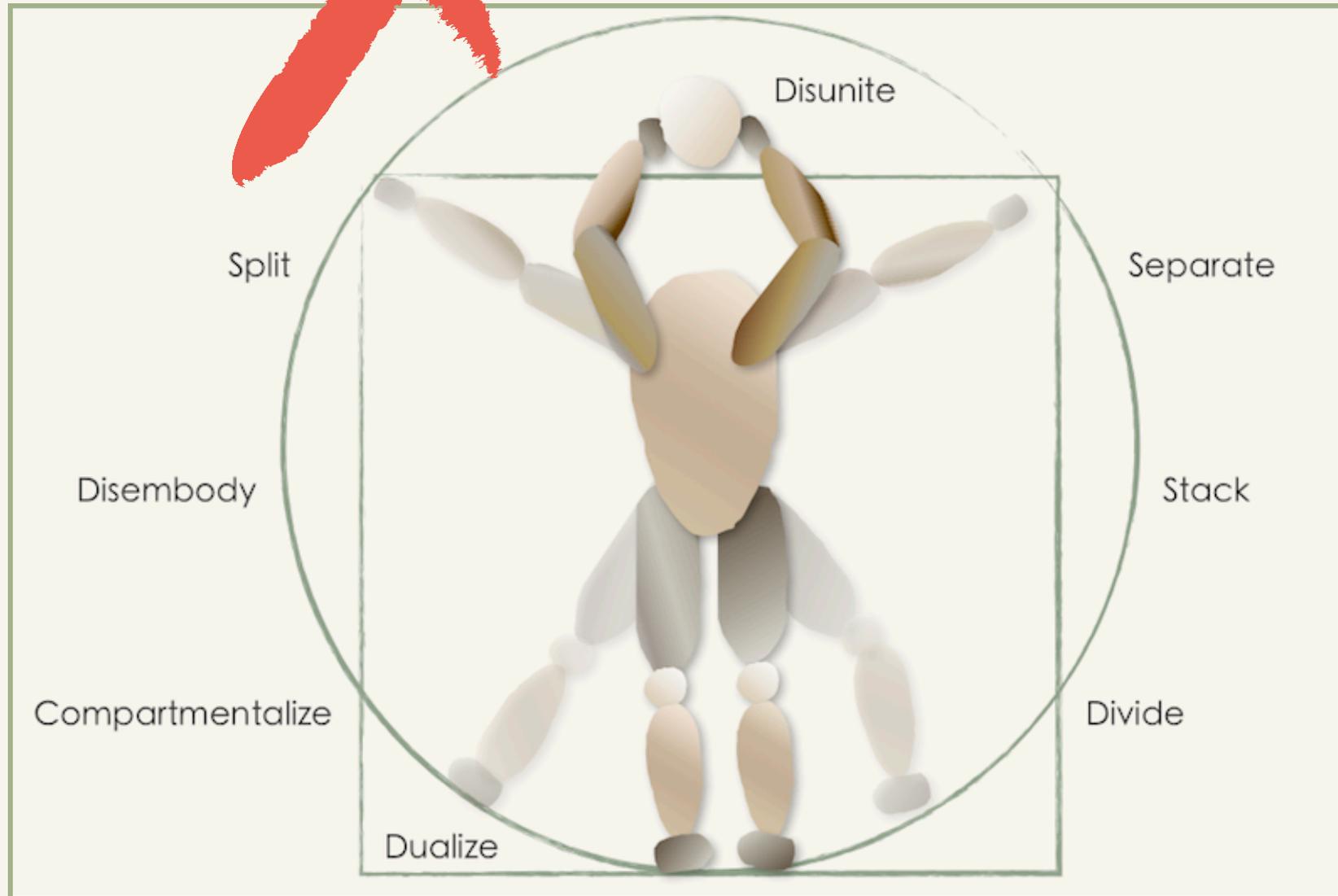
But have you ever wondered why doctors are interested in our symptoms, yet never our associated feelings and thoughts? After all, the emotional distress that *always* accompanies our disease is very real, yet it’s as if we have to put this aspect of our suffering to one side.

Rather than viewing these emotional and physical aspects as arising from a separate mind and body as conventional medicine does, a MindBody understanding of disease recognizes that emotions, thoughts, and physical symptoms emerge from the same unitary source.

This approach is useful because it allows us to consider our emotions and thoughts together with our physical symptoms in ways in which healing in one domain will simultaneously bring healing to another domain.

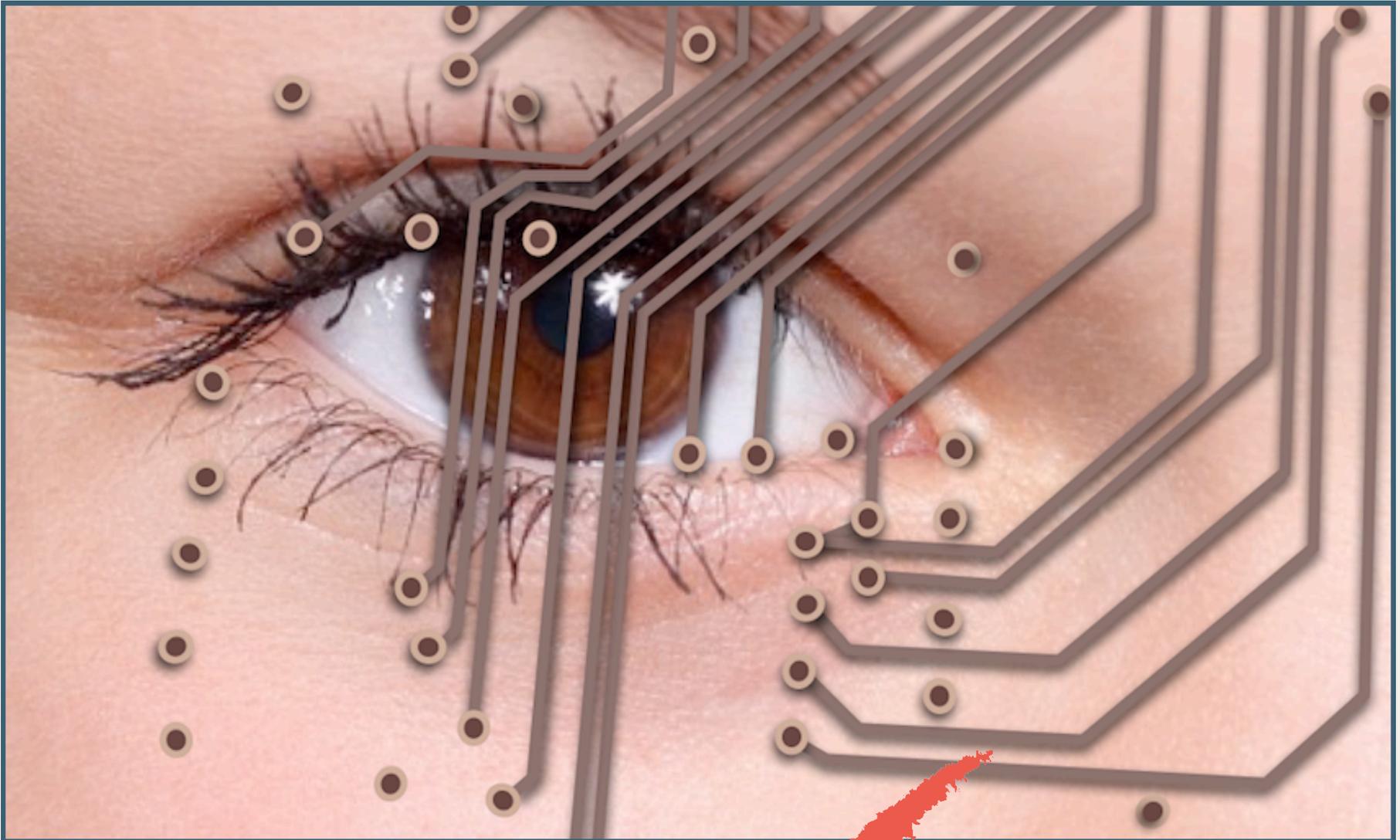
In this workbook, “Bridging Symptoms and Stories,” I invite you to explore this unitary understanding of your “wholeperson.” By documenting your symptoms alongside your mood and your significant life events, you will uncover insights that highlight how one domain reflects another. As you engage in this process of self-discovery, you will gain a deeper understanding of your chronic condition, fostering a wholeperson approach to your well-being. Join me on this journey to weave together your experiences into a coherent story for healing and empowerment.

...the mind and body are **separate**





...the mind is **located** in the brain



...the body is a **machine**



...the mind is **disconnected** from any role in our physical well-being and healing; and is often removed from having a role in psychological well-being too!



...we are **products of a molecular text** whose genes control our fate

...Every aspect of your reality must only be explained in **physical** terms

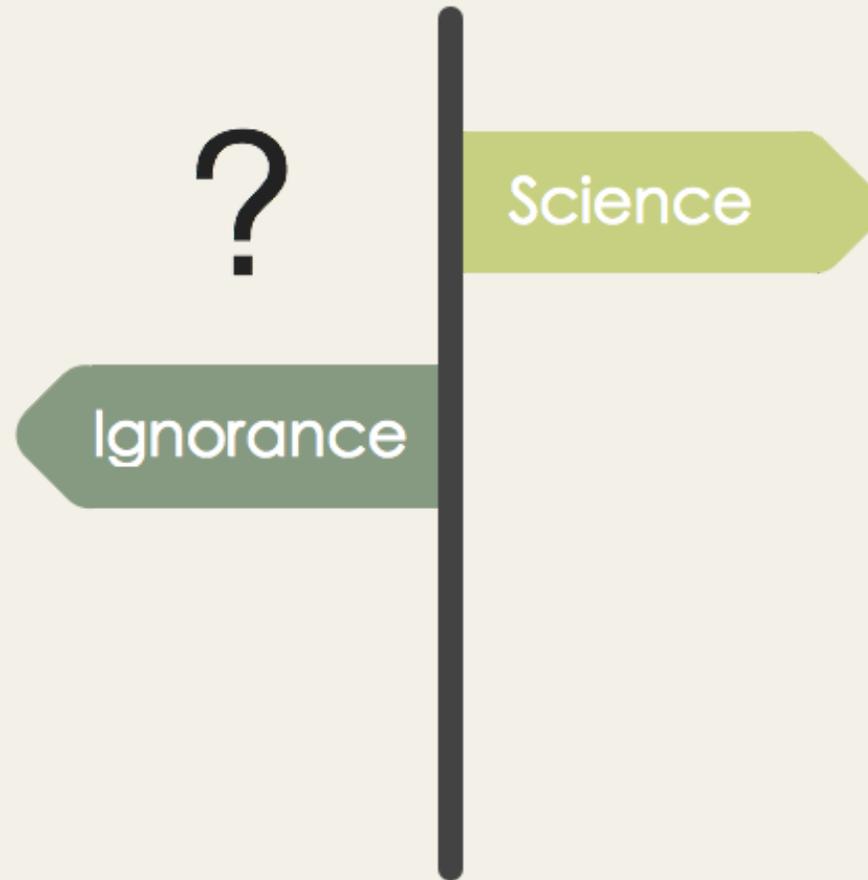
...Thoughts and intentions **do not** have nonlocal effects

...Free will **does not** exist

...Consciousness arises from the **unconscious matter of the brain**

...Mechanistic medicine is the **only kind of healing that works**





Rather, MindBody embraces a path to knowledge that honors **all aspects of experience**, including via the senses, intuition, and our own inner subjectivity

t h e o r y .

MindBody is a practical awareness that embraces a **wholeperson** view of personhood

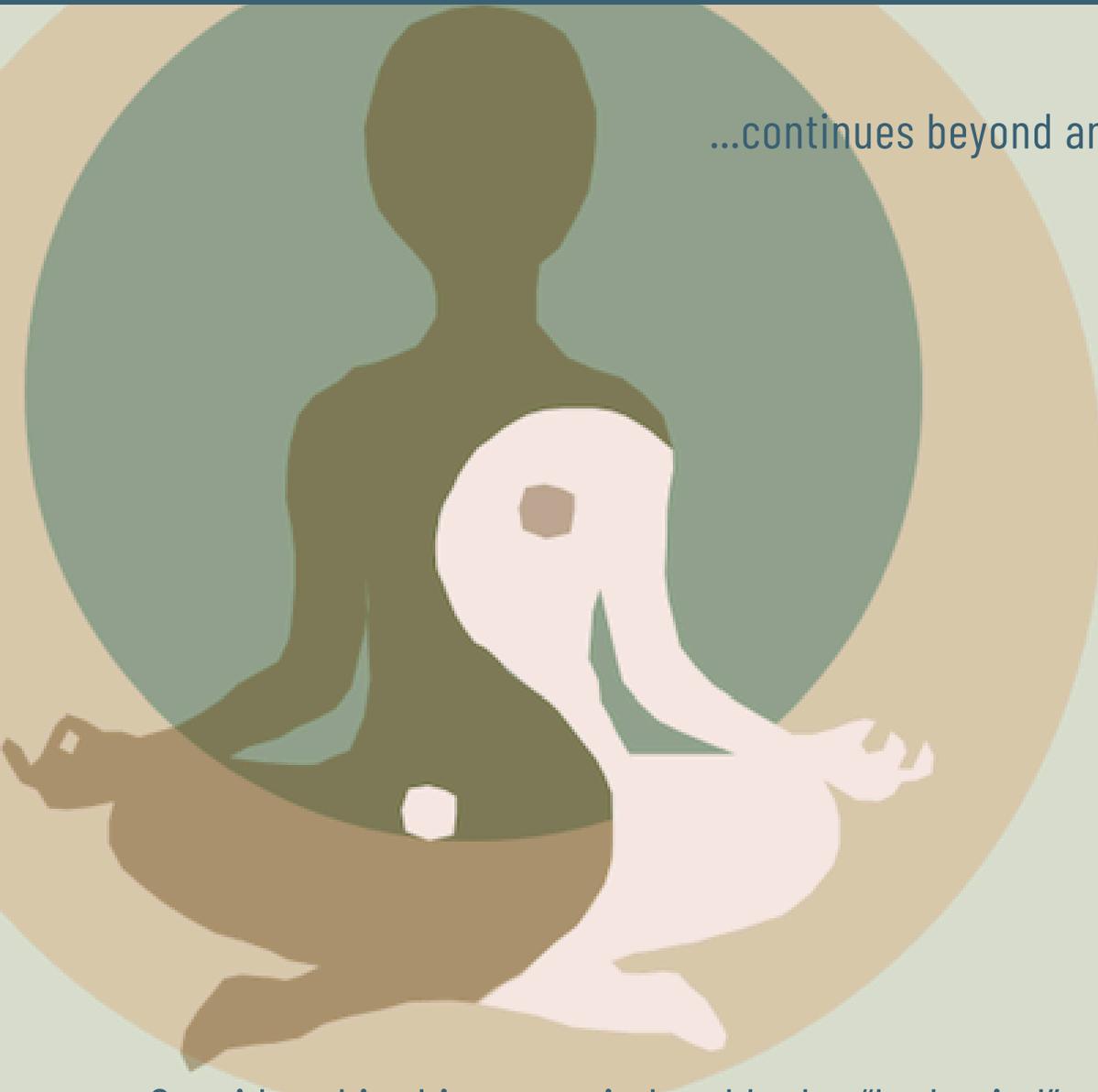


...That recognizes mind and body as **one**



...confined to a precise *location* inside the brain. A MindBody approach to well-being does assume that mind exists **non-locally**, able to occupy the same "space" as body

...continues beyond any perceived boundary, such as the skin



Considered in this way, mind and body—“bodymind”—are **inseparable** aspects of personhood represented by the whole, an indivisible and ultimately **unbounded** state of being



...the personal **meaning** that is apparent in our life stories,
our relationships with others, and the world around us

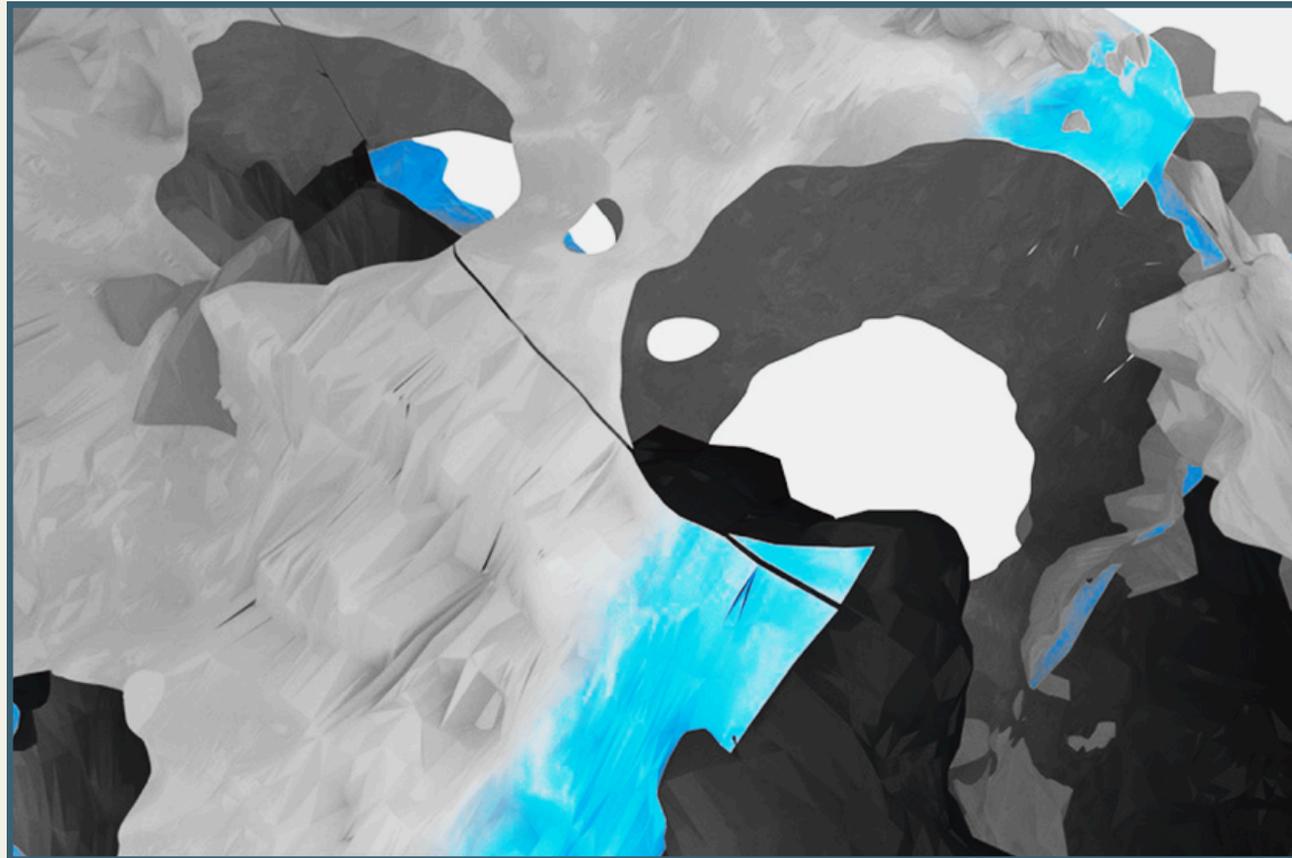


...a healing modality you can use to simultaneously
transform your emotional, psychological and physical health

...It's all about **your subjective story**



The same story which—in conventional medicine—is **discarded** as your doctor focuses on your symptoms alone, much like throwing the baby out with the bathwater



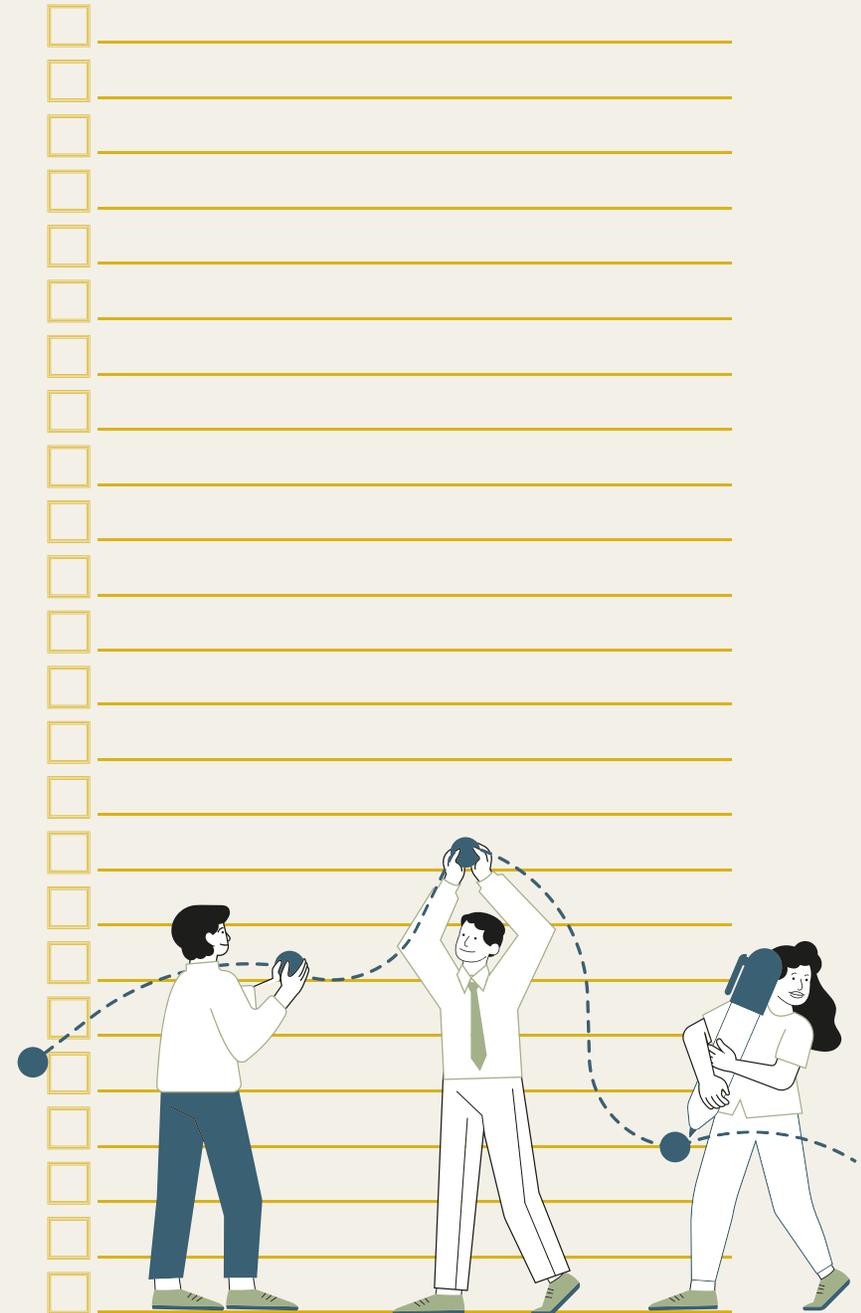
Chances are you see something quite different to **everyone** else. Your subjective experience of the image is uniquely **your own**. Your disease is like that too.

Your Life Is a Cornucopia of Subjective Experiences...Start by Writing Down These Experiences Along a Timeline Starting at Your Birth

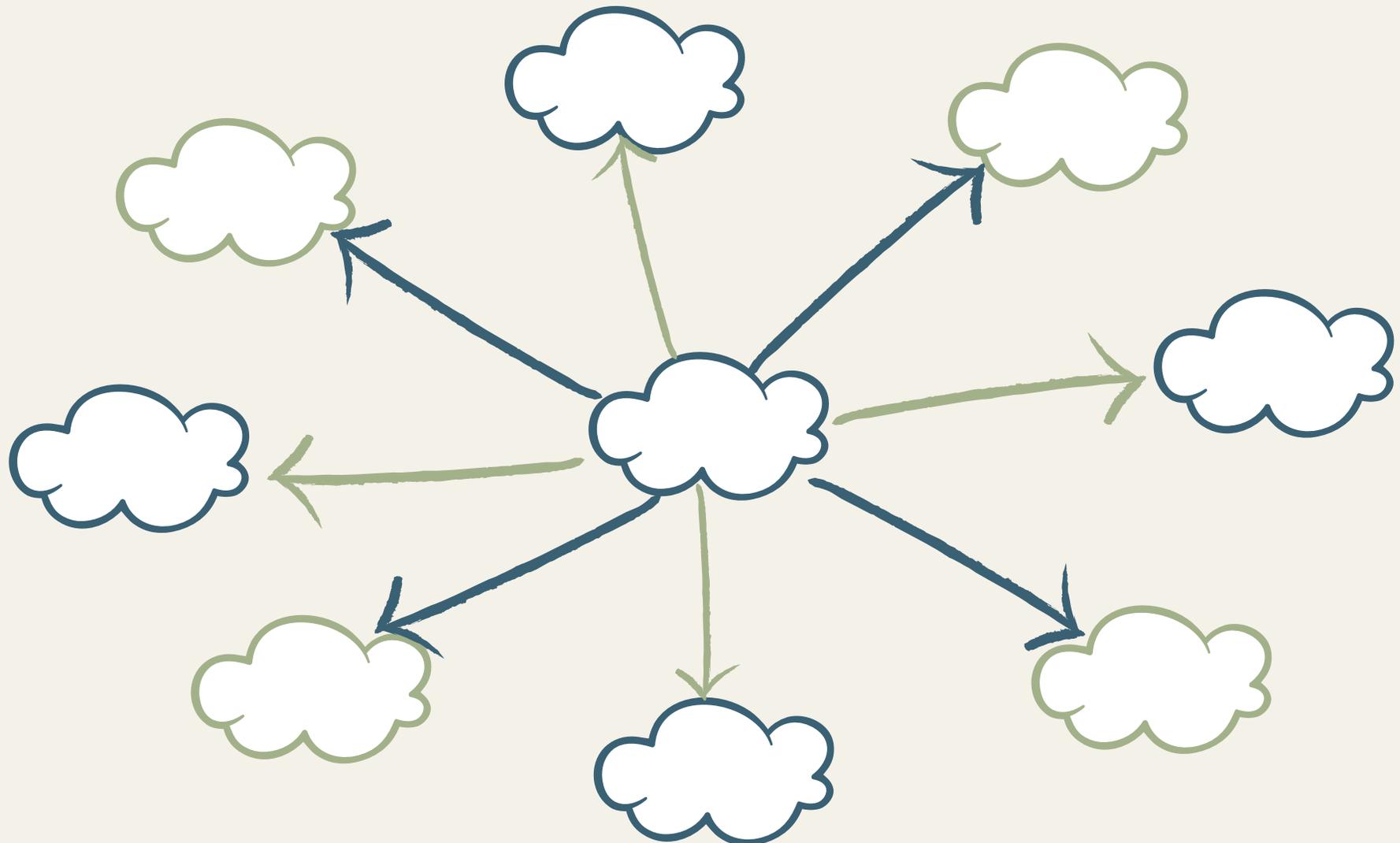
A vertical timeline consisting of 20 horizontal yellow lines, each preceded by a small yellow square box for marking.

Note key relationships, events (good and bad), and things that happened by choice as well as by chance.

And be sure to write down what was going on when you first noticed symptoms of your disease.



Begin to build a bridge between you—a wholeperson—and your symptoms by using the mindmap below to list all your current symptoms. If any of your symptoms worsen and improve together, consider grouping them as a single symptom cluster. If you need a hand naming some common symptoms, see over the next page.

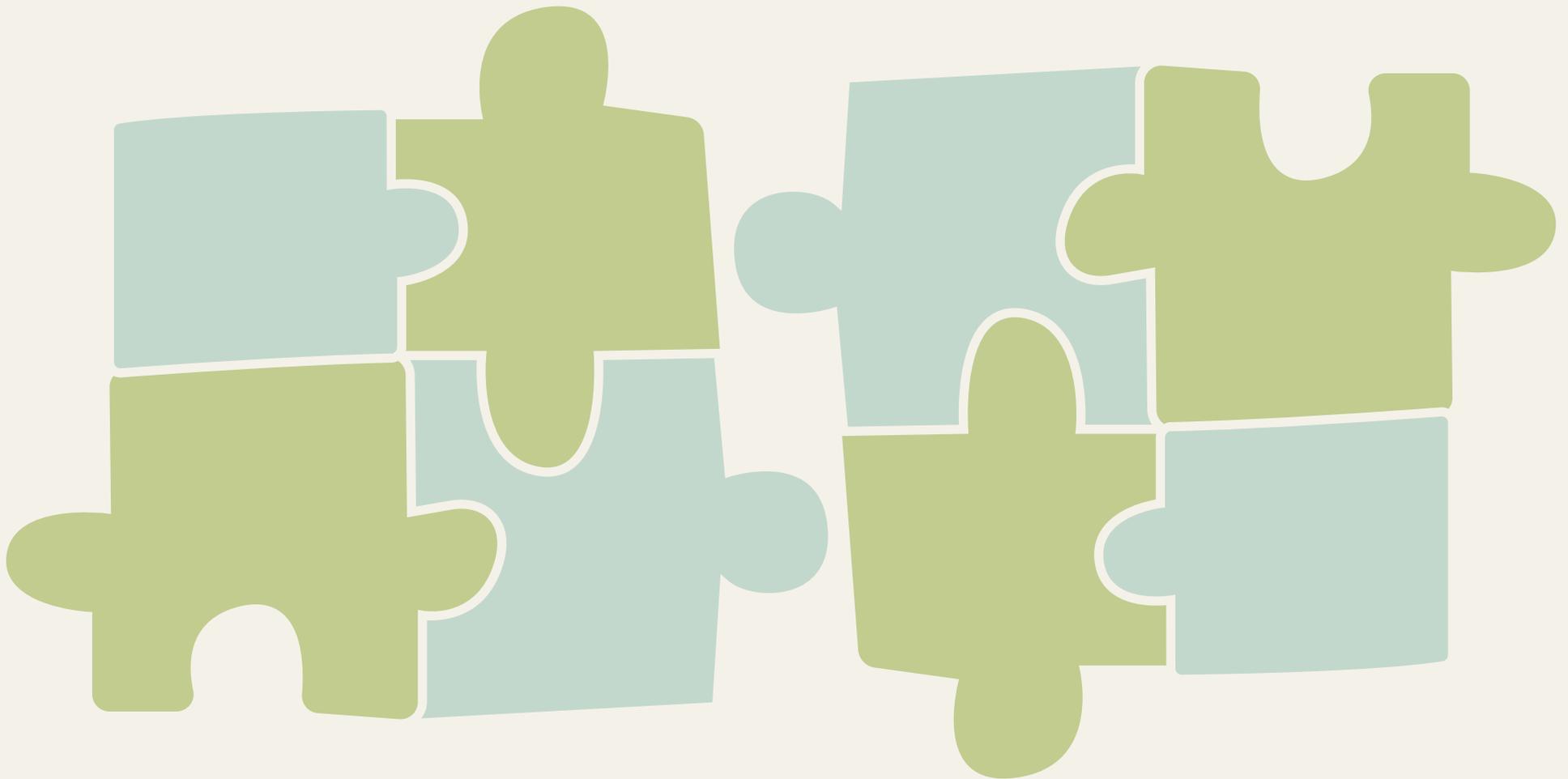


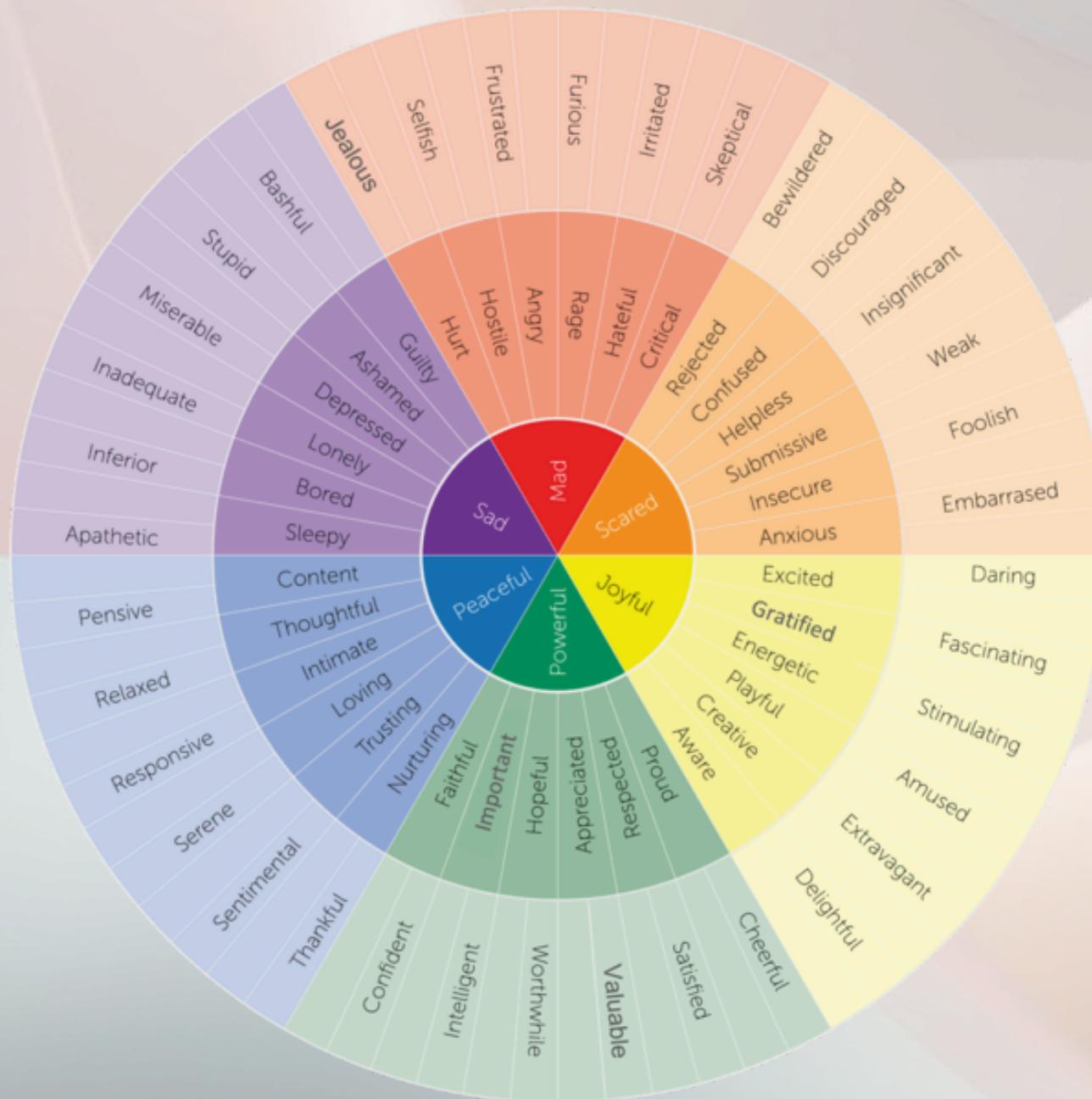
Fever Ache Fatigue Cough Headache Dizziness
 Physical Psychological **Addiction Anger Depression Hallucinations**
 High blood pressure High blood sugar Anemia Elevated white blood cell count **Paleness**
Vomiting Diarrhea Hot Flashes Night Sweats
Anxiety Paralysis Weight gain Insomnia Reduced libido Lethargy
 Muscle tension Irritability **Incontinence** Difficulty concentrating **Bradycardia** Disorientation
Headache Pruritus Nasal congestion Heartburn
Malingering Alexithymia High creatinine Elevated triglycerides
 Bruising **Bleeding Numbness Tenderness Stiffness** Grief **Swelling** Shuffling gait Rigidity
Pain Deformity Sensory loss Alopecia Spasms
Cyanosis Tingling sensation Disruptive behavior Psychopathy Disorientation
 Discolored urine **Lump** Erectile dysfunction **Incontinence** Incontinence **Broken bone Pus**
Pus Hypotension Respiratory distress Bluish
Redness Rash Sensitivity Snoring Strange taste Impulsive behavior
Confusion Cravings Delusions Cognitive deficit **Emotional detachment Dysmenorrhea**
Irrational fear Forgetfulness Itch Apathy Dizziness

If you cannot find your own symptoms from the list above, go to <https://symptoms.webmd.com/> and enter your age and gender, then click on the region of the body where your symptoms are located, and choose among the symptoms listed.

Next, while thinking about your individual symptoms or symptom cluster(s), ask yourself, “What is the feeling that goes with this?” Use the feelings’ wheel on the next page to help you identify possible feelings that best represent your symptoms. Then write down the names of your feelings in the spaces below.

If you’re unsure, try naming different feelings aloud and notice where in your body there is a corresponding sensation or resonance. The names of feelings, their embodied location, and physical symptoms often “say” the same thing!





The Feelings Wheel: Modified from an image by Thehistoryhead available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Feelings_Wheel.png and licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International license.

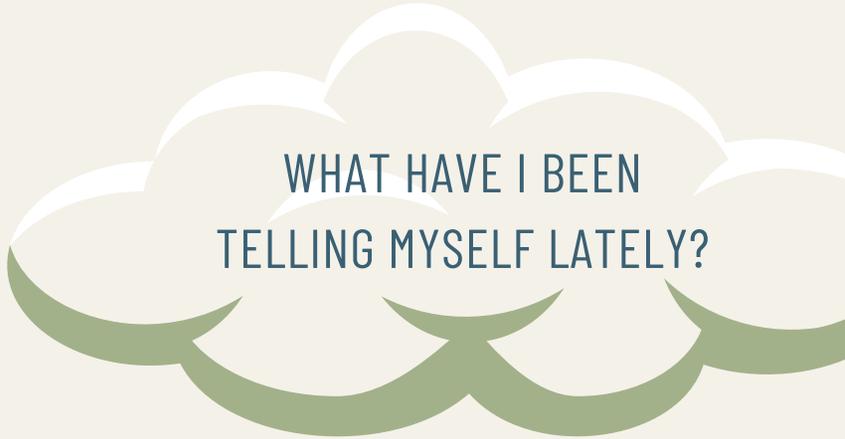
In our journey towards understanding chronic disease, it's essential to acknowledge that thoughts—as for our symptoms and feelings—are interwoven aspects of our being. Just as symptoms provide valuable signals about our body's well-being, thoughts can illuminate our inner landscape, revealing beliefs and narratives that shape our experiences. When we start to see our thoughts as part of a unified whole, we gain a deeper understanding of ourselves.

Thoughts can often be critical or limiting, creating narratives that diminish our sense of self, and which constrict and misshape our body. By embracing these thoughts without judgment, we open the door to curiosity.

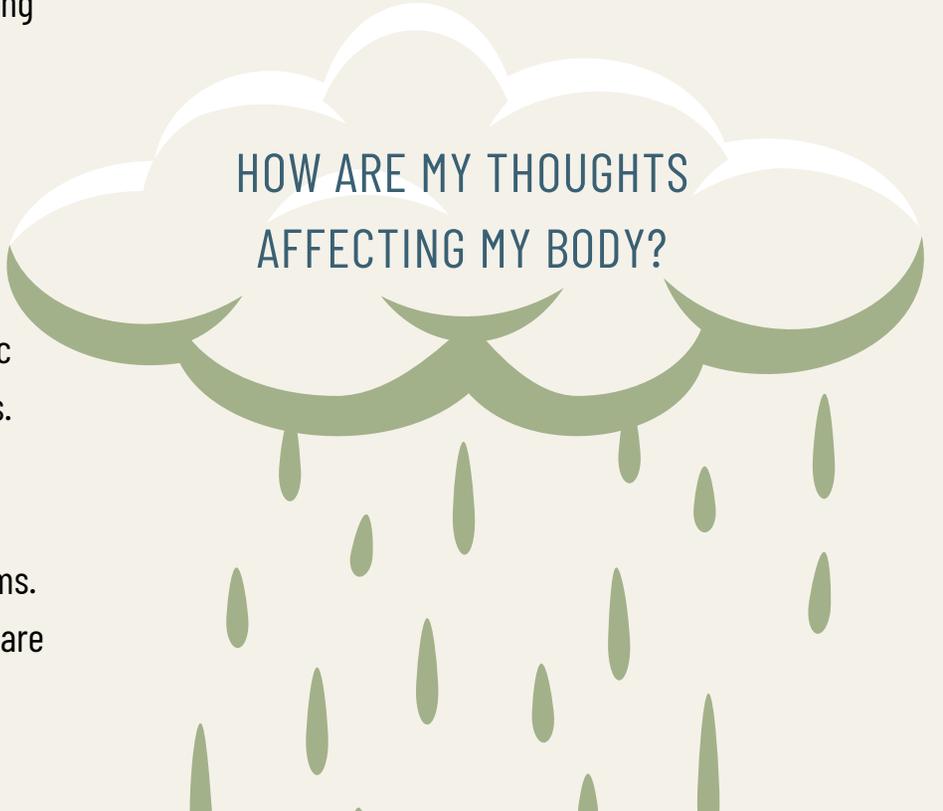
What are the stories you've been telling yourself? How do these stories reflect your feelings and physical symptoms?

Recognizing that our thoughts are merely one thread in the complex fabric of our existence allows us to gently unravel and reweave these narratives.

As we learn to embrace ourselves as wholepersons, we are empowered to transform the dialogue within, leading to healing that transcends symptoms. In this journey, remember: Your thoughts are not separate from you; they are part of your path to understanding, well-being and wholeness.



WHAT HAVE I BEEN
TELLING MYSELF LATELY?



HOW ARE MY THOUGHTS
AFFECTING MY BODY?

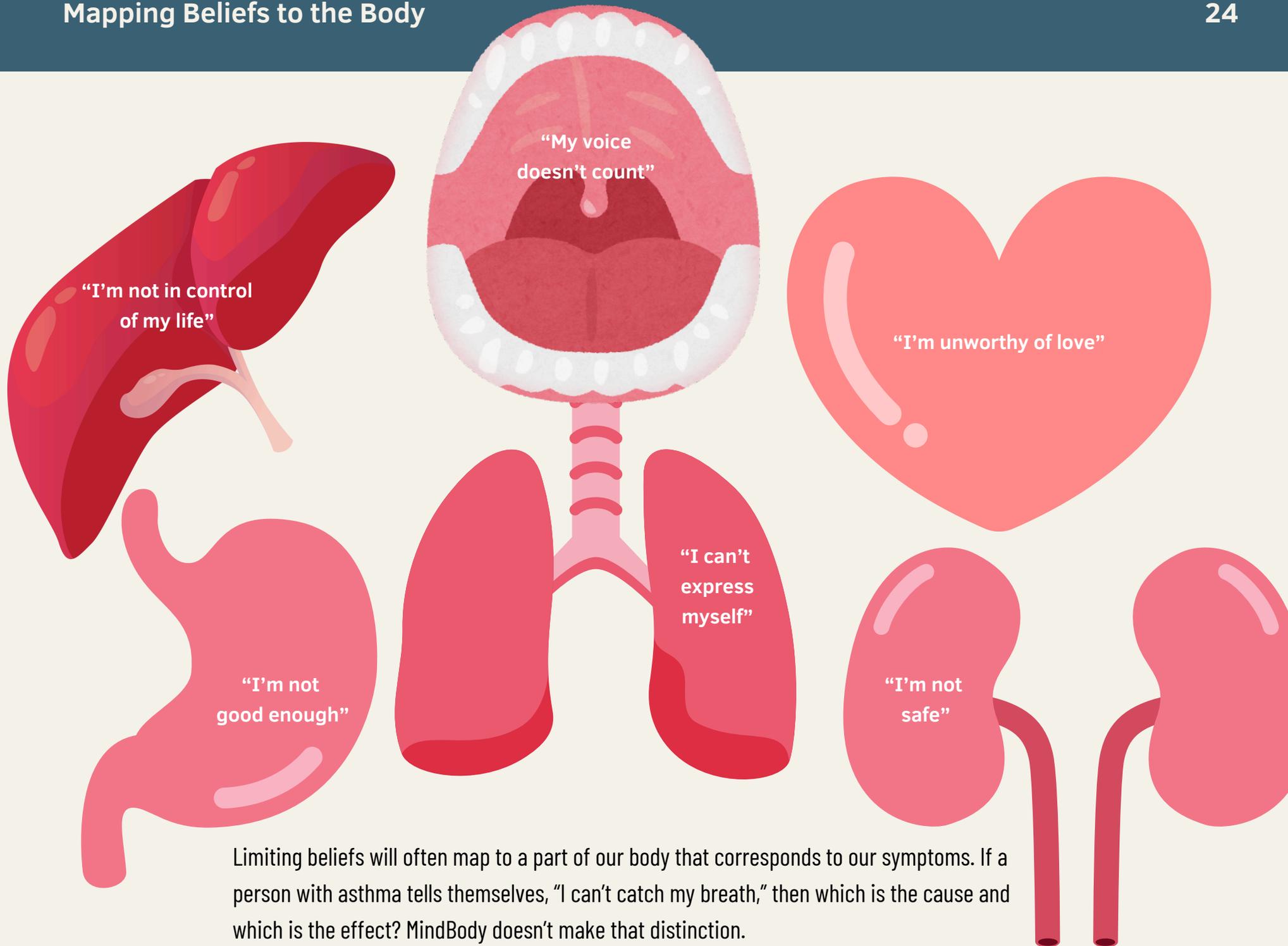


*What have I been telling myself lately?**

Write for five minutes, allowing your thoughts to flow freely, while focusing on a specific, bothersome symptom.

Then, read what you've written, highlighting any negative or limiting beliefs.

* What we often tell ourselves has usually been ingrained within us for much longer than we realize.



“I PUT ON A BRAVE FACE”



Woman with a long-standing facial rash struggling with her own shame in response to her husband's depression

“THIS CANCER HAS BEEN MY LIFE”



Man with testicular cancer that began while undergoing a workplace redundancy and expecting the birth of his son; his son had been conceived following assisted reproductive therapy as a result of his male factor infertility

“I NEVER HAVE ENOUGH”

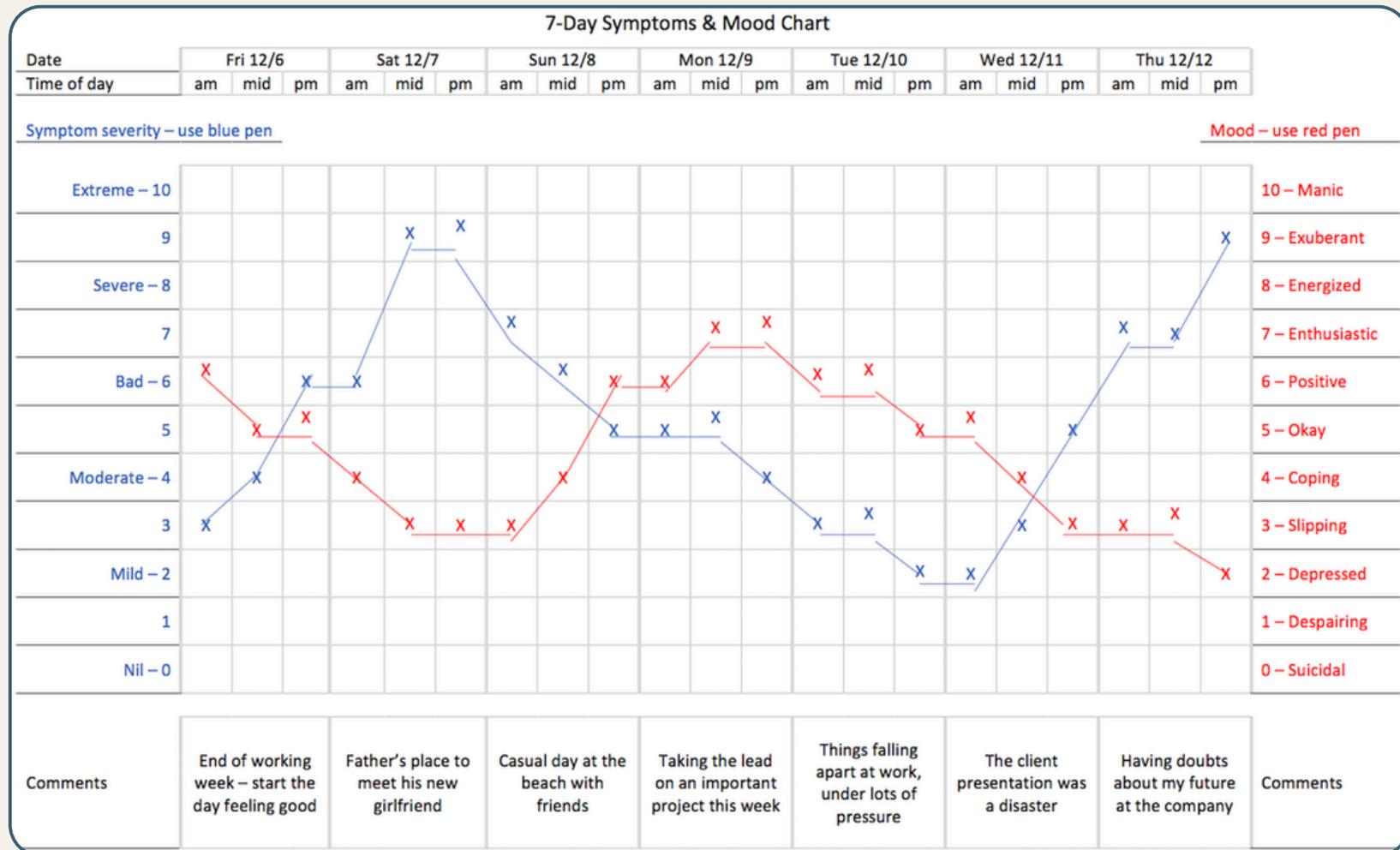


Me, before I healed my acid reflux disease; the stomach being a vessel for sufficiency (and, in my case, inadequacy and shame)



WHAT'S YOUR METAPHOR?

Creating a chart of your symptoms and mood allows you to visualize how your experiences are reflected in your body over time. In the example below, Jamal has tracked the severity of his acid reflux symptoms—heartburn and regurgitation—using a scale from 0 (nil) to 10 (extreme), represented in blue. He has also rated his general mood on the same scale, represented in red. The chart displays both symptom severity and mood across three daily data points: morning (am), midday (mid), and evening (pm) for each of the seven days. Additionally, there is space at the bottom of each day for brief comments on key events or experiences.



Jamal's chart reveals a strong connection between the severity of his heartburn and regurgitation symptoms and his mood, tracked three times daily over the week. His symptoms worsened and mood dropped significantly following a visit to his father and his father's new girlfriend, which likely stirred complex feelings related to unresolved family dynamics. In contrast, his symptoms and mood improved the next day when he relaxed with friends at the beach, a nurturing environment that provided a sense of safety.

The challenges he faced at work, including the excitement of leading an important project followed by a disastrous client presentation, contributed to his declining mood and escalating symptoms. Initial optimism transformed into disappointment and overwhelm, exacerbating his doubts about the future and fueling his depression.

Jamal's experiences underscore how unexplored emotional states can impact physical symptoms of disease. Focusing on these emotions can help him uncover deeper insights into his experiences, allowing not only for more effective coping strategies, but also greater insights into how he conceptualizes his own disease.

Ready to try it out for yourself?

7-Day Symptoms & Mood Chart

Date																					
Time of day	am	mid	pm																		
<u>Symptom severity – use blue pen</u>																			<u>Mood – use red pen</u>		
Extreme – 10																			10 – Manic		
9																			9 – Exuberant		
Severe – 8																			8 – Energized		
7																			7 – Enthusiastic		
Bad – 6																			6 – Positive		
5																			5 – Okay		
Moderate – 4																			4 – Coping		
3																			3 – Slipping		
Mild – 2																			2 – Depressed		
1																			1 – Despairing		
Nil – 0																			0 – Suicidal		
Comments																		Comments			

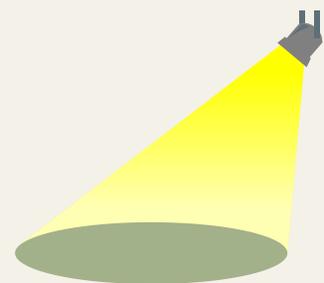
S Are my **symptoms** worse at certain times?

m Is my **mood** worse at certain times?

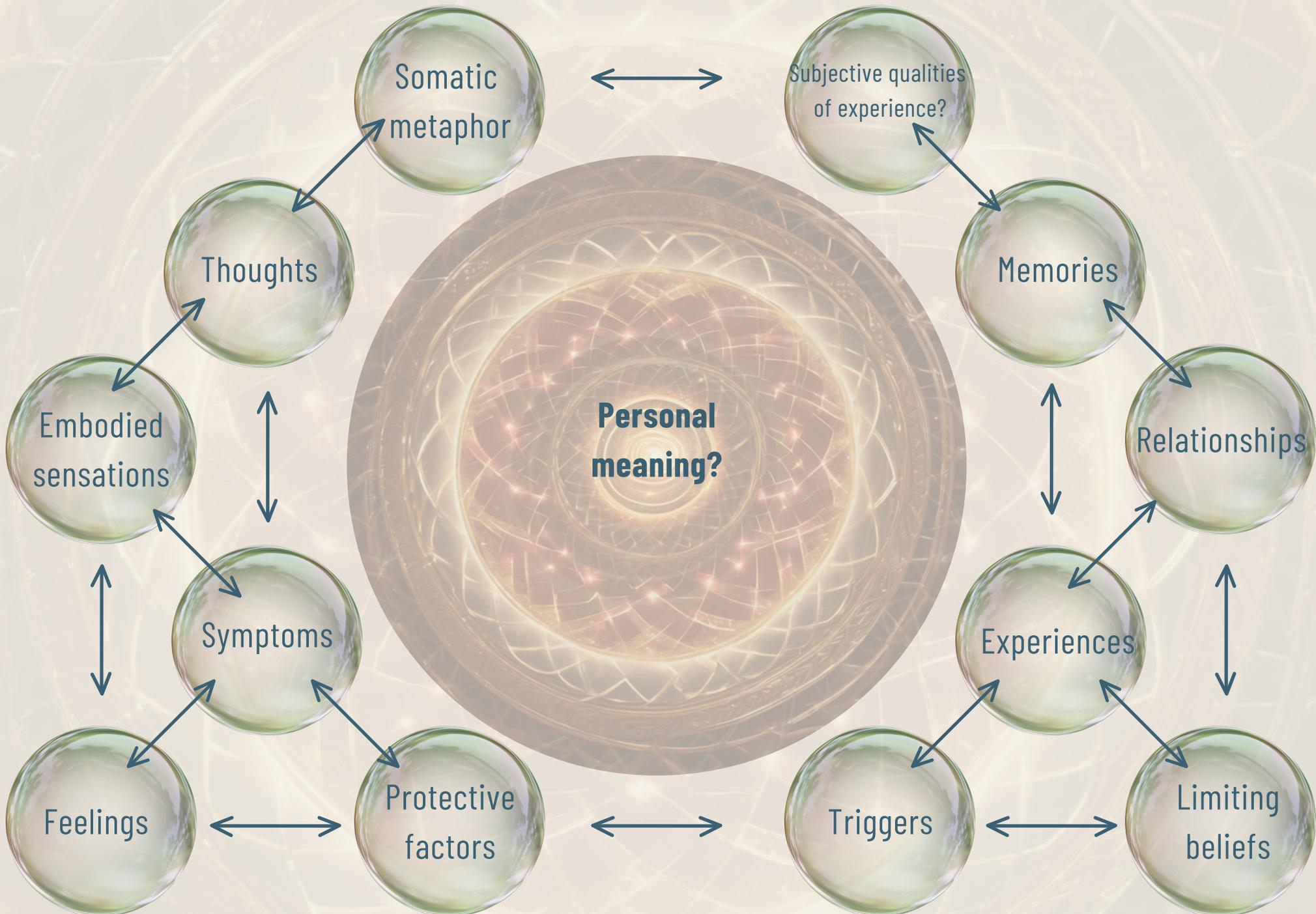
i What types of events can I **identify** as triggers?

l How do I **look** after myself? What helps my symptoms go down?

e **Evaluate:** How can I put this information together?







As you reach the end of this workbook, take a moment to acknowledge the profound healing journey you have embarked upon. Through curiously exploring your symptoms, feelings, thoughts, and life experiences, you are now weaving together the intricate drivers of your chronic illness. This exploration is not merely a means of understanding your disease; it is a foundational step toward healing and personal empowerment.

By reflecting on the unity of factors in your story that come together to produce personal meaning, you are cultivating awareness of your unique emotional, psychological and physical landscape. You are gaining the tools to recognize limiting beliefs, understand the burden of your old narrative, and create an alternative inner dialog of curiosity and compassion.

Healing is not a destination, but a continuously unfolding journey into the depths of self-awareness. As you integrate each new insight, remember that every step you take contributes to a broader understanding of your wholeperson. Embrace this unitary approach as it nurtures your emotional, psychological and physical well-being.

As you continue on your path, consider expanding your knowledge and toolkit. For a deeper dive into healing, I invite you to explore my book, **"Your Home Remedy for Acid Reflux Disease: Live, Eat and Heal Abundantly."** Although I have primarily written this book for people with acid reflux disease/GERD, the principles of healing this disease are the same as for any other. I am confident this resource will complement the insights you have gained here, and offer you a deeper understanding of your specific illness as well as the tools needed to unlock your own healing.

Your story matters, and sharing it can inspire both your healing and the healing of others. Together, let's create a community that embraces the diversity of chronic illnesses and prioritizes a MindBody or meaning-based story approach to emotional, psychological and physical well-being. Thank you for joining me on this transformative journey. Your healing and empowerment is yours to unfold.

