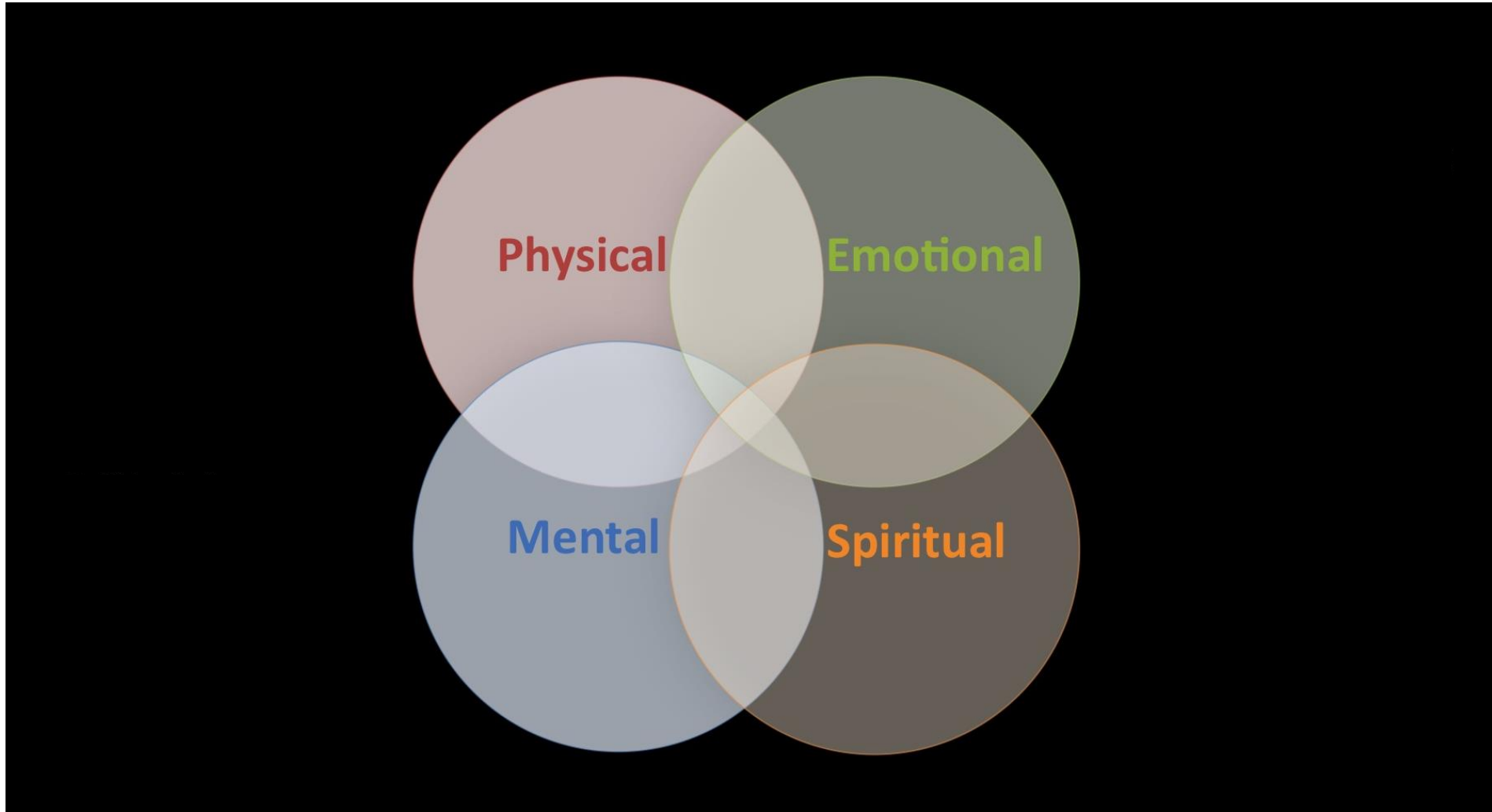


What do we /can we do ourselves for our mental health?



Visualisation (1)

- According to research using brain imagery, visualisation works because neurons in our brains interpret imagery as equivalent to a real-life action. When we visualise an act, the brain generates an impulse that tells our neurons to "perform" the movement. This creates a new neural pathway -- clusters of cells in our brain that work together to create memories or learned behaviours -- that primes our body to act in a way consistent to what we imagined. All of this occurs without actually performing the physical activity, yet it achieves a similar result.

..... (2)

- Visualisation is a technique for creating a mental image of a future event. When we visualize our desired outcome, we begin to "see" the possibility of achieving it. Through visualization, we catch a glimpse of what is, in the words of one writer, our "preferred future." When this happens, we are motivated and prepared to pursue our goal.



Visualisation exercise

- Imagine how you would like your life to be. This may be the achievement of a specific goal – eg weight loss, cutting down on alcohol consumption, getting a promotion etc, or it may be broader – ‘My ideal life’.
- Imagine how you think and feel having achieved this.
- Write this down, with as much detail as possible. Include how you feel as well as what you think about it. Include sensory description (what you can see, touch, hear, taste and smell).
- Do this for 20 minutes per day for three days in a row. Repeat weekly.

Before you start...

- Breathe – Access positive emotions



Miracle question exercise

- In this exercise, work with a partner.
- You do not need to name the problem that you are going to consider
- You are not dwelling on the problem, or on solving the problem, but on how it will feel when the problem is solved



Miracle question exercise - stages

- Ask your partner to tell you *'What it will be like when.... (the problem is solved)'*?

This can be broken down into some or all of the following questions:

- What will you be doing / seeing / feeling / hearing instead?

Ask for specifics here, eg What will be different when you wake up? What will you do first in the morning? What will you have for breakfast? What will the weather be like etc. When forming questions, think of questions that involve the senses (taste, sight, smell, hearing, touch)

- If that happens what difference will it make?
- How will others know that things are better?
- Who will notice first? Then who? (etc)
- What else will be different?
- What else? (etc)

Writing a gratitude diary

- **Slow down and deepen your breathing and focus for a moment on a genuine feeling of appreciation**
- **Write down 5 things you feel truly grateful for, right now**
- **Focus on genuine feelings of gratitude, in the here and now**



The effect of gratitude and appreciation on happiness and success

“The participants who focused on five things they were grateful for were not only happier and more optimistic, but also more successful in achieving their goals, physical healthier, and more generous and benevolent towards others.”

Emmons, Robert; McCullough, Michael E. 2003

Counting Blessings Versus Burdens: An Experimental Investigation of Gratitude and Subjective Well-Being in Daily Life Journal of Personality and Social Psychology. Vol 84 (2), pp. 377-389