

Headache 101: Stress

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Managing Stress

Stress \neq Weakness!

Stress is your body's reaction to anything that throws it off balance



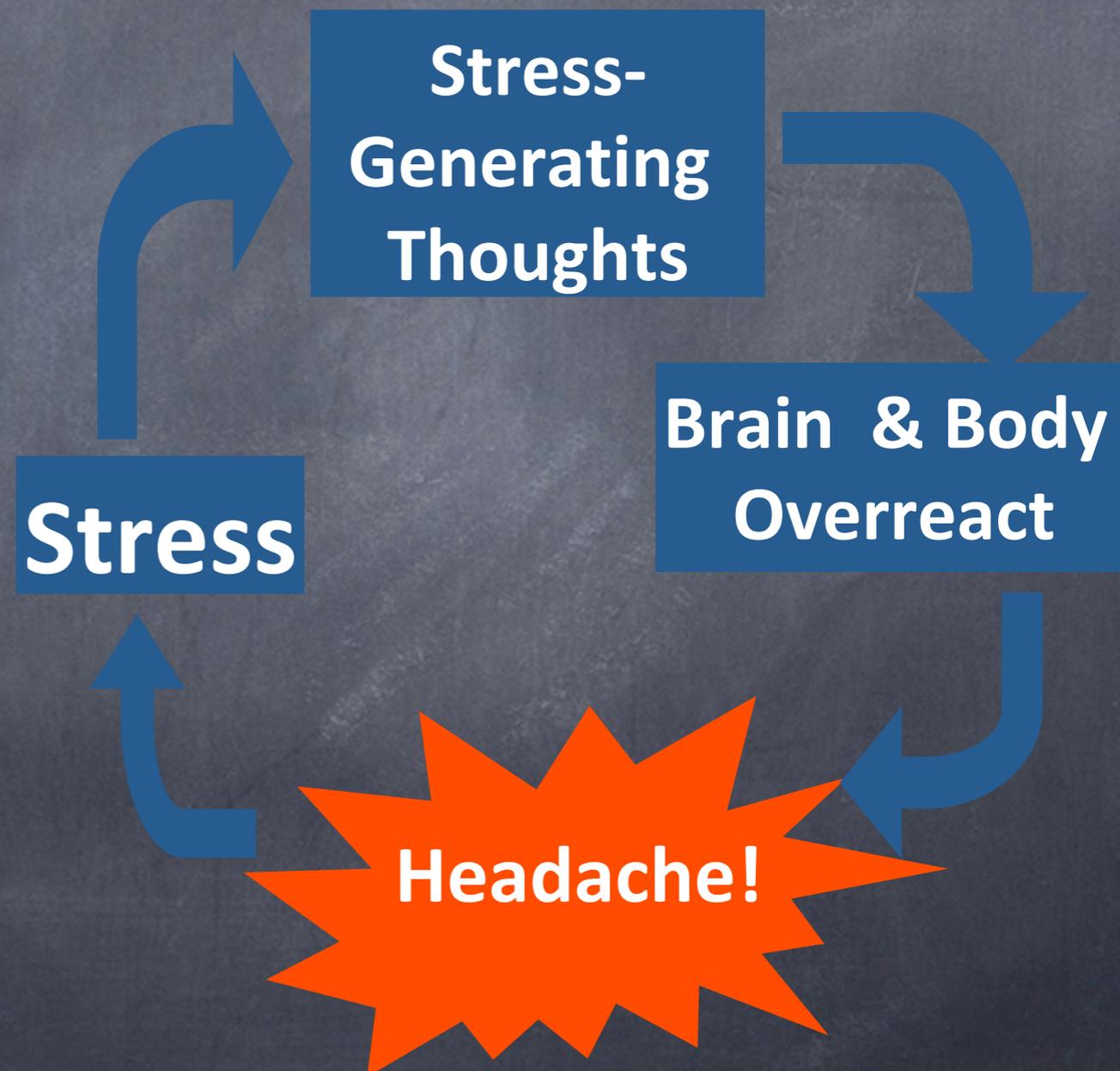
Managing Stress

Stress ≠ Situation!

Stress is also caused by your thoughts during the situation, and your reaction to the situation

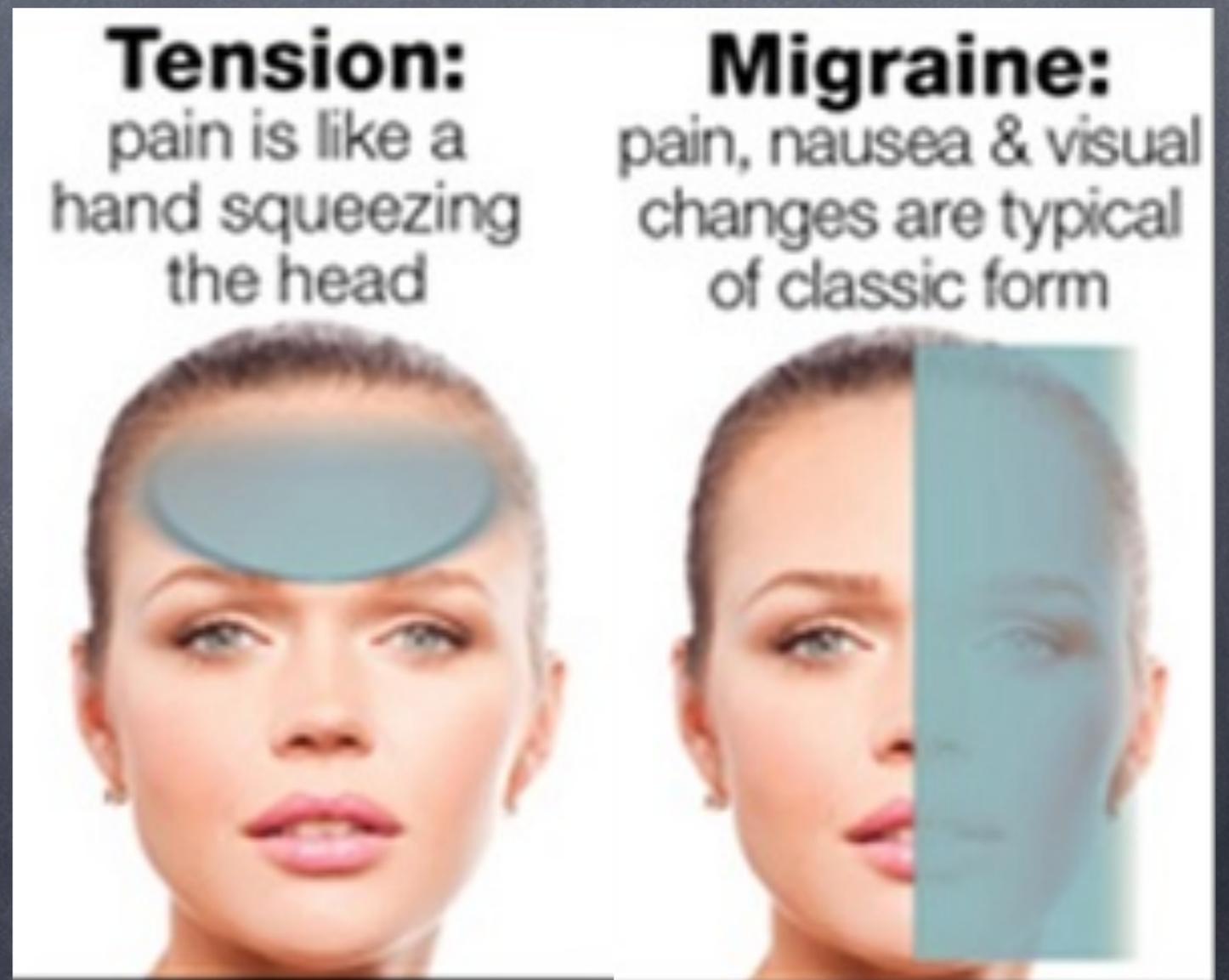
Stress-Generating Thoughts

- Automatic
- Distort how you see the situation
- Affect your body's physical response, making it more likely that you will have a headache



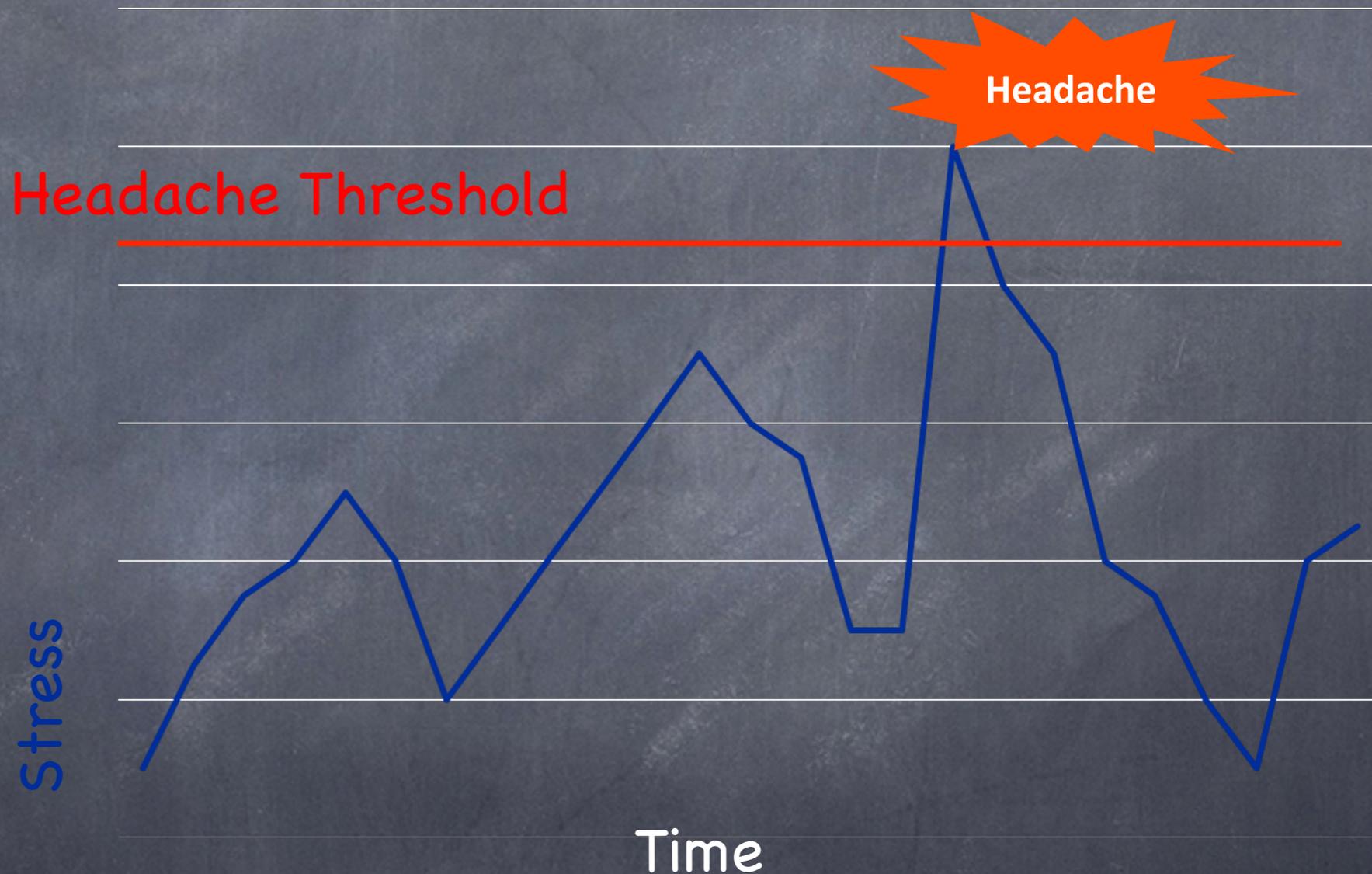
Stress & Headache Type

- Managing stress can prevent headaches and decrease the severity of headaches you do have
- Tension-type headaches are more likely to happen when you are stressed
- Migraine headaches are more likely to happen during the “letdown” after stress



Stress Threshold

- Stress builds over the course of the day
- Building stress can push your stress level over the headache threshold



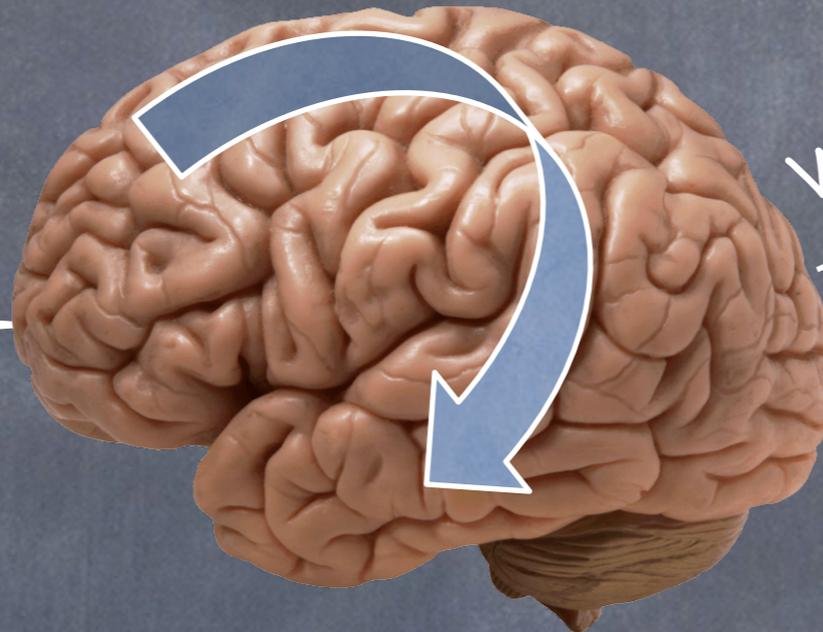
Stress and Pain Cycle

Stresses

- Past Injuries, accidents or health related conditions
- Relationships (family or Romantic)
- Work
- Anxiety
- Sadness or Grief
- Anger
- Childhood adversity
- Unresolved Painful memories
- PTSD
- Social rejection or isolation
- Discrimination

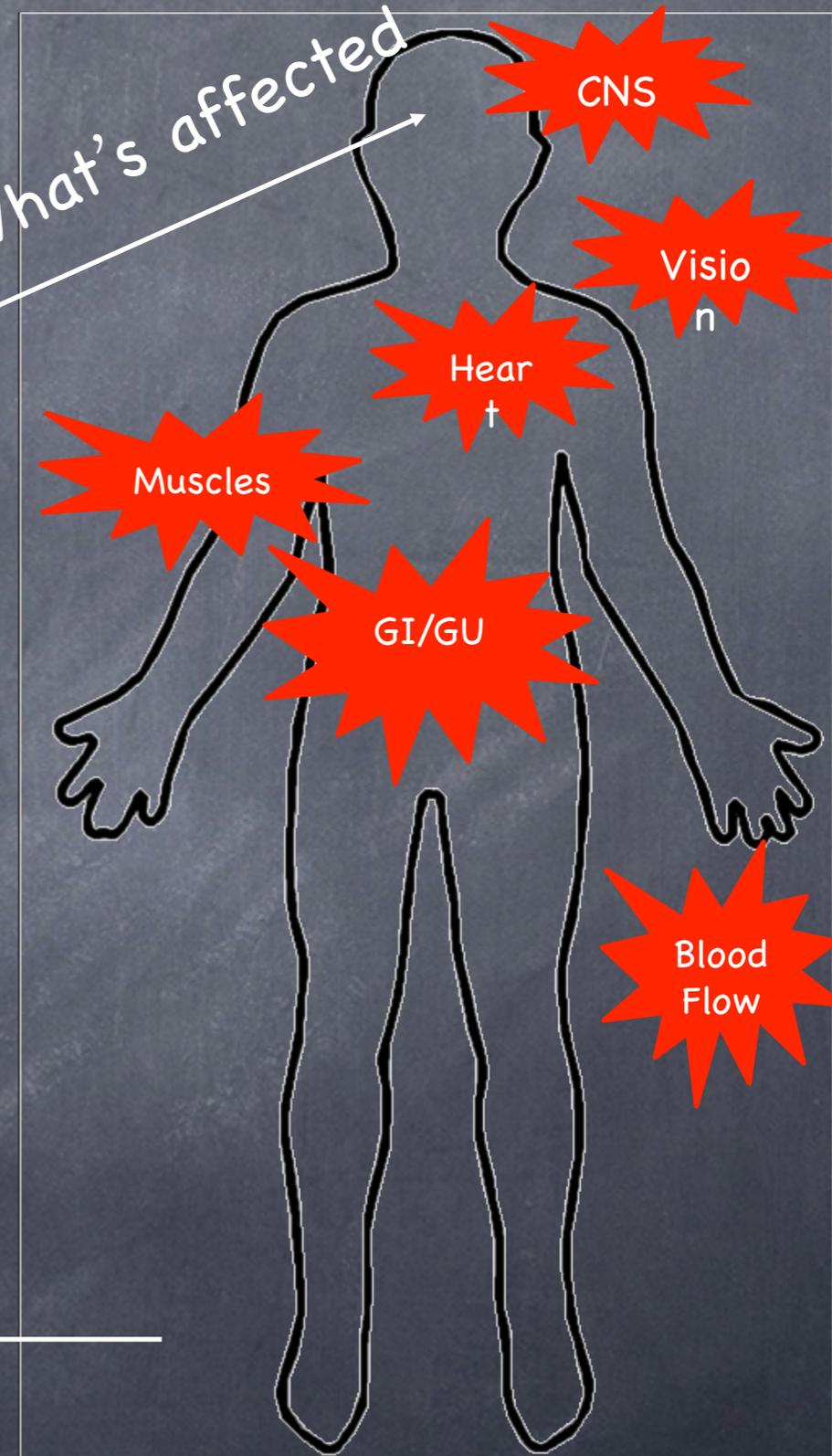
Stresses (from Pain)

- Sensitized nervous system
- Fear, worry & anticipation of pain
- Associating the pain with some catastrophic health issue



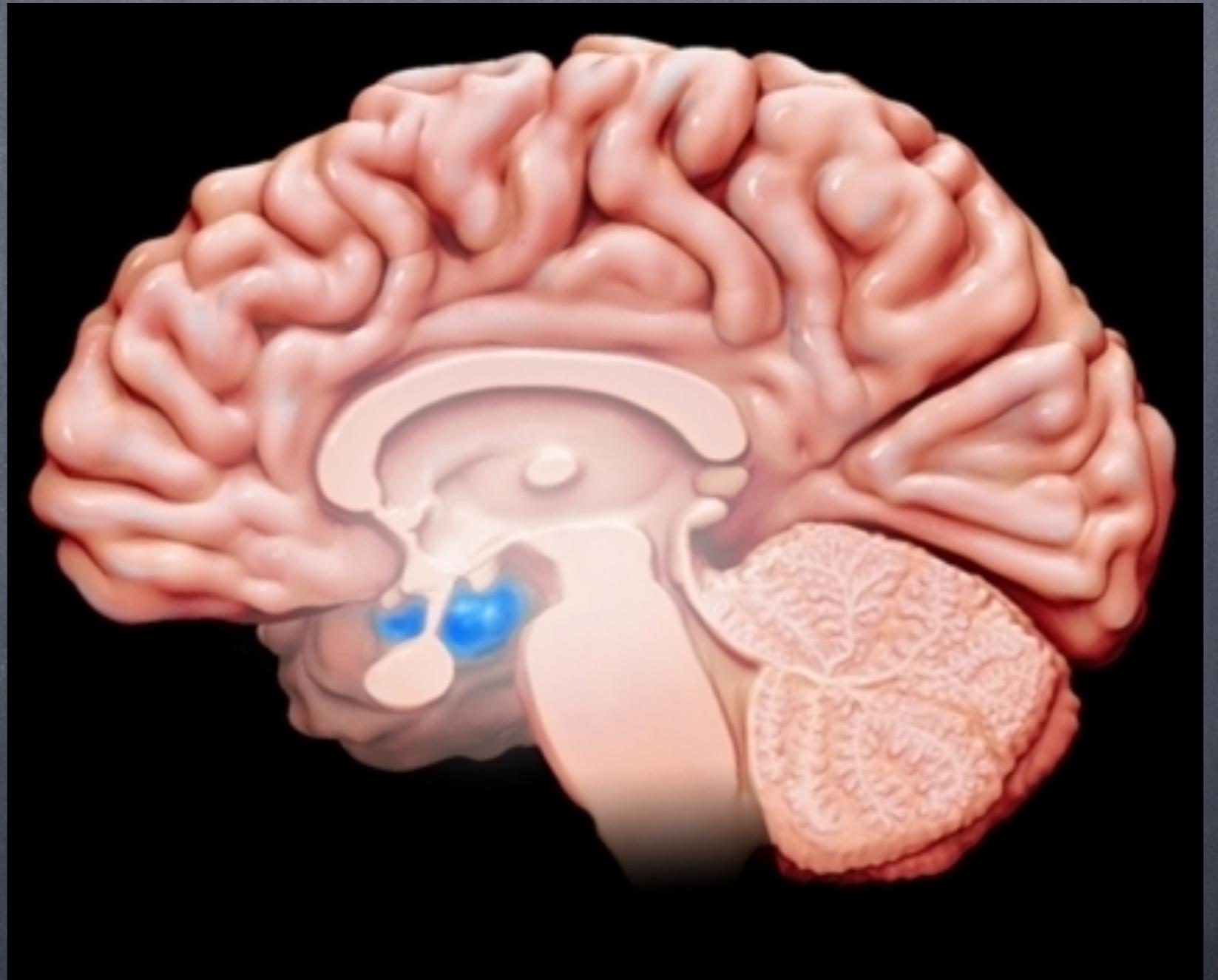
When the Brain is Stressed

Blood flow shifts from frontal lobes (conscious way of thinking) into the limbic system (emotional, reacting, “fight of flight” part of the brain – the amygdala and ANS)



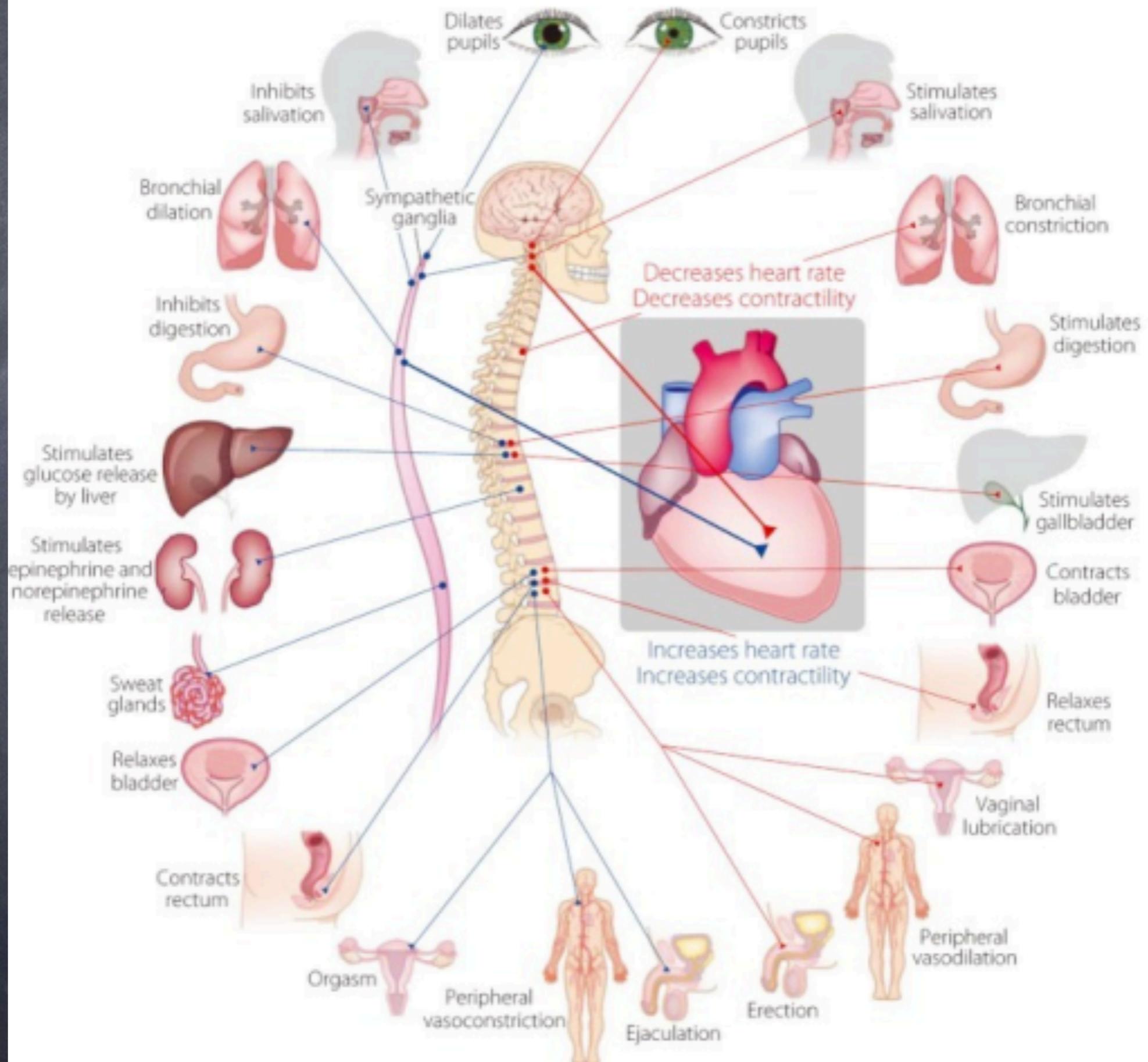
Amygdala

The amygdala is the brain's stress evaluator. It continuously monitors all situations for danger and decides when to react. The sights, sounds and smells of frightening and dangerous memories are stored here. When the brain recognizes similar situations, the amygdala sends out danger signals and gets the body ready for a flight or fight.



SYMPATHETIC

PARASYMPATHETIC



What can we do for it. . .

- Medications: SSRI, SNRIs, Betablockers, Prazosin
- (if you are on a medication it is very important you take it according to your doctors recommendations)
- Non Medication treatments (our focus here)
 - Lifestyle change (self reflexion)
 - Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
 - Biofeedback
 - Progressive muscle relaxation
 - Aerobic Exercise