



# NAILING IT: Wellbeing and Leadership Strategies for Optimal Performance in a Changing World

Restoring the Clinician Behind the Smile

Dr Rana Al-Falaki

April 2026





**Well-being as Strategy, Not Self-Care:** In complex Prosthodontics, your nervous system is the primary "instrument" of precision

**The Leadership Ripple Effect:** A regulated clinician creates a regulated team. A dysregulated clinician creates a chaotic practice.

**Optimal Performance:** Our ability to lead patients through complex treatment plans depends on our cognitive "headroom."

**The "Primary Restoration":** If the clinician's well-being is fractured, the clinical outcomes and team culture are at risk.

## BDA Surveys 2019 and 2021

### BURN OUT

- 54.9% of dentists reported experiencing high job stress
- 43.8% felt they could not cope with the level of stress in their job
- 63% reported being frequently burnt out or exhausted
- 48% said they were disillusioned or disengaged at work
- 50% of dentists have considered leaving the profession due to personal well-being and burnout concerns
- 63.4% of respondents reported sleeping badly or very badly

## BURN OUT

A state of emotional, mental, and physical exhaustion due to prolonged stress, impacting your personal well-being, work performance, and relationships

It is not about how busy you are

It is about how mis-aligned you are

# BURNOUT: THE ABSCESS OF HIGH-PERFORMANCE PROFESSIONALS.

PERIAPICAL ABSCESS

SYSTEMIC RISK:  
UNTREATED  
INFECTION



CHRONIC STRESS  
RESPONSES

FROM ISOLATED  
STRESS TO SYSTEMIC  
PATHOLOGY

CLINICAL BURNOUT





# 01 The Problem

Recognising The Signs



**BSSPD**  
British Society of Prosthodontics

Nailing It: Leadership strategies for optimal performance in a changing world

[www.nailitindentistry.com](http://www.nailitindentistry.com)

**NAIL-IT**

[www.nailitindentistry.com](http://www.nailitindentistry.com)

[www.nailitleadership.com](http://www.nailitleadership.com)

# Stage 1: Early Warning Signs: The Stress leak

**Physical:** Subtle sleep disturbances; grinding teeth at night (Bruxism); tension headaches.

**Emotional:** Loss of "Joy in Medicine/Surgery"; feeling like you're just "ticking boxes."

**Behavioral:** Working longer hours but being less productive; "Checking out" as soon as you get home.

**The Science:** This is **Interoceptive Blindness** starting to take root. You are ignoring the "Low Fuel" light to finish the mission.



# Stage 2: Medium Signs: The Systemic Inflammation

**Physical:** Chronic fatigue that a weekend doesn't fix; frequent colds/coughs; gastrointestinal issues

**Emotional: De-personalisation** - patients feel like obstacles; cynical "Gallows Humor" that feels more bitter than funny

**Behavioral:** Procrastination on critical admin; withdrawal from social team events; "The Difficult Colleague" phase

**The Science:** This is **Diffuse Physiological Arousal**. Your nervous system is stuck in "High Gear," and your body is beginning to pay the **Allostatic Load** tax



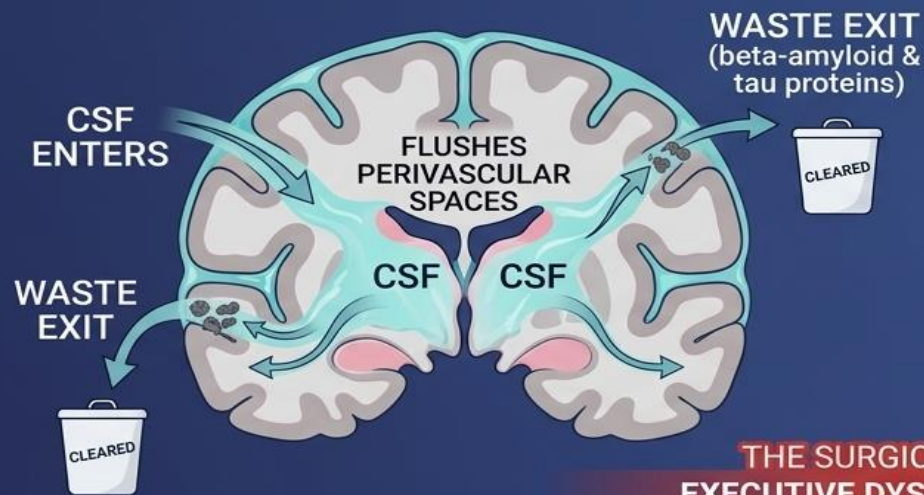
# Stage 3: Late Signs: The Systemic Sepsis

- **Physical:** Significant health events (Chest pain, chronic pain, autoimmune flare-ups)  
**Glymphatic failure** (brain fog so thick you forget names/dates).
- **Emotional:** Complete Emotional Exhaustion; feelings of worthlessness; total loss of empathy
- **Behavioral:** Major medical or professional errors; thoughts of quitting the profession entirely; total isolation from friends and family.
- **The Science:** This is the **Empathy Gap** and **Cognitive Erosion**. The prefrontal cortex (the surgeon's brain) has effectively been hijacked by the amygdala (the survival brain).



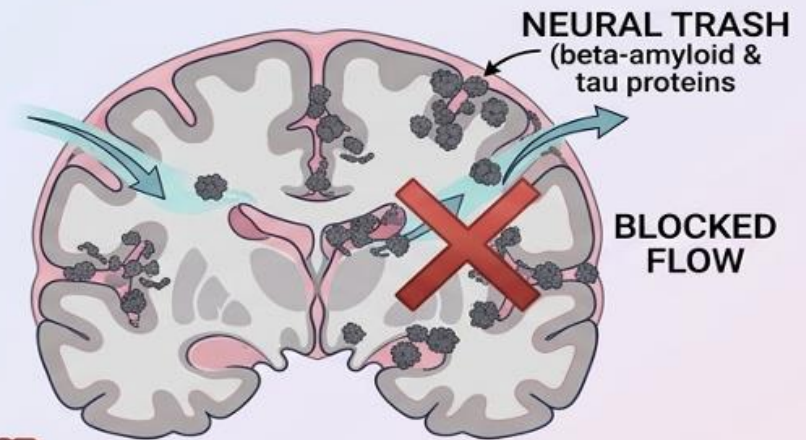
# The Glymphatic System

## BRAIN WASTE MANAGEMENT: NREM SLEEP (THE GLYMPHATIC FLUSH)



**NREM SLEEP:**  
60% INCREASE IN  
INTERSTITIAL SPACE

## GLYMPHATIC FAILURE: CHRONIC SLEEP DEPRIVATION (BURNOUT STAGE 1 & 2)



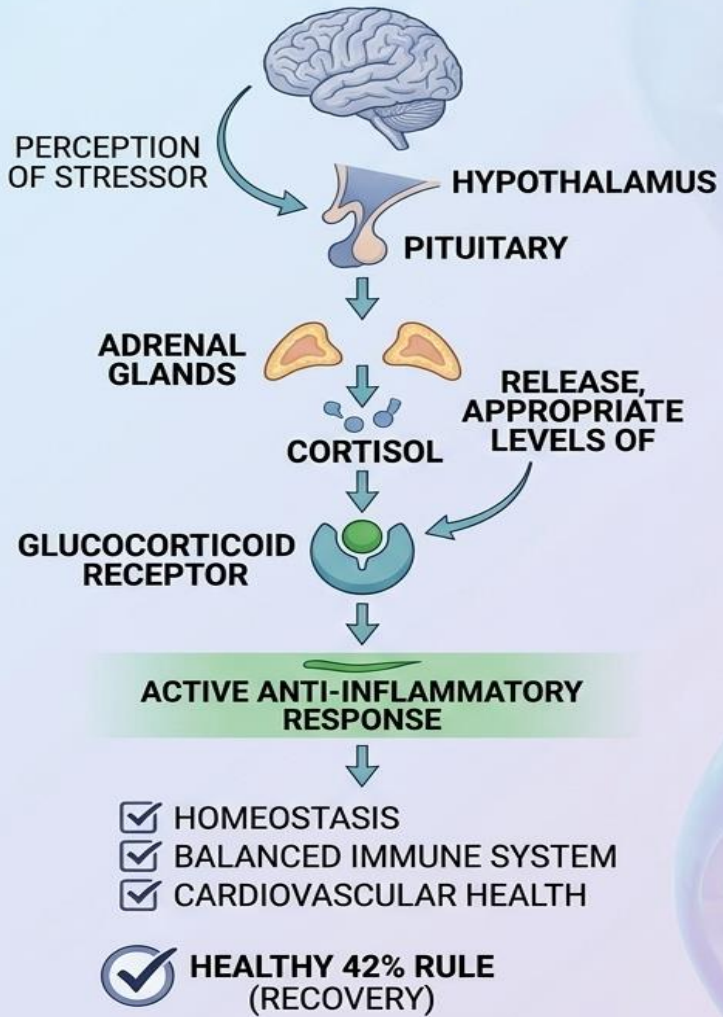
**FRAGMENTED SLEEP:**  
WASTE ACCUMULATION

THE SURGICAL CONSEQUENCE:  
EXECUTIVE DYSFUNCTION (BRAIN FOG)

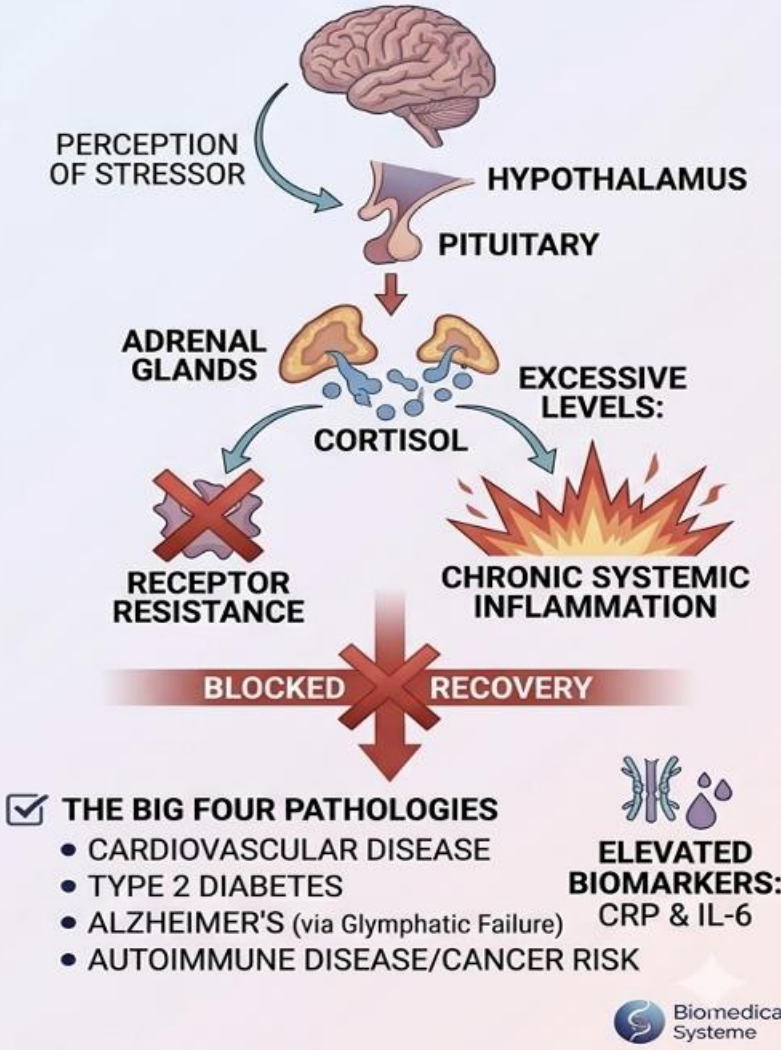


# SYSTEMIC PATHOLOGY: THE ALIOSTATIC LOAD (HPA AXIS FAILURE)

## REGULATED RESPONSE: HEALTHY ALIGNMENT (NEEDS)



## DYSREGULATED RESPONSE: ALLOSTATIC LOAD (STAGE 2-3 BURNOUT)

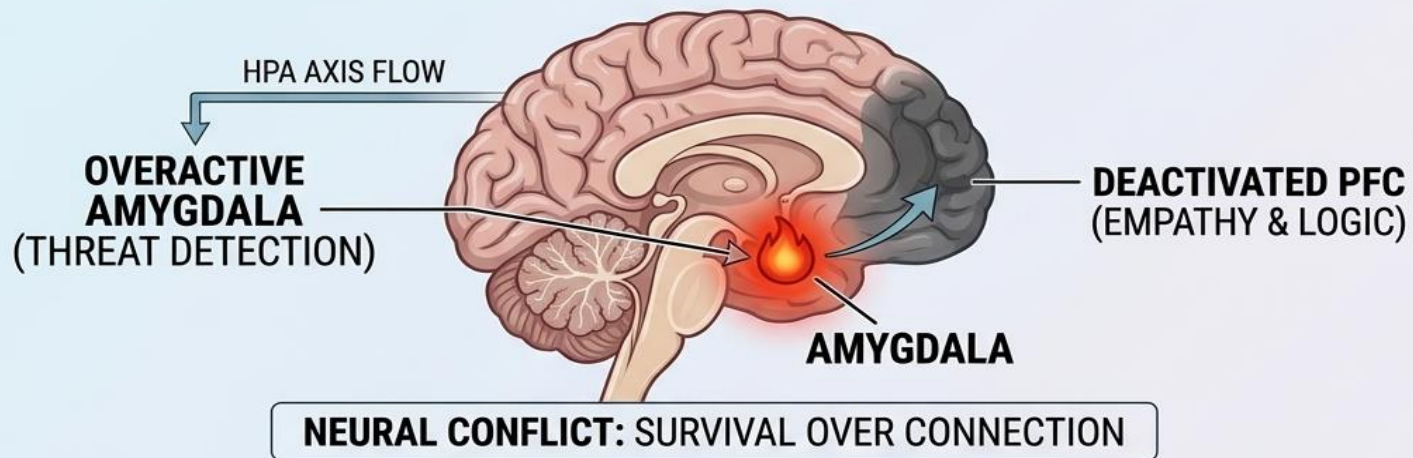


# The Big Four: Chronic Inflammation

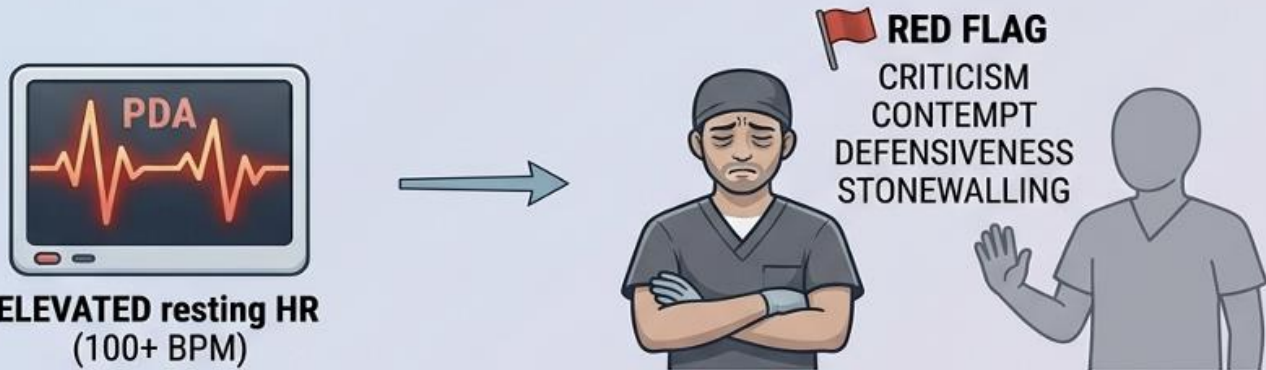
# The Toll On Relationships: Empathy Gap & Team Dynamics

## THE PATHOLOGY OF THE 'EMPATHY GAP'.

**INTERNAL MECHANISM: NEURAL DYSREGULATION (HPA & AMYGDALA)**



**EXTERNAL OUTCOME: PHYSIOLOGICAL DIFFUSE AROUSAL (GOTTMAN DATA)**



**COMMUNICATION BREAKDOWN: REDUCED 'SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT' CAPACITY**





# 02 | The Evidence

Impact and truth

# The Clinical Pathology of Burnout: A Summary of Evidence

Impact	Clinical Evidence / Key Study Reference
<b>Accelerated Cognitive Decline</b>	Deficits in Executive Function, Attention, and Memory associated with clinical burnout (Tandfonline/Psychology & Health, 2021/Updated 2025).
<b>Glymphatic System Failure</b>	Sleep fragmentation in surgeons prevents neural waste-clearance (beta-amyloid/tau), leading to "Brain Fog" (Nedergaard et al., Science, 2013).
<b>Chronic Systemic Inflammation</b>	Significant correlation between burnout and elevated C-reactive protein (CRP) and Interleukin-6 (IL-6) (Biomedical Research Reviews, 2025/Updated 2026).
<b>Mortality &amp; Cardiovascular Risk</b>	"Allostatic Load" from low-control work predicts all-cause mortality, heart disease, and diabetes (The "Whitehall II" Study / McEwen's Allostatic Load Model).
<b>Professional Error &amp; Litigation</b>	Higher burnout scores directly correlate with a 3x higher likelihood of self-reporting major medical errors in surgeons (Mayo Clinic Proceedings / Shanafelt et al.).
<b>Relationship Breakdown</b>	Physiological Diffuse Arousal (PDA) overrides the brain's social engagement system (empathy), predicting marital failure (Levenson & Gottman, 2016).

# Mortality & Life Expectancy

## The Figure: 10–15 Years

- **The Context:** High allostatic load (chronic burnout) is associated with a reduction in life expectancy comparable to lifelong smoking. In some longitudinal studies of high-stress medical professionals, the "biological age" (telomere length) was found to be **10 years older** than their chronological age.
- **The Stat:** A 2024 meta-analysis found that physicians with high burnout scores had a **2.5x higher risk** of suicidal ideation and a significantly higher rate of early-onset cardiovascular events before age 60.

# Cognitive Decline & Brain Function

## The Figure: 50% Reduction in Executive Efficiency

- **The Context:** Brain imaging shows that the Prefrontal Cortex (the "Surgeon's Brain") can show up to a **14% reduction in grey matter volume** in cases of prolonged Stage 3 burnout.
- **The Stat:** In cognitive testing, burned-out clinicians performed at a level equivalent to someone with a **0.05% Blood Alcohol Content** (the legal driving limit in many places) in tasks requiring sustained attention and rapid switching.

# Professional Error Rates

## The Figure: 200% to 300% Increase

- **The Context:** This is the most famous Shanafelt/Mayo Clinic stat.
- **The Stat:** Surgeons suffering from burnout are **3 times more likely** to involve themselves in a "Major Medical Error." For every 1-point increase in the "Depersonalization" scale of the Maslach Burnout Inventory, the risk of a medical error increases by **11%**.

# Career Longevity

## The Figure: 12–15 Years Earlier Retirement

- **The Context:** The "ROI" on a surgical career is decimated by burnout.
- **The Stat:** Up to **40% of surgeons** experiencing high burnout contemplate early retirement or leaving the profession entirely. On average, those who do not implement a recovery system like NAIL-IT exit the clinical workforce **12–15 years earlier** than their resilient peers.

# Relationship Breakdown

## The Figure: 40–60% Divorce Rate

- **The Context:** While general divorce rates are high, "Physiological Diffuse Arousal" acts as a catalyst.
- **The Stat:** Medical marriages where one partner reports high burnout have a **statistically significant 20% higher failure rate** than non-medical high-income peers, largely due to the "Empathy Gap" we discussed.



# Superficial Interventions = Superficial Results



[WWW.BREATHEDENTALWELLNESS.ORG](http://WWW.BREATHEDENTALWELLNESS.ORG)



TAKE THE QUIZ

✔ ⚠ 🔥

**WHAT'S YOUR  
BURNOUT RISK  
SCORE?**

✔ ⚠ 🔥

Find Out In 2 Minutes: Take The Quiz!

NAIL-IT  
IN DENTISTRY

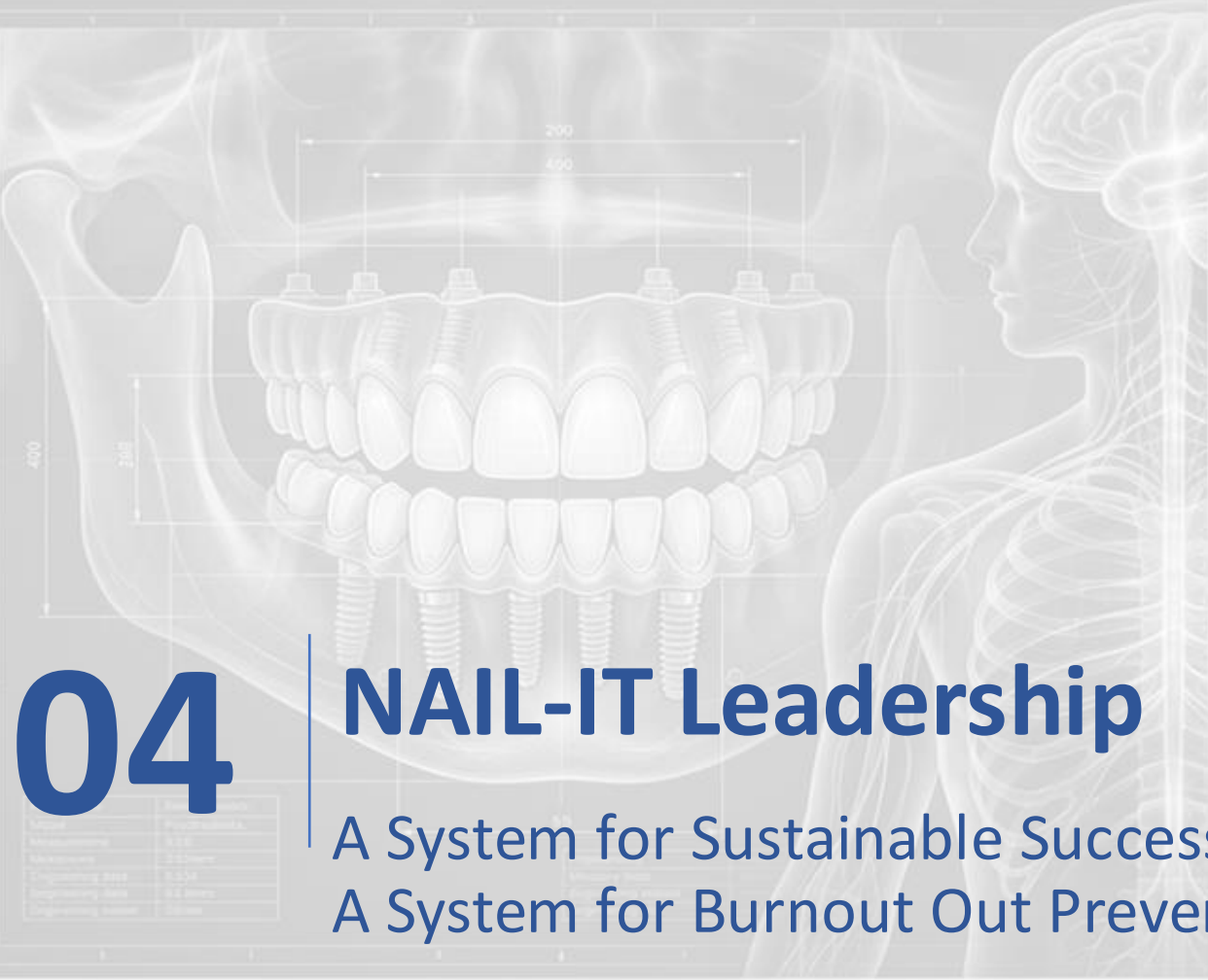
✔ ⚠ 🔥

The background features several overlapping envelopes in white, light green, light blue, and light pink. On the left side, there is a large, semi-transparent gear shape in a light orange color. The overall aesthetic is clean and professional.

# Check your e-mail for your Burnout Risk & Score



PREVENTION BETTER THAN CURE



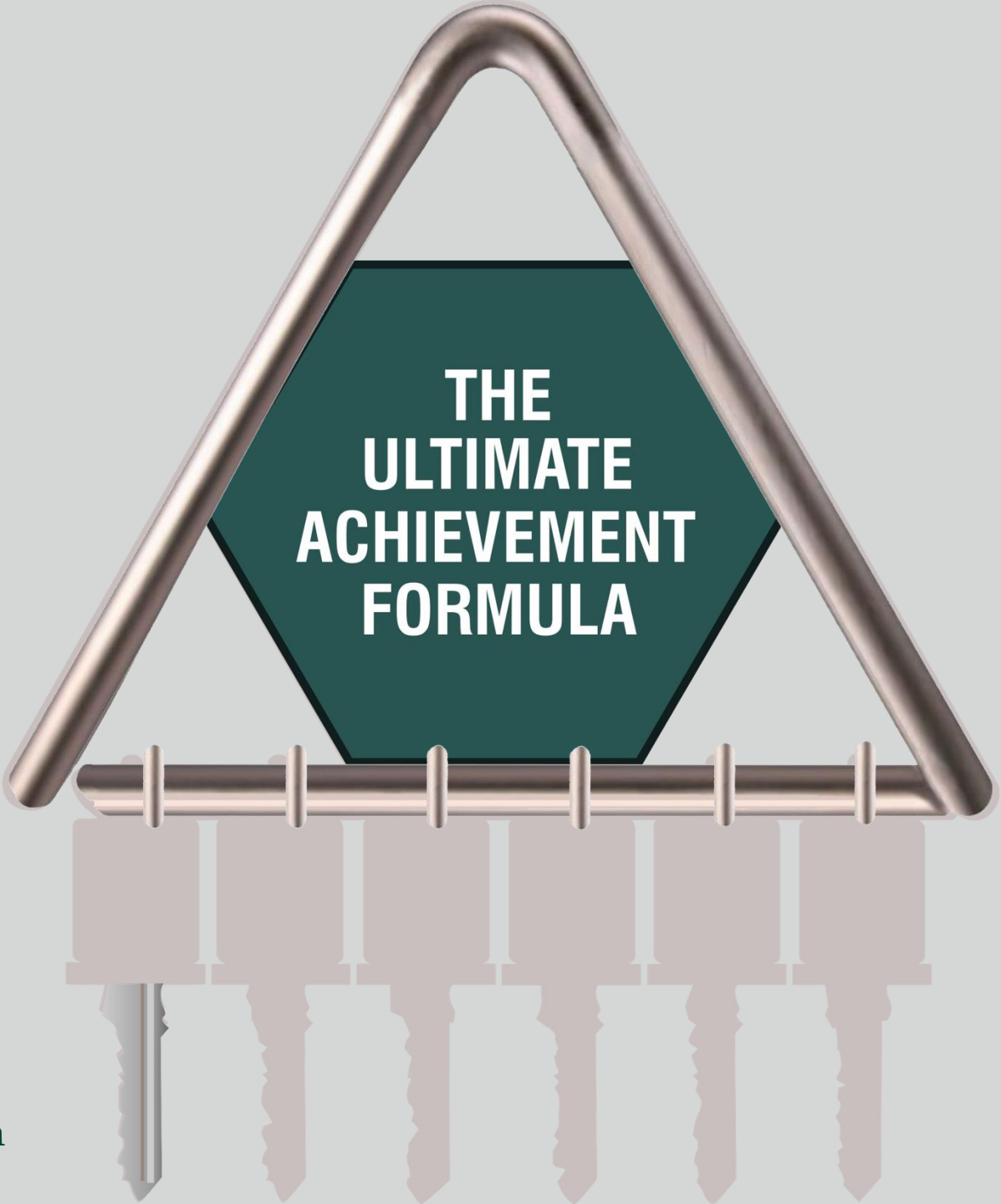
# 04

## NAIL-IT Leadership

A System for Sustainable Success  
A System for Burnout Out Prevention







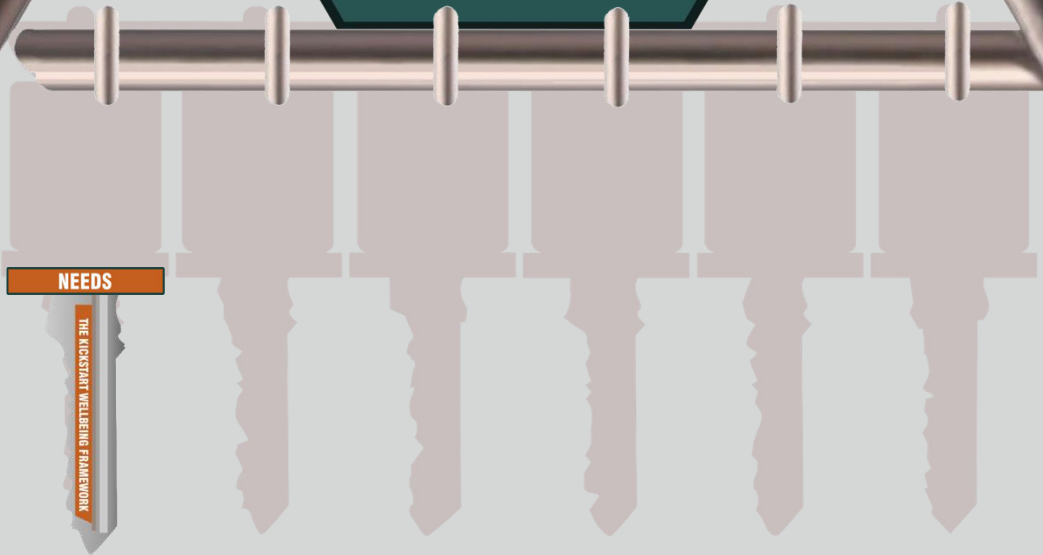
**THE  
ULTIMATE  
ACHIEVEMENT  
FORMULA**



FOUNDATIONS FOR SUCCESS

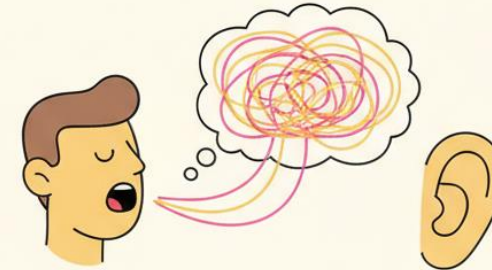
**NEEDS**

THE KICKSTART WELLBEING FRAMEWORK



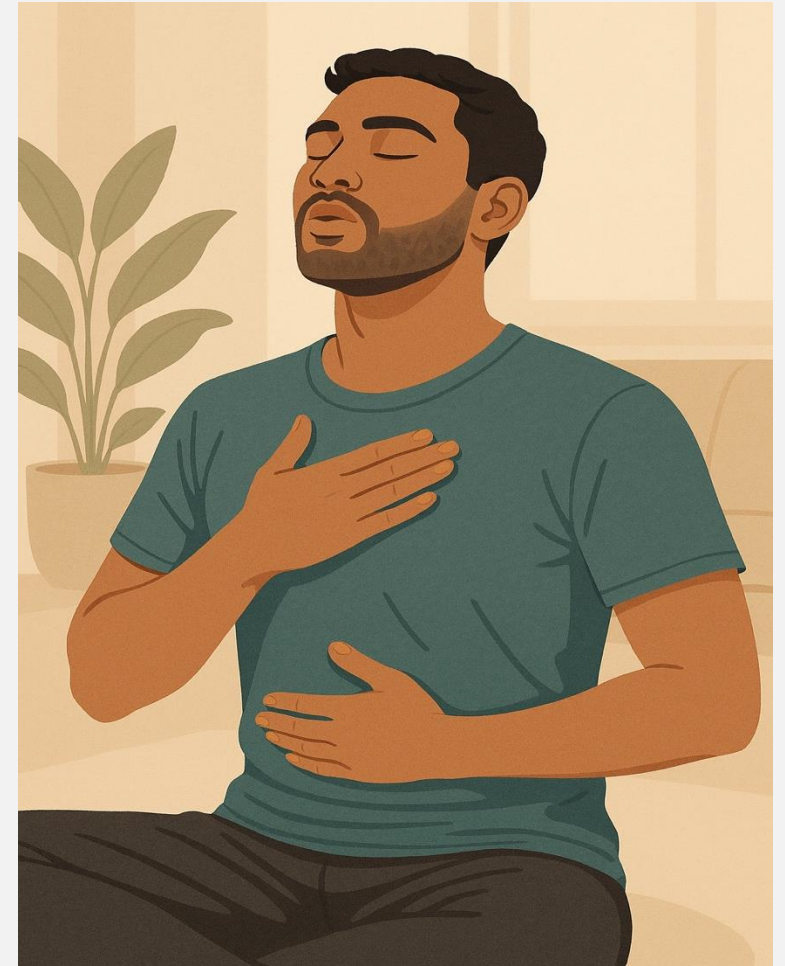
# NEEDS: The Interoceptive Reset Reversing Allostatic Load & Inflammation

Set a boundary – a time to leave work,  
time to sleep etc



# DOWN-REGULATING BREATHWORK: EXTENDED EXHALE

- Relieves symptoms of depression
- Reduces stress
- Maintain a healthy weight with health cholesterol levels
- Improves cognitive functioning
- Relax before an important meeting and relieve anxiety in a matter of minutes
- Increased productivity and decision making by entering a calm flow state
- Digest your food better as you switch on your parasympathetic nervous system
- Helps you relax so you can sleep better





NEEDS      ATTITUDE

THE KICKSTART WELLBEING FRAMEWORK

THE SUSTAINABLE SUCCESS TOOLKIT

MAINTAIN FOCUS

**ATTITUDE**

THE SUSTAINABLE SUCCESS TOOLKIT

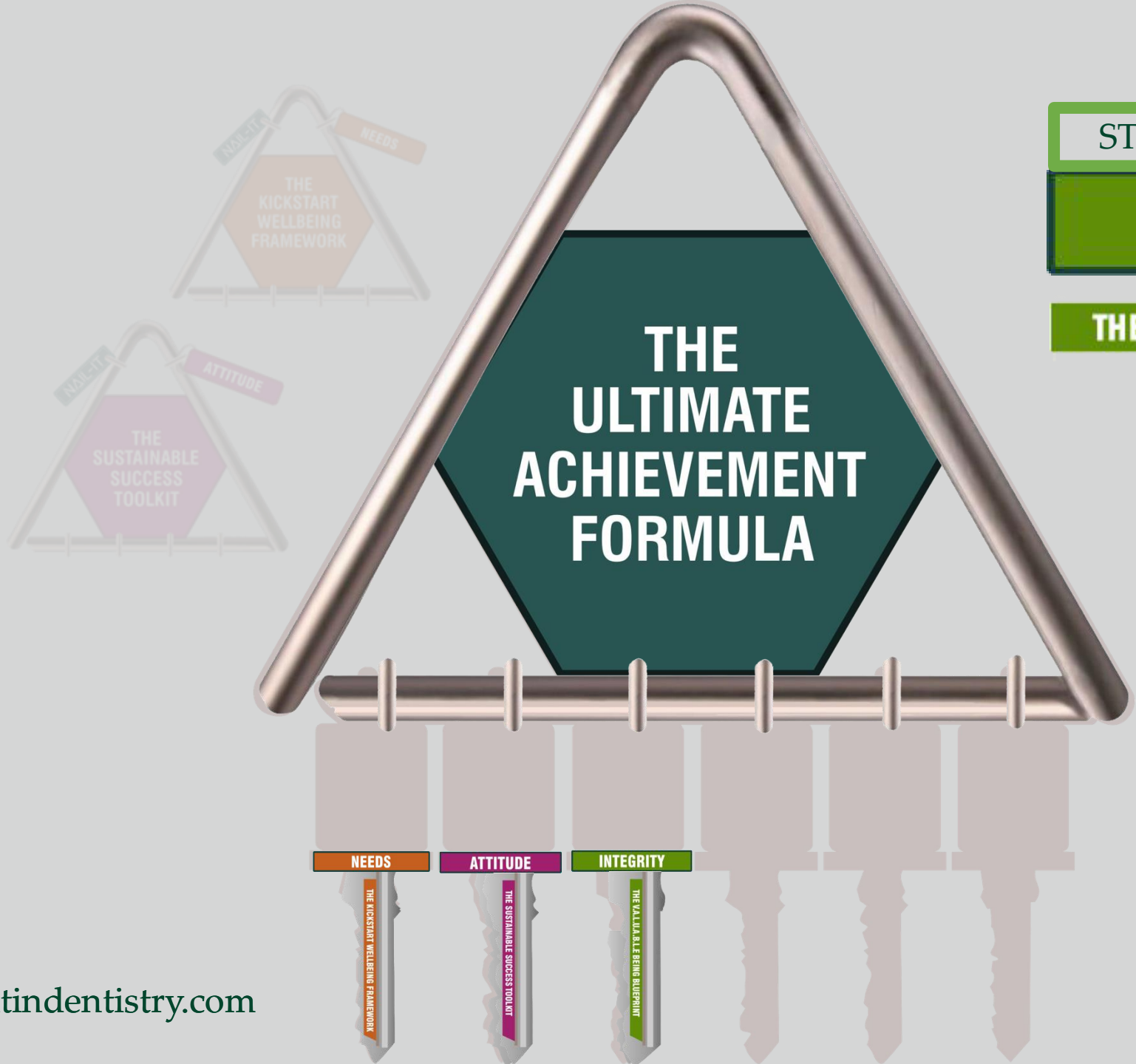


**ATTITUDE:**  
**Neuroplasticity**  
Overriding the  
Negativity Bias

Self talk

## The Self-Talk Ramble

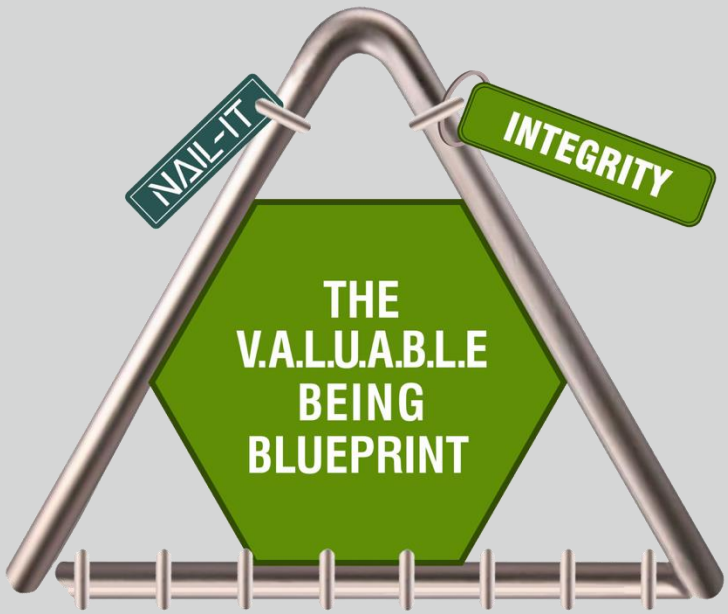




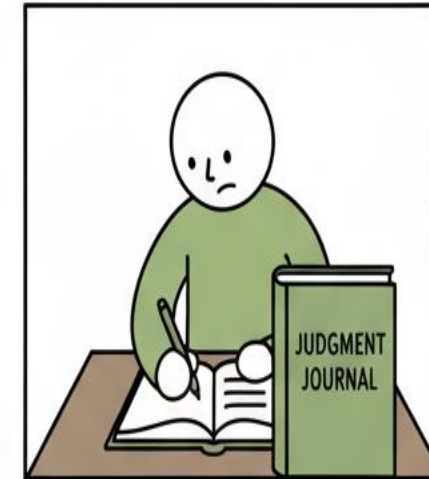
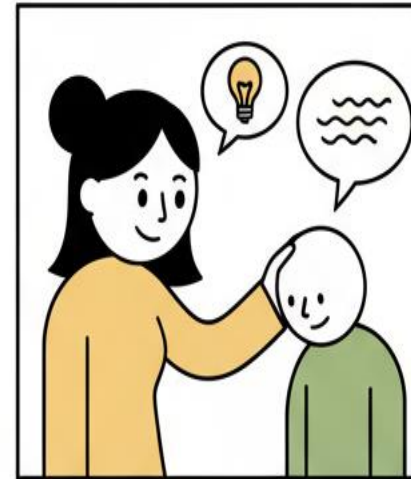
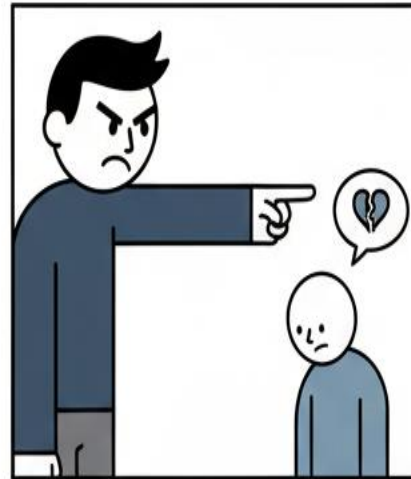
STAND OUT FROM THE CROWD

**INTEGRITY**

THE V.A.L.U.A.B.L.E BEING BLUEPRINT



# INTEGRITY: Cognitive Alignment Eliminating Moral Injury & Dissonance



Judgement journal

# THE ULTIMATE ACHIEVEMENT FORMULA

EFFORTLESS LEADERSHIP

# LIMITLESS

THE BOUNDLESS B.E.L.I.E.F.S METHOD

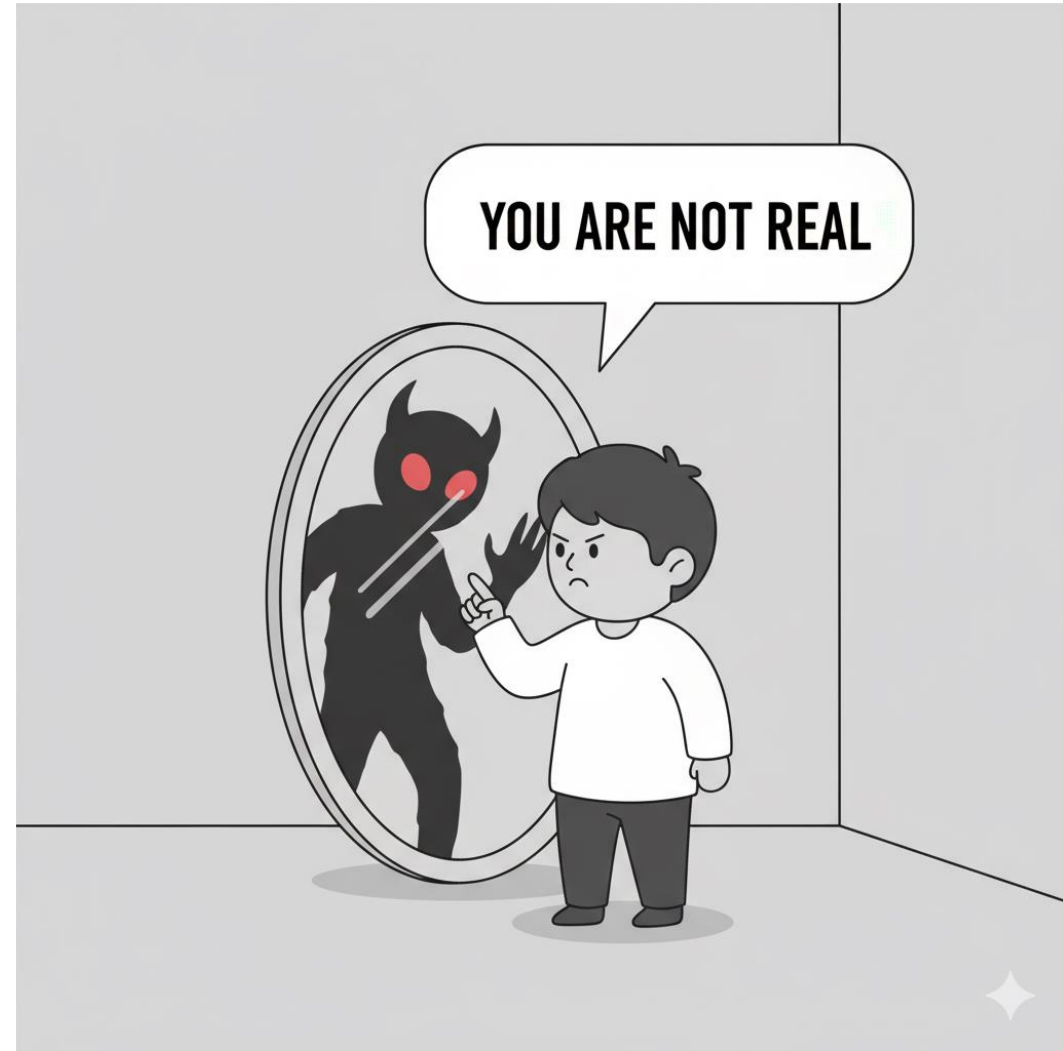
## THE BOUNDLESS B.E.L.I.E.F.S METHOD

NEEDS ATTITUDE INTEGRITY LIMITLESS



# LIMITLESS: Vagal Tone Mastery Bypassing the Amygdala Hijack

Look in the mirror and tell your younger self the fear of not being good enough is not real



# THE ULTIMATE ACHIEVEMENT FORMULA

POWERFUL DECISION MAKING

THE BOUNDLESS BELIEFS METHOD

# INTUITION

THE NORTH S.T.A.R NAVIGATOR

NAIL-IT

INTUITION

## THE NORTH S.T.A.R NAVIGATOR

NEEDS

ATTITUDE

INTEGRITY

LIMITLESS

INTUITION

THE KICKSTART WELLBEING FRAMEWORK

THE SUSTAINABLE SUCCESS TOOLKIT

THE VALUABLE BEING BLUEPRINT

THE BOUNDLESS BELIEFS METHOD

# INTUITION: DMN Activation Clearing Metabolic Waste (Glymphatic)

Spend 5 minutes in nature



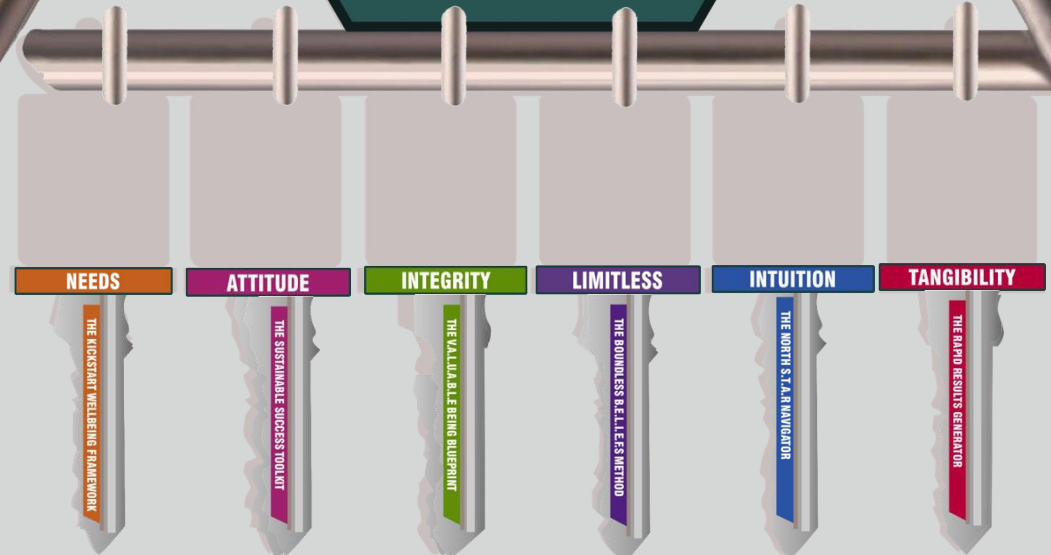
# THE ULTIMATE ACHIEVEMENT FORMULA

SUSTAINABLE TRANSFORMATION

THE BOUNDLESS BELIEFS METHOD  
**TANGIBILITY**

THE RAPID RESULTS GENERATOR

THE RAPID RESULTS GENERATOR



# TANGABILITY: Dopamine Re- sensitisation

## Restoring the Reward Feedback Loop

Gratitude – celebrate wins



# THE ULTIMATE ACHIEVEMENT FORMULA

**NAIL-IT** **NEEDS**

THE KICKSTART WELLBEING FRAMEWORK

FOUNDATIONS FOR SUCCESS

**NAIL-IT** **LIMITLESS**

THE BOUNDLESS B.E.L.I.E.F.S METHOD

EFFORTLESS LEADERSHIP

**NAIL-IT** **ATTITUDE**

THE SUSTAINABLE SUCCESS TOOLKIT

MAINTAIN FOCUS

**NAIL-IT** **INTUITION**

THE NORTH S.T.A.R NAVIGATOR

POWERFUL DECISION MAKING

**NAIL-IT** **INTEGRITY**

THE V.A.L.U.A.B.L.E BEING BLUEPRINT

STAND OUT FROM THE CROWD

**NAIL-IT** **TANGIBILITY**

THE RAPID RESULTS GENERATOR

SUSTAINABLE TRANSFORMATION

**N** **A** **I** **L** **I** **T**

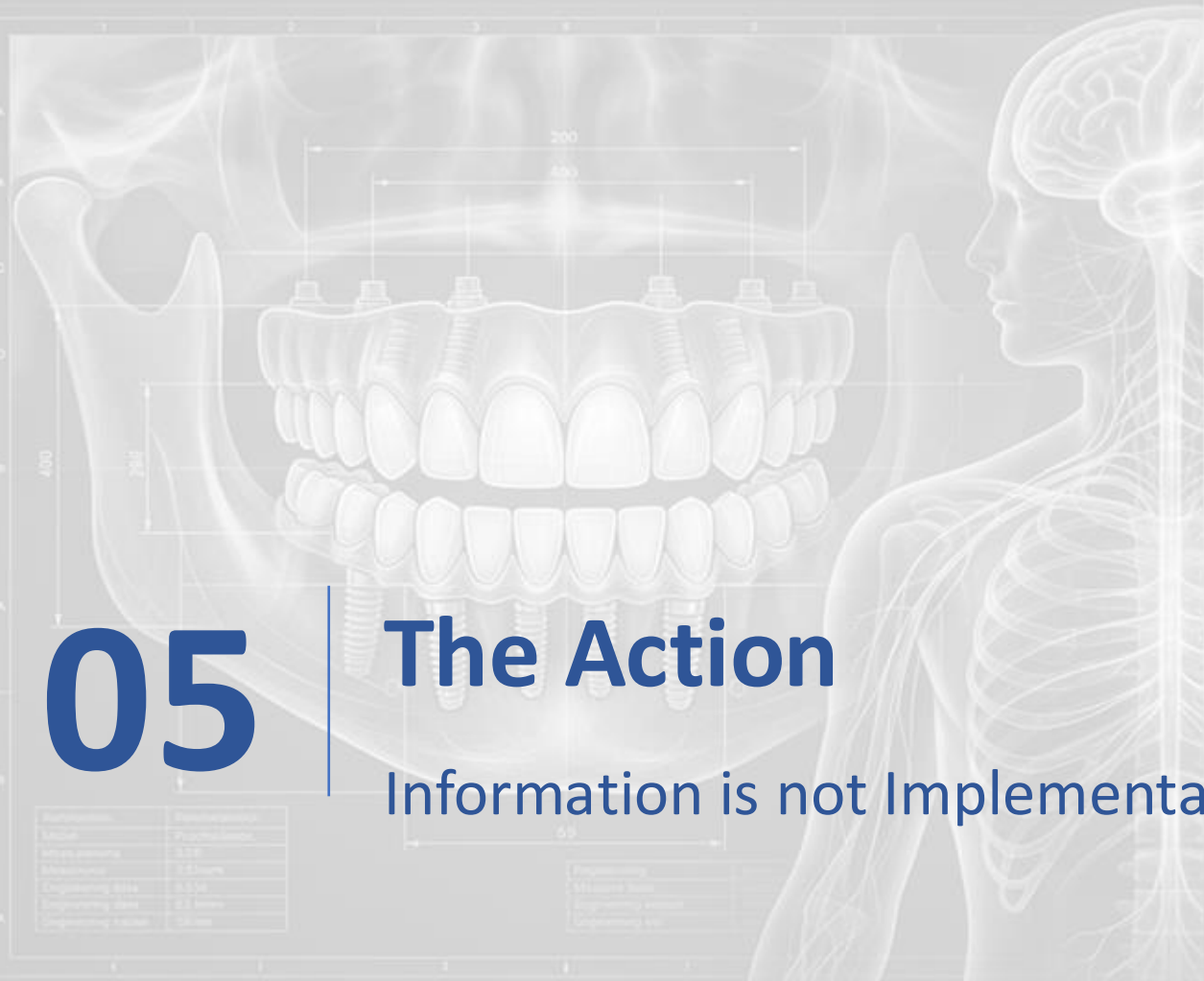
NEEDS ATTITUDE INTEGRITY LIMITLESS INTUITION TANGIBILITY



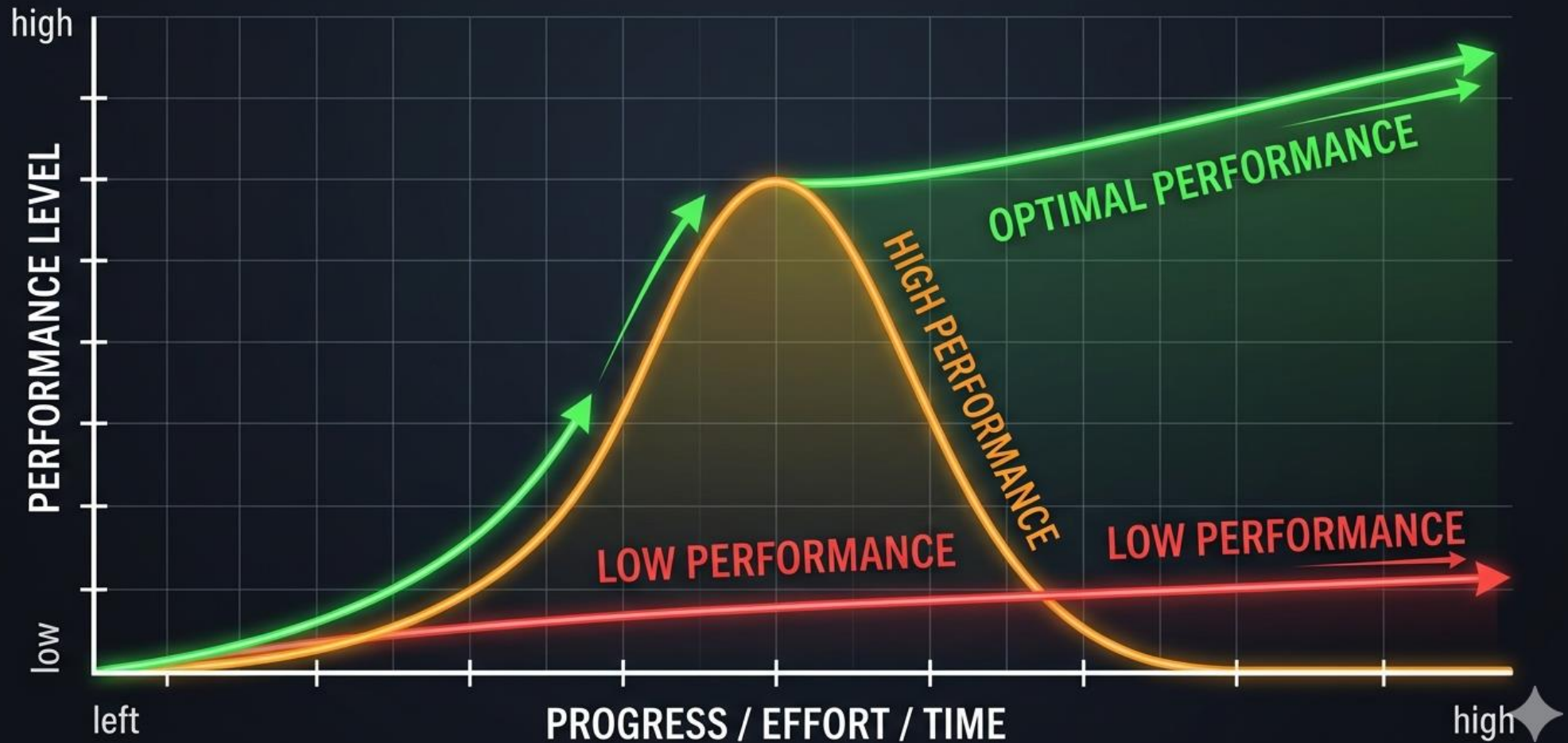
# 05

## The Action

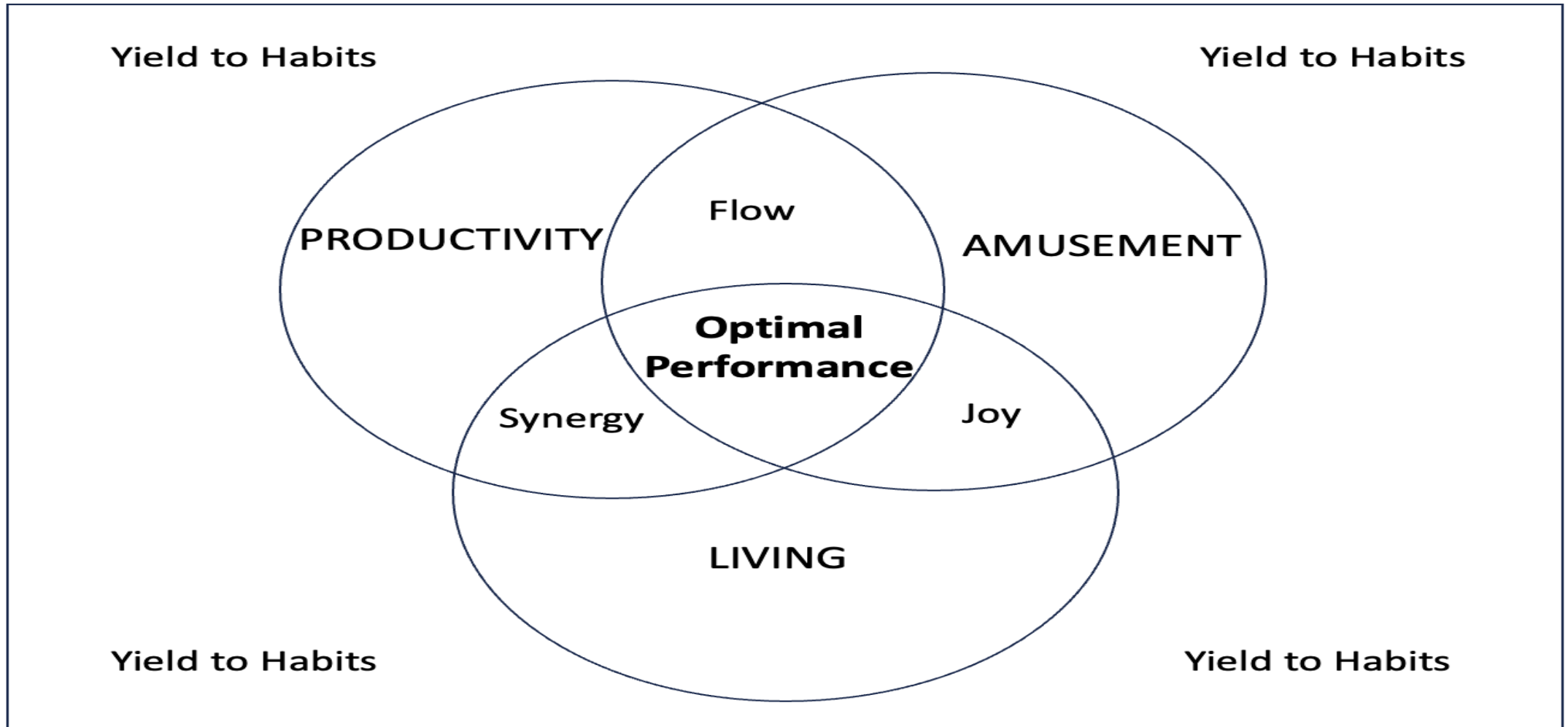
Information is not Implementation

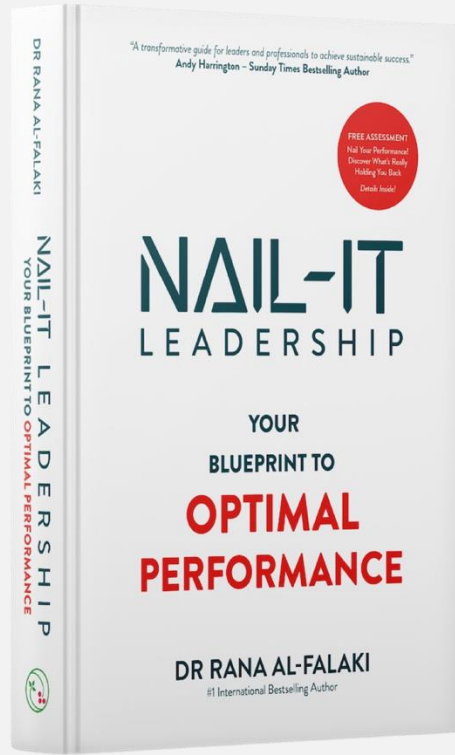


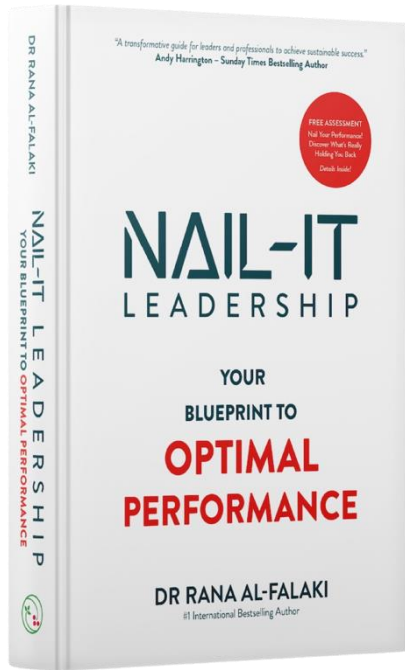
# COMPARATIVE PERFORMANCE PATHWAYS: LOW, HIGH & OPTIMAL



## THE P.L.A.Y. MODEL OF OPTIMAL PERFORMANCE







Buy from Amazon

Buy from Waterstones



## NAIL-IT ROADSHOW

London – April  
Birmingham – May  
Essex – October



Details on:

[www.nailitleadership.com](http://www.nailitleadership.com)

[support@nailitleadership.com](mailto:support@nailitleadership.com)

Details on:

[www.nailitindentistry.com](http://www.nailitindentistry.com)