3 Strategies for Managing Headache

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Keck Medicine of USC

Living with Chronic Migraine

Frustration of delayed or mis-diagnosis	Dysfunction	Isolation

Anxiety

- One of the most common headache triggers

- Headache patients are more anxious than those without pain.

Depression

- 40-50% of pain patients are depressed
- Pain is depressing!
- Depression makes pain worse!

Strategies to address:

- emotional suffering
- physical suffering

3 Strategies for Managing Headache

Befriend your Body	Take Charge, then Give up Control	Transform your Relationship to Others and Yourself

1. Befriend your Body

- Animosity, estrangement from your somatic self—disembodiment
- Ignore/distraction: prevents hearing what the body needs—what you need—to feel better
- Neck tension (ignore) ->neck soreness (ignore)-> migraine triggered

Examples of abuses of the body

- poor ergonomics, posture,
- inactivity,
- over-/under-exercising,
- eye strain (too much screen time),
- muscle weakness,
- dysregulated sleep, eating, hydration

Stress-Migraine Connection

- Migraine is triggered, exacerbated, and maintained by poorly managed **stress**.

- Stress leads to…
  - Muscle tension
  - Sustained neuromuscular tension
  - Trigger point development and activation

How to Befriend the Body

Check-in, Listen, and Respond

Yoga

Mindfulness Meditation

Body Scan

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Activity Pacing

Breathing Awareness

2. Take Charge, Then… Give up Control

Best prognosis: don’t expect providers to “fix” you, without your active collaboration

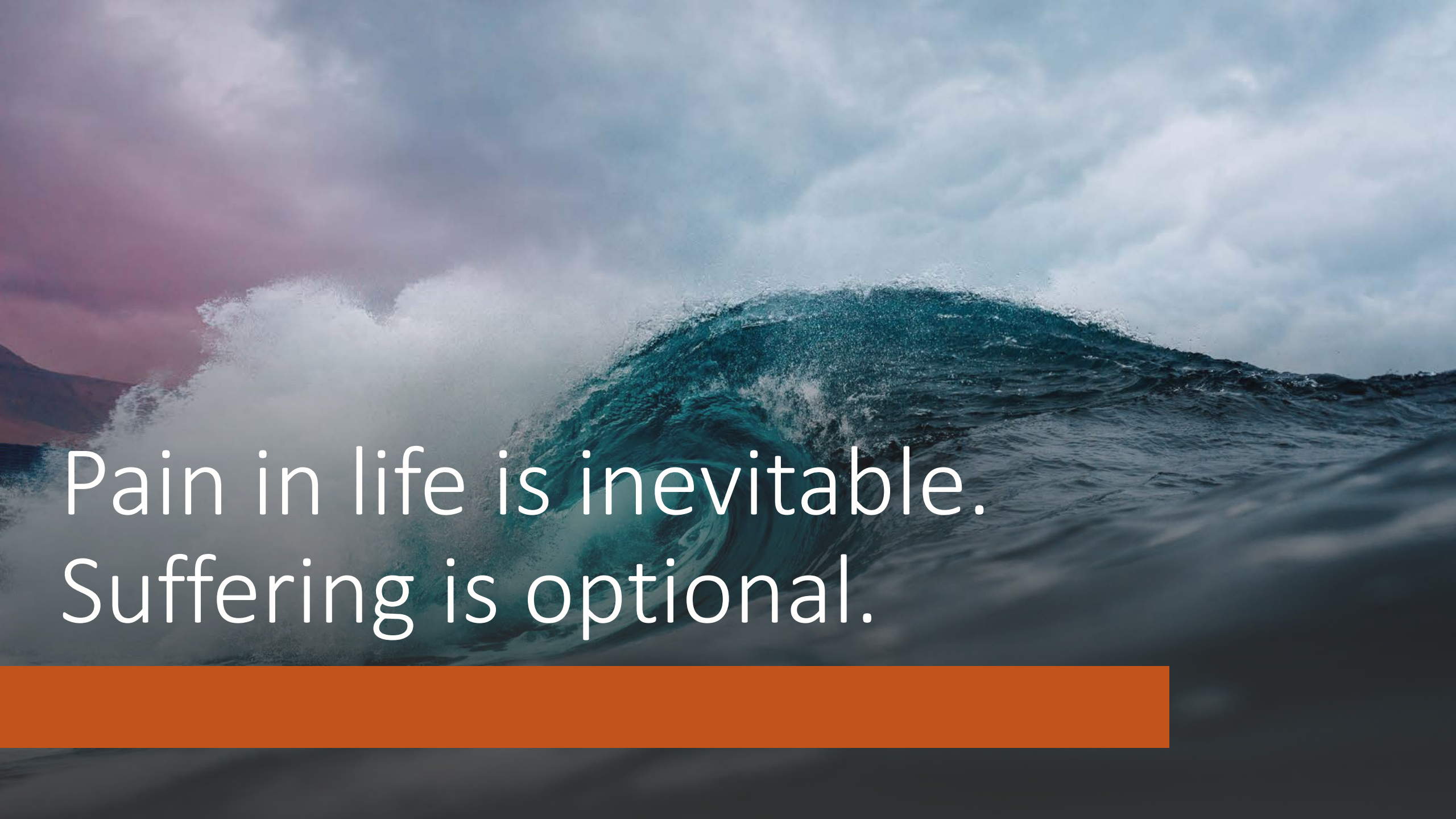
Your job: seek treatment from those who can help you identify what you need to change.

Then you take it from there.

Resignation vs Acceptance

Giving up trying to help yourself

Mindset: I’m going to do all that’s in my power to influence my migraine condition. Then I will give up my ***resistance*** to the fact of my pain.


Pain in life is inevitable.
Suffering is optional.

3.
Transform your Relationship with Others and Yourself

The ***psychological*** roles you play in relationships can contribute to stress, anxiety, or depression, and worsen your headaches.

Some of us experience others as a threat

- Unconscious
- Bracing for a blow
- Muscle tension in face, neck and/or shoulders

Case:
The People Pleaser

60-year-old lady, jaw pain, headaches

Resented household dynamics

Passive, didn't want to make waves

" I have to **grit my teeth** to get through the day."

The Rescuer:

Your sense of self-worth comes from fixing others' problems

Common in the helping professions

May feel pressure/frustration/anger interacting with those whose problems are more difficult or impossible for you to solve

Ultra-Independent, self-reliant:

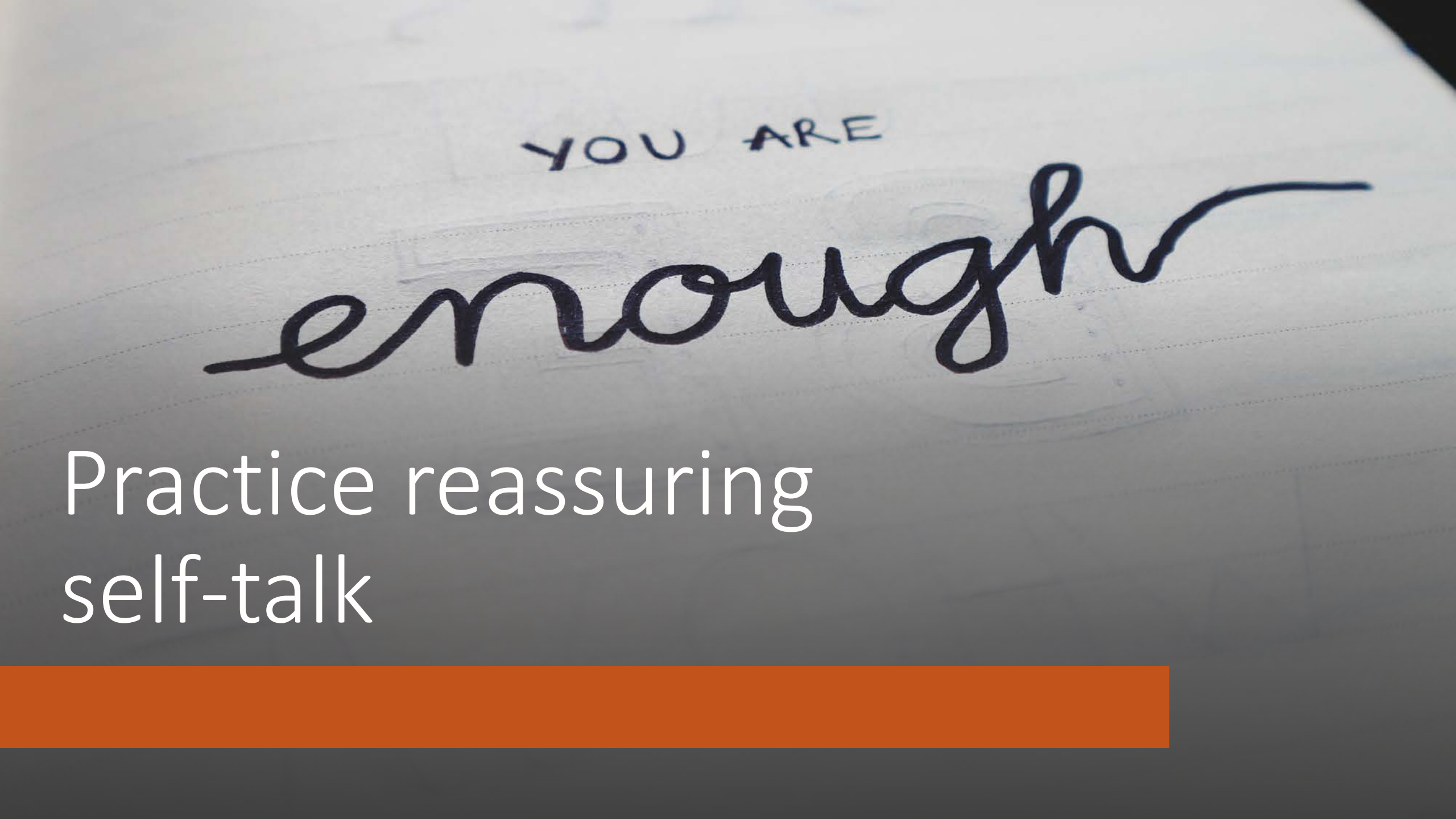
Learn to be OK with needing help

Rigid perfectionism:

understand your worth outside of accomplishments & productivity

Notice how you feel…

Choose to commit to relating differently



Practice reassuring self-talk

Bringing the subconscious relationship dynamics to light

then consciously choosing to relate differently,

allows the mind/body to relax and function optimally.

In summary:

The mind and body are inextricably linked.

Capitalizing on this interconnection will empower you to reduce the emotional and physical suffering of migraine.

grazie
obrigado
dankie
mahalo
efharisto
merci
arigato
gracias
ThankYou
danke

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