

Keeping a Peaceful Home:

Supporting and Providing Advantages for a Loved-One
With Severe Mental-Illness

Daniel Linscott, PsyD., MAT.

Why Is a Peaceful Home Important?

- * When you have a loved one in the home who has severe mental illness, it is imperative that the home be a restful and supportive environment.
- * Having a peaceful place to return to from the stressors of the outside world allows home to be a respite for any of us.
- * Imagine what it is like to additionally have a constant stream of internal stressors (voices, negative thoughts, anxiety, etc), and what it would mean to have a chaotic vs. a peaceful home to live in.

Defining a Peaceful Home

- * How will we be discussing a peaceful home
 - * Peaceful Communication
 - * Structured Scheduling
 - * Calm Home Environment

Risk Factors and Protective Factors

- * People with schizophrenia and their caregivers (all of whom were relatives) perceived non-adherence to antipsychotic medication as a leading risk factor of relapse; other risks included poor family support, stressful life events and substance use. Family support, adherence to antipsychotic medication, employment and religion were viewed as protective factors.

Research Suggests Support and Warmth

- * Homes that have greater caregiver warmth and higher levels of family cohesion were associated with lower levels of patient symptom severity.

Research on Poor Communication in the Home

- * “it was found that disrupted communication was the major risk factor predicting the onset of psychopathology..it appears that a higher proportion of families with children from schizophrenic mothers had ‘severe disturbances’” in the household more than control families.

Research Continued...

- * For patients with schizophrenia, regular contact with high-EE family members (family members who are highly critical, hostile, and/or emotionally over-involved) has been well established as a psychosocial risk factor known to contribute to worsening of patient symptomatology and higher relapse rates.

How to Speak Peacefully

- * Conflict will often arise when one or the other person feels imposed upon.
- * When we speak from our own feelings we can avoid triggering the other feeling criticized, ordered around, blamed, or shamed.

Speaking Peacefully

- * One way to speak using our feelings which avoids setting others off is by using a simple formula.
“When you...I feel...”
- * “*When you* continue to look at your phone when I walk through into the house, *I feel* sad and disconnected from you.”
- * The essential ingredients are to
 - * Use concrete observation vs. evaluation
 - * Taking responsibility for our own feelings.

Evaluation v. Observation

<p>You're lazy.</p>	<p>When I see you in the same spot on the couch as when I left you this morning, I wonder if you have done anything all day.</p>
<p>He is a poor soccer player</p>	<p>He hasn't scored any points in the last 5 games</p>
<p>You're never willing to help.</p>	<p>The last 3x I've asked for your help you haven't been available.</p>
<p>You'll never keep a job if you can't wake up.</p>	<p>You've woken up after 1PM everyday this week, which puts you out of sync with most work schedules.</p>

Express Your Feelings, Not Opinions

DO NOT DO THESE:

- * **“I feel that...”** = This is stating an **opinion** NOT expressing a feeling.
- * **“I feel you are...”** - This is a **judgement** of others
- * **“I feel unimportant”** - This is **interpretation** of others' evaluation
- * **“I feel misunderstood”** - This is an **evaluation** of other people's comprehension

Responsible Feelings

- * When you feel discomfort attach it to a *need*. This way you take responsibility for them. “I feel X because I...”
- * We are responsible for what we are...
RESPONSE—ABLE:
 - * Behavior and Intentions
 - * What we say or do
 - * How we interpret others

Taking Responsibility for your Feelings

- * **“I feel... because I...”** -This takes responsibility for what we feel.

Behaviors & Intentions	What We Say or Do	How We Interpret Others
* I feel disappointed, because I had organized this party and had thought it would be a big bash.	I feel embarrassed, because I told you to be there at 10:00 and I didn't even get there until 10:50.	I feel angry, because I keep thinking they are making this difficult on purpose. (Note: It's my action, I'm thinking about them in this light.)

Expressing *Their* Feelings

- * Flip this formula around and you are doing basic empathizing.
- * Sounds like *you feel...* angry and disappointed *when I...* ask you 3 times in one day if you started looking for a job, *because you...* had asked me not to ask you so often.

So how do I do this?!

- * To start, your goal will be to review past conversations and think about how you would have owned your part better and understood the other's better. This is how you practice by yourself.
- * Then attempt to speak to a person you trust this way, to practice when the stakes are low. Then move on to doing in low conflict conversations. As you get good start stepping into higher stake conversations with it.
- * However, you should always have in mind that this is not a coercive way of engaging. This is a way that respects the other's autonomy to reject your request.

Feelings Forward

- * Starting an interaction by stating your feelings is inviting the other person to participate in holding the tension you feel.
- * “I feel scared and nervous to share this with you. I don’t want to make you angry.”
- * “I want to talk to you about the state of your room, but I’m worried that we will end up in a fight. Could we both try to talk about it with out letting ourselves start shouting?”

Peace Communication

- * When you are honest and invite the other to take part in your feelings with them, while respecting their feelings, you are opening up more vulnerability. If you can respect their emotions and vulnerability, often the other will reciprocate. Creating a peaceful resolution to conflictual situations
- * Remember: conflict is not traumatic, it is only when conflict proceeds without emotions being recognized and marked.

The Peaceful Home

- * How will we be discussing a peaceful home
 - * Peaceful Communication
 - * Structured Scheduling
 - * Calm Home Environment

Constructing a Schedule

- * The benefit of schedules:
 - * They make sense of chaotic demands on our lives.
 - * They also reassure us that we are capable of getting all our responsibilities done.
 - * They provide predictability and stability

The Importance of Schedules

- * Following a routine of consistent sleep, healthy diet, exercise, and social engagement has a significant affect on balanced mental health.
- * Having a consistent habit of sleeping and waking up affects the release of hormones and neurochemicals. These, in turn, affect mood, energy level, motivation, immune functioning, weight stability, and clearer thinking.
- * Exercise routine improves mood, immunity, cognitive clarity, skin health, energy levels, muscle and bone density, and sleep (among others).
- * Sleep and Exercise go hand-in-hand one benefitting the other in an endless feedback loop.

More to Schedules than meets the eye

- * Having a routine is more than sleeping and exercising. In our modern era, schedules have helped make a chaotic world feel manageable. Some of the difficulties we face are:
 - * Decision Fatigue - having so many choices to choose that we feel completely overwhelmed.
 - * Too Many Demands - the perception of high demand or expectations can feel overwhelming, leading to avoidant/procrastination behaviors.
 - * Lack of Productivity - when not of “enough” gets accomplished, feelings guilt or shame.
 - * Constant Rush - when time is not scheduled well, then we feel under pressure at all times to get things done or get to appointments.

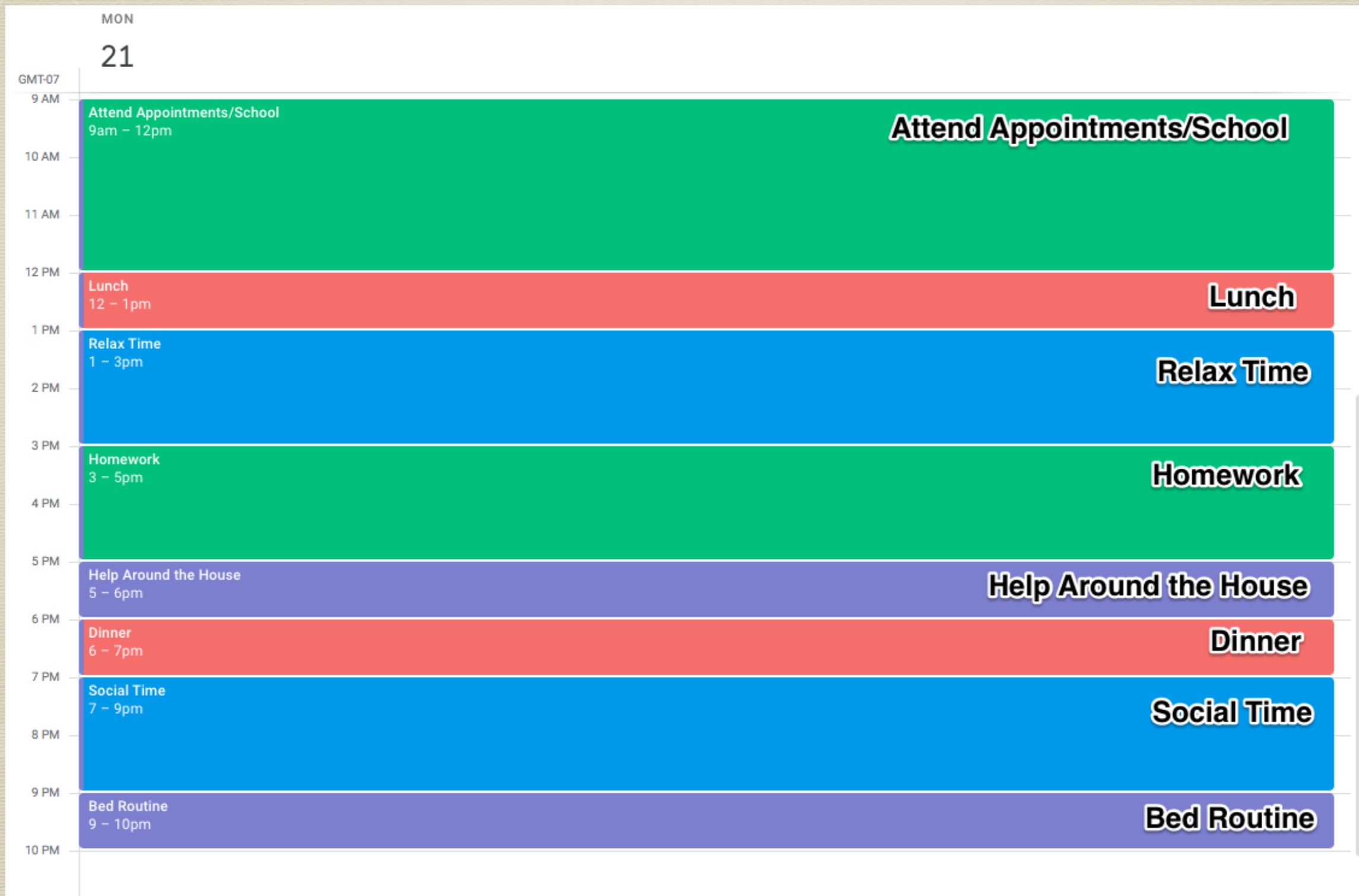
Psychology of a Schedule

- * Having a consistent schedule has been demonstrated to benefit vulnerable populations because it gives them structure to initiate them through the day.
- * Our brains function best with a balance of patterns and novelty.
 - * Consider if you ate oatmeal for every meal, every 8hr, every day for your whole life. You'd stop finding meaning/excitement/value in food.
 - * Consider if you had a meal of arbitrary quantity, quality, time of day, if at all for your whole life. You'd stop finding comfort in food, instead you'd associate it with stress.
- * The purpose of a schedule is to help us feel safe, while maintaining space for spontaneity.

Scheduling with a loved one

- * Scheduling is a way that we communicate expectations.
- * Think of how well your loved one self-motivates on tasks. For individuals who do not self-motivate well, scheduling helps in setting an expectation for school, treatment, volunteering, etc. with the assurance that they will have time to relax and recover.

Example Schedule



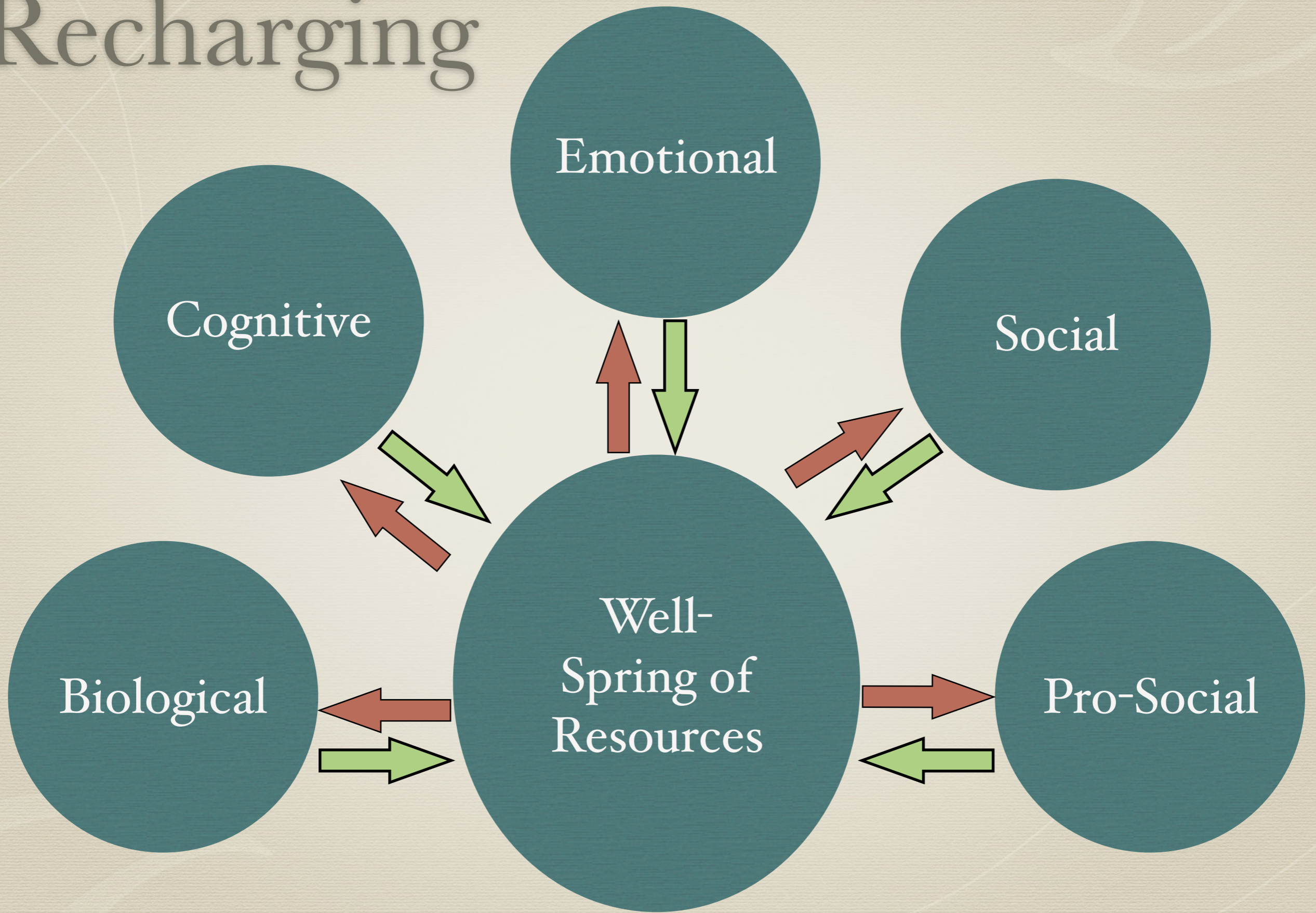
The Peaceful Home

- * How will we be discussing a peaceful home
 - * Peaceful Communication
 - * Structured Scheduling
 - * Calm Home Environment

Keeping a Calm Environment

- * Restful space is space that is an uncluttered visual, auditory, olfactory, thermometrical environment. Cluttered space can be in overstimulating and can affect mood.
 - * Visually - Try to keep surfaces clear and floor and wall space open.
 - * Auditory - Try not to leave TV or Radio on which would have random noises at varied volumes. If you live in a neighborhood that has irregular loud noises consider using a sound machine.
 - * Olfactory - We often can't smell our own homes, but you'll know if there are invasive smells. Attempt to air out the living spaces instead of spraying over them. Clean items that hold odors.
 - * Thermometrical - Attempt to maintain a range of 4-6 degrees in your living space, if possible.

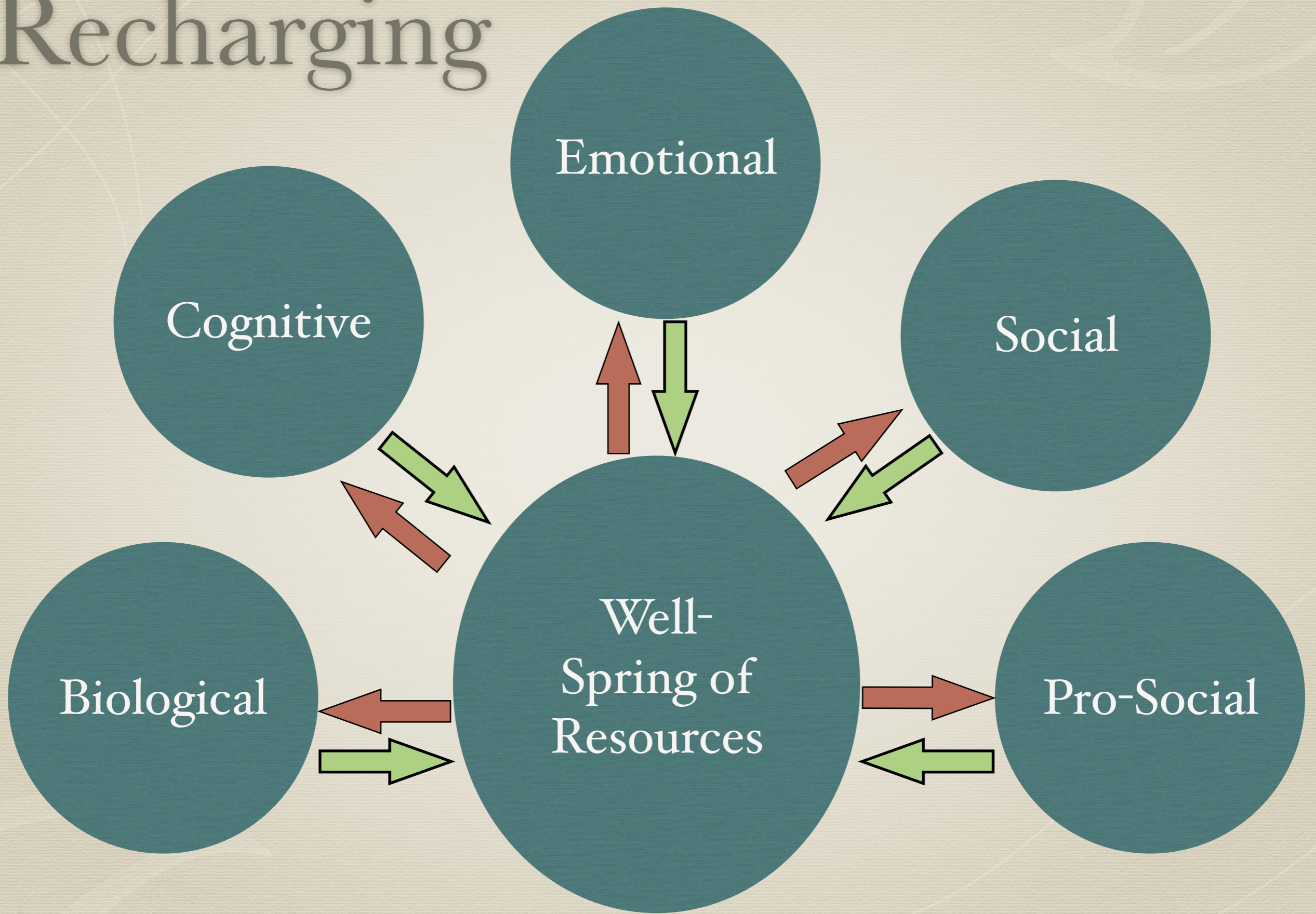
Recharging



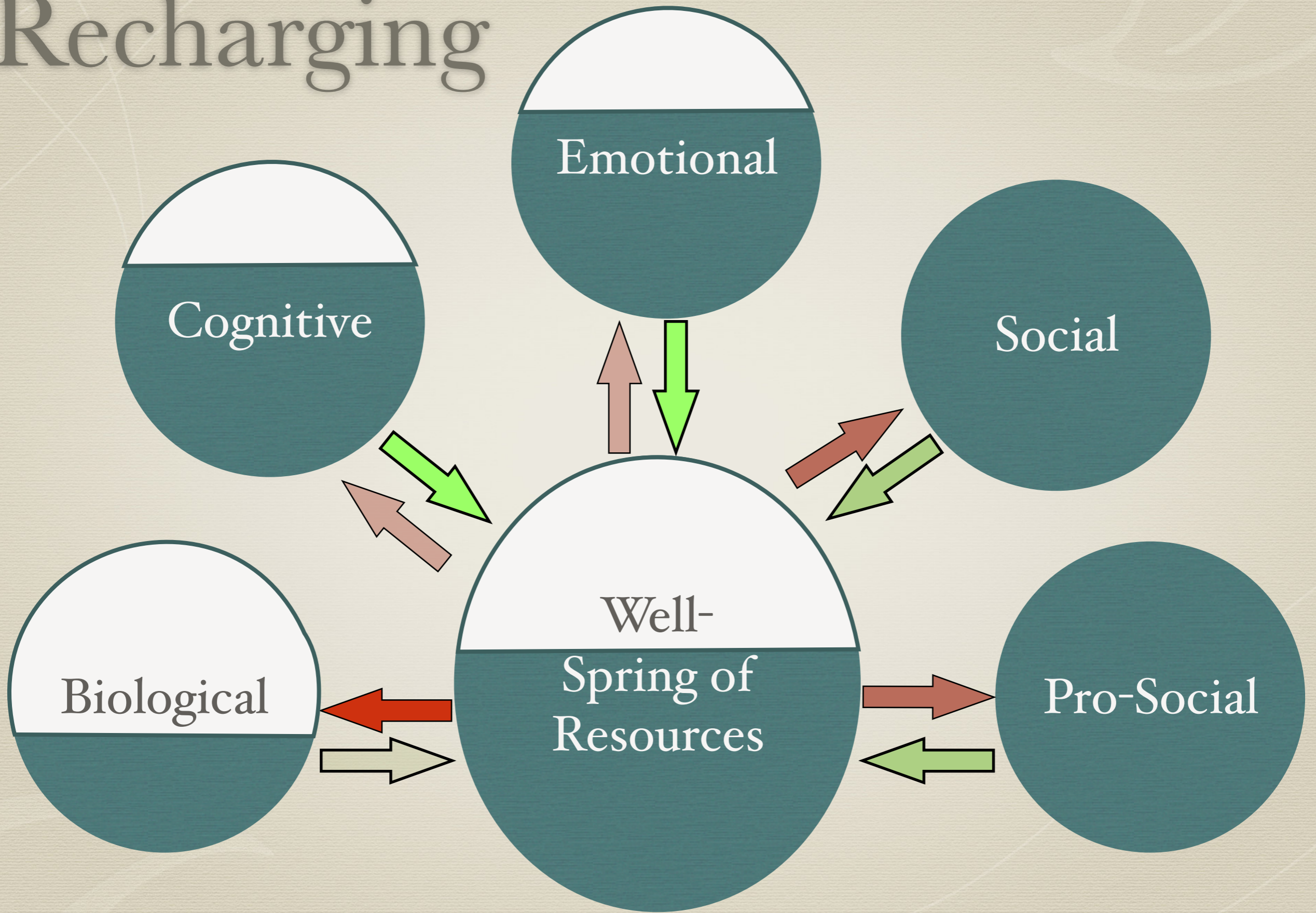
Domains of Stress & Rest

- * **Biological** - all stimulation of the nine senses, sleep, metabolism, etc (everything physiological).
- * **Cognitive** - stimulation of the mind including reading, arithmetic, strategy, planning, logistics, memory recall, etc.
- * **Emotional** - stimulation of emotions including shouting anger, crying sadness, beaming pride, lit up joy, validation, empathy, etc.
- * **Social** - stimulation of social validation including interpersonal connection, engagement, humor, commiseration, etc.
- * **Pro-Social** - stimulating one's reciprocal identity including sense of contribution, meaningful effort for another, involvement in altruistic work, etc.

Recharging



Recharging



Restorative Activities

- * **Biological** - nap, go on a walk, swim, swing in a hammock, lay under a weighted blanket, bundle up, dance, eat something healthy, go to the gym etc.
- * **Cognitive** - listening to music, meditate, color, draw., simple arithmetic, read, listen to a podcast, daydream, etc
- * **Emotional** - pray, talk to a therapist, journal, have a good cry, read a letter from future you, review your gratitude journal, etc.
- * **Social** - have coffee with a friend, hang out with a group, attend a meeting, buy something at the grocery store and make small talk at the check out, call a loved one, etc.
- * **Pro-Social** - volunteer at a homeless shelter, at church, or an animal shelter, ask a neighbor if you can help them with their yard, give someone a dollar, buy put change in someone else's meter, listen to someone else's story, etc.

Conclusion

- * There are many facets to home being peaceful. Having peaceful communication, structured scheduling, and a calm home environment allow for greater care for your loved one and provide them with stability they need.

Questions?