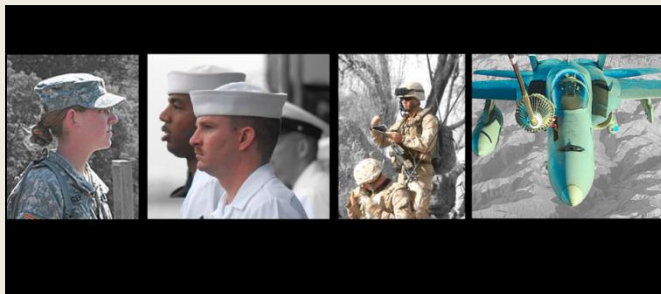


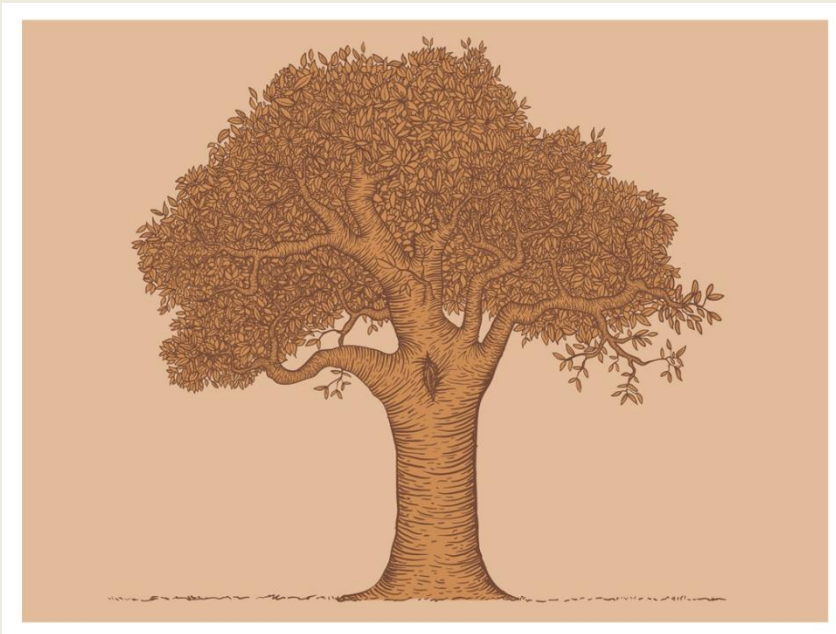
# *Problem-Solving Training to Enhance Resilience*

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Warrior Resilience Conference II  
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# Aesop's Fable: The Oak Tree & the Reed



# Aesop's Fable: The Oak Tree & the Reed



Moral of the story: Those who adapt to new changes,  
will emerge unharmed.



# Resilience

Resilience  $\neq$  “hard”



Resilience = “hardy”

- Able to adapt to new stressful situations
- Able to cope with new challenges
- Able to solve difficult problems in life
- Key word → “flexibility”

# “Resilience Training”

## ADAPTIVE RECOVERY



### “Peacetime” Mind

- Pre-deployment
- “Enjoy life”
- “Enjoy family”
- “Enjoy work”

Depression, PTSD, Suicide . . .

Military training



Post-Deployment



Strong Readjustment Tools



Poor Readjustment Tools

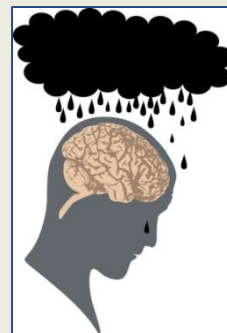


### “Battle Mind”

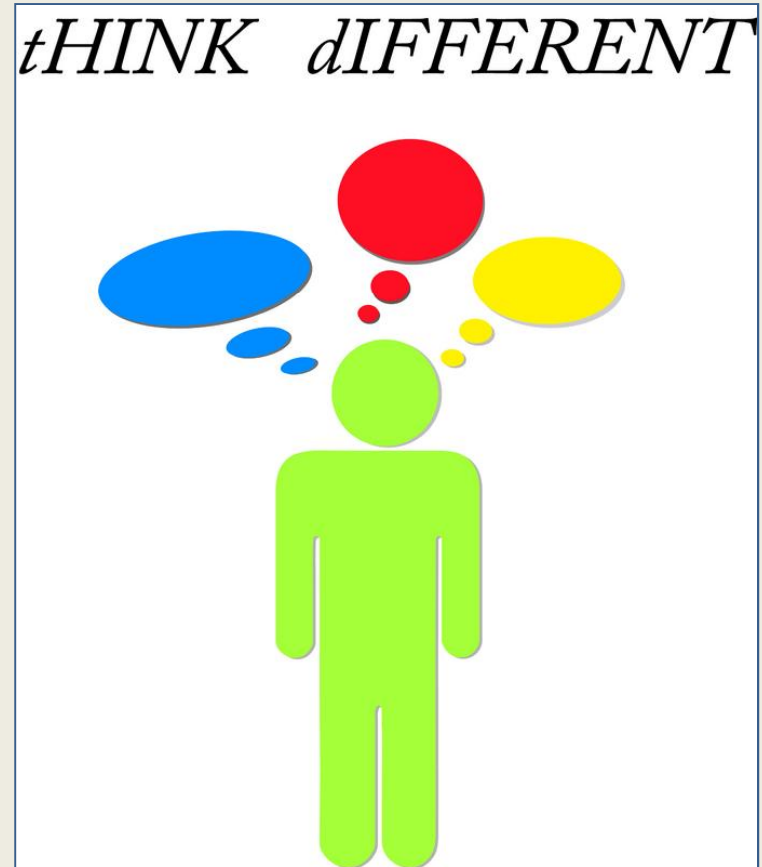
- “Stay alert”
- “Stay alive”
- COMBAT READY

### Deployment

- combat
- stress
- injuries



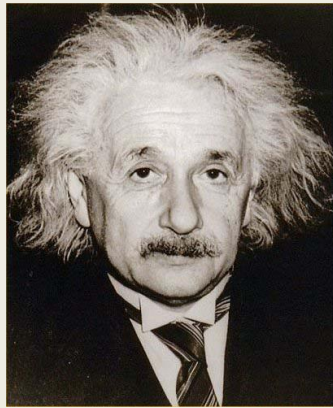
Need to . . .



# “Insanity”

**“Insanity”: Doing the same thing over and over again and expecting differing results.**

--Albert Einstein

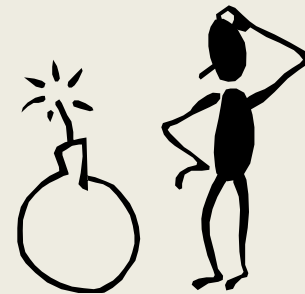


# Need for Flexible Thinking

- “We can’t solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them”

--Albert Einstein

So . . . what do we do?





- PST developed over 30 years ago
- Evidenced-based clinical intervention
- Has strong potential relevance for Warriors' training
- Fosters adoption and effective use of adaptive problem-solving attitudes & skills when dealing with stress



**RECOMMEND:  
PROBLEM-SOLVING THERAPY (PST)**

# Overarching Goals of PST

- Enhances optimism & hope
- Improves emotional regulation
- Enhances ability to match effective coping strategies based on the nature of the stressful situation (e.g., “battle mind” vs. “peacetime mind”)
- Fosters flexibility in recognizing difference between “problem-focused goals” and “emotion-focused goals”



# Therefore . . .

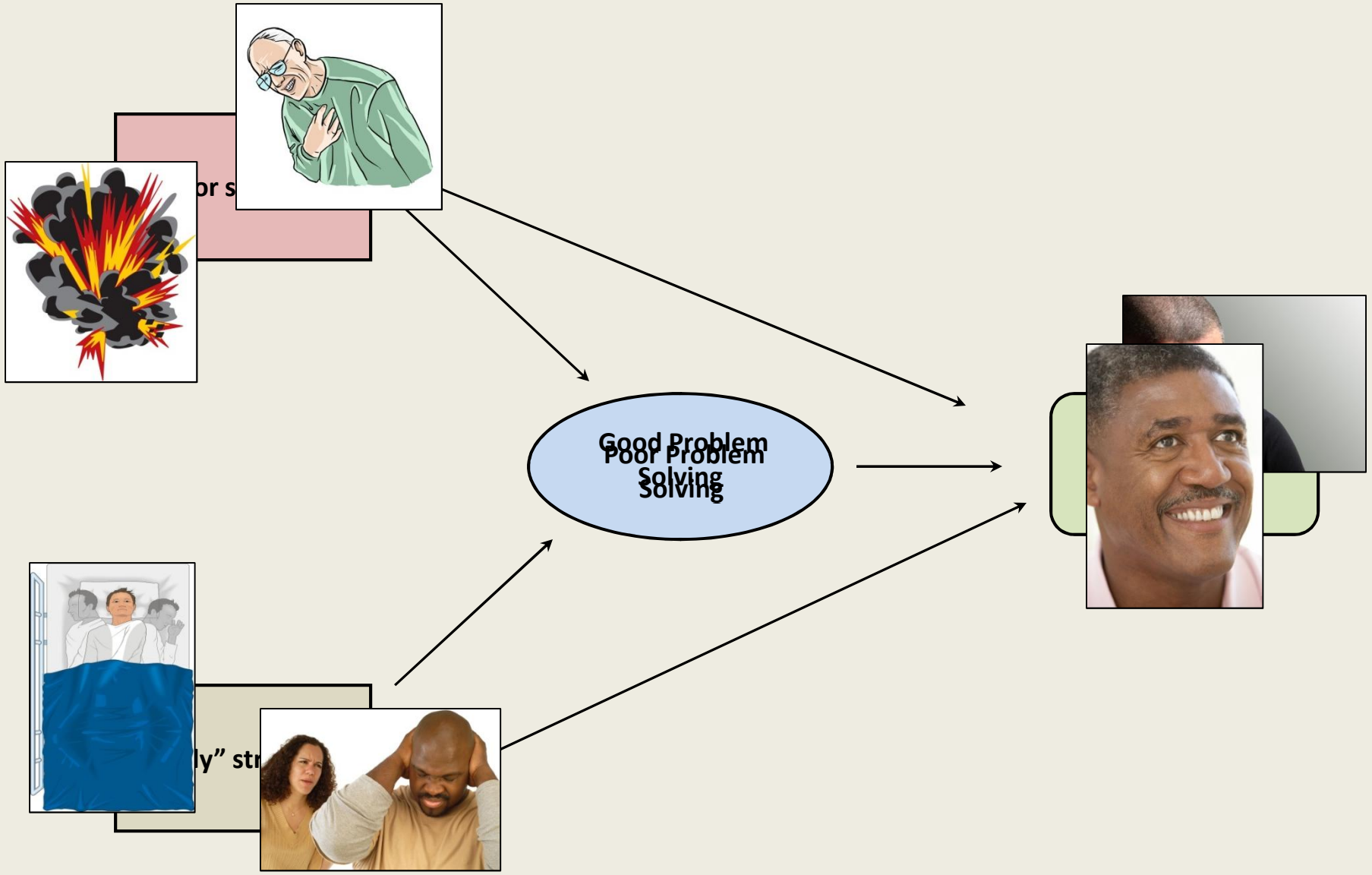
- PST is relevant to Warriors in two ways:
  - As a *pre*-deployment skills training approach to foster resilience (i.e., to reduce impact of combat stress)
  - Can also serve as an effective therapy approach to help decrease significant psychological difficulties (e.g., depression, anxiety, suicide, TBI) resulting from deployment



# Problem-Solving Therapy (PST)

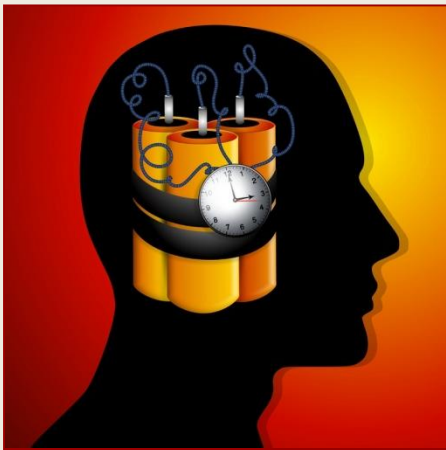
- PST based on research that continuously identifies:
  - A strong association between ineffective real-life problem solving and poor adaptation and psychological distress across multiple populations (e.g., poor problem solving correlated with PTSD among Vietnam veterans)
  - Problem solving moderates the association between stress (acute, chronic, traumatic) and distress (e.g., depression, suicide, anxiety)





Problem Solving as a Moderator of the Effects of Stress

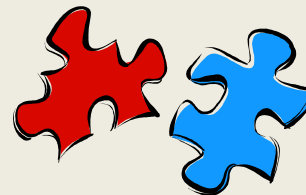
# PST Specifically Targets These Barriers to Effective Adaptation



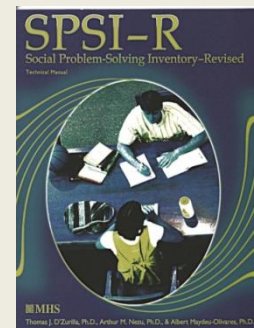
- Hopelessness
- Negative thinking
- Ruminative thinking
- Emotional dysregulation
- Ineffective rational problem-solving skills

# Multidimensional Model of (Real-Life) Problem Solving

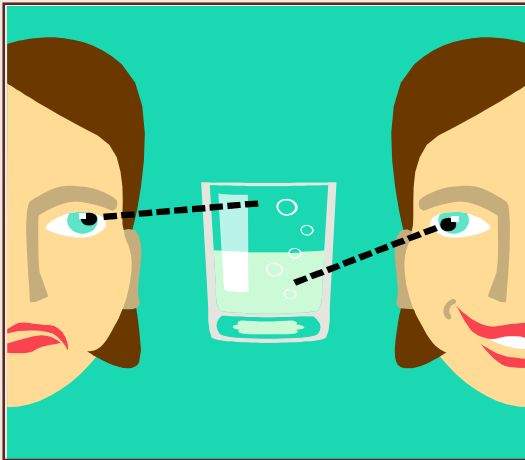
- Two major inter-related dimensions
  - Problem Orientation
  - Problem-Solving Style



- Model cross-validated across various U.S., European, & Asian cultures (using SPSI-R)



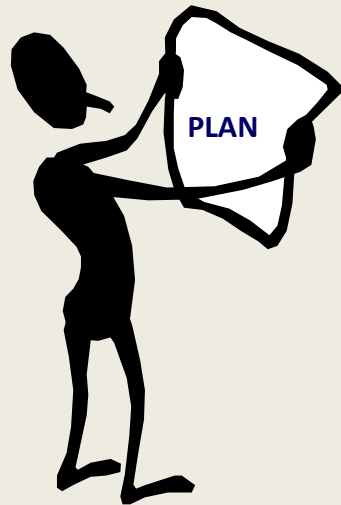
# Problem Orientation



- Attitudes and beliefs about stressful problems in living & one's ability to cope with them
  - Positive orientation (“realistic optimism”)
  - Negative orientation (“pessimism”)
- Serves as motivating factor
- Impacts problem-solving styles



# Problem-Solving Styles



**Rational Problem Solving**



**Impulsive/Careless**

**Avoidant**



# Rational Problem Solving

- What's the problem?
- What are my options?
- Which option is likely to work and lead to maximal positive effects?
- Did my solution plan solve my problems?



PST provides specific training to effectively answer these questions!

# Training Example: Use of “S.S.T.D.”

- STOP: “Put the brakes on”
- SLOW DOWN
  - Slow counting (“down from 10”)
  - Deep breathing
  - Artificial “Yawn” (yes, yawn!)
  - Visualize “safe place”
  - Other relaxation techniques
- THINK: Rational Problem Solving
- Do: Carry out action plan & evaluate outcome

Precuneus  
(in parietal lobe)



# Is PST Effective?

- **CLINICAL DEPRESSION**
- Schizophrenia
- **SUICIDE**
- **MARITAL PROBLEMS**
- Parent-child conflicts
- Parent training
- Caregivers of medically ill patients
- Cancer patients
- **GENERALIZED ANXIETY DISORDER**
- Social phobia
- Obesity
- **PTSD**
- **HEART DISEASE**
- Primary care patients
- Child psychopathology
- Persons with mental retardation
- **STRESS**
- **SUBSTANCE ABUSE**
- HIV/AIDS prevention
- **HYPERTENSION**
- **TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY**
- Offenders/sex offenders
- **HEADACHES**
- Arthritis
- Diabetes

# “Take Home Message”

- Resilience = hardy, flexible; not hard, tough
- PST → increased flexibility → better adaptation (e.g., “battle-mind” in combat situations, NOT in peacetime situations)
- PST → improved resilience & lowered vulnerability to negative effects of (combat) stress.
- PST → reduced psychological problems due to (combat) stress
- PST = toolbox containing skills to help manage shift between “combat ready” to “recovery” and back again



# So . . .



- Think about incorporating PST into both pre- and post-deployment training programs
- Thank you very much for your attention--

Thanks

# Audience Questions

- Problem-solving therapy (PST) is relevant for both pre-and post-deployment training?
  - Y or N?
- Using one's "battlemind" in peacetime situations is very effective in coping with stress.
  - Y or N?