

# The Psychosocial Impact of Vitiligo

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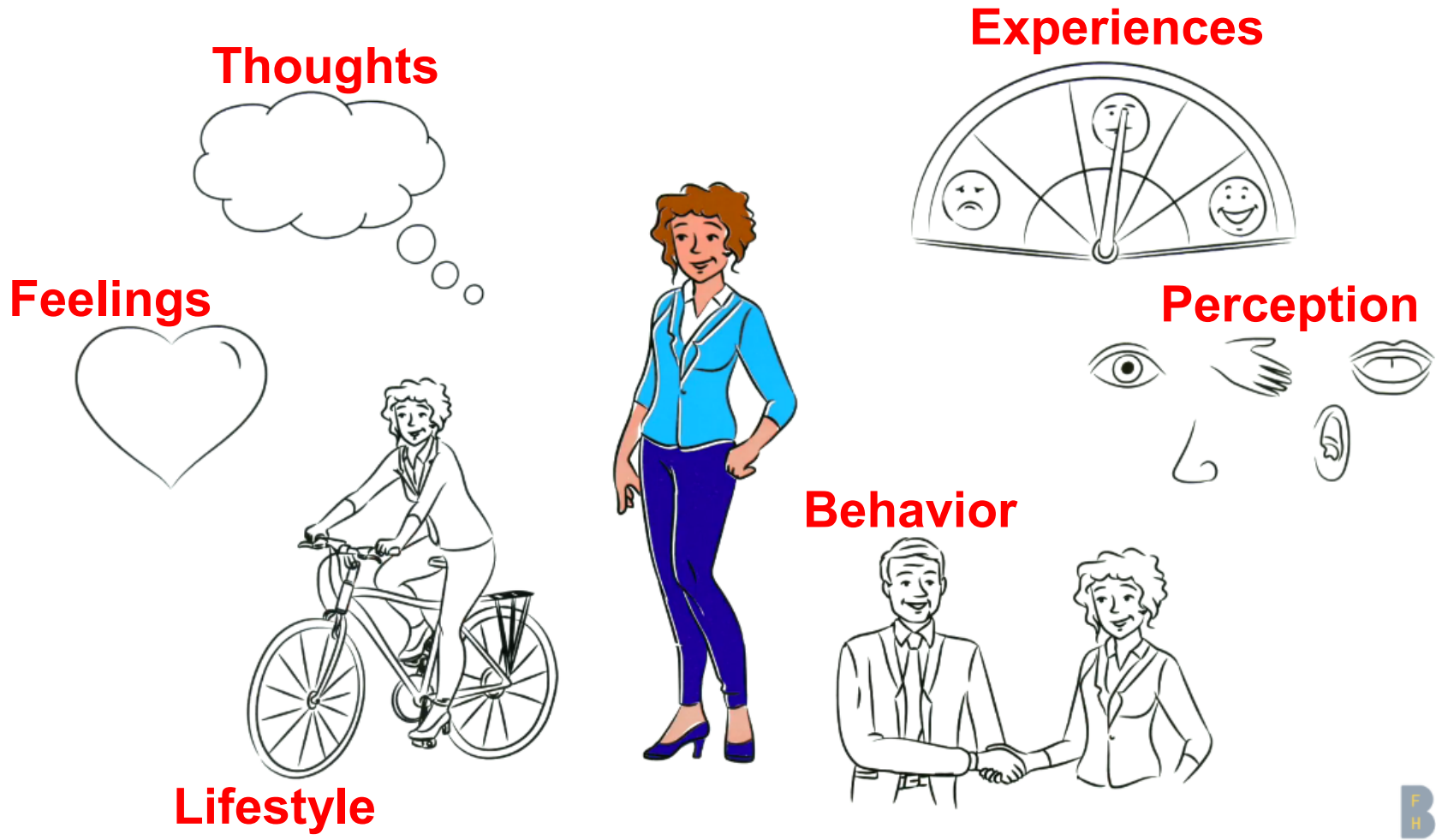
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# What is Psychosocial Health?

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Psychosocial health is an alternating condition that involves the reciprocal **adjustment** and **dependency** between an **individual** and his or her **social environment**.

# What is Psychosocial Health?, continued



# What is Psychosocial Health?, continued

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## Psychological

- Experiences
- Perceptions
- Thoughts
- Emotions / Feelings
- Behaviors

## Social

- Interaction and Relationships with Others
- Society
- Environment
- Culture and Traditions

# Then vs. Now

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Most physicians think vitiligo is a **disease of little consequence** because they evaluate the importance of an illness by the tendency of the disease to **impair physical activity** or to **pose a serious threat** to the life of the victim.

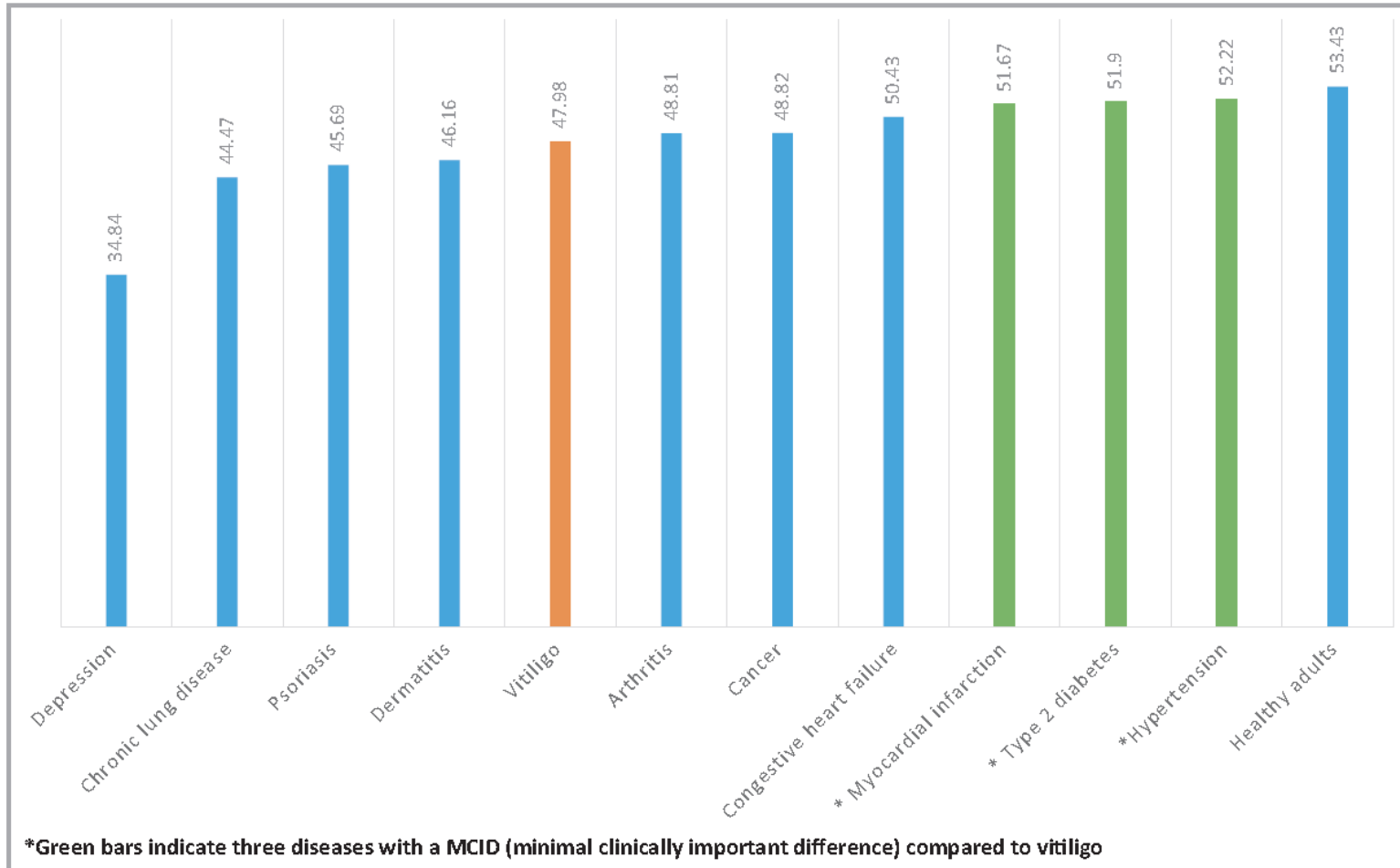
Porter et al., 1978

# Then vs. Now

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Finding ways to **alleviate the mental burden** of vitiligo and providing resources for patients struggling with its impact in their daily lives should be a high priority, as the ultimate goal is to **treat the patient, not the disease.**

# Overall Psychological Well-Being by Disease<sup>1</sup>



# The Psychosocial Impact of Vitiligo<sup>2</sup>

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- Embarrassment
- Lack of confidence
- Social anxiety
- Loss of self-esteem
- Body image issues
- Reduced quality of life (QOL)
- Perceived stigma



# Main Themes Describing Experience of Living with Vitiligo<sup>2</sup>

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Impact of Vitiligo

Coping with Vitiligo

Issues with Appearance / Body Image

Issues with the Sun

Medical

Reactions from Others

# Stressful Events and Experiences

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Research has shown it's not the **objective severity** of an event that makes it traumatic, but rather the **person's perception of the severity** of the event.

A traumatic experience for one person may not be traumatizing to another person.

# Stressful Events and Experiences, continued

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Do you conceptualize an event as traumatic, or as an opportunity to learn and grow?

Events are not traumatic until we experience them as traumatic.

Bonanno, G. <sup>3</sup>

# Experience of Living with Vitiligo

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“We can never presume that the so-called objective severity of a dermatological disorder correlates with the psychological impact.”

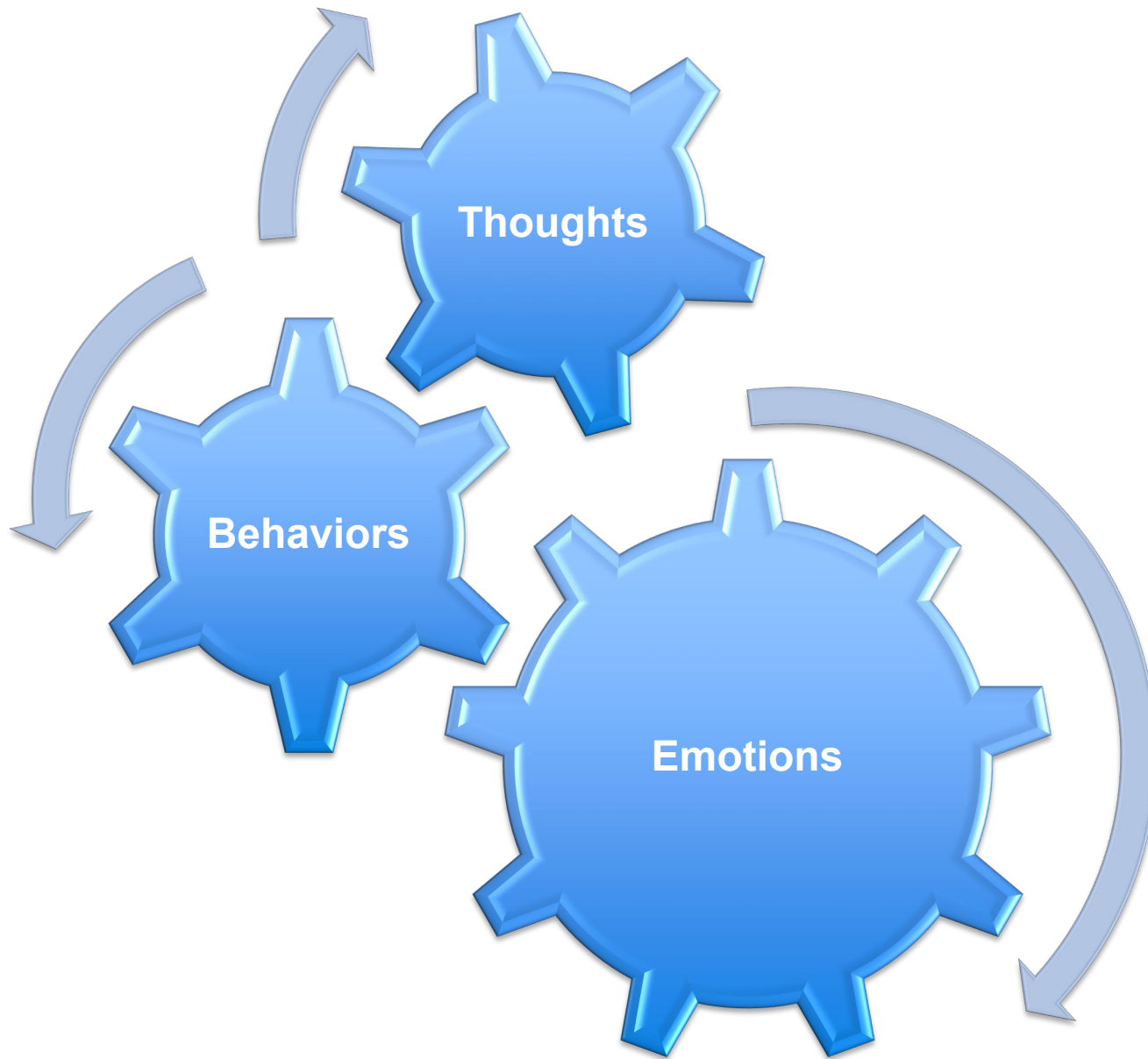
Fried, R. <sup>4</sup>

# Are You a Dandelion or an Orchid?<sup>5</sup>



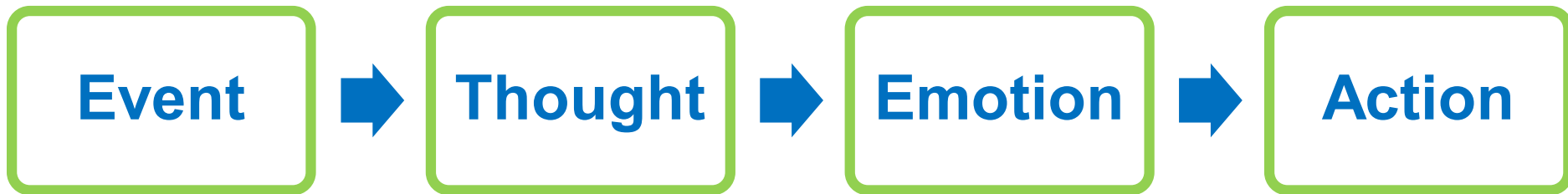
# Dandelions, Tulips, and Orchids<sup>6</sup>





# Basic Principles of Cognitive Therapy

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# Introduction to Emotions



Joy or happiness can ***motivate*** us to join in, take part, share



Sadness can ***motivate*** us to withdraw, brood, ruminate



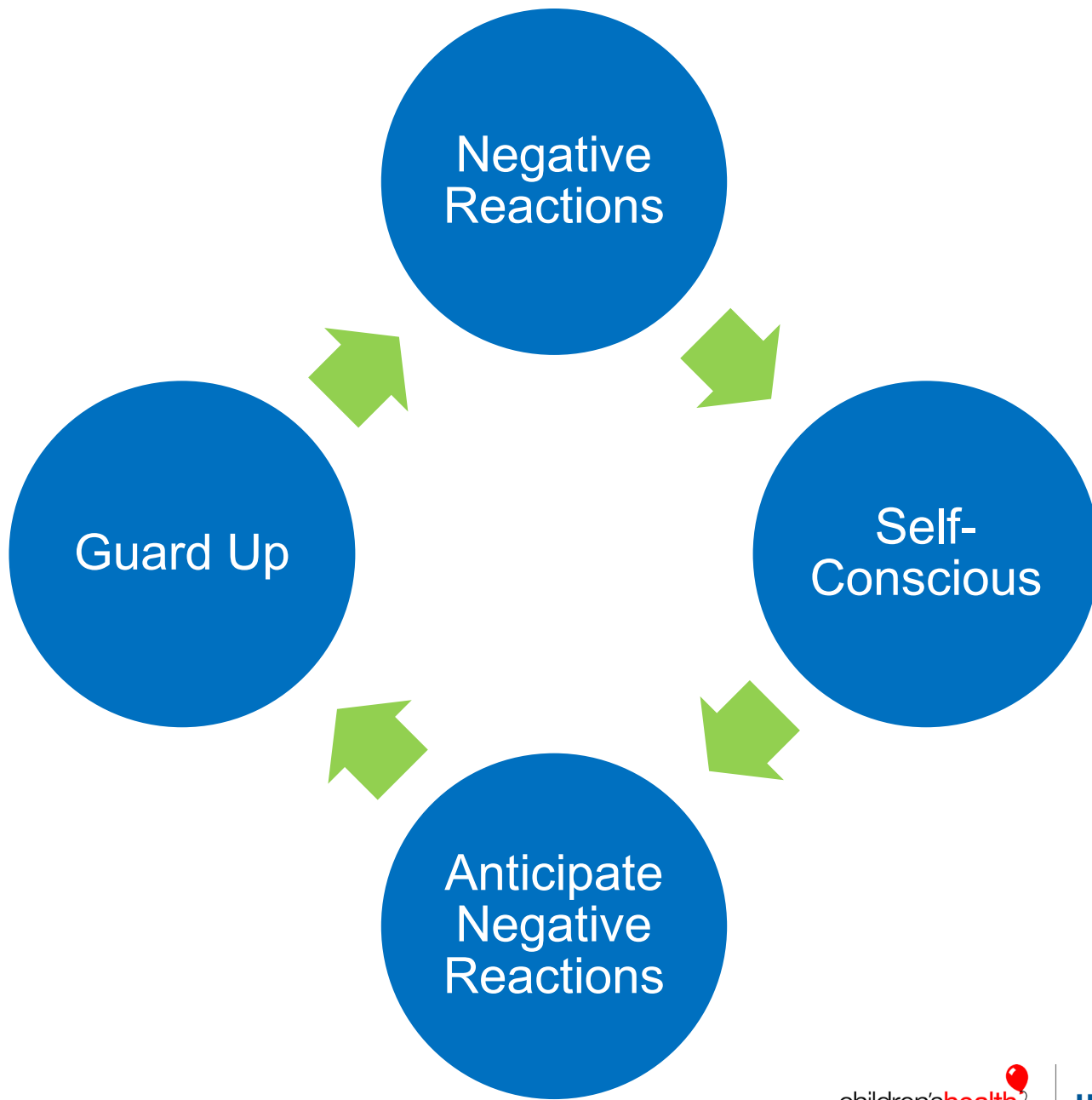
Anger can ***motivate*** us to attack, lash out, stand up for ourselves



Compassion, empathy, or sympathy can ***motivate*** us to offer comfort, be with



Embarrassment or humiliation can ***motivate*** us to hide





*"We're encouraging people to become involved in their own rescue."*

# Self-Compassion

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- Give yourself the gift of self-compassion
- Try to always remember to be kind to yourself
  - “There’s more to me than just my vitiligo”
  - “There are so many things I am good at, like writing, organizing, listening to people”
  - “I’m valuable in my own right”
- How you think about yourself makes a big difference in how you feel about yourself and how much you value yourself

# Self-Compassion, continued

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“How can we be expected to properly judge ourselves? We know all of our worst secrets. We are biased, and overly critical, and occasionally filled with shame. So you’ll have to just trust me when I say that you are worthy, important, and necessary.”

Lawson, J. <sup>7</sup>



# Reframing and Building Resilience<sup>8</sup>

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- Accept the uncontrollable
  - “In every situation, there are things that we cannot control. Sometimes, the uncontrollable is difficult to acknowledge or accept. What are some aspects of the situation that you feel you can't control?”
  
- Focus on the controllable
  - “Okay, you can't control some things, but what aspects of the situation can you control?”

# Reframing and Building Resilience,<sup>8</sup> continued

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- Identify and acknowledge your strengths
  - “What strengths do you have that you can use to help comfort and take care of yourself?”
- Find / Use the positive aspects of the situation
  - “Is there anything positive that you have learned about yourself that you can apply to this situation?”



# Communication Toolbox: Tools to Take Charge

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- The “Humor” Tool
  - The gift of putting things in perspective and being able to laugh at yourself
- The “Explanations” Tool
  - Short explanations are good for questions, comments, curiosity, and awkward situations
- The “Distraction” Tool
  - Change the topic
  - Distract yourself

# Communication Toolbox: Tools to Take Charge

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- The “Body Language” Tool
  - Facial expression
  - Posture
  - Eye contact
  
- The “Self-Motto” Tool
  - Pick a motto for yourself that you can recite to yourself whenever you start to feel bothered by something
    - “This is me and I’m proud of it”
    - “My vitiligo is just one aspect of me”



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# References

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- <sup>2</sup>Ahmed, A., Steed, L., Burden-Teh, E., Shah, R., Sanyal, S., Tour, S. ... Bewley, A. P. (2018). Identifying key components of a psychological intervention for people with vitiligo – a quantitative and qualitative study in the United Kingdom using web-based questionnaires of people with vitiligo and healthcare professionals. *Journal of the European Academy of Dermatology and Venerology*, 32(12), 2275-2283. doi: 10.1111/jdv.15168
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- <sup>4</sup>Clay, R. A., (2015). The link between skin and psychology. *Monitor on Psychology*, 46(2), 56. doi: 10.1037/e506852015-015
- <sup>5</sup>Fresh Air (2019, March 4). *Is your child an orchid or a dandelion? Unlocking the science of sensitive kids* [Radio Broadcast]. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2019/03/04/699979387/is-your-child-an-orchid-or-a-dandelion-unlocking-the-science-of-sensitive-kids>
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- <sup>7</sup>Lawson, J. (2015). *Furiously happy: A funny book about horrible things*. New York, NY: Flatiron Books.
- <sup>8</sup>Healthcare Toolbox. *What is PTE and how to help patients*. Retrieved from <https://www.healthcaretoolbox.org/latest-news/22-e-emotional-support/416-what-is-a-pte-and-how-to-help-patients.html>