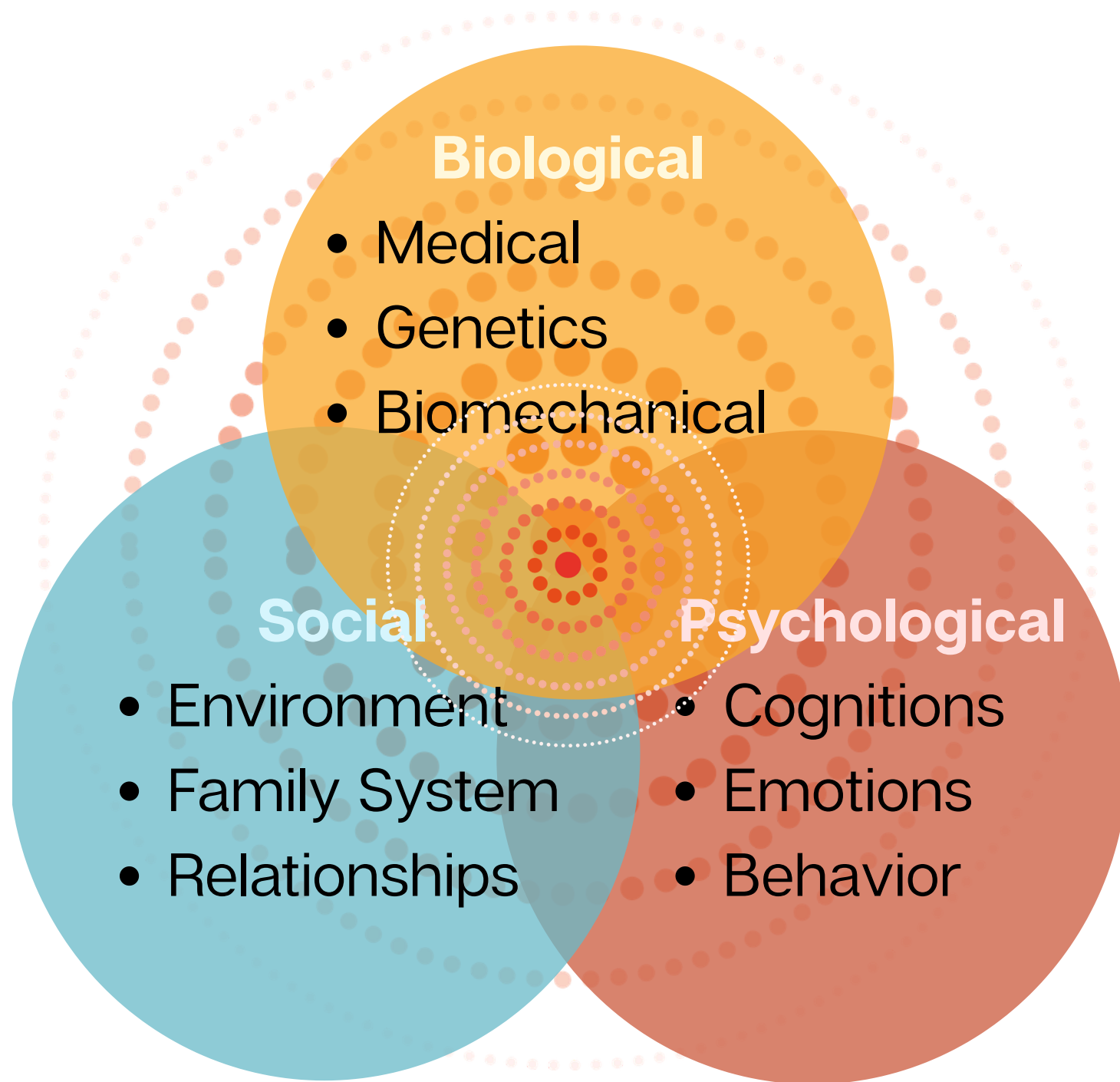
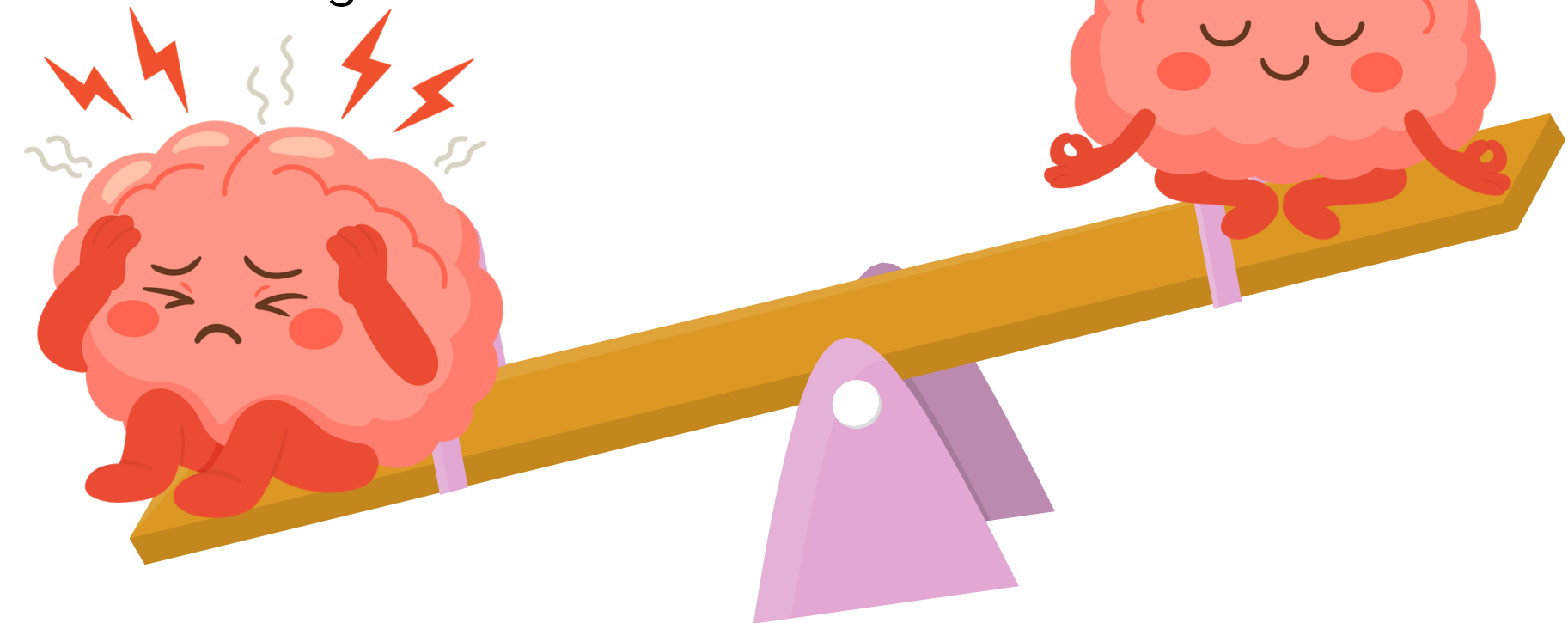


Pain is Bio-Psycho-Social



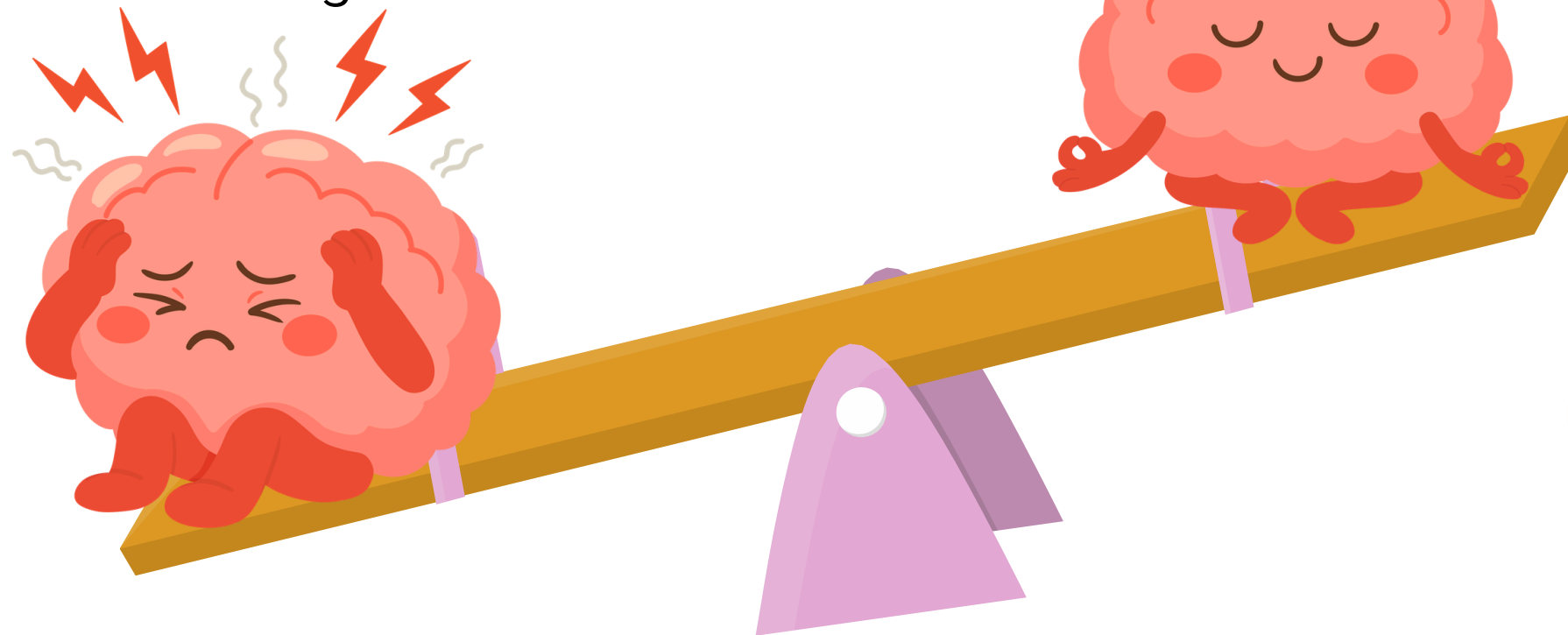
Pain is the Body's Protector

- The brain and the body are connected through the **nervous system**.
- Pain occurs when there's more sympathetic ("fight or flight") vs. parasympathetic ("rest and digest") activation of the nervous system (DANGER > SAFETY).
- The brain is on **"high alert"** about possible danger or threat in one's body or surroundings.



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1 PAIN HAPPENS:
You feel pain in your body, like a sore back, aching knees, or headaches.

2 FEAR:
You start to worry that doing certain activities or movements will worsen the pain or lead to injury.

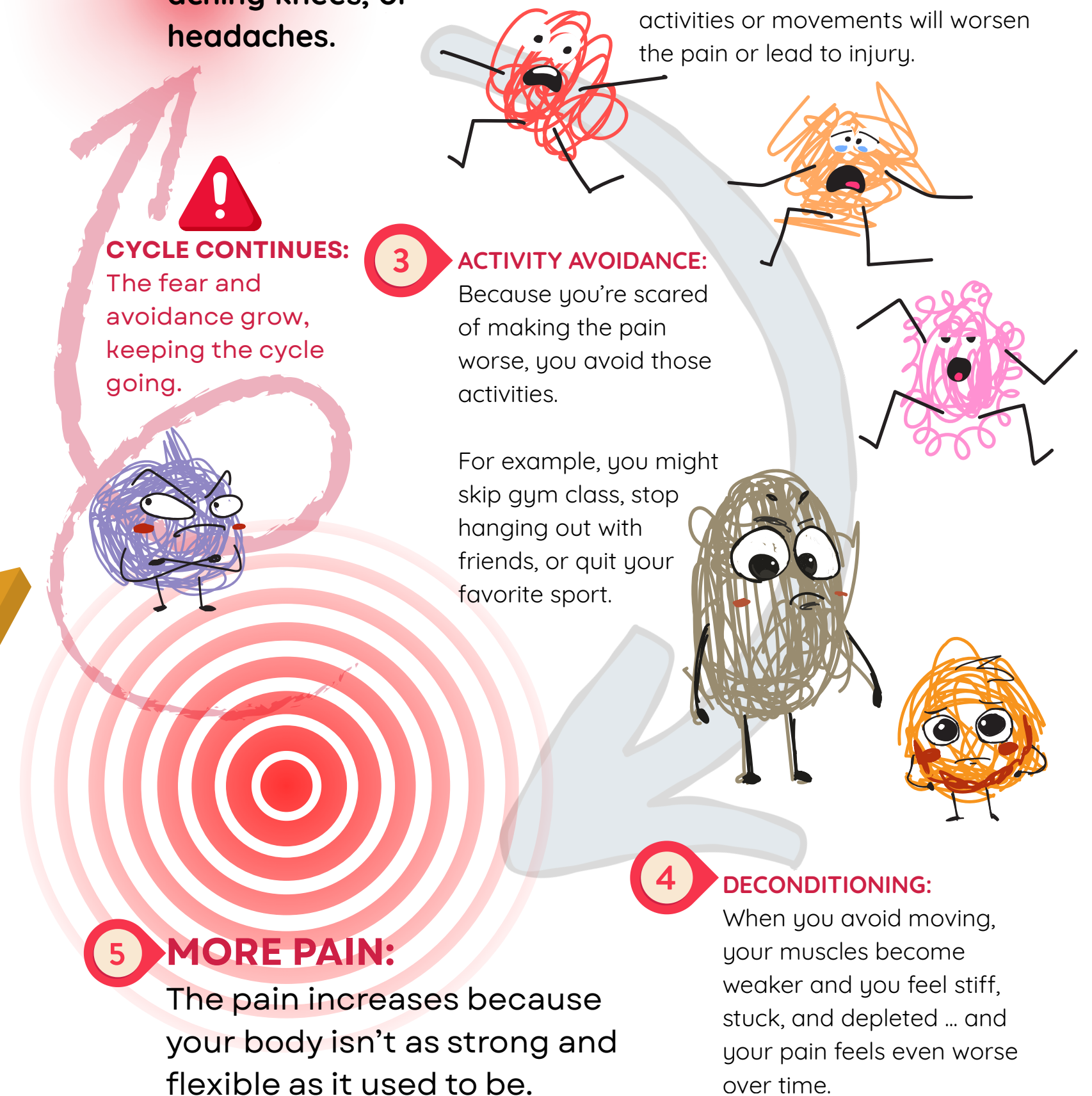
CYCLE CONTINUES:
The fear and avoidance grow, keeping the cycle going.

3 ACTIVITY AVOIDANCE:
Because you're scared of making the pain worse, you avoid those activities.

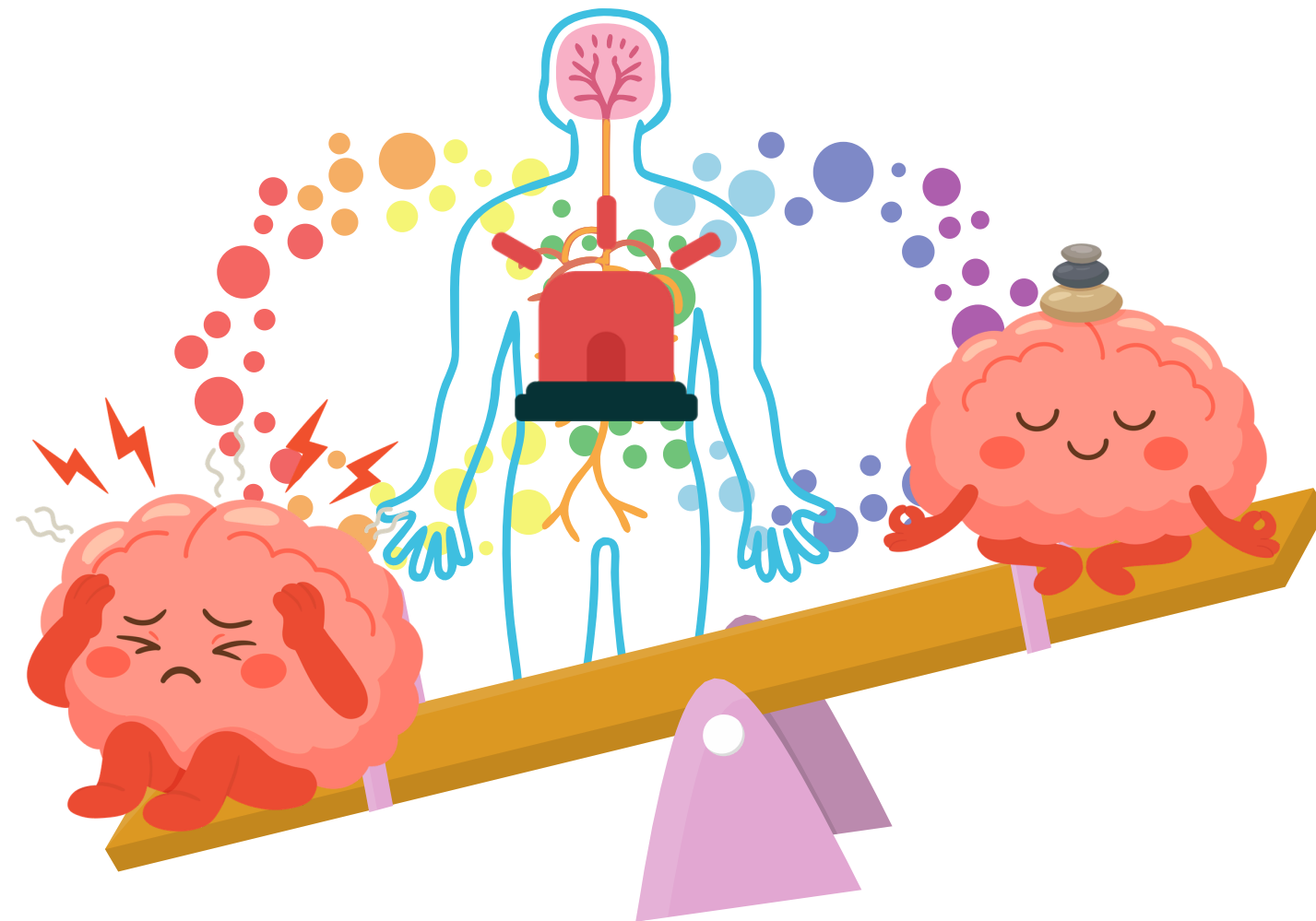
For example, you might skip gym class, stop hanging out with friends, or quit your favorite sport.

5 MORE PAIN:
The pain increases because your body isn't as strong and flexible as it used to be.

4 DECONDITIONING:
When you avoid moving, your muscles become weaker and you feel stiff, stuck, and depleted ... and your pain feels even worse over time.



Features of autism and aspects of the autistic experience may lead to increased dysregulation or “protectiveness” of the nervous system, leading to persistent pain and discomfort.



Sensory Processing

- Sensory overload
- Differences in interoception
- Sensory dysregulation

Emotional Processing

- Difficulty labeling, describing, or regulating emotions

Co-occurring Conditions

- Sleep problems, GI distress, hyper mobility
- Anxiety, depression, OCD, trauma

Cognitive Style and Attention

- Repetitive, concrete, or black-and-white thinking styles
- Focus on pain and threat

Social Stress

- Social difficulties and isolation
- Masking and camouflaging
- Social stress & withdrawal

Healthcare Challenges

- Finding providers who understand & acknowledge neurodivergence
- Integrated, whole-person care