
Sport psychology for running

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What % of running is mental?



Workshop objectives

By the end of the session, you will have ...

1

developed an understanding of what sport psychology is (and is not), who can work as a sport psychologist and the type of our work we do.

2

developed an awareness of how sport psychology can benefit your running

- by reflecting on the psychological demands of running
- by connecting these demands to psychological theory
- by identifying appropriate strategies that you can use pre-, mid- and post-race

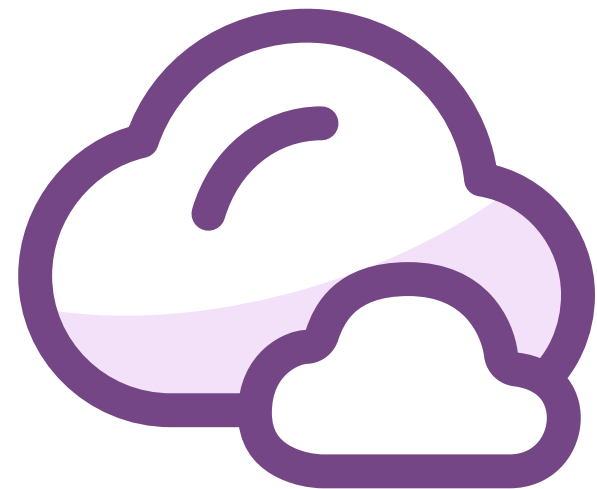


What is Sport Psychology?



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What is sport psychology? What do we do? Who do we work with?

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5 misconceptions

1

Sport psychology is only for elite athletes

2

Sport psychologists only work with 'problem' players

3

Sport psychs are only interested in mental health and wellbeing

4

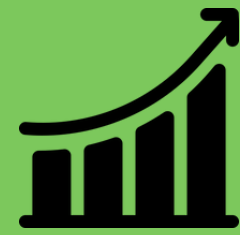
Sport psychology is a quick fix

5

Others will see me as weak for talking with a sport psychologist



4 areas in which we work



**Performance
Psychology**



**Mental Health
& Wellbeing**



**Performance
Lifestyle**



**Culture/
Environment**



Sport psychology is NOT mind coaching

Sport Psychologist

- HCPC registration
- Regulated profession
- Professional standards
- Approved training pathway

vs.

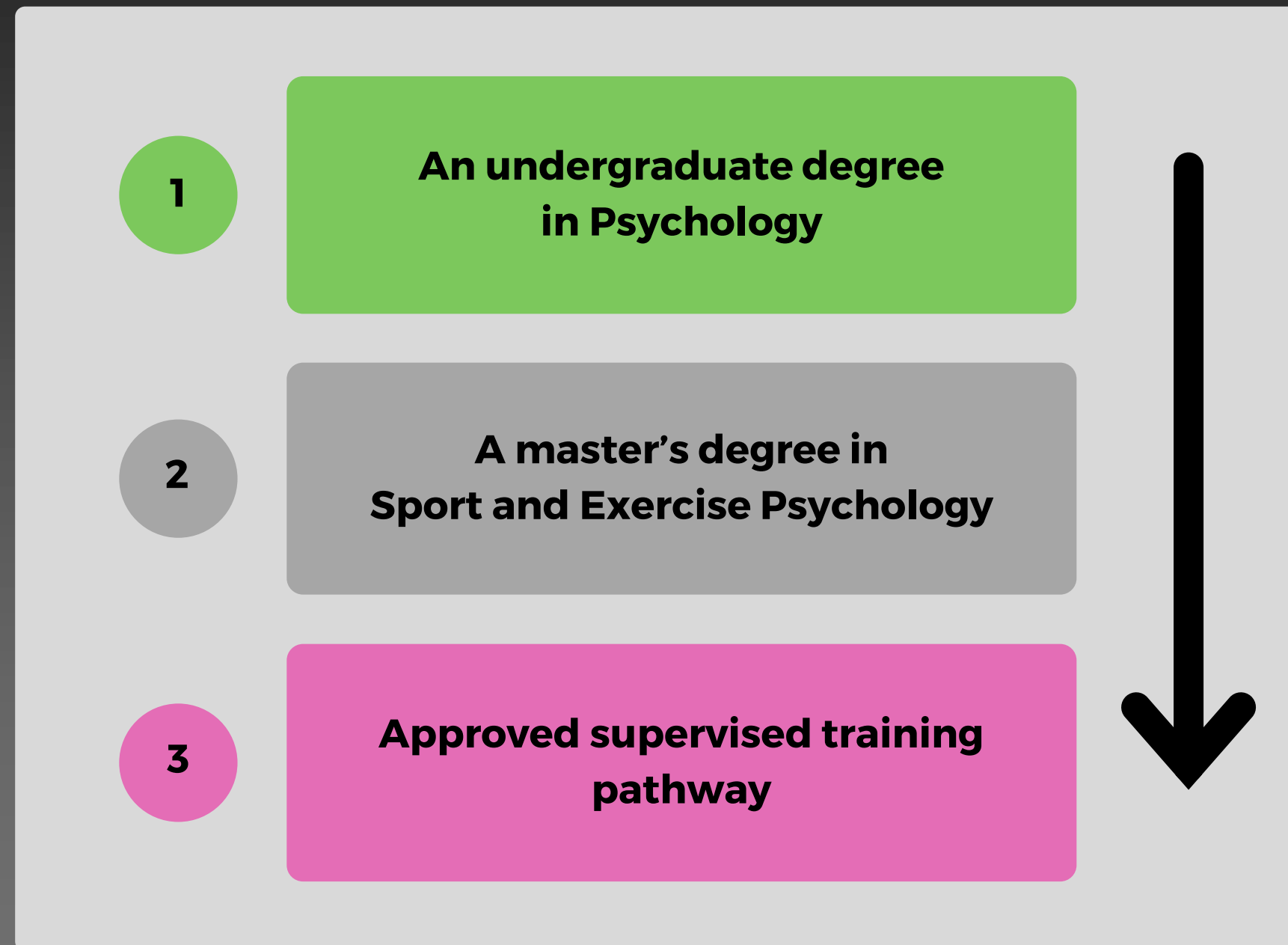
Mind Coach

- No HCPC registration
- Non-regulated
- No formal training
- May do more harm than good

hcpc
registered
www.hcpc-uk.org



My training pathway





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Reflection



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Running is not just physical - it's a mental sport too. To better understand what challenges us, let's take a moment to identify the key mental demands of running. Think about what goes through your mind when training or racing - what are the toughest parts mentally?

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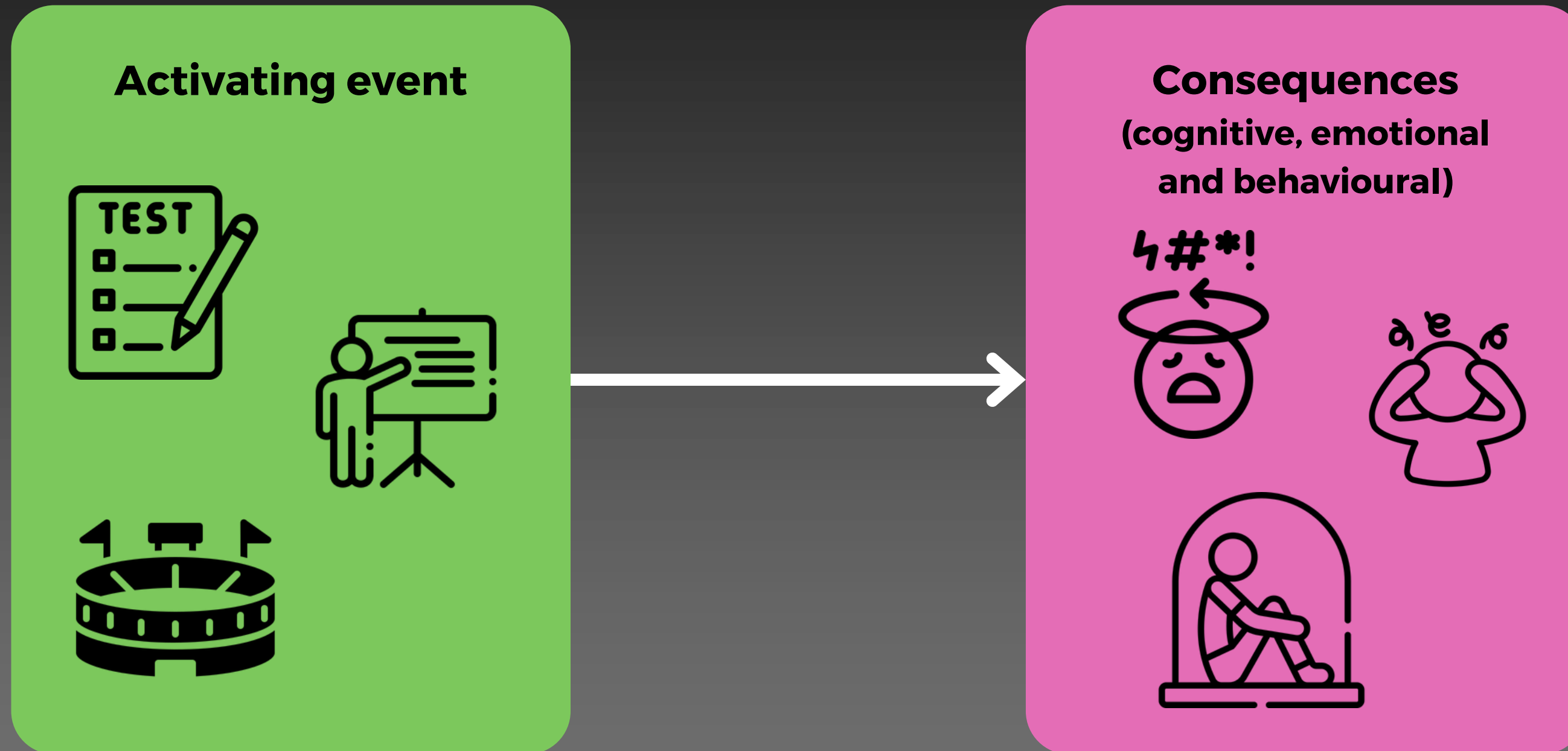
Psych demands



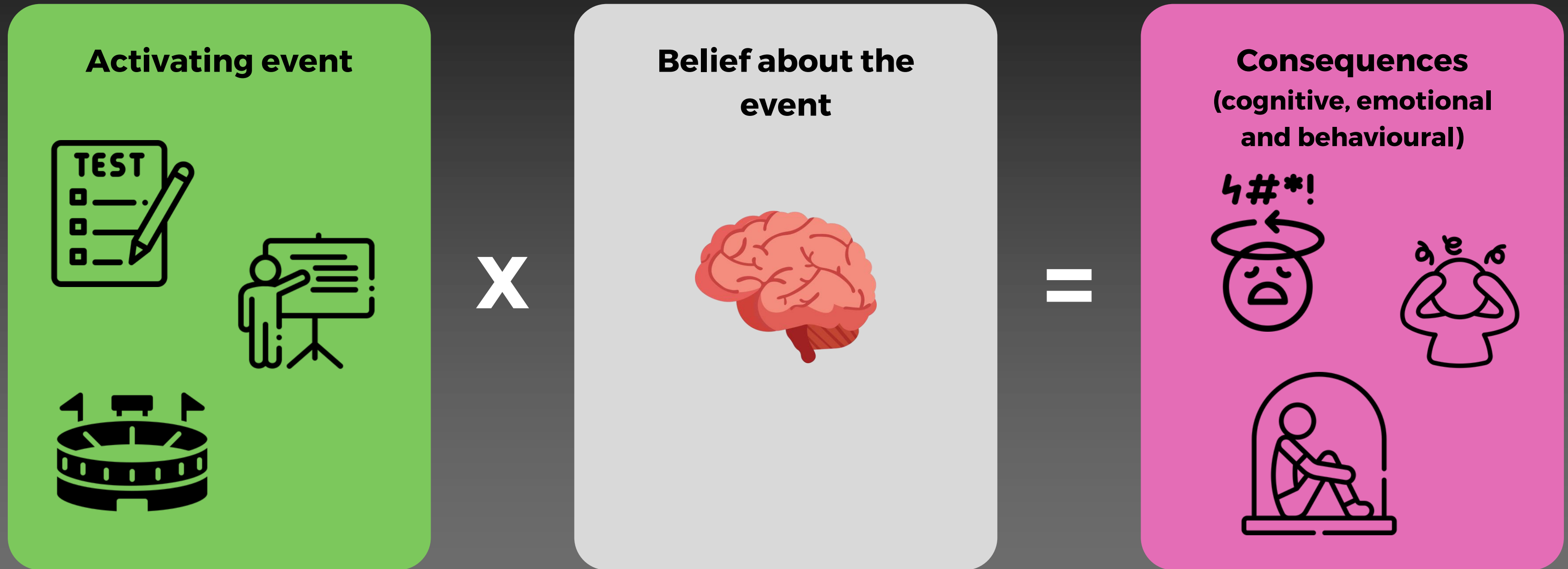
(McCormick et al., 2018)



How we think we work...



How we actually work...



(Collard, 2023)



What's going on inside our brain?

Belief about the event



Primary appraisal

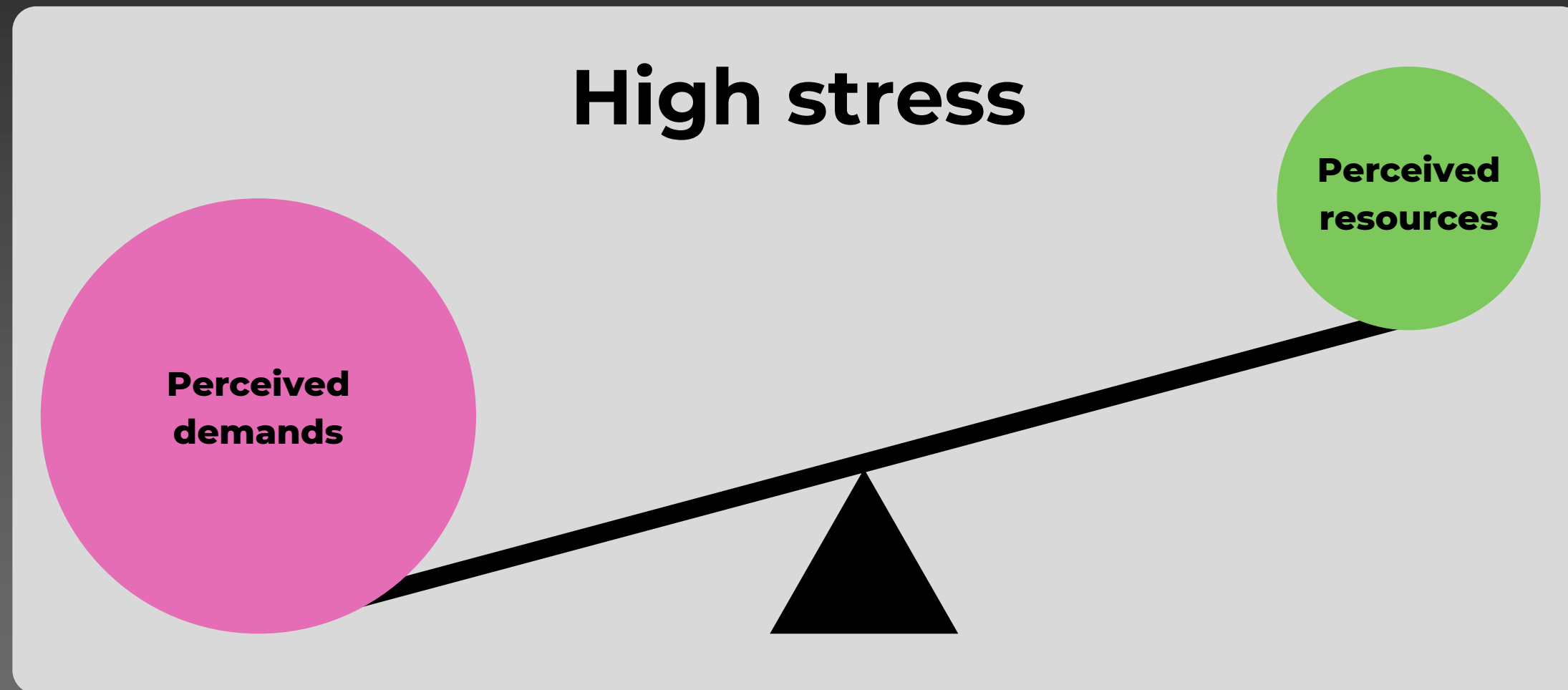
Is this event related to my goal?
Does this event hinder my goal?

Secondary appraisal

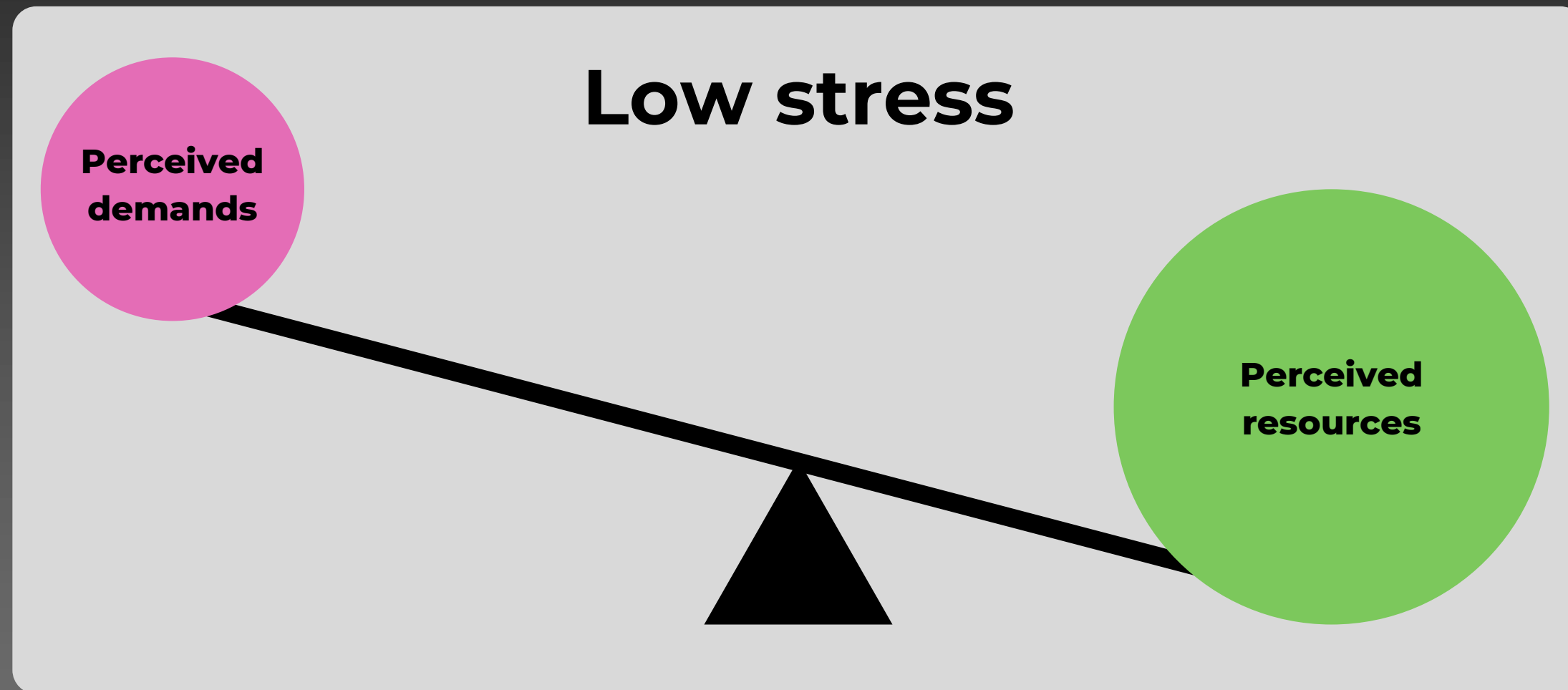
Can I influence this situation?
Do I possess the required resources?



The stress see-saw



The stress see-saw



Perception is key

“

**People are not disturbed by things,
but by the view they take of them**

Epictetus

“

**There is nothing either good or bad,
but thinking makes it so**

Shakespeare

We assign meaning to
the events in our life



“

**We are what we think. All that we are
arises from our thoughts. With our
thoughts we make the world.**

Buddha

(Collard, 2023)



Reflection

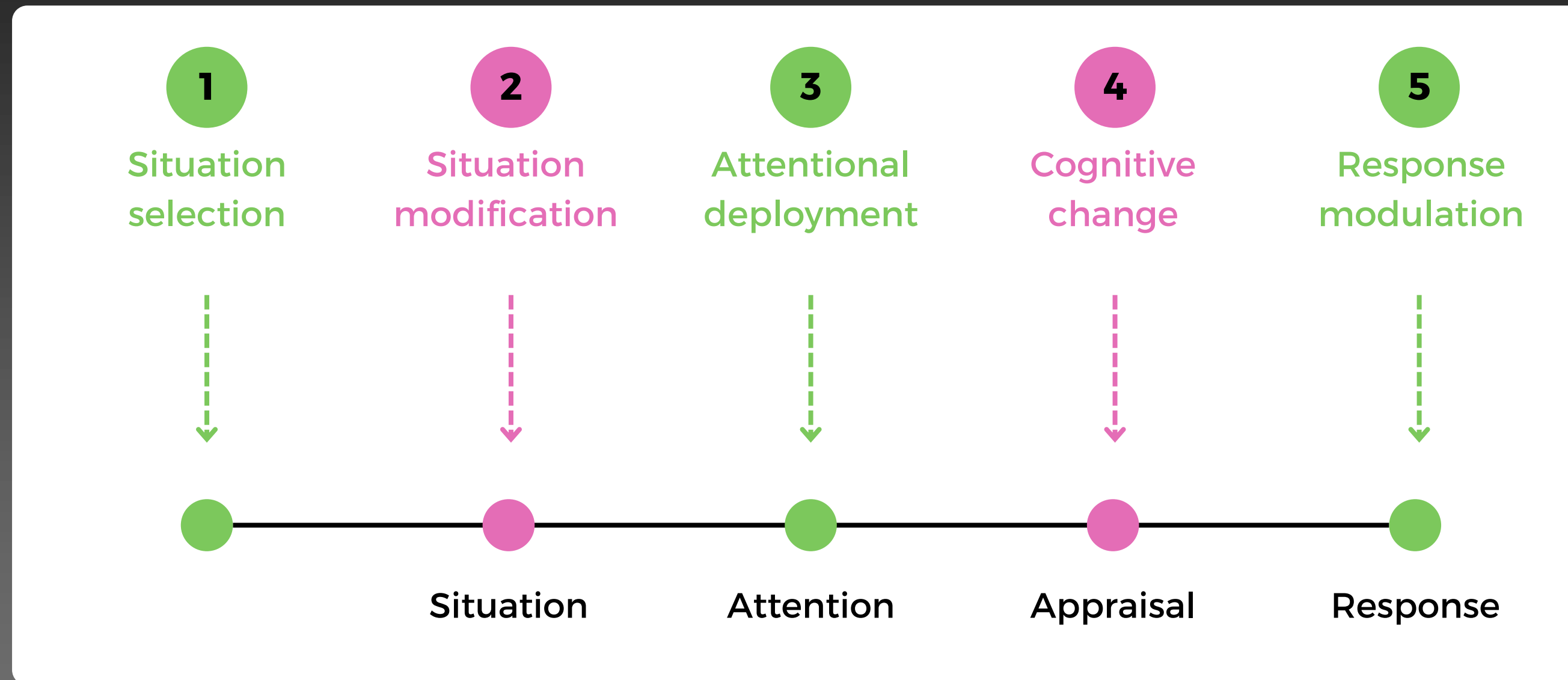
**How are you contributing to
the demands of running?**



Breaking through the wall



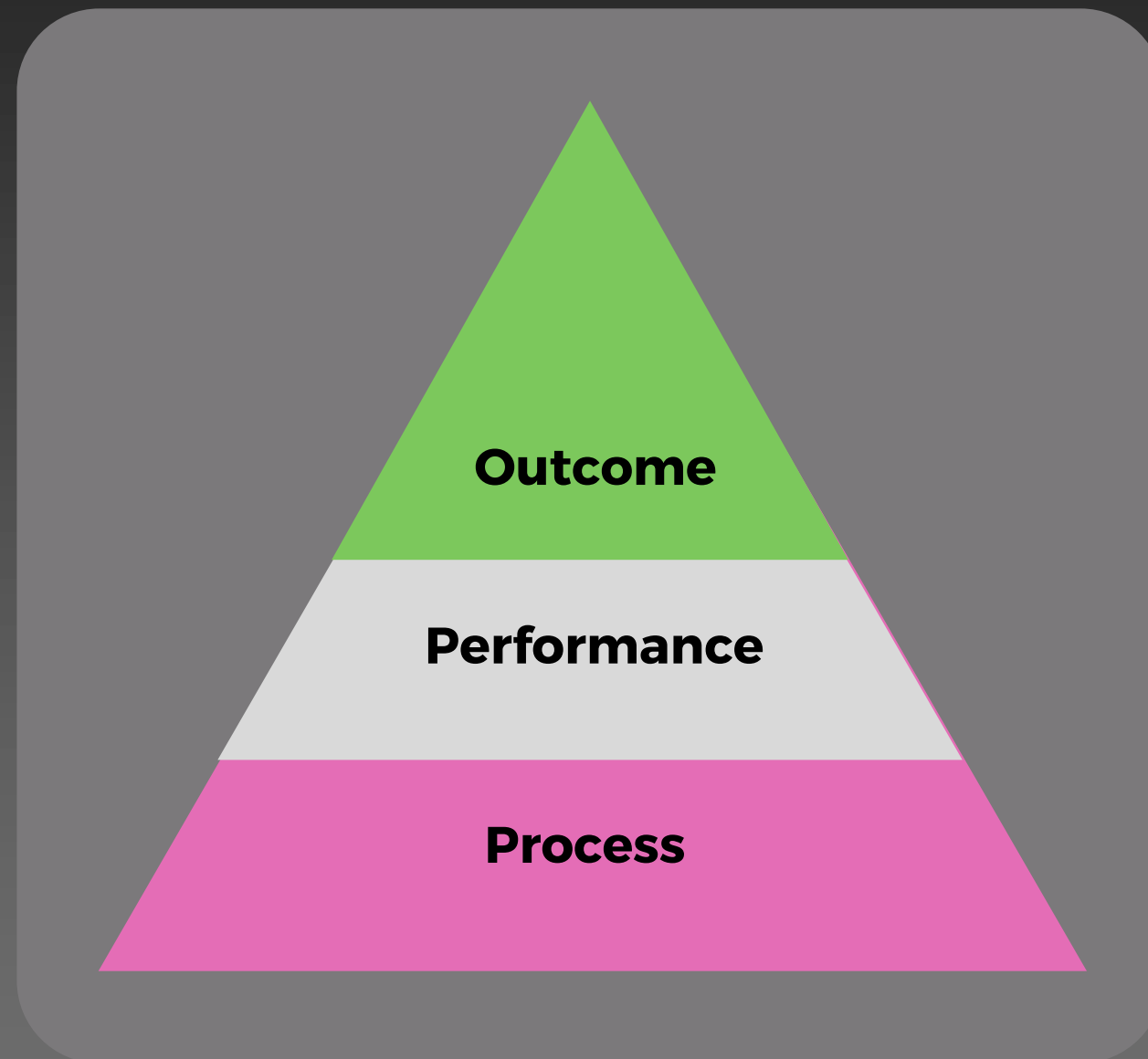
Emotional regulation



(adapted from Gross & Thompson, 2007)



Goal setting



Outcome goals

- Focus on achieving specific results
- Can provide direction to behaviours, but dependent on external factors outside of control

Performance goals

- Focus on improving relative to past performance
- Self-referenced

Process goals

- Focus on improving specific techniques or strategies for performance
- Focus on controllable aspects of performance

(Williamson et al., 2022)



Focus on the process

Outcome goals

Finish the marathon in
under 4 hours

Place in the top 10

Set a new PB

Performance goals

Achieve an average
pace of 8:30/mile

Complete 3 training
sessions each week

Increase weekly
mileage by 10% each
week

Process goals

Focus on keeping a
relaxed breathing
pattern

Seek advice from a
nutritionist

Stretch using a foam
roll after every run



What-if scenarios



“Everyone faces up more bravely to a thing for which he has long prepared himself, sufferings even, being withstood if they have been trained for in advance. Those who are unprepared, on the other hand, are panic-stricken by the most insignificant happenings.”

Seneca



What-if scenarios

**What are you
worried about?**

Hitting the wall
at mile 18

**What are you going
to do to prevent it?**

Seek support from a
nutritionist

**If it happens,
what will you do?**

Consume an energy gel
& snack

**Expect things not
to go to plan**



Distraction



Self-talk

The internal dialogue we use to instruct, motivate and make sense of our experiences

1

Self-distanced talk

Changing the pronouns we use to address ourselves

You > I

2

Temporal distancing

Involves seeing an event from a future perspective

Ask yourself: How will I feel about this tomorrow/next week/a year from now?



Irrational beliefs

Rigid, illogical & unhelpful

Irrational beliefs	Definitions	Examples
Demandingness	Where we turn a preference into an absolutistic demand	I must set a new PB
Awfulising	A belief that adversity is so bad, that it couldn't be any worse	It would be awful if I didn't place top 10
Frustration intolerance	Where we cannot stand, tolerate or bear the adversity we are facing	I couldn't stand it if I didn't run sub-4 hours
Depreciation	Where we give ourselves, others or the world a global negative evaluation	I have failed, therefore I am a failure



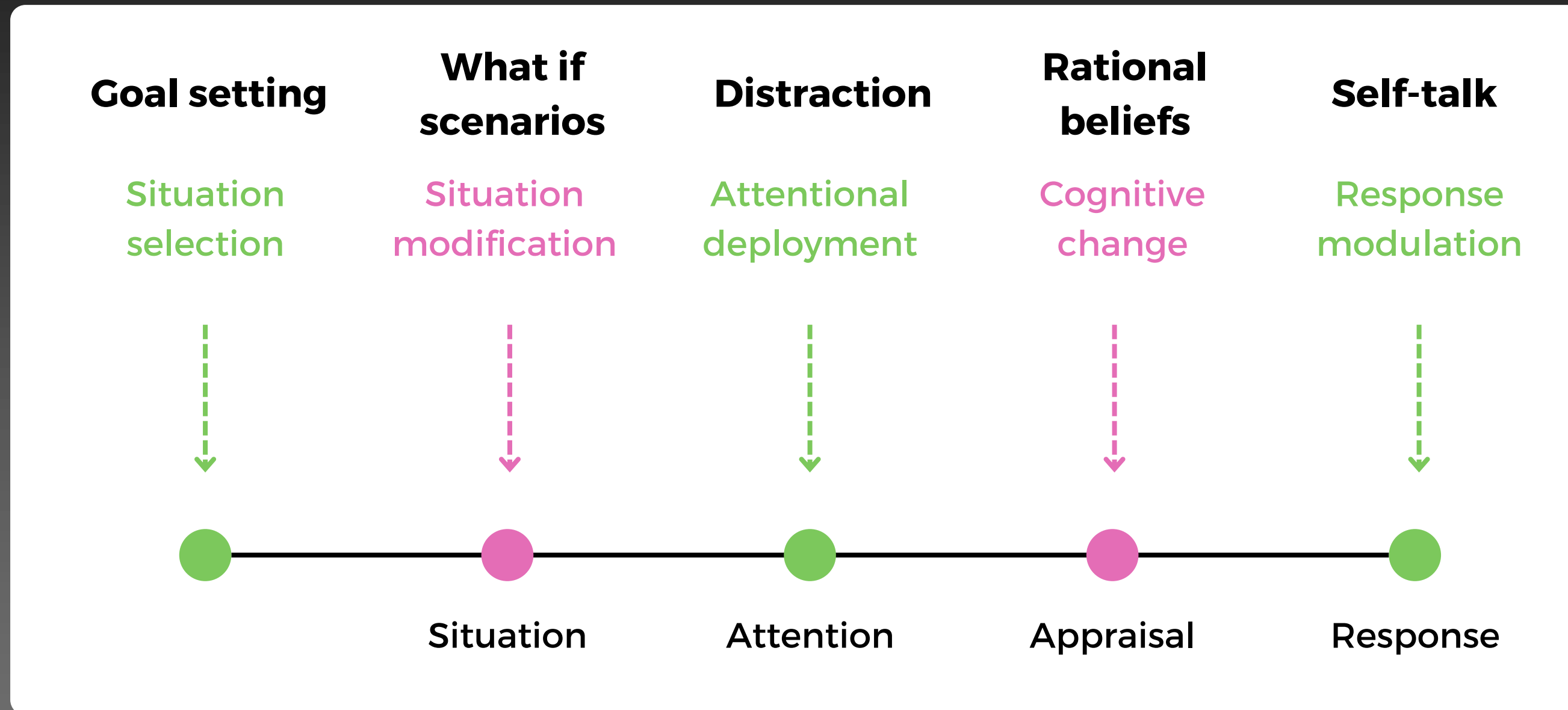
Rational beliefs

Flexible, logical & helpful

Irrational beliefs	Rational beliefs	Examples
I must set a new PB	Preferences	I want to set a new PB, but that doesn't mean I must.
It would be awful if I didn't place top 10	Anti-awfulising	I am disappointed, but it is not the worst thing that could have happened.
I couldn't stand it if I didn't run sub-4 hours	Frustration tolerance	It is difficult to tolerate not achieving my goal, but I can stand it.
I have failed, therefore I am a failure	Unconditional acceptance	I have failed, but that does not mean I am a failure. Actions can be rated as good or bad, but we are too complex.



Summary



(adapted from Gross & Thompson, 2007)



Reflection



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What will you take away from today's session?

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Thank you



The advertisement features a dark background with a white border. At the top center is a circular logo containing two upward-pointing chevrons, one green and one pink. In the top right corner of the ad is a white 'X' icon. The main text is centered and reads: 'January Sale' in green, 'Up to 30% off' in pink, and 'all Flourish & Thrive sport psychology packages*' in white. At the bottom, a small white line of text states: '*Sale ends midnight Friday 31st January 2025'.

January Sale

Up to 30% off

all Flourish & Thrive

sport psychology packages*

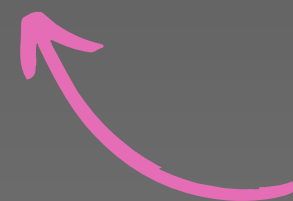
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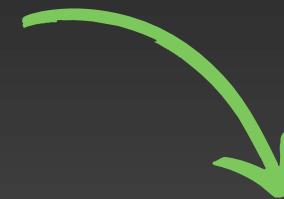
MENTAL PERFORMANCE COACHING



Keep in touch

QUESTIONS?

Feedback



References

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