

# Connecticut Early Psychosis Learning Health Network

*A collaboration of the STEP Program / Yale School of Medicine and  
Connecticut Department of Children and Families*

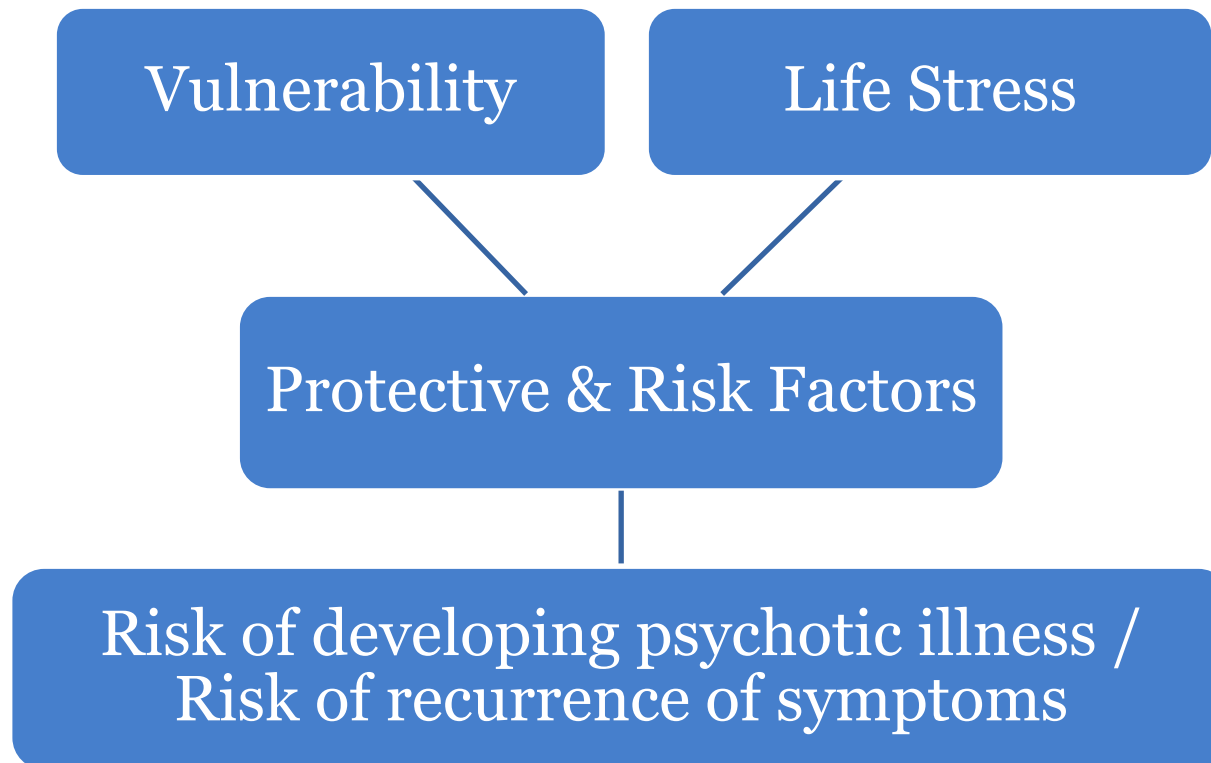
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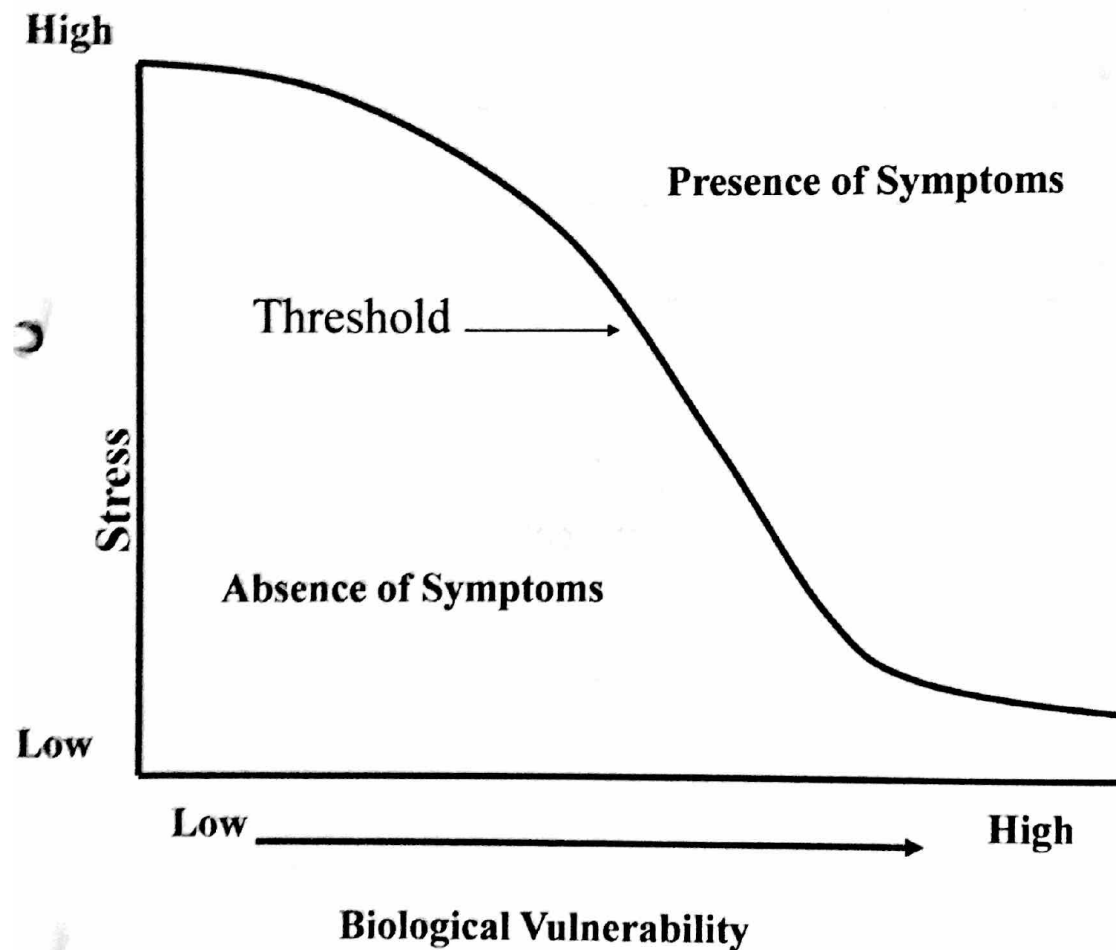
Yale SCHOOL OF MEDICINE



# Stress Vulnerability



# Stress Vulnerability Model



# Stress Bucket Analogy

**Stressors** (relationships, transitions, school/work, loss, drugs, finances, discrimination)

**Size of your bucket/vulnerability**  
(genetics, birth complications early adverse experiences / trauma, early head injury)



**What does it look like when your bucket overflows?**  
(symptoms, early warning signs)

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**Stress Relievers “Poking Holes”** (coping skills, therapy, medications, sleep, nutrition, exercise, structure, social support)



# Stress Vulnerability → Relapse Prevention

- Initial step in coming to shared understanding of onset of illness, distressing experiences, early warning signs, coping strategies
- Sets groundwork for relapse prevention / wellness planning
  - Can be helpful to do right after a hospitalization or uptick in symptoms
  - List early warning signs
- Helpful to share this information with supported others
- Examples of relapse prevention / safety plans available on shared folder

Personal  
Therapy for  
Schizophrenia  
&  
Related  
Disorders

A GUIDE TO INDIVIDUALIZED TREATMENT

Gerard E. Hogarty

# Behavioral Signals of Distress

Difficulty falling/staying asleep	Trouble sitting still	Flying off the handle
Lack of patience	Constantly talking	Impulsive, spur-of-
Increased irritability	Smoking many cigarettes	the-moment actions
More sarcastic or insulting	Using more alcohol or drugs than usual	Irrational actions
More critical	Difficulty completing tasks	Stuttering/stumbling
Constant arguments	Trouble reading, watching TV or movies	speech
Picking on other people	Not wanting to talk to people	Slow recovery from a
Quick mood changes	Sleeping more than usual	stressful event
Jumpiness	Doing things to "escape"(sleep, drugs, TV)	Missing appointments
Avoiding other people	Decreased grooming or hygiene	Procrastination
Easily frustrated	Decreased physical activities	Avoiding social
Nightmares	Increased physical activities	gatherings
Pacing	Increased medical appointments	Eating more
Rushing around		

# Physical Signals of Distress

Indigestion  
Increased sweating  
Wet palms  
Headache  
Frowning or furrowed facial expression  
Clenched jaw  
Teeth grinding  
Lump in the throat  
Dry mouth or throat  
Muscle tension or pain in neck or shoulders  
Clenched fists  
Finger tapping  
Nail biting  
Trembling or twitching  
Pounding heart  
Palpitations  
Twitching

Upset stomach  
“Butterflies” in stomach  
Knot in stomach  
Loss of appetite and weight loss  
Backache  
Chronic fatigue  
Frequent need to urinate  
Diarrhea  
Decreased sexual drive  
Foot jiggling  
Toe tapping  
Difficulty sitting still  
Cold hands or feet  
Increased breathing rate  
Shallow breathing  
Shortness of breath  
Feelings of pressure or pain in chest



# Emotional (Feelings) Signals of Distress

Feeling like hitting someone or something  
Feeling tied up in knots  
Consistent feelings of anger  
Feeling “woozy”  
Feeling like running away or getting away from things  
Feeling impatient with oneself or others  
Feeling out of control  
Feeling all “wound up”  
Emotional ups and downs  
Feeling like crying  
Feeling like shouting or screaming  
Fearfulness –  
    About the future  
    About others disapproving of you  
    About doing something wrong  
    About losing control of oneself  
    That something terrible is going to happen

# Cognitive Signals of Distress

Intrusive thoughts  
Unable to find the right words  
Trouble remembering things  
Mind goes blank  
Trouble making decisions  
Trouble concentrating  
More easily distracted  
Preoccupation with the same thoughts  
Disorganized thoughts  
Fuzzy or foggy thinking  
Thoughts seem unclear  
Belittling oneself  
Preoccupation with one's health  
Ruminating about real or imagined slights