

*Tea*

Everyone deserves a little couch-time.



Monthly Wellness Seminar

**The Power of Gardening**  
**How Plants Can Reduce Stress**

Presented by  
Horatio Neely, MBA

# About The Presenter

## Horatio Neely, MBA

- Entrepreneur, co-owner, Neely Behavioral Health
- Operations and Organizational Strategy Professional
- Executive Board Member, Chamber of Commerce
- Advocate for Wellness and Leadership Growth
- Runner and Wellness Enthusiast

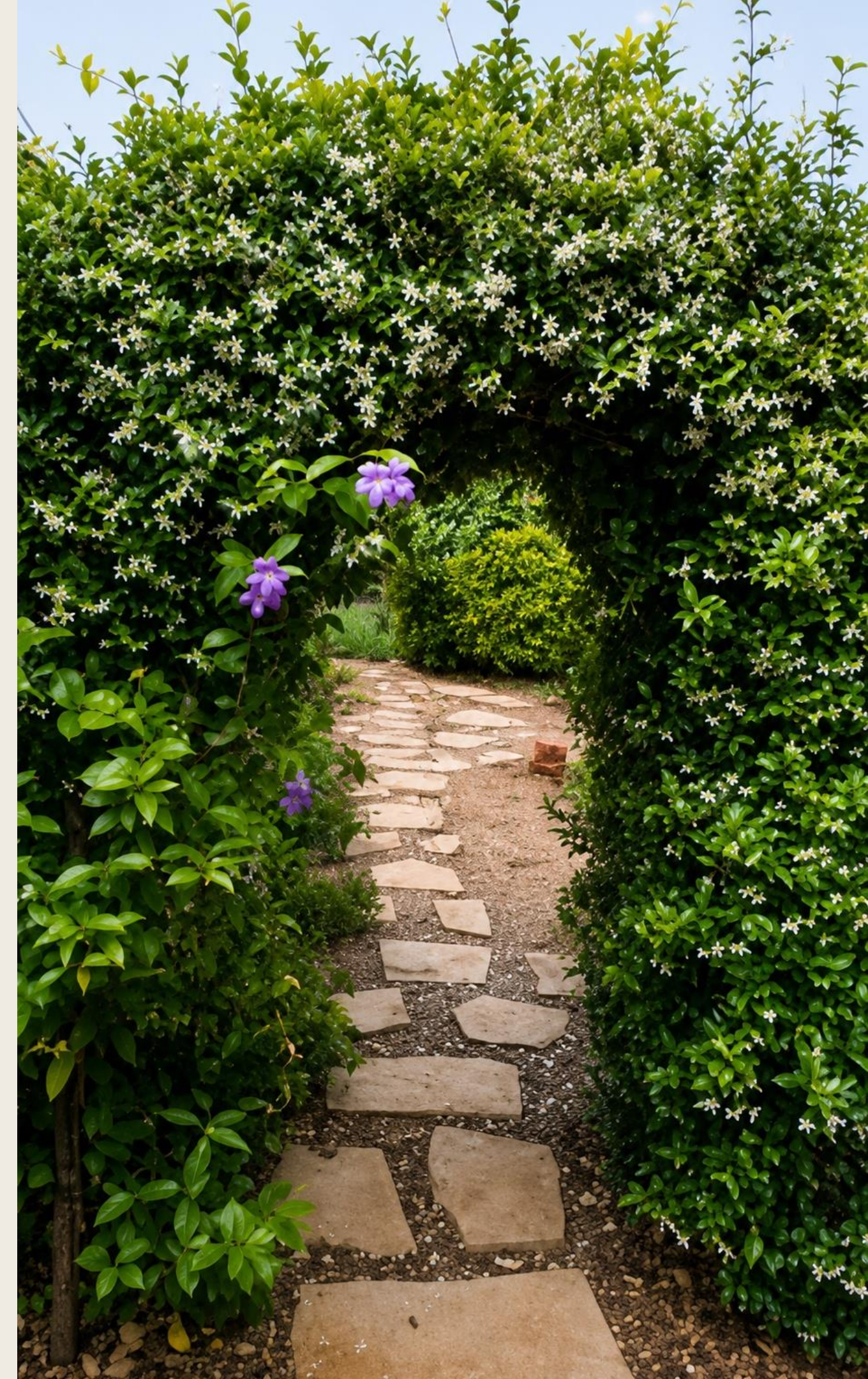


# Why This Matter?

- Nearly 77% of people report stress affecting their physical health
- Chronic stress impacts mood, sleep, concentration, and energy
- Time in nature has been associated with lower stress and improved emotional wellbeing
- Gardening combines movement, mindfulness, sunlight, and purpose

**"To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow."**

— Audrey Hepburn





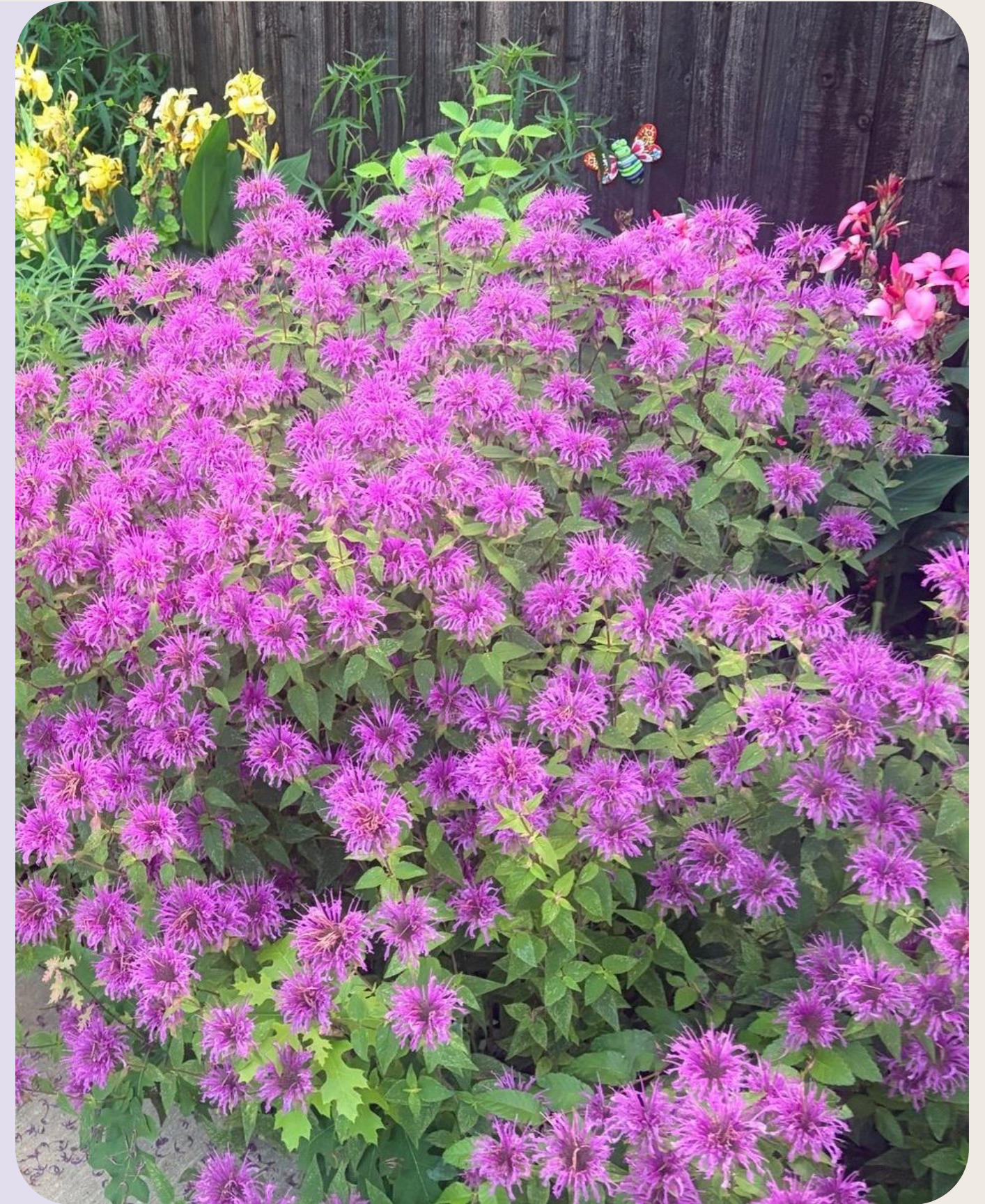
# Why Are We Here

- Understand stress and the brain
- Explore the science of gardening
- Review stress benefits
- Learn strategies for starting or restarting
- Learn watering strategies

# Poll #1

Which best describes your relationship with plants?

- I have several plants or a garden
- I have one or two plants
- I have tried before with mixed results
- I admire plants from a distance
- I seem to have a talent for losing succulents



# Stress and the Brain

- Fight or flight response
- Emotional reactivity
- Difficulty focusing
- Fatigue and burnout



# The Brain on Gardening

- Sensory grounding through what we: see, hear, touch, smell, and taste
- Dopamine from nurturing and accomplishment
- Sunlight exposure supports serotonin and Vitamin D
- Gardening routines can reduce stress activation



# Stress Reduction Benefits

- Reduced anxiety
- Better mood
- Increased focus
- Mindfulness
- Sense of accomplishment



# Participant Spotlight

Discussion:

- What emotions come to mind?
- What does caring for this require?
- What benefits come from this routine?



# Gardening as Self Care



Gardening Works Best As...	Not...
A pause	Another obligation
A routine	Perfection focused
Mindfulness	A race for results

"In every walk with nature one receives far more than he seeks."  
— John Muir, from John of the Mountains: The Unpublished Journals of John Muir

# Starting or Restarting Gardening

- Start with one plant
- Choose low maintenance plants
- Pair with routines
- Progress over perfection



# Poll #2

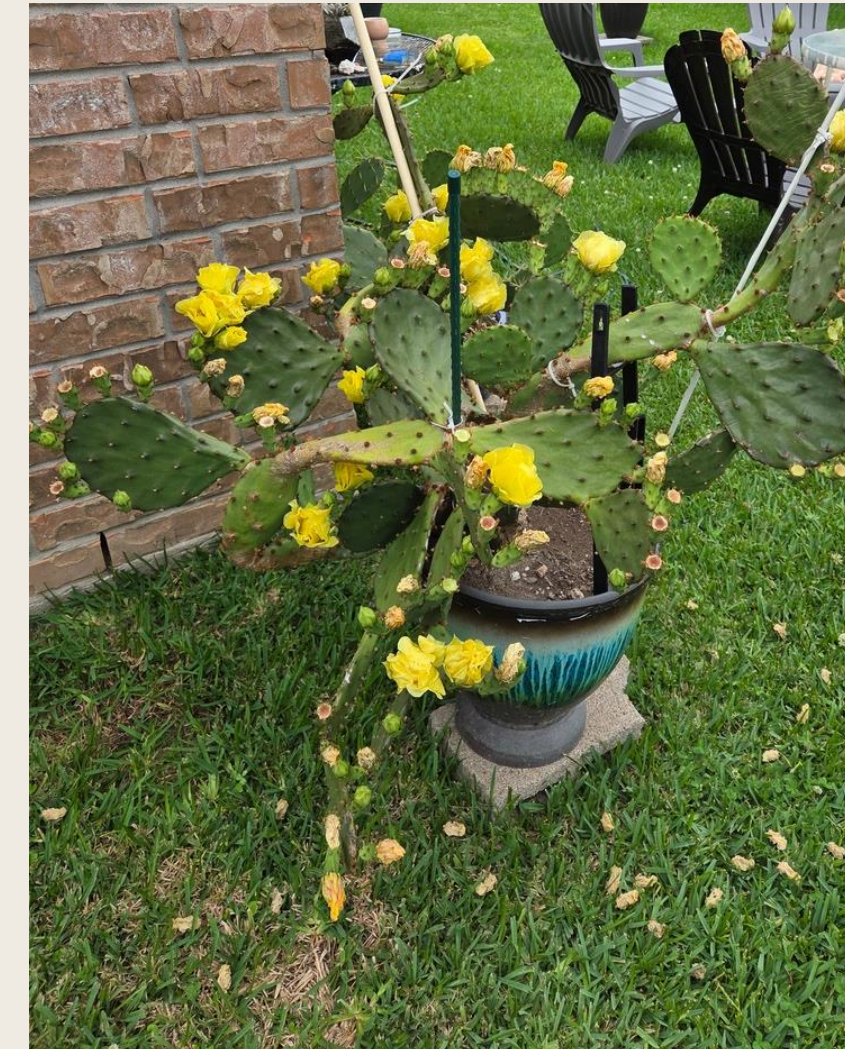
What has been your biggest challenge with gardening?

- Finding time
- Knowing what to buy
- Keeping plants alive
- Space limitations
- I have never tried before



# Beginner Friendly Plants

- Snake Plant
- Pothos
- Herbs
- Succulents

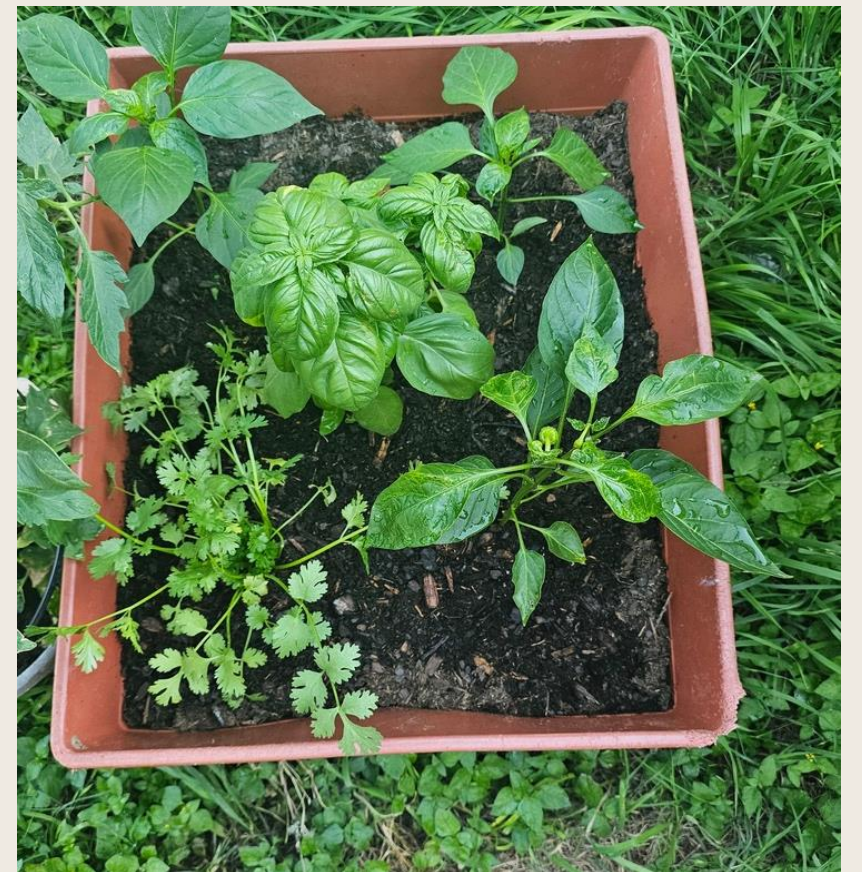


# Watering Strategies

- Check soil before watering
- Water soil rather than leaves
- Morning watering often works best
- Use drainage holes
- Overwatering is more common than underwatering

**"April showers bring May flowers."**

— Traditional proverb



# Simple Watering Routine

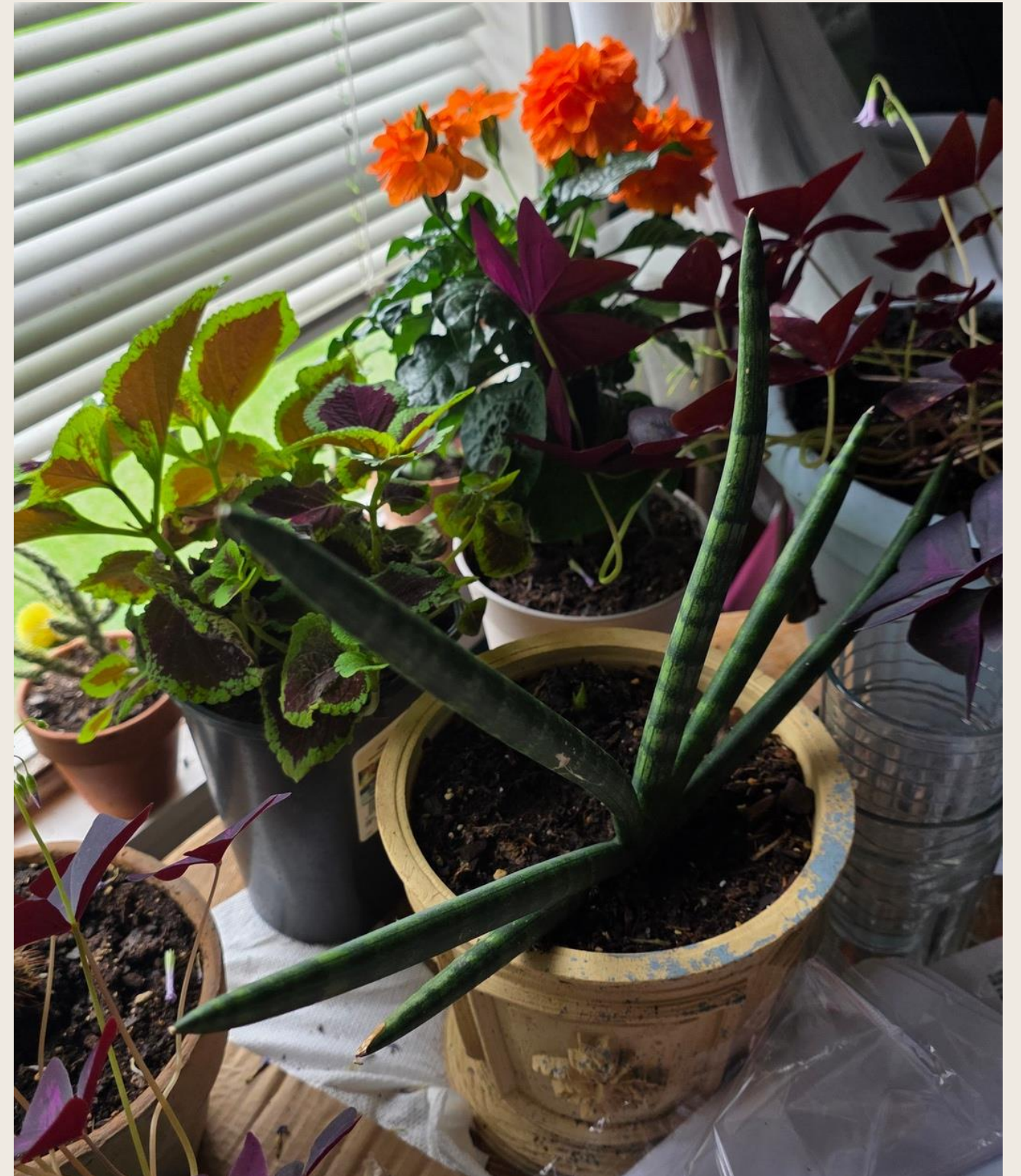
- Check plants 1–2 times weekly
- Finger test soil
- Dry = water
- Damp = wait



# Poll #3

If you decided to start gardening today, what would interest you most?

- Indoor plants
- Herbs or vegetables
- Flowers
- Fruits
- Outdoor or container gardening



# Case Study

## Background:

Maria is a 38 year old working professional and parent balancing work responsibilities, family demands, and a busy schedule. Recently she noticed:

- Feeling overwhelmed most days
- Difficulty sleeping and shutting her mind off at night
- Trouble focusing at work
- Increased irritability and stress
- Feeling mentally exhausted, even on days off

## Maria often told herself:

"I don't have time for self care."

## Instead of making a major lifestyle change, Maria:

- Purchased two beginner friendly indoor plants
- Spent 10 minutes each evening watering and checking them
- Began sitting outside while caring for her plants
- Later added a small herb garden with basil and mint



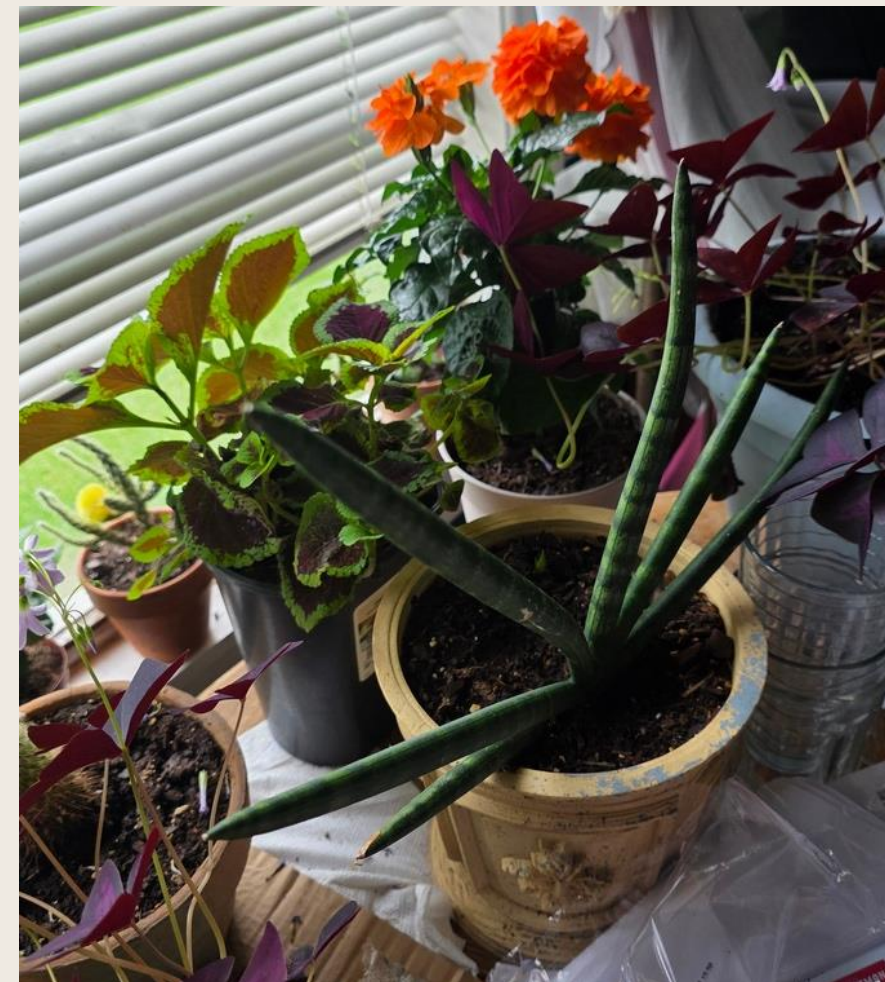
# Case Study - Results

## Results After Several Weeks:

- Improved mood and reduced stress
- Felt calmer in the evenings
- Improved routine and mindfulness
- Reported fewer racing thoughts before bed
- Increased sense of accomplishment and control

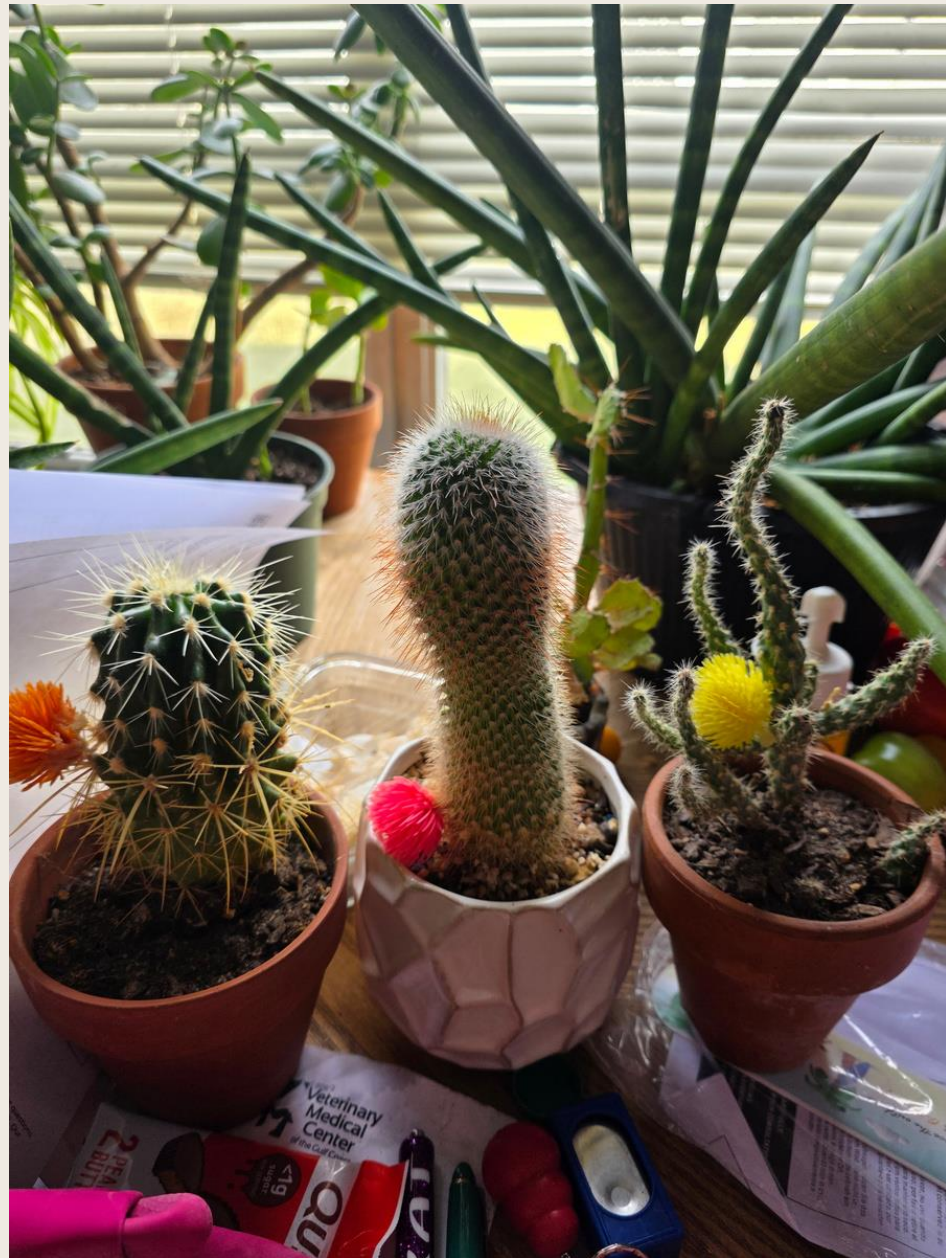
## Discussion Questions:

- What stress symptoms was Maria experiencing?
- What barriers almost prevented her from starting?
- What helped Maria be successful?
- What small step would you start with?



# Reflection Activity

What in your life currently needs attention, patience, or nurturing?



"Nature is an unlimited broadcasting station, through which God speaks to us every hour, if we will only tune in."  
— George Washington Carver

# Final Takeaways

- Small interactions matter
- Progress over perfection
- Gardening can support emotional wellbeing



# THANK YOU...

*for joining us today, we look forward to seeing you the next time!*



admin@neelyeap.com



@NEAPServices



# Access Your NEAP Benefits

## Online:

[www.neelyeap.com](http://www.neelyeap.com) company page

Live CONNECT

Balancy

Use your company code from benefits flyer

**24/7 Hotline: 866-212-6096**

# EAP Benefit Spotlight – Flourish Features

Resources For Total Wellbeing

## AWARE: A MINDFULNESS PROGRAM

### FEATURES:

- Six telephonic sessions with an Aware specialist who is trained in mindfulness.
- An individualized practice plan, tailored to your needs.
- Opportunity to experience and learn mindfulness exercises within each scheduled session.
- Electronic resources such as a practice plan journal, guided practice exercises and an additional resource guide.



The Aware mindfulness program helps you live in the present moment. It offers a research-based program which is derived from some of the world's leading mindfulness experts.

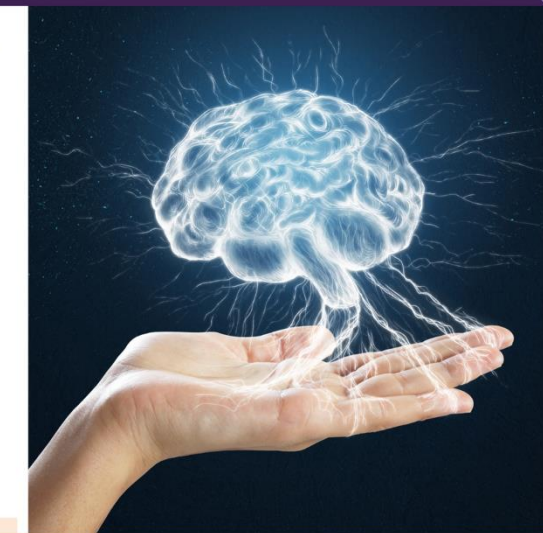
A specially trained Aware specialist will guide you through the process to learn the skills you need to reduce stress and establish greater mind-body balance and inner peace.

Resources For Total Wellbeing

## COMPUTERIZED COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY

### KEY BENEFITS OF THE CCBT PROGRAM INCLUDE:

- An alternative way of receiving counseling, ideal for people used to accessing services online.
- Effective for mild to moderate levels of stress, anxiety and depression.
- Helps to improve quality of life, both in and away from the workplace.



You now have a new way to obtain counseling through your Employee Support Program. For support with issues such as anxiety, stress, and depression, you can access computerized Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (cCBT). Weekly, online interactive sessions teach you how to apply CBT concepts to change the way you think about and perceive events, resulting in an improvement to your personal well-being, family relationships, and work and social roles.

The confidential cCBT program\* comprises seven sessions offered online over seven weeks. A qualified counselor will track your progress and guide you throughout via email and telephone support. Easy to use, with a personalized registration and login, this seven-week program utilizes video and multimedia to enhance your online experience.

Call or e-mail us now to get started.

\* Prior to accessing cCBT, an assessment is made to ensure clinical appropriateness. In some cases, short-term face-to-face or telephone counseling, or other support/resource options may be more appropriate.



Employee Assistance Program

## LIFE COACHING

### FEATURES INCLUDE:

- Have convenient telephone conversations with your Life Coach.
- Establish your vision, set goals and create an action plan in your very first meeting.
- Engage in up to 5 follow-up meetings to help recalibrate, refresh, and progress with your goals.



PROFESSIONAL SUCCESS IS NOT ALWAYS CLEAR

...you through a thought-provoking, creative process to maximize your potential and



# THE POWER OF GARDENING

## HOW PLANTS CAN REDUCE STRESS

### The Brain & Gardening

- Engages all five senses through what we: see, hear, touch, smell, and taste.
- Encourages dopamine release through small accomplishments and growth milestones.
- Gives the brain a break from screens and constant stimulation helping to shift the nervous system out of possible "fight-or-flight" mode.

### Stress Reduction Through Gardening

- Interrupts cycles of worry and overthinking by giving the brain a concrete task to focus.
- Creates opportunities for mindfulness without formal meditation.
- Supports relaxation through repetitive activities like watering and weeding.

### Gardening as Self-Care

- Gardening creates a calming routine that helps reduce daily stress.
- Caring for plants encourages mindfulness and being present in the moment. Focus on progress and learning rather than perfection.
- Time spent in nature can improve mood and emotional wellbeing providing a sense of accomplishment through small daily progress.

### Starting (or Restarting) a Garden

- Choose a beginner-friendly, low maintenance plant like pothos, snake plants, or herbs.
- Pair plant care with a daily routine like morning coffee or evening relaxation.
- Learn one plant at a time instead of trying to master everything at once.

#### THINGS YOU'LL NEED

##### Beginner Plants:

1. Herbs (Basil, Mint, Parsley, Rosemary)
2. Succulents
3. Pothos
4. Veggies (Green Onions, Tomatoes, Peppers, Peas, and more!)
5. Lavender
6. ZZ Plant

##### Beginner Tips:

- Water the soil! Check with a finger to see if it's dry.
- Use pots with drainage holes on the bottom.
- Overwatering is more common, use soils that are better suited for drainage.



*"What's interesting is that gardening helps not just one part of us. It engages all of our senses, supports our mood, and creates routines that help both the mind and body."*

– **Horatio Neely, MBA**

