

# Collaborative approach to Mental Health: Coming together of AMEs, Airline Medical Departments and Pilot Peer Groups

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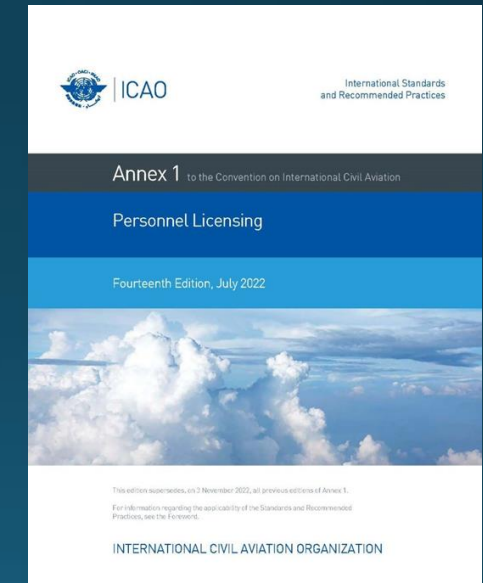
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# Medical certification

## Chapter 6 of Annex 1 to International Aviation Convention states:

### 6.3.2.2 The applicant shall have no established medical history or clinical diagnosis of:

- a) an organic mental disorder;
- b) a mental or behavioural disorder due to use of psychoactive substances; this includes dependence syndrome induced by alcohol or other psychoactive substances;
- c) schizophrenia or a schizotypal or delusional disorder;
- d) a mood (affective) disorder;
- e) a neurotic, stress-related or somatoform disorder;
- f) a behavioural syndrome associated with physiological disturbances or physical factors;
- g) a disorder of adult personality or behaviour, particularly if manifested by repeated overt acts;
- h) mental retardation;
- i) a disorder of psychological development;
- j) a behavioural or emotional disorder, with onset in childhood or adolescence; or
- k) a mental disorder not otherwise specified;
- l) such as might render the applicant unable to safely exercise the privileges of the license applied for or held.



## BABY BLUES



I DIDN'T PLAY WITH MATCHES,  
I DIDN'T RUN WITH SCISSORS,  
AND I DIDN'T HIT  
HAMMIE WITH  
ANYTHING BIGGER  
THAN MY HAND.





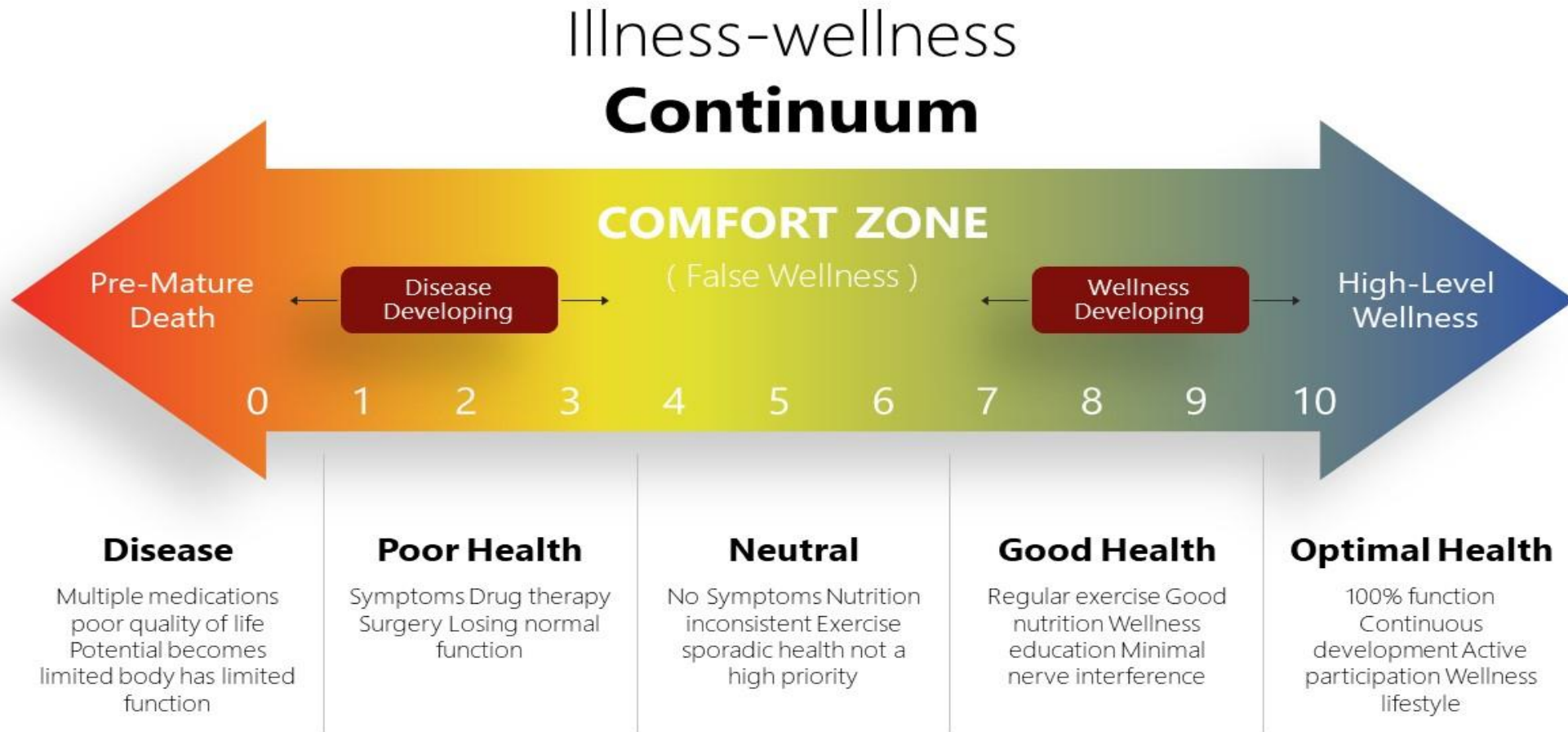
We are coming to understand health not as the absence of disease, but rather as the process by which individuals maintain their sense of coherence (i.e. sense that life is comprehensible, manageable, and meaningful) and ability to function in the face of changes in themselves and their relationships with their environment.

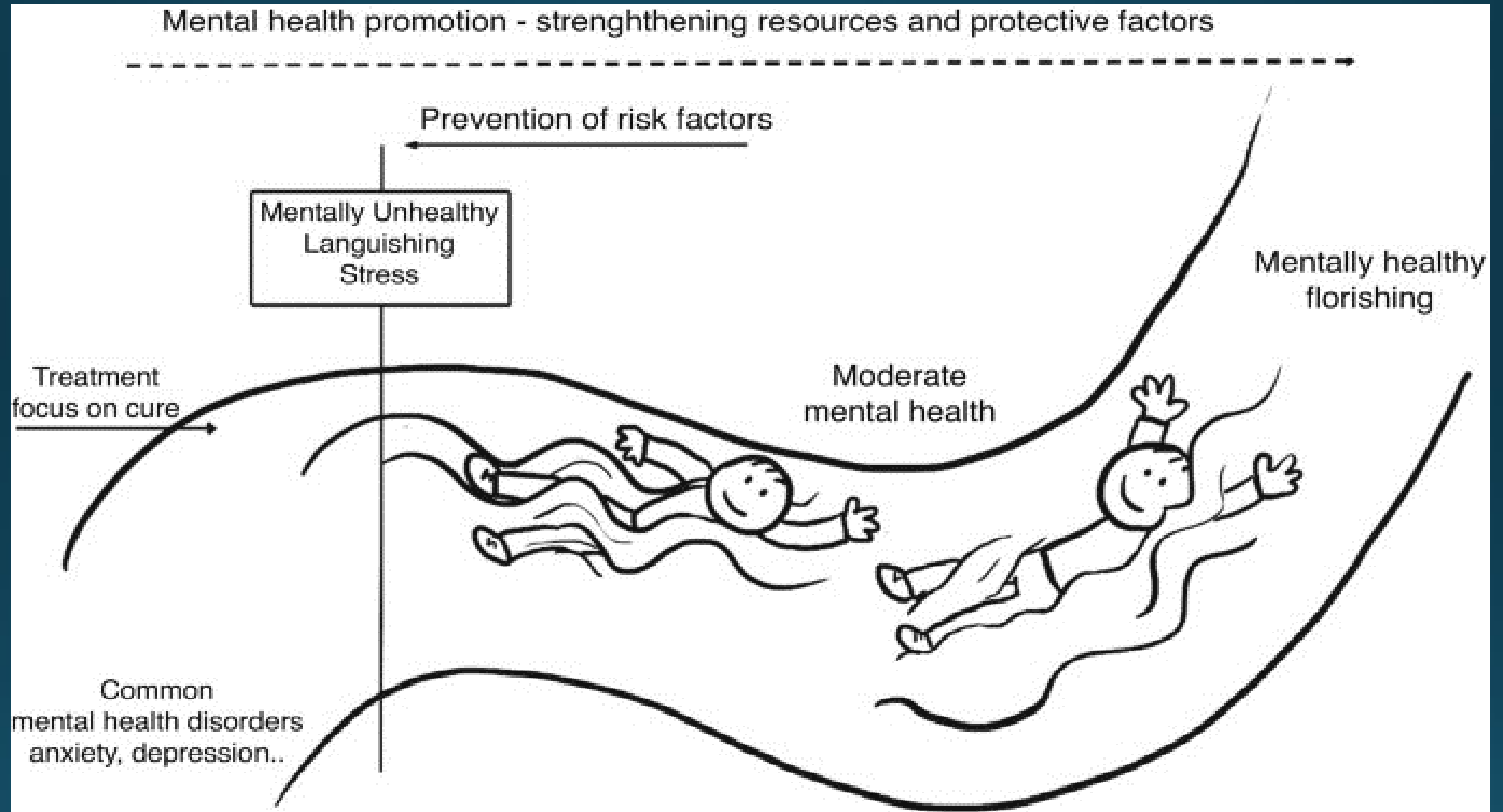
— Aaron Antonovsky —

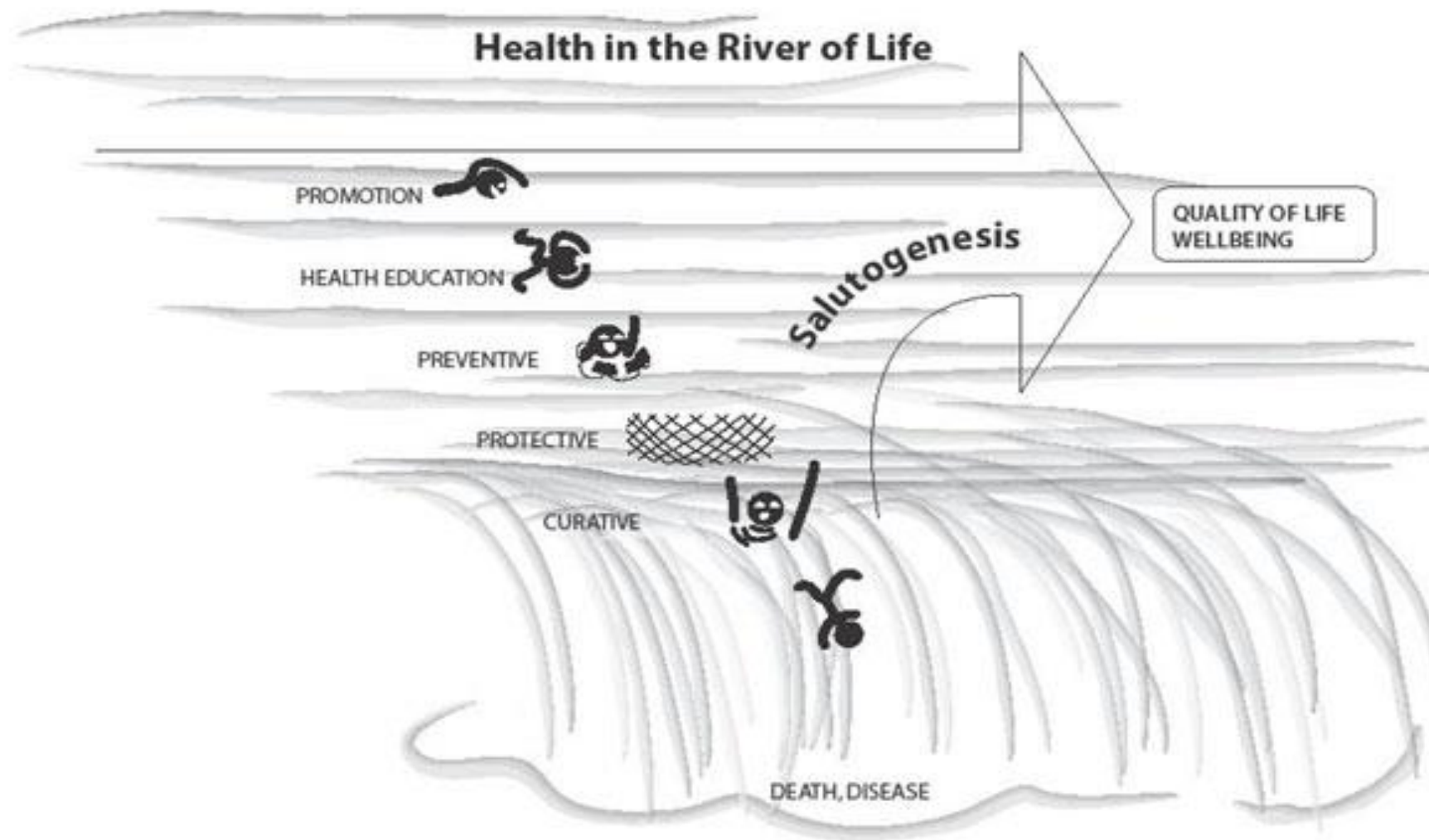
AZ QUOTES

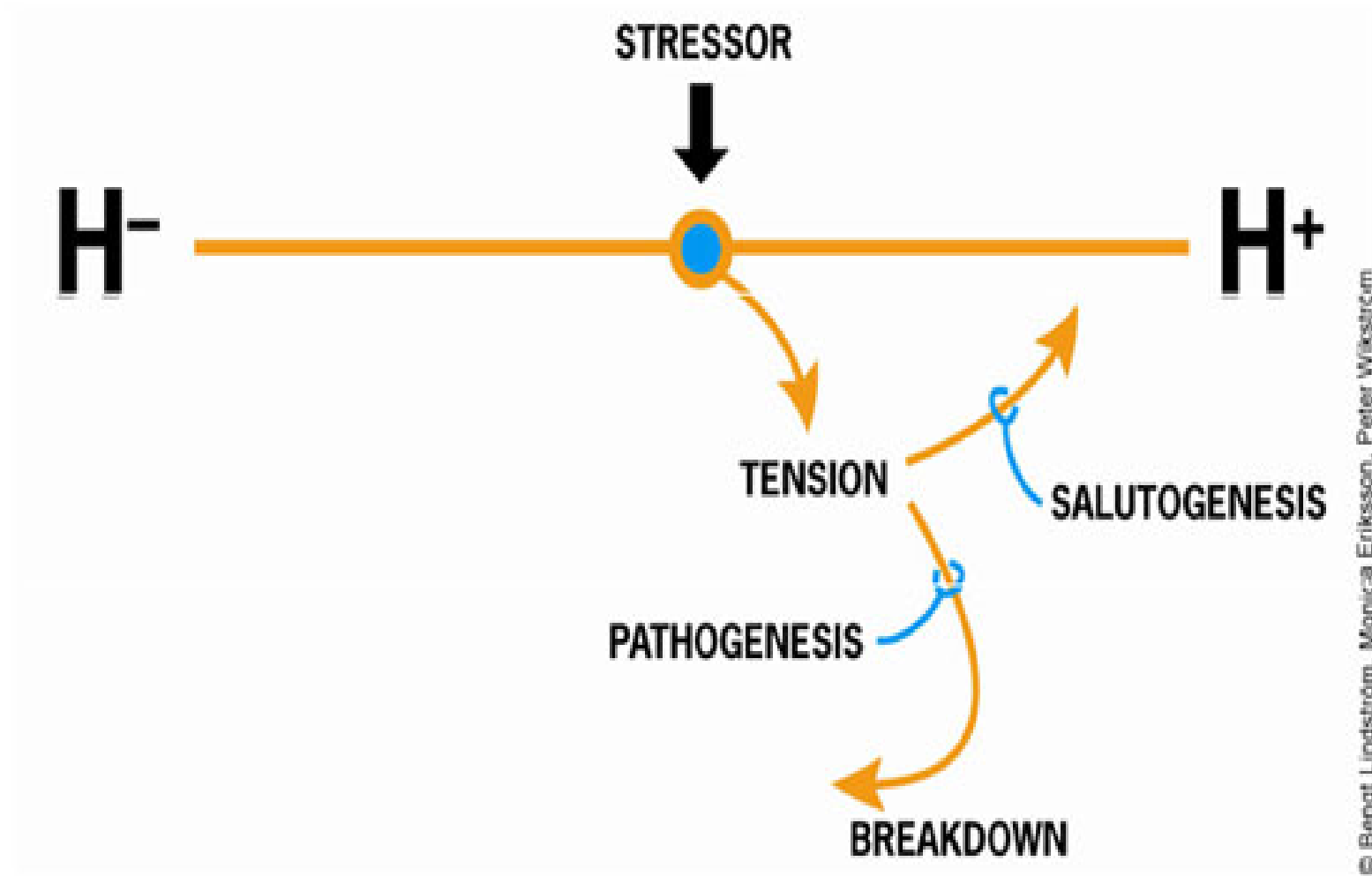


# Just because you are not sick doesn't mean you are healthy











# Salutogenesis vs Pathogenesis

## Salutogenesis (1979)

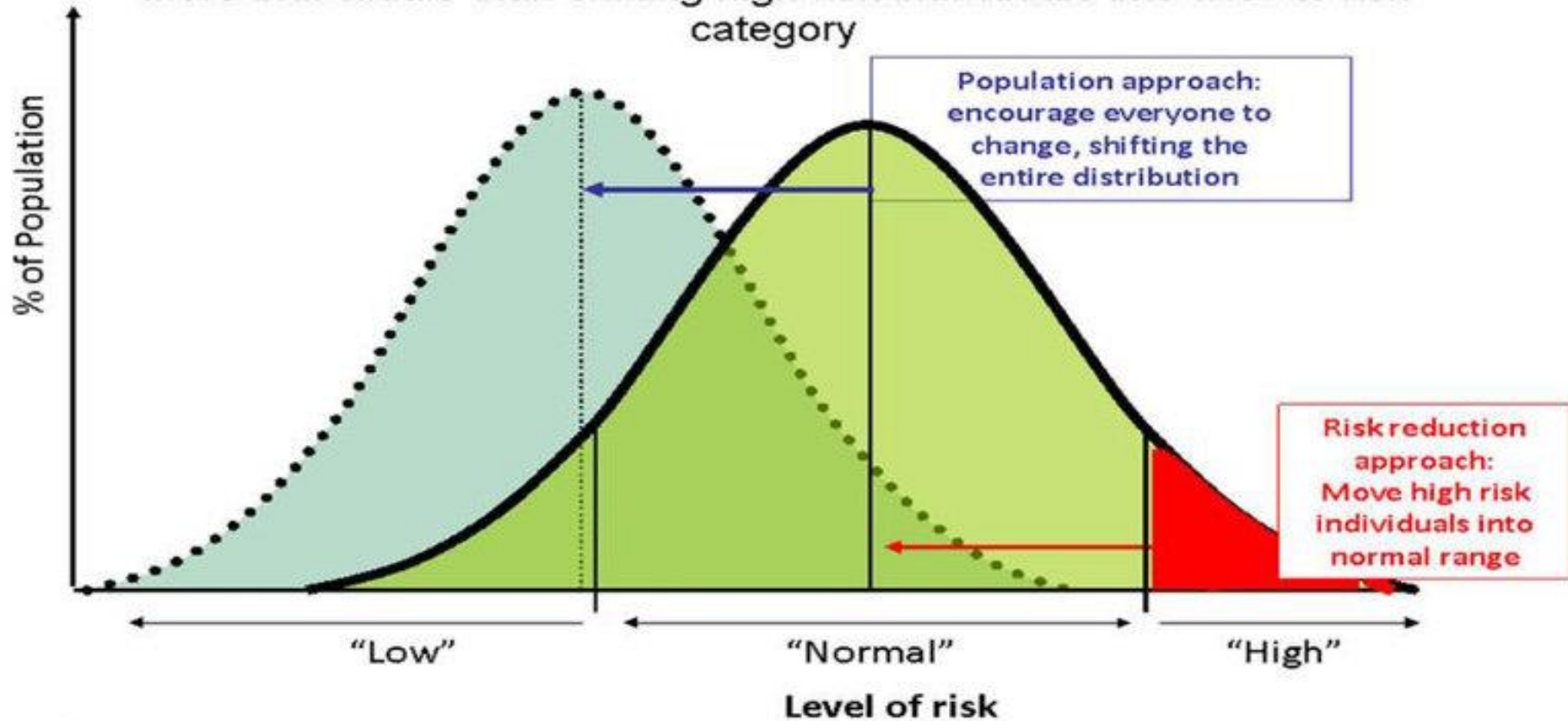
- Salus (Latin) - wellbeing
- Genesis (Greek) - origin
- Emphasis - global well-being
- Creation /maintenance of good health rather than diseases

## Pathogenesis

- Risk factors involved in specific disease

## The Bell-Curve Shift in Populations

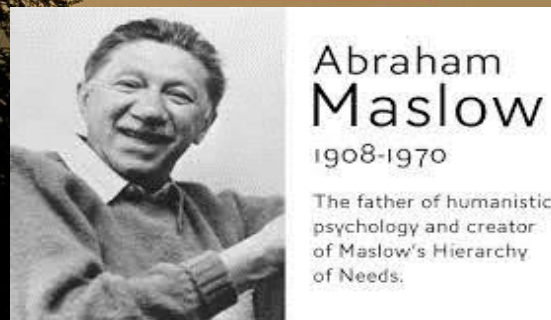
Shifting the whole population into a lower risk category benefits more individuals than shifting high risk individuals into a lower risk category



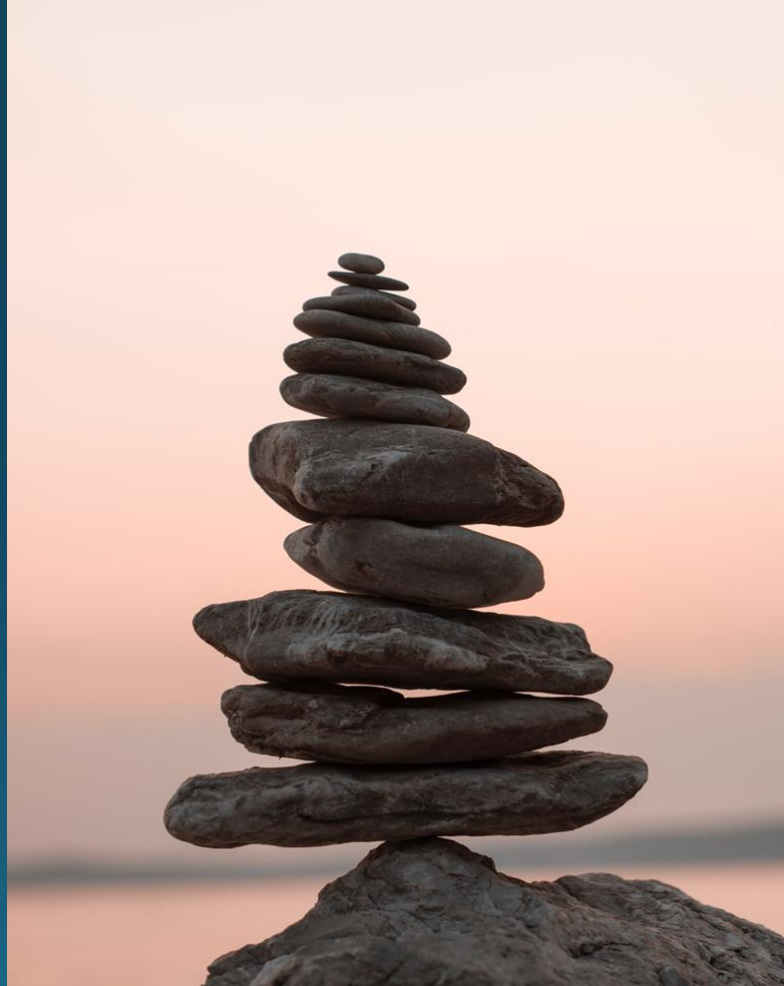
Source: Rose G. Sick Individuals and sick populations. *Int J Epidemiol.* 1985; 12:32-38.

What we call 'normal' in psychology is really a psychopathology of the average, so undramatic and so widely spread that we don't even notice it ordinarily.

Abraham Maslow



# Integrating Salutogenesis

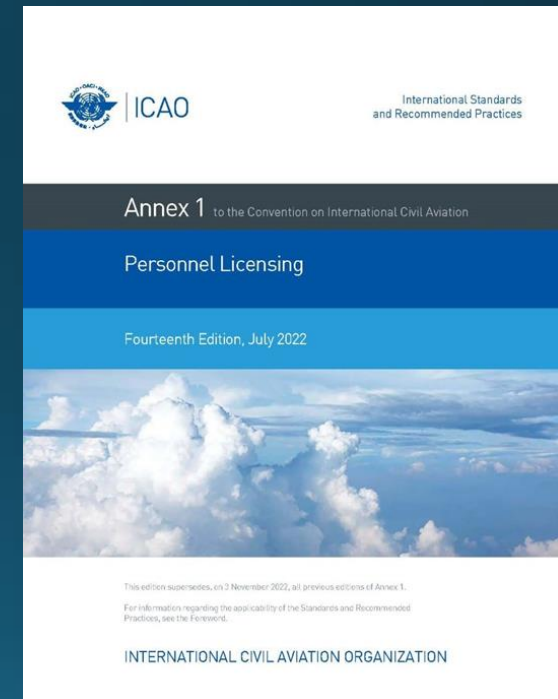


# Chapter 1 of Annex 1: Health Promotion Amendment

**1.2.4.2** States shall apply, as part of their State safety programme, basic safety management principles to the medical assessment process of licence holders, that as a minimum include:

- a) routine analysis of in-flight incapacitation events and medical findings during medical assessments to identify areas of increased medical risk; and
- b) continuous re-evaluation of the medical assessment process to concentrate on identified areas of increased risk.

**1.2.4.3** The Licensing Authority shall implement appropriate aviation-related health promotion for licence holders subject to a Medical Assessment to reduce future medical risks to flight safety.





# FAA's Committee Report

"... the ARC believes a risk mitigation process built on Safety Management System (SMS) principles should be used by air carriers and pilot representative organisations to create an environment where early reporting, appropriate treatment, and rapid return to the flightdeck are the expectation"

## Pilot Fitness Aviation Rulemaking Committee Report

November 18, 2015



# DGCA India – NASP 2018-2022

## 4.5 Application of safety management principles to the medical assessment process

- 4.5.1 In-flight Crew Incapacitation
- 4.5.2 Medical risk identification
- 4.5.3 Over-The-Counter (OTC) drugs and self medication

# Mental Health Continuum



## Stressors

- Operational
- Personal
- Medical fitness
- Incidents/ Accidents
- Organisational
- Regulatory

## Wellbeing

- Physical
- Psychological
- Social
- Spiritual

**FOUR PILLARS  
SAFETY MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS**

**POLICY**

**RISK MANAGEMENT**

**ASSURANCE**

**PROMOTION**

# Wellbeing



PHYSICAL

PSYCHOLOGICAL

SOCIAL

SPIRITUAL



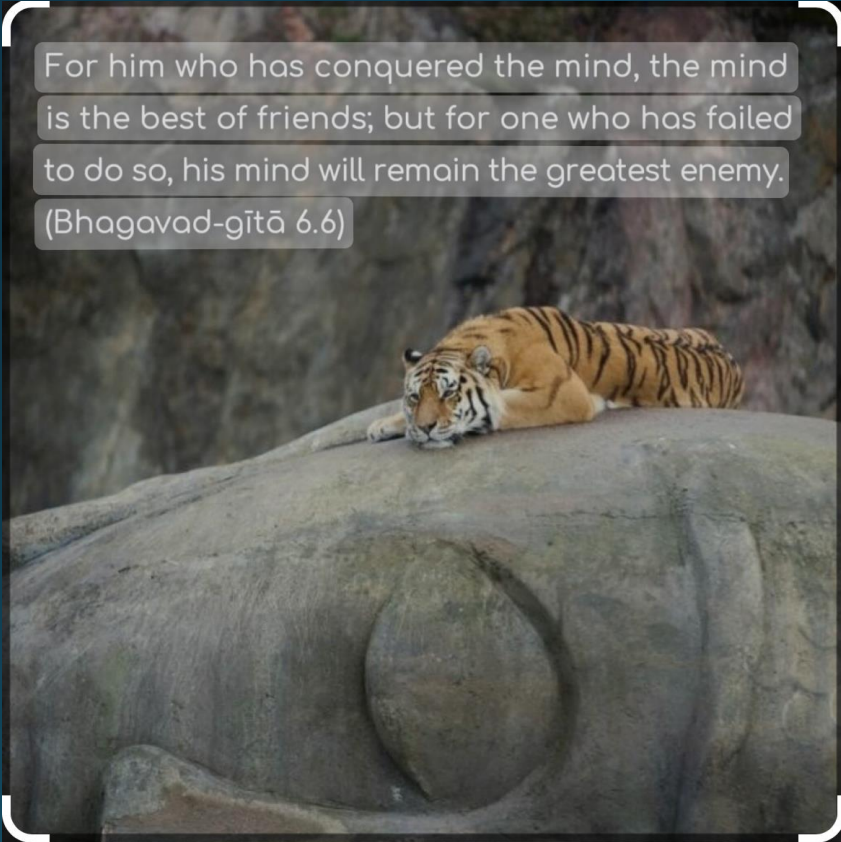
# Physical Wellbeing



- ❖ Our vehicle - The body
- ❖ Prevents lifestyle diseases, boost immunity and quick recovery
- ❖ How – integrated physical activities, nutritious mindful eating with gratitude, relaxing well
- ❖ Dopamine release
- ❖ Benefits –endurance, discipline
- ❖ Who – AME, Airline Med Dept

# Psychological Wellbeing

For him who has conquered the mind, the mind  
is the best of friends; but for one who has failed  
to do so, his mind will remain the greatest enemy.  
(Bhagavad-gītā 6.6)



- ❖ Where do we live?
- ❖ Listen to our body
- ❖ Psychosomatic diseases
- ❖ How – Step back, journalling
- ❖ Benefits – Resilience
- ❖ Who – You, Peers, AME

# Social Wellbeing



- ❖ What is your goal?
- ❖ Social beings
- ❖ Social addicts
- ❖ India – inbuilt peer support, social boundaries thin, inbuilt resilience
- ❖ How – engage in activities
- ❖ Serotonin release
- ❖ Benefits – Stability
- ❖ Who – Family, peers, groups

# Spiritual Wellbeing



- ❖ What do you live by?
- ❖ India – land of spirituality
- ❖ How – silence, breath, meditate, nature, purpose of life, aspire
- ❖ Serotonin release
- ❖ Benefits – anchor within, inner strength, peace, universal energy, gratitude
- ❖ Who – people, books, yourself

# Mental Health Continuum



## Stressors

- Operational
- Personal
- Medical fitness
- Incidents/ Accidents
- Organisational
- Regulatory

## Wellbeing

- Physical
- Psychological
- Social
- Spiritual



# Challenges

- Reluctance to seek help
- Non disclosure
- Lack of trust
- Loss of control
- Stigma and discrimination (perceived and real)
- Medical confidentiality
- Grounding
- Additional costs – examinations/ treatment / maintain medical certification
- Loss of income
- Fear of loss of employment

# DGCA India

**Medical Circular: 22 Feb 2023, Effective 31 May 2023**

**Mental Health Promotion of Flight Crew and Air Traffic Control Officers**

**Scheduled (Operators/  
Commuters)**

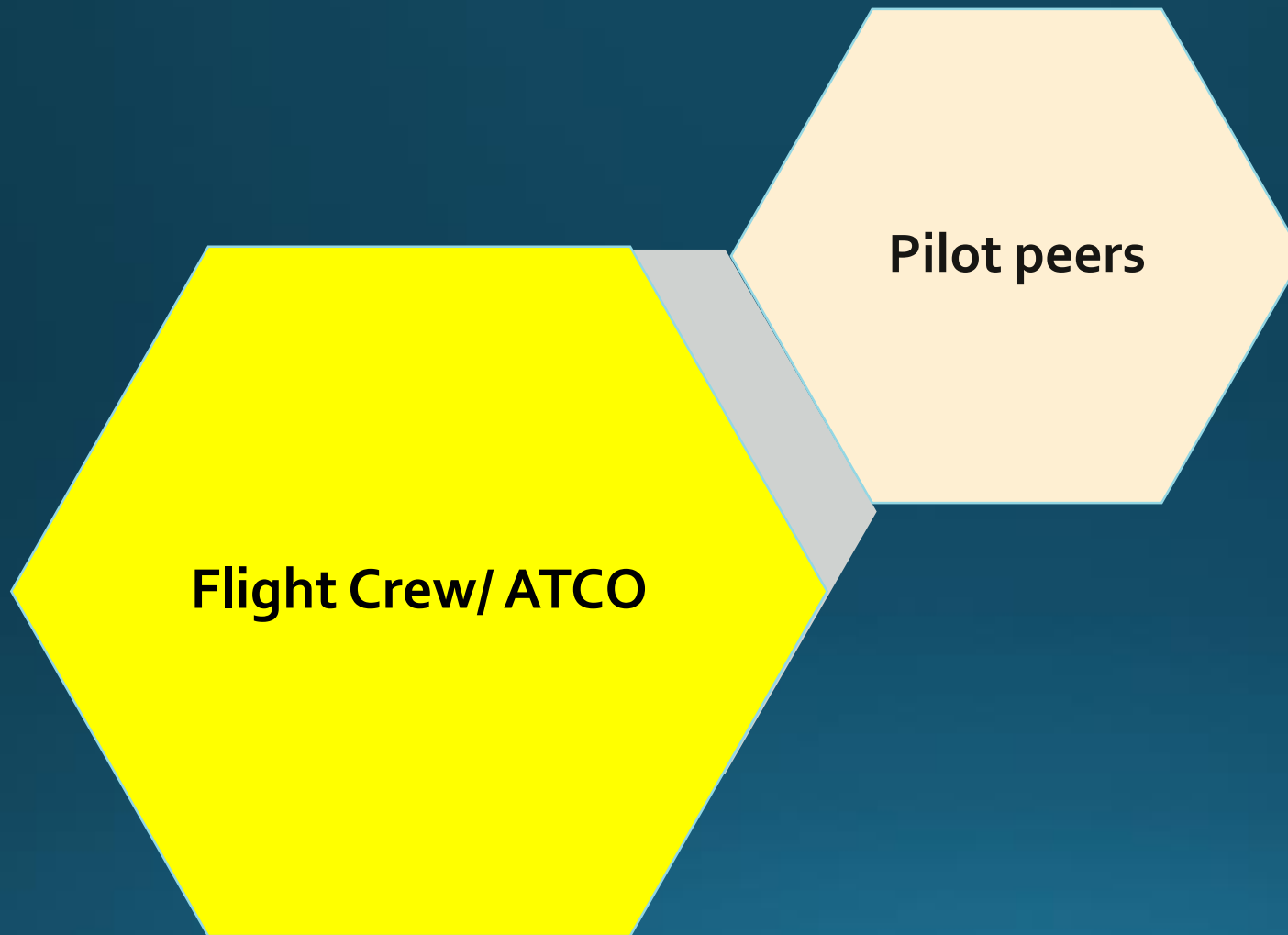
**Non-scheduled Ops**

**FTOs**

**Airports Authority  
India**

**Av Med Examiners**

**AeMC**

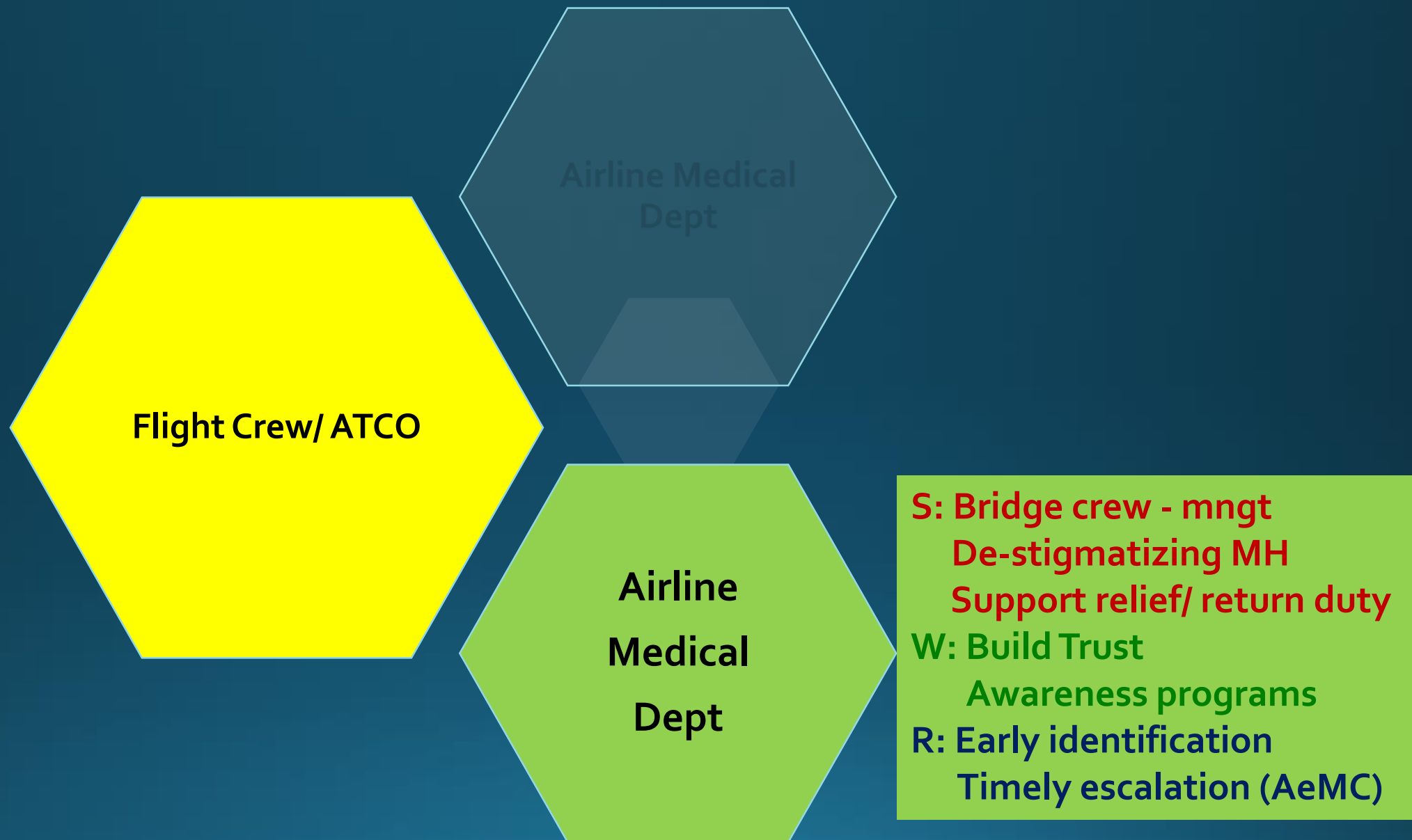


**S: Overwhelmed -1<sup>st</sup> contact**  
**Agency, Autonomy**  
**Identify red flags**  
**Confidential, non-punitive**  
**Escalation**

**W: Begin early – FTO**

**R: Psychological first aid**  
**Apply just culture**  
**Support relief/ return duty**  
**Manage risks from fear of**  
**loss of license**

S= Stressors, W=Wellbeing, R=Regulatory Circular



S= Stressors, W=Wellbeing, R=Regulatory Circular





**S: Create safety positive culture**  
**Policies supportive, non-punitive**  
**Power of positive example**

**W: De-stigmatise MH**  
**Awareness and Wellbeing programs**  
**Appropriate training**  
**Encourage EAP, PSP**

**R: Pre-emp Psychological Assessment,**  
**Training crew, Peers**  
**Formal agreement for data protection**  
**Multi-stakeholder participation & partnership in governance**

S= Stressors, W=Wellbeing, R=Regulatory Circular



**S: Policies – non punitive  
RTW pathways**

**Encourage EAP, PSP**

**W: Salutogenesis/ Health  
promotion**

S= Stressors, W=Wellbeing, R=Regulatory Circular

**S: Confidant**  
Early identification  
Escalation  
Hand holding - RTW

**W: Build trust**  
Motivate  
Health promotion

**R: Non threatening MH**  
examination



S= Stressors, W=Wellbeing, R=Regulatory Circular

# AMEs – What to look for?

Medical Manual – Part 3.9 – Mental Health CAA  
[www.aviation.govt.nz](http://www.aviation.govt.nz)

- ☐ Clues before examination begins
- ☐ Clues on medical certificate application form
- ☐ Clues obtained during physical examination
- ☐ What to do when examination finished

# AMEs – What to look for?

## □ Formal Mental Status examination (AMSIT)

- Appearance, Behaviour, Speech
- Mood, Affect
- Sensorium
- Intellectual function
- Thought

**MHP/ Family support**

**S: Early intervention**

**Collaborate**

**Ongoing monitoring**

**W: Education**

**R: Psychological first aid**

**Data protection**

**Evaluate self report/  
escalated cases**

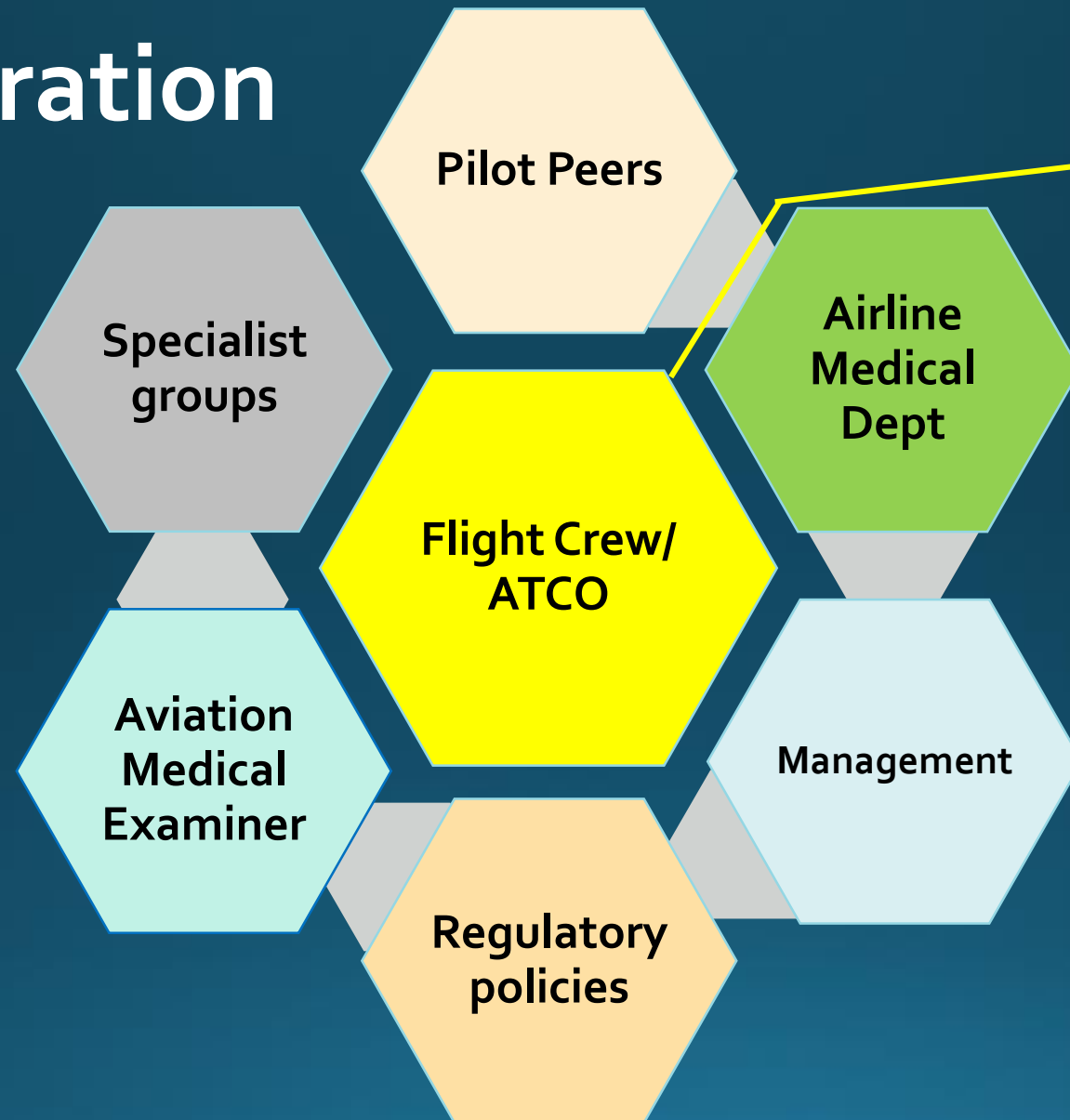
**Clin Psych/ Psychiatric  
evaluation**



S= Stressors, W=Wellbeing, R=Regulatory Circular



# Collaboration



**S: Speak up, Trust**  
**Seek Support**  
**W: Strengthen wellbeing**  
**R: Timely intervention**



S= Stressors, W=Wellbeing, R=Regulatory Circular

# Case study

During COVID 19

- Pilot steps out for duty – Hailed as hero by residents
- Returns from duty – block way home – for fear of COVID
- Severe mental stress
- Crew - airline doctors – local health authorities – administration – management - resolve issue
- Arrangements to stay away from family

# Case study

- Pilot with COVID - prolonged recovery period
- Develops long covid
- Small child - stress compounds - loses family support
- Does not reach out to anyone
- On treatment for depression
- Loss of job

## Personnel

- Aircrew
- Airline Doctors
- Management
- Regulator
- AME
- Specialists

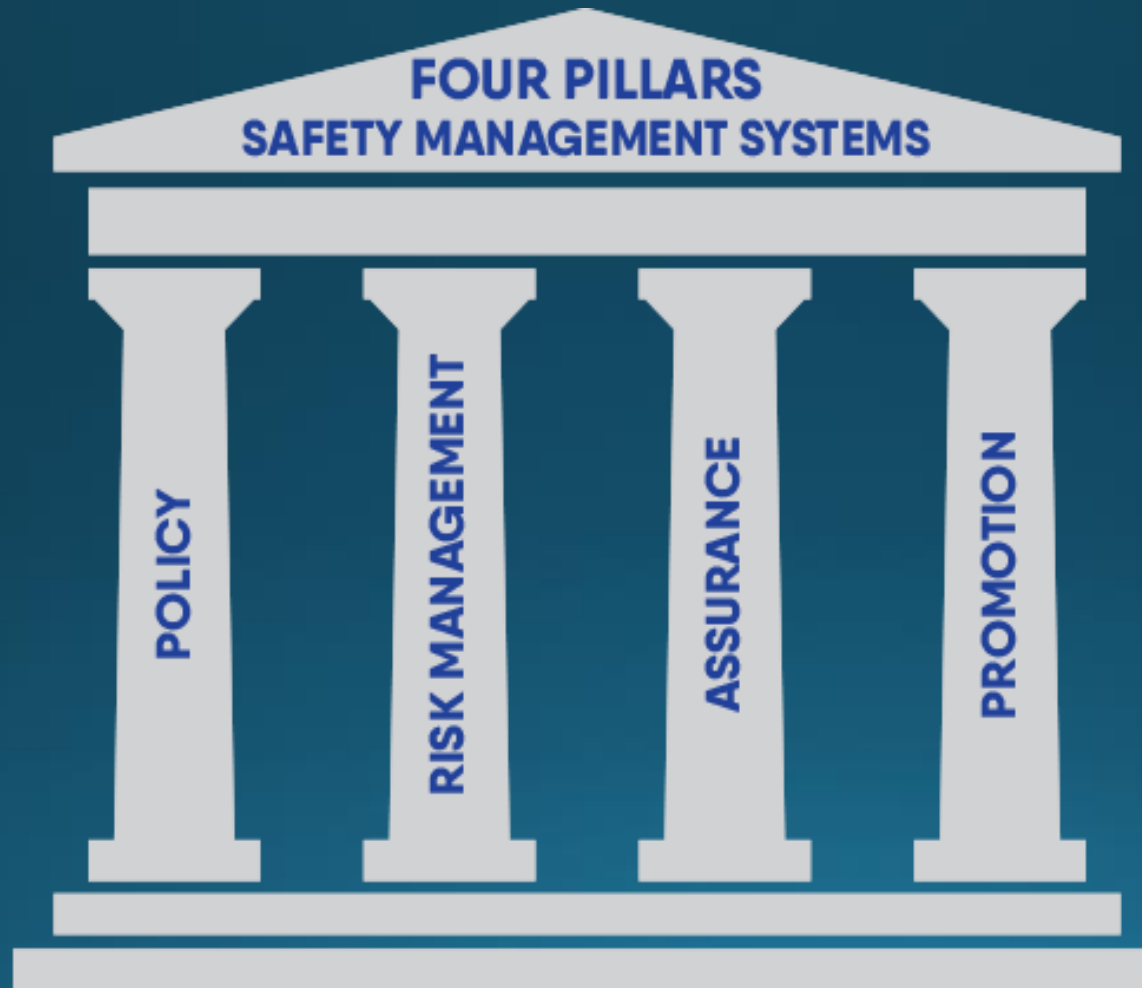
## Culture

- Destigmatize
- Encourage to speak up
- Understand MH problems common
- Every MH issue not safety concerns
- Apply correct risk management

## Policies

- Supportive, not punitive
- Chance for rehab
- Training for peers
- Training for all

# Integrate into SMS



# Wellbeing

PHYSICAL

PSYCHOLOGICAL

POLICY

RISK MANAGEMENT

ASSURANCE

PROMOTION

SOCIAL

SPIRITUAL

FOUR PILLARS  
SAFETY MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS



Wellbeing  
I - Impact

T - Training

S - Support

O - Operate/ Off

K - Keep in Touch

A - Assess

Y - You

*“Good health is an external expression  
of an inner harmony”*

*Mirra Alfassa - The Mother*

# Thank you



- Salutogenesis
- Peer support programs key
- Multi stake holder participation
- All SSAA