Revitalizing Our Exhausted Brains

A "Mental Bandwidth" Perspective

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Ohio Program for Campus Safety & Mental Health, NEOMED

For Today...

Join PollEverywhere

Two ways to join:

1️⃣ Go to **PollEv.com**

Enter **BANDWIDTH**

2️⃣ Text **BANDWIDTH** to **37607**

In Zoom

- Click on "**Chat**" to open the chat window
  - We will be using this for comments and for question-answering
- You can **raise your hand** (from the "Participant" panel)
  - "Lower hand" when you're done

In one word (or two words hyphenated), what is on YOUR mind right now?

My Background

About Me...

About you...

- In the chat
  - The role or job that brings you to this webinar
  - One interesting thing that makes you feel happy or at peace

- Examples
  - Student; the sound of ocean waves
  - Radiology technician; the smell of chocolate chip cookies
  - Queen of the universe; the glimmer of diamonds in moonlight

http://everydaybandwidth.com/

Session Objectives

- **Describe mental bandwidth**, what impacts its availability, and how it can shape human behavior/choices

- Describe **how mental bandwidth impacts** productivity, satisfaction, and other important outcomes

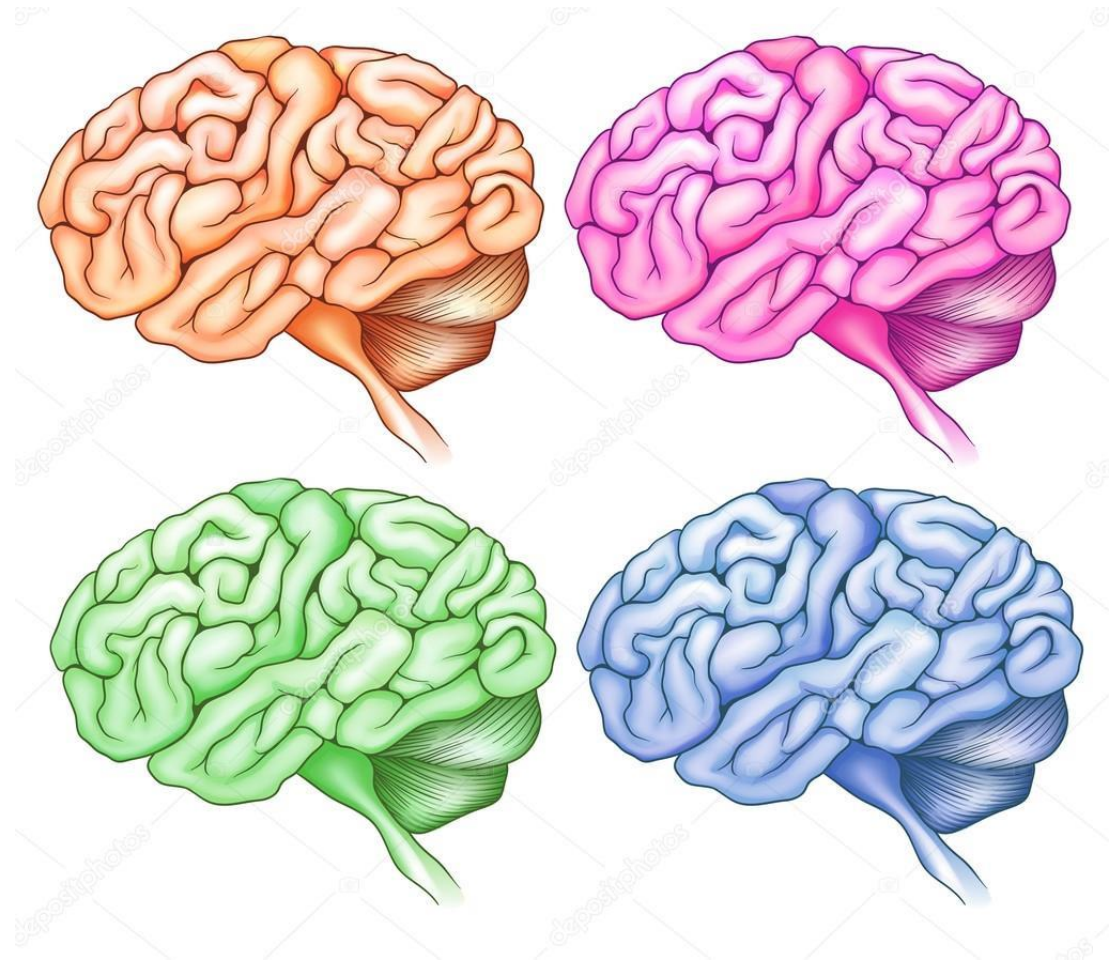- **Identify strategies** to protect mental bandwidth and increase desired outcomes

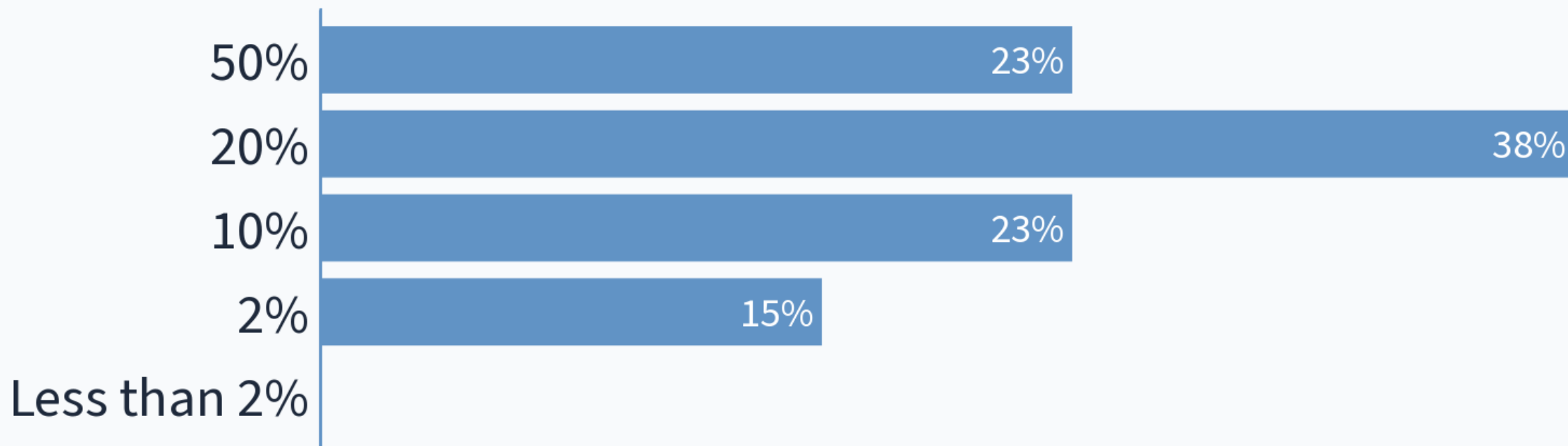# Mental Bandwidth Basics

What is "Mental Bandwidth"?

- Human Brain Processing
~11 million bits/second

- Television
~9 billion bits/second

Of our 11 million bps of brain processing power, about how much do we have conscious control over?

50%	23%
20%	38%
10%	23%
2%	15%
Less than 2%	

Mental Bandwidth is Extremely Limited

• We all have about the same capacity, but *availability* varies widely

Brain Processing is

99.9%

Automatic

Your
Mental
Bandwidth

0.1%

http://everydaybandwidth.com/
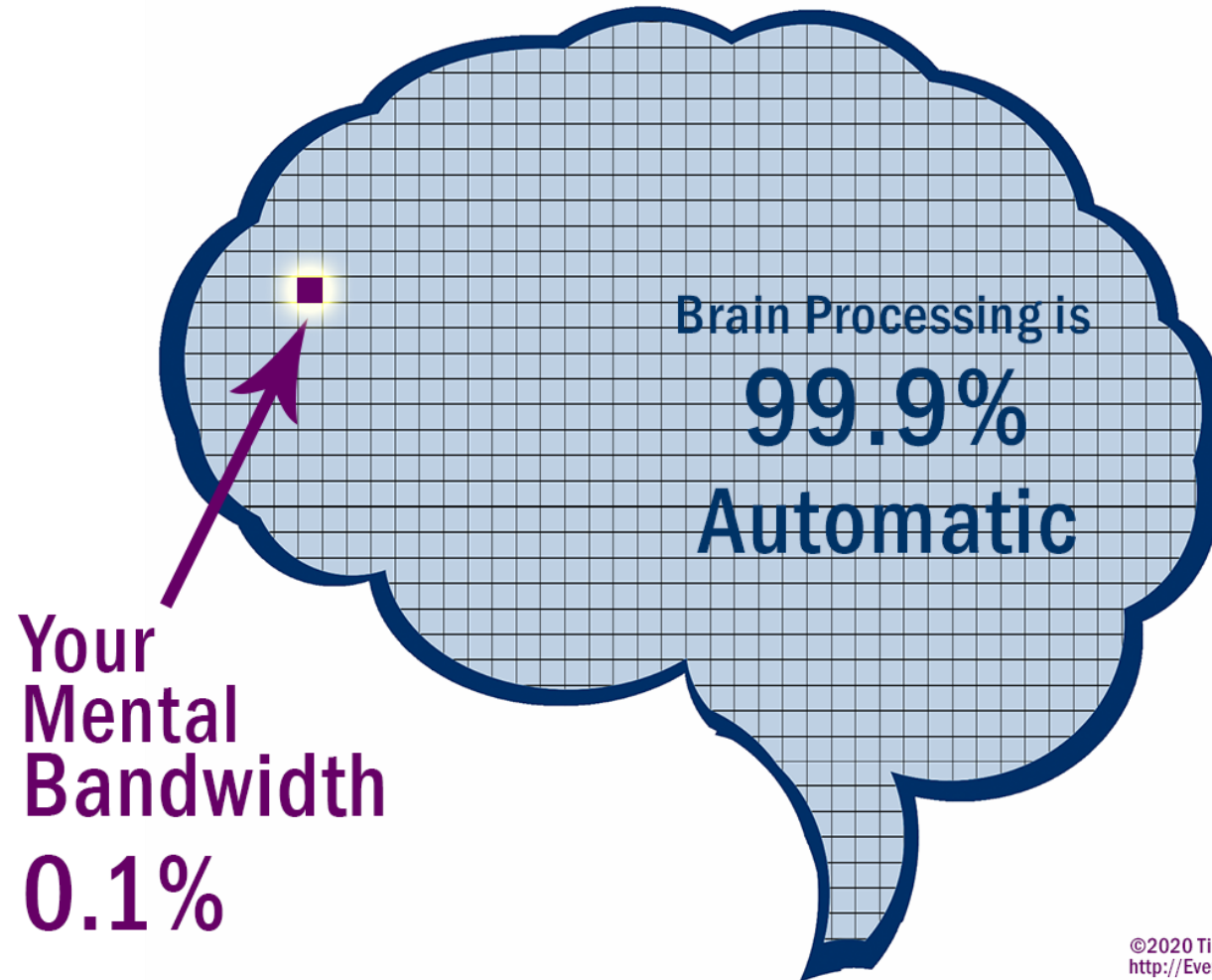
Bandwidth is Extremely Important

- It is needed for learning, productivity, innovation, creativity, meaningful interaction, patience, controlling impulses, and so on…

- It helps us to make nuanced, thoughtful decisions, and to take actions that are complex, unfamiliar, or demanding
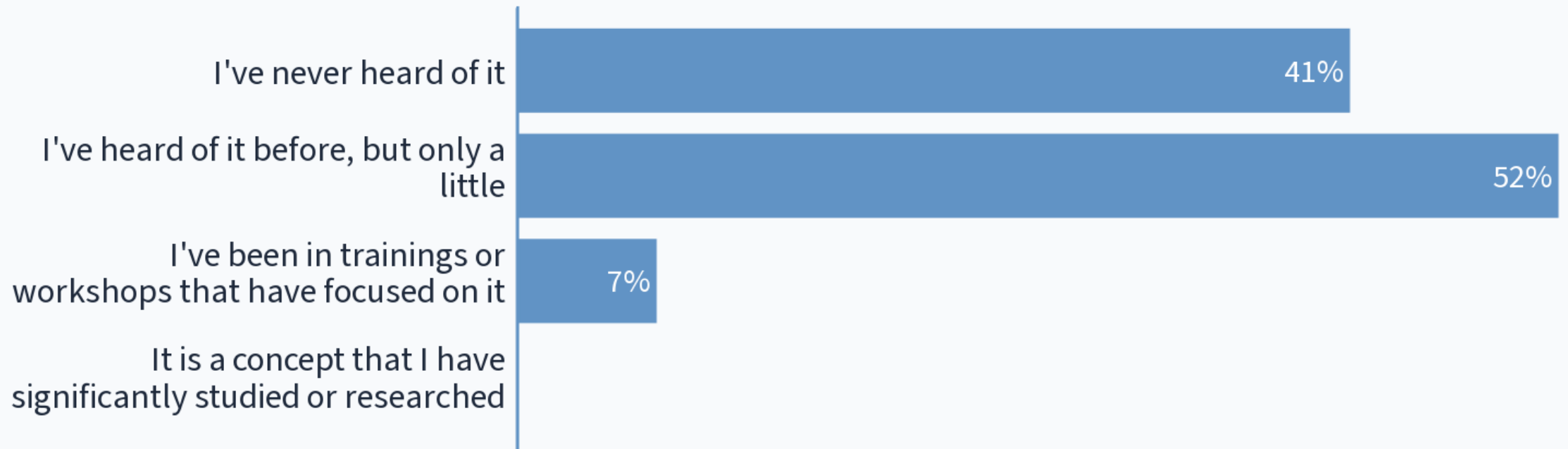
Bandwidth Availability

Mental & Physical Health Conditions

Financial & Basic Needs Insecurity

Responsibilities of Multiple Roles

Belongingness Uncertainty & Marginalization

Constantly Changing Expectations

Bandwidth Drains in a Pandemic

Isolation

Uncertainty

**Loss of Routines**

How Much of Your Bandwidth is Free?

- Do you regularly have trouble paying for the basics (rent, food, heat), paying your bills, or making it from paycheck to paycheck?

- Are you frequently conscious that you are the only one of your "identity" in a situation?

- On a daily basis, do you have a mental or physical condition or difference that takes up a significant portion of your thoughts or focus?

- Do you feel unwelcome or unsafe in your home or work environment?

- Are you regularly concerned for your personal well-being or safety, or the well-being and safety of people close to you?

- Are you most often functioning on not enough sleep, a diet that lacks essential vitamins & minerals, and/or a generally sedentary lifestyle?

- Are you often concerned that what you are doing is not good enough?
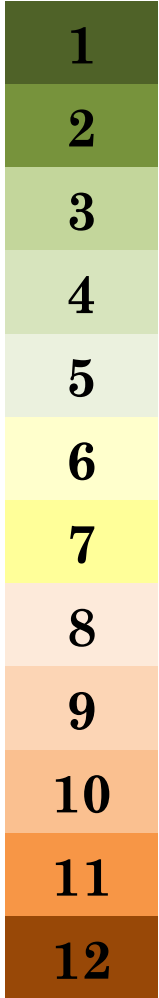
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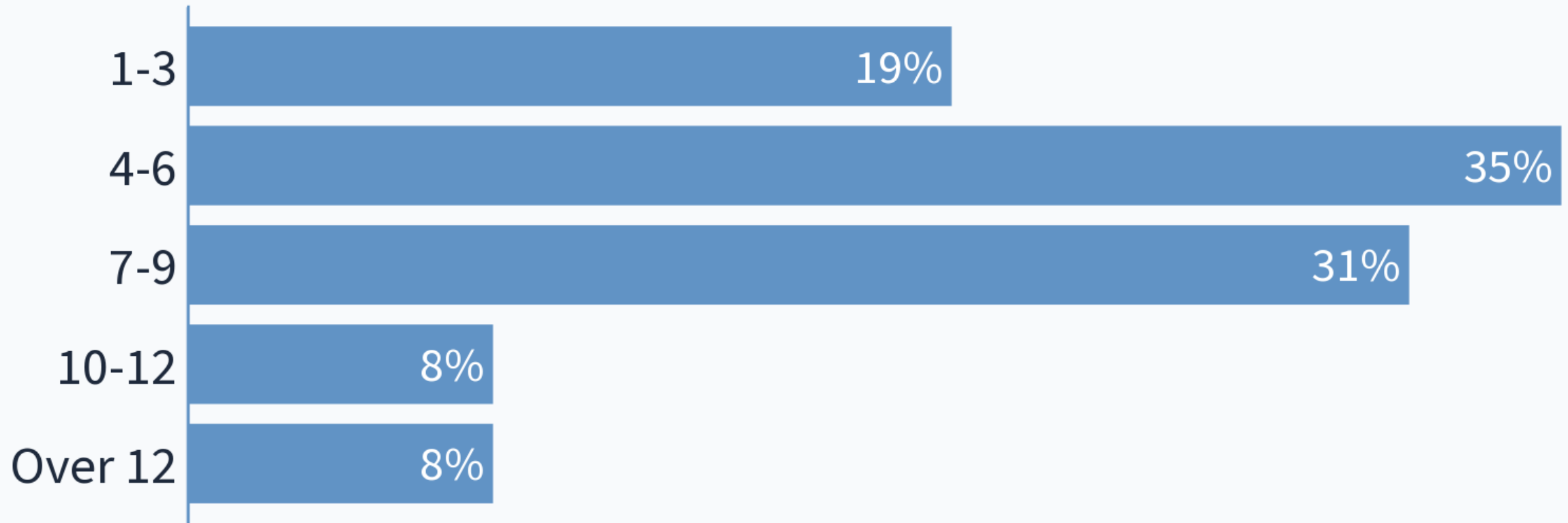
Bandwidth Exhaustion

Bandwidth Exhaustion

Not enough bandwidth for everything we try

Excuses

Avoidance

Disconnection

Substance Use

Media Overload

Mindless Eating

All Right | All Wrong

Right/Wrong Thinking
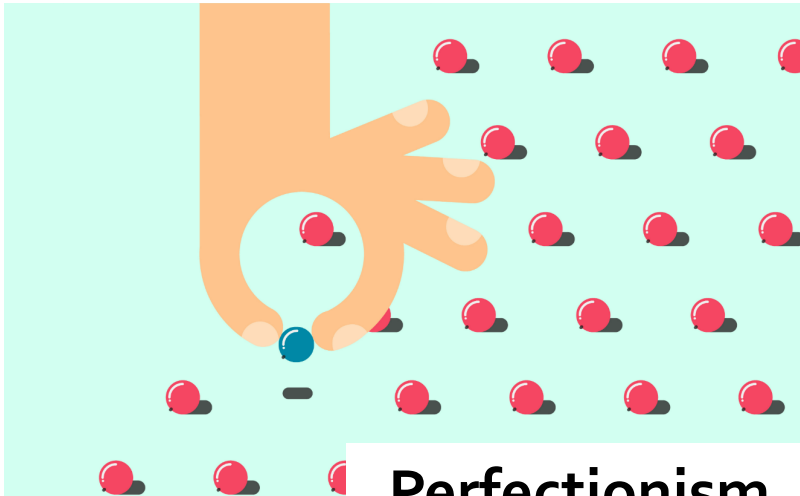
Perfectionism

Anger & Judgment

Long-Term Consequences of Bandwidth Exhaustion

Chronic Stress

I QUIT!

Giving Up

Worsening Health

What are some of the things draining your bandwidth these days?
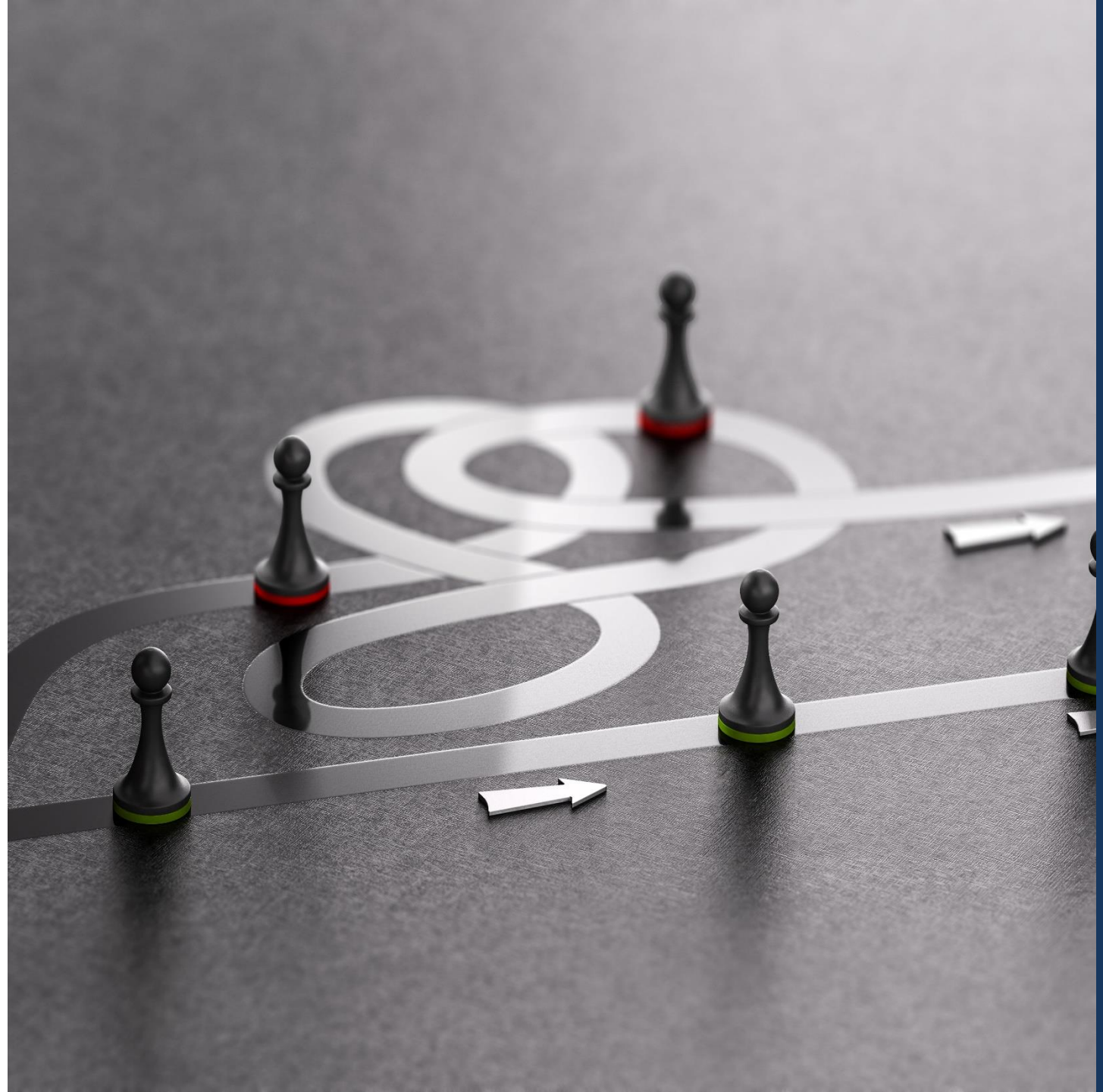
- Working?

- Learning?

- Leadership?

- Caregiving?

What To Do

STRATEGY 1:
Streamline Bandwidth Demands

What do you REALLY want those you influence to use their bandwidth for?

How do YOU want to invest your bandwidth?

Align Demands with Objectives

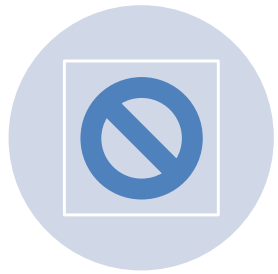# Stop the Information Overload

Discourage "Multi-Tasking"

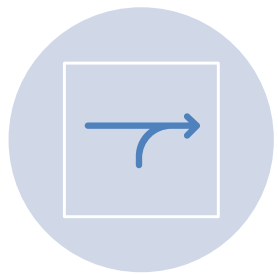# Scaffold Complex & Important Tasks

How can you streamline bandwidth demands for yourself and others?
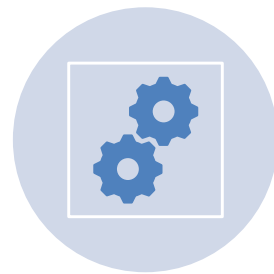
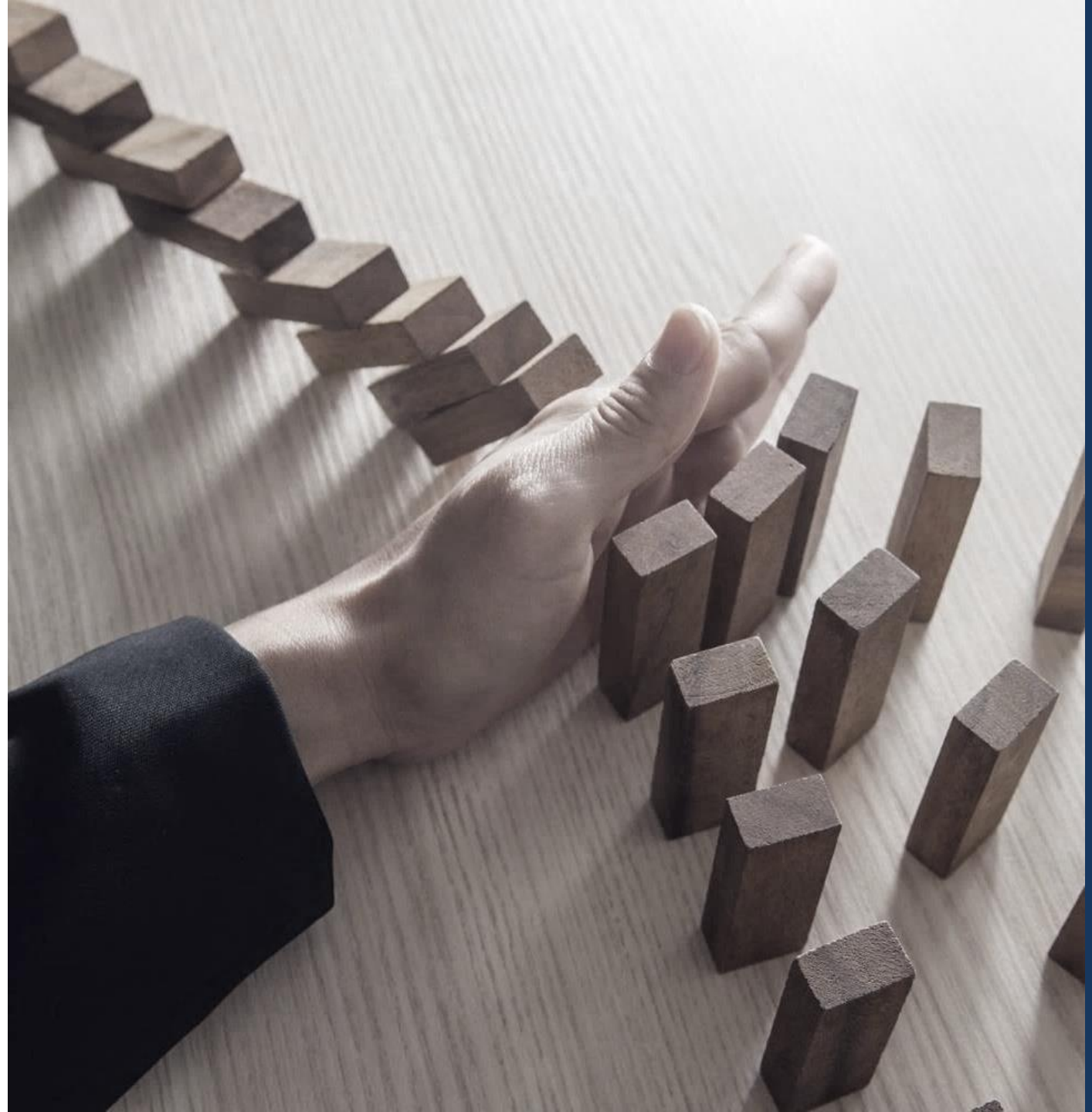Stop the information overload

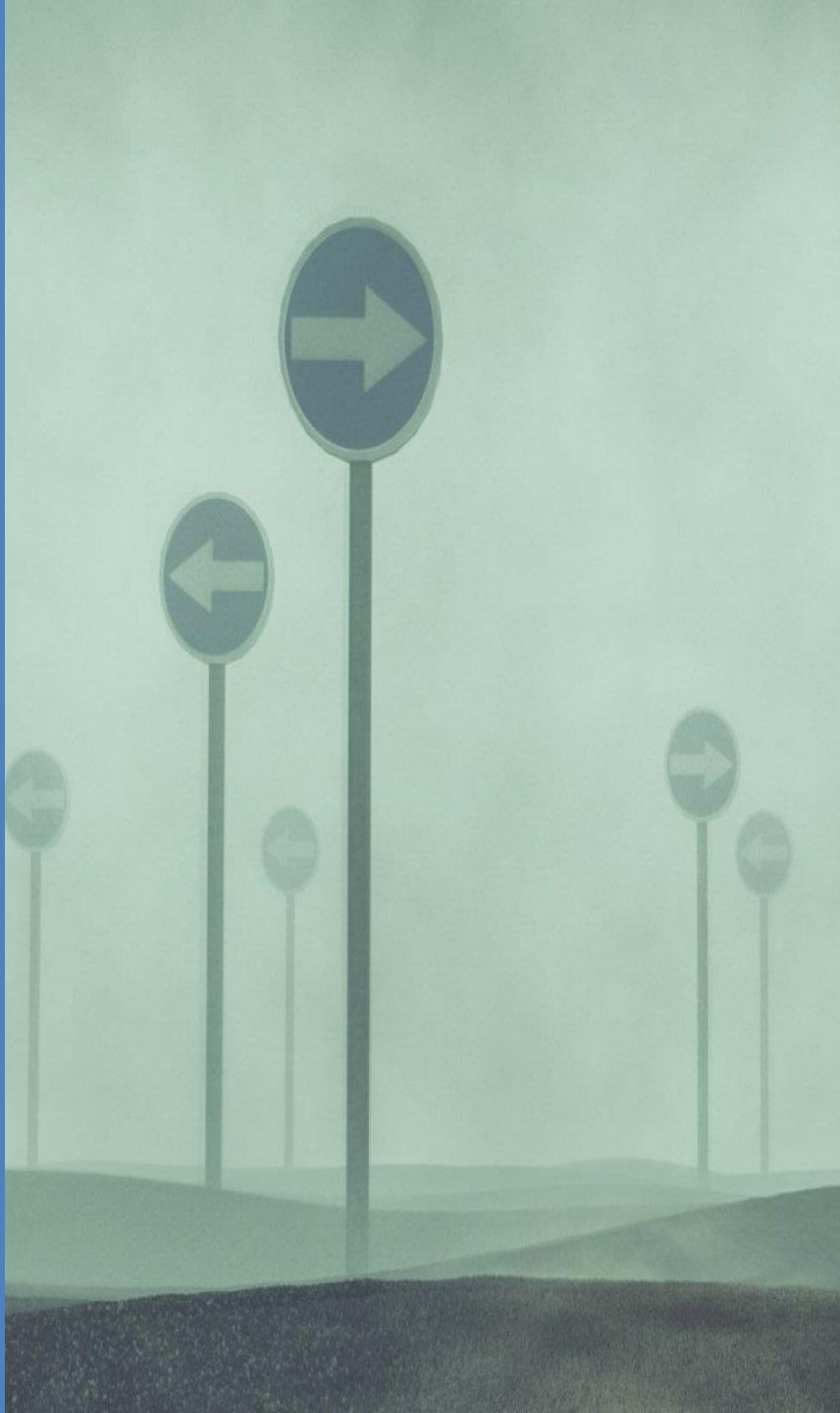Discourage "multi-tasking"

Align demands with objectives

Scaffold complex & important tasks

STRATEGY 2:
Reduce Bandwidth Drains

Acknowledge Uncertainty

Respond With Grace & Compassion (& Accountability)

Work from an Equity-Minded, Strengths-Based Perspective

Pandemic Equity Checklist

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☐ Internet access/speed	☐ Computer speed/type	☐ Familiarity with technology	☐ Number of remote courses completed
☐ Safety at home	☐ Privacy/quiet at home	☐ Time zone/ geographic region	☐ Community type (urban, rural, suburban)
☐ Risk for COVID-19	☐ Exposure to COVID	☐ Quarantine/ isolation status	☐ Living with others ill or at high-risk
☐ Employment hours/schedule	☐ Employment status/security	☐ Ability to pay for basic needs	☐ SES of origin/ family

http://everydaybandwidth.com/

How can you reduce bandwidth drains?

Acknowledge uncertainty

Respond with grace & compassion

Work from an equity-minded, strengths-based perspective

STRATEGY 3:
Examine Organizational Practices & Policies

Create Conditions for Health & Well-Being

Create Patterns that Optimize Bandwidth

Create a Path of Least (Brain) Resistance for Desired Behaviors

How can you adjust organizational practices & policies?

Create conditions for health and well-being

Create patterns that optimize bandwidth

Create a path of least (brain) resistance for desired behaviors

STRATEGY 4:
Bandwidth
Self-Care

Take Care of Your Body

http://everydaybandwidth.com/

Connect to Values & Purpose

Savor Your Routines

Refresh Your Bandwidth

How can you care for your own bandwidth?

Take care of your body

Connect to values and purpose

Savor your routines

Refresh your bandwidth

Wrapping Up

Bandwidth: Science Meets Reality

- Cognitive resources are limited
  - You can't get more from "will power"
  - Running out doesn't mean you are incapable or not trying

- Our brains don't always do what we want them to do
  - This is not about *trying harder*

(and world peace...)

What Is One Thing You Can Do Right Now?

Thank You!

And feel free to reach out...

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