

Staff wellbeing

Tolerating Uncertainty

Looking after ourselves and our teams

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Staff support psychology service

Overview

- Why is it so hard?
- A 'road map' & guide to uncertainty
- Top tips for tolerating uncertainty
 - Individuals
 - Teams
- Sources of support

Why is it so hard?

- Uncertainty; it introduces ‘the unknown’ which can feel anxiety-provoking and can reduce or remove our felt sense of predictability, consistency, security, safety and control.
- At times of heightened stress we often inclined to ‘reach’ for more certainty as a way of managing the distress we are experiencing- it becomes our ‘go to’ way of managing.
- We can mislead ourselves (and each other) into thinking ‘The Solution’ is through excessive control over a situation (that feels out of our control). Rather than learning to tolerate the feeling of discomfort associated to it.

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Why is it so hard?

- Different for everyone- we all have our own individual preferences and ways of tolerating uncertainty.
- Tendency to prefer to know what is coming & what to expect.
- We can lose sight that we can cope, it might just not *feel* pleasant;
- And it's that *feeling* we often are trying to escape from;
- rather than the reality that *we can manage* it- whatever 'it' is and however 'it' feels
- Often try to outsmart or out-think it

Why is it so hard?

- How we express it as individuals can look different-
 - Anxiety
 - Stress
 - Low mood; feeling helpless or powerless
 - Seeking control
 - Repetitive/ritualistic/superstitious behaviours
 - Obsessive-compulsive behaviours
 - Anger
 - Self-criticism
 - Experiencing physical symptoms- e.g. wobbly tummies
 - Working harder; fact-seeking; information gathering
 - Withdrawing/Isolating

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Why is it so hard?

For example:

If I believe that “*I can’t cope with not knowing; I must be prepared*”

- “if I do X...then Y wont happen”...
- every time I do X, then Y doesn’t happen...therefore
- ...I must do X to prevent Y from happening...
- ...I must do it more & more, over & over....
- Therefore we teach our brain & our body that worrying is helpful.
- Leads to behavioural patterns that can get repetitive, unhelpful, and difficult to let go of.
- In some cases this can get out of control and become a source of distress.

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Why is it so hard right now?

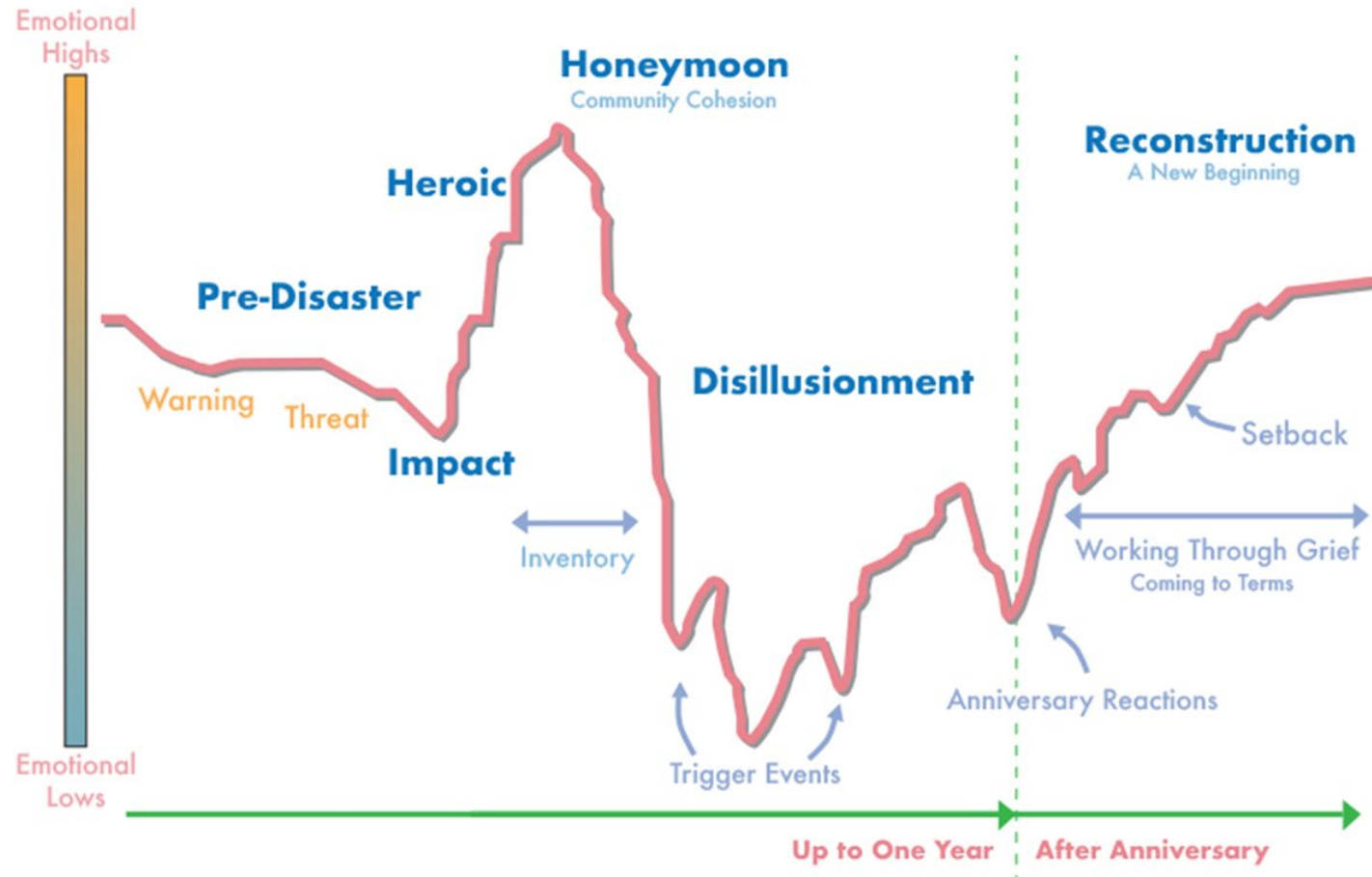
It's a **GLOBAL PANDEMIC...**

“The emergence of a novel virus... raised the uncertainty of whether we would become victims or vectors (or both), at any given time”

Tiong and Koh (2013, describing the experiences of health care workers during the 2009 H1N1 pandemic in Singapore)

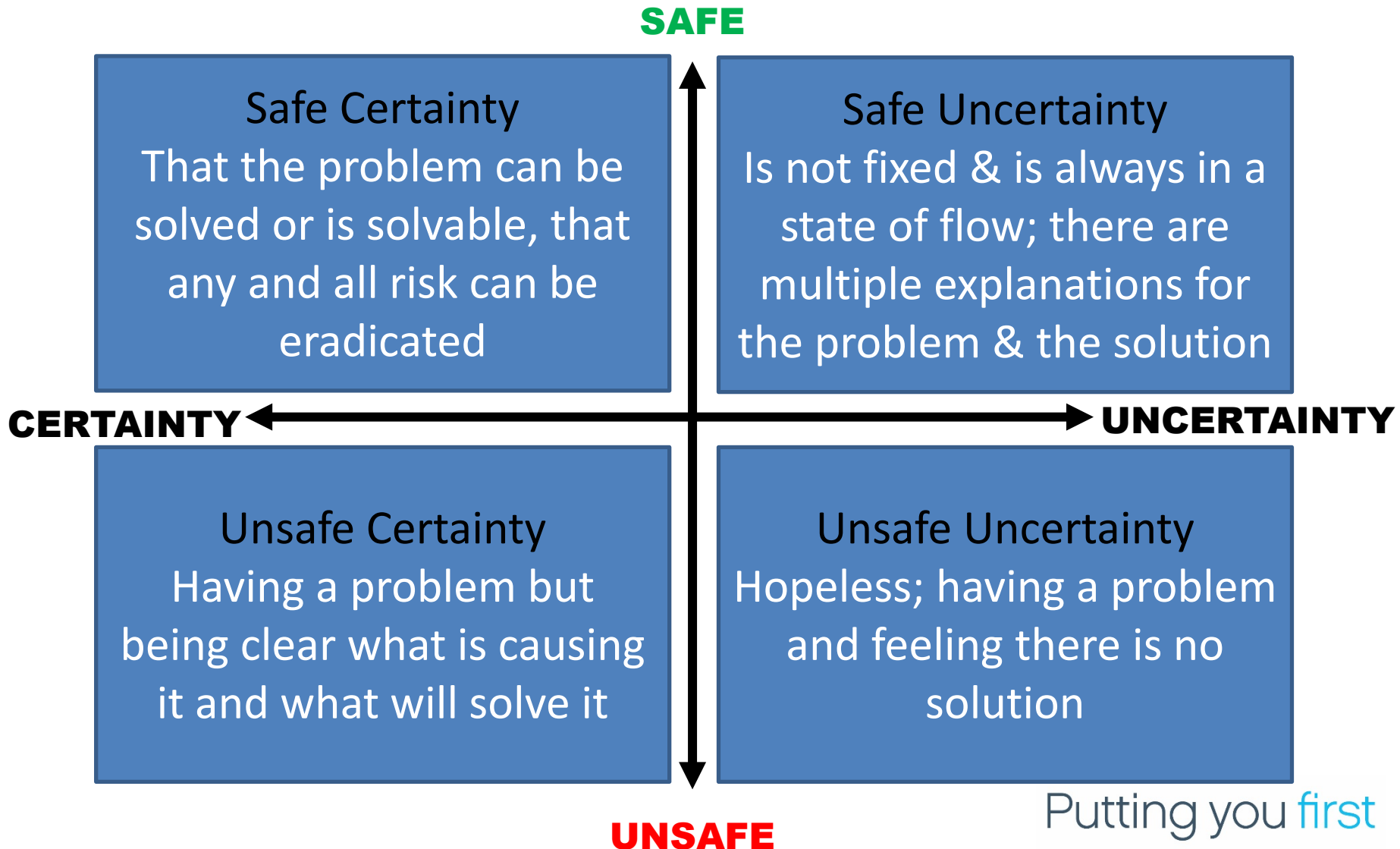
Moving Towards A Position of Safe Uncertainty

Stages of pandemic – differing levels of uncertainty- what now?

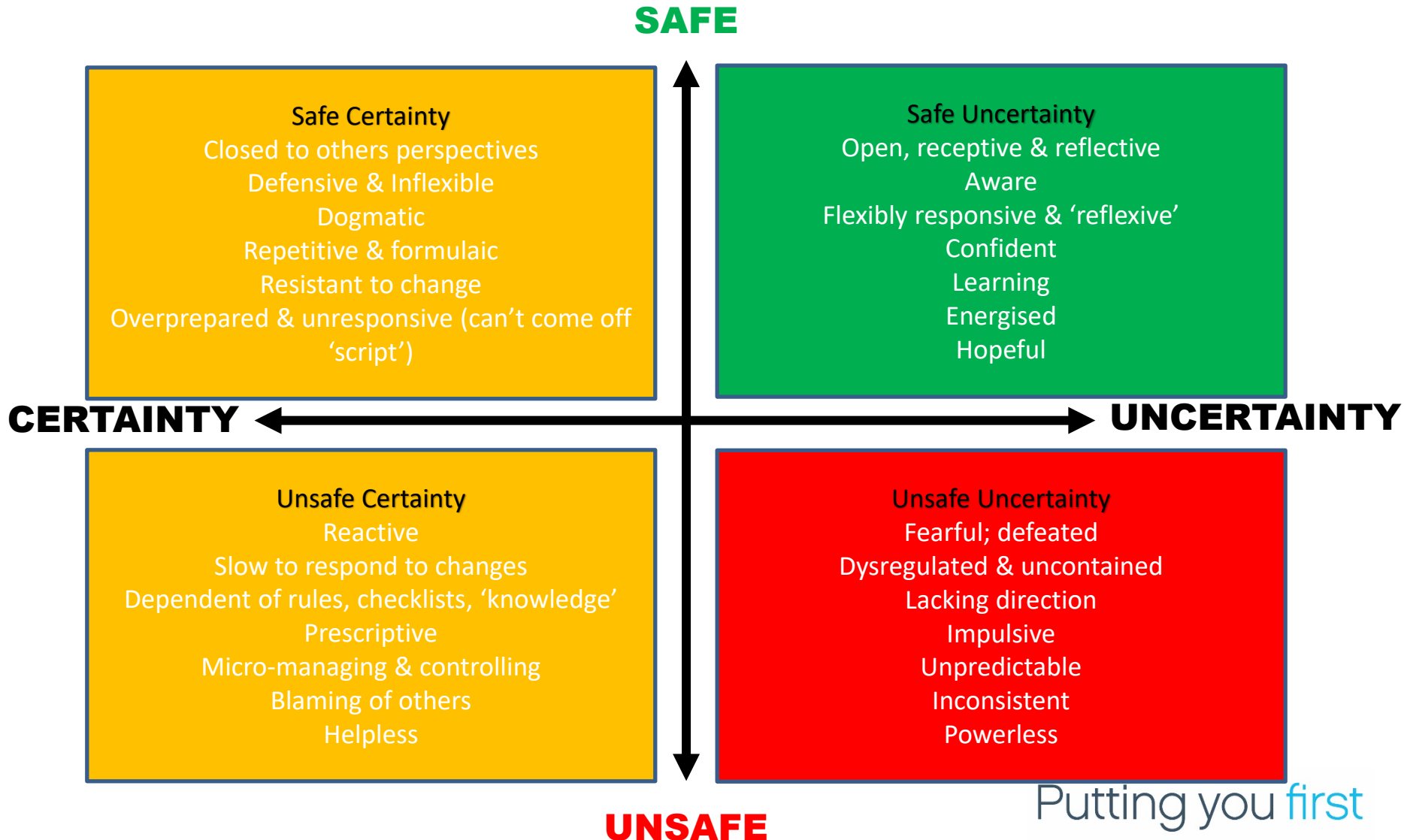


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A 'road map' / guide



A 'road map' / guide: 'Safe Uncertainty'



Moving Towards A Position of Safe Uncertainty



Safe Uncertainty
Authoritative Doubt

Moving Towards A Position of Safe Uncertainty: Some Top Tips

AWARENESS

- Where am I on the map?
- What's my go to for managing uncertainty-what's being triggered?
- Is this helpful? Is this healthy?
- How sustainable is this?
- Has this stopped being helpful?
- How would I know if this was becoming unhelpful?
- What would I recommend to a patient, colleague, friend, family member?

Some Top Tips

Try to let go of....



& try to

focus on...



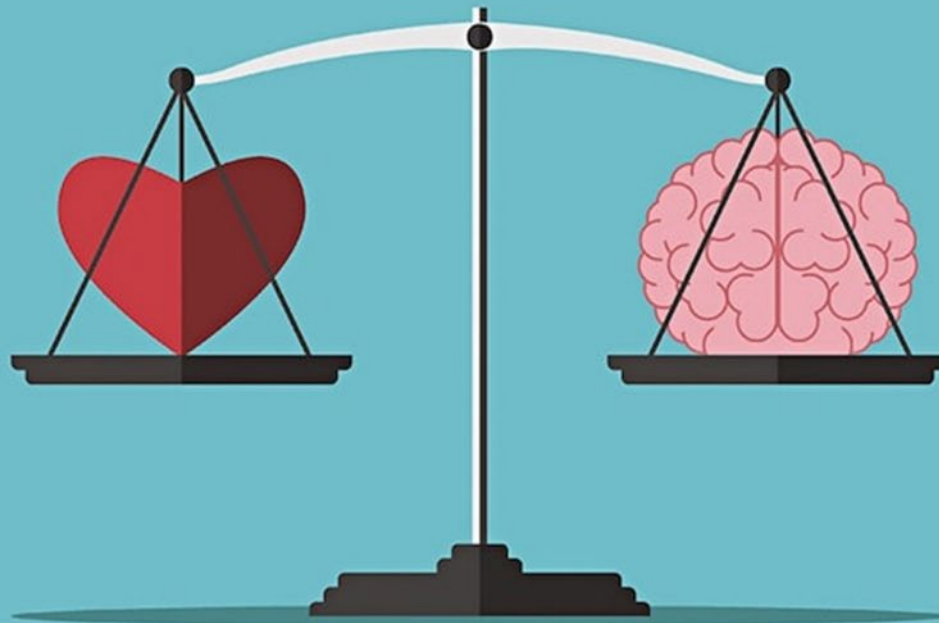
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Moving Towards A Position of Safe Uncertainty: Some Top Tips

- Challenge your need for certainty
- Acceptance
- Curiosity
- Empathy, Kindness, Compassion- for yourself & others
- Reflect on all the other situations & times when you have coped
- Reduce your anxiety and stress levels.

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Top tips



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Moving Towards A Position of Safe Uncertainty: Some 'Top Tips'

Suggestions for managers & teams:

'Psychological PPE'

- The basics
- Information & communication
- Team huddles & care spaces
- Model it- what it *can* look like; label, validate, normalise
- Ensure staff teams are as much our priority as our patients
- Ask twice ("How are you?" "How are you really?") but only if you have the emotional space to cope with the response – 'REACT' training for managers is coming to support with this

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Sources of support

- **WSFT staff support psychology team** email staffsupport@wsh.nhs.uk or phone 01284 712598 or 07971 884731 or medic bleep 'staff wellbeing'
- **NSFT First Response service** – MH crisis service 24/7 0808 196 3494 or Samaritans on 116 123
- **NSFT NHS staff helpline** – 9.30am - 4.30pm, Monday – Friday 0300 123 1335
- **NHS Helpline** 7am – 11pm 0300 131 7000 or text service – text FRONTLINE to 85258
- **Every Mind Matters** www.nhs.uk/mental/health
- **Counselling and webinars from Care First**
- **Suffolk Wellbeing and Suffolk Libraries** (courses and resources as well as CBT) www.wellbeingnands.co.uk
- **NHS practitioner health webinars and resources** – www.people.nhs.uk
- **Intensive Care Society** – www.ics.ac.uk/ICS/wellbeing
- **Check out the** [Trust intranet page](#)

Staff wellbeing

We are WSFT

We are in this together - we can get through this

Every role matters - you are making a difference

Ask for help or support if you need it - it's ok not to be ok

Remember to stay hydrated and eat regularly - take your breaks

Exercise when you can - allow time to switch from work to home mode

When not working get some rest and do rewarding, pleasurable activities

Sleep matters - have a regular sleep routine if you can

Focus on what you can control and try to let go of what you can't

Thank you for what you are doing

Staff psychological support service:

Medic Bleep 'Staff Wellbeing' | e: staffsupport@wsh.nhs.uk

t: 01284 712598 / ext. 2598 | m. 07971 884731

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