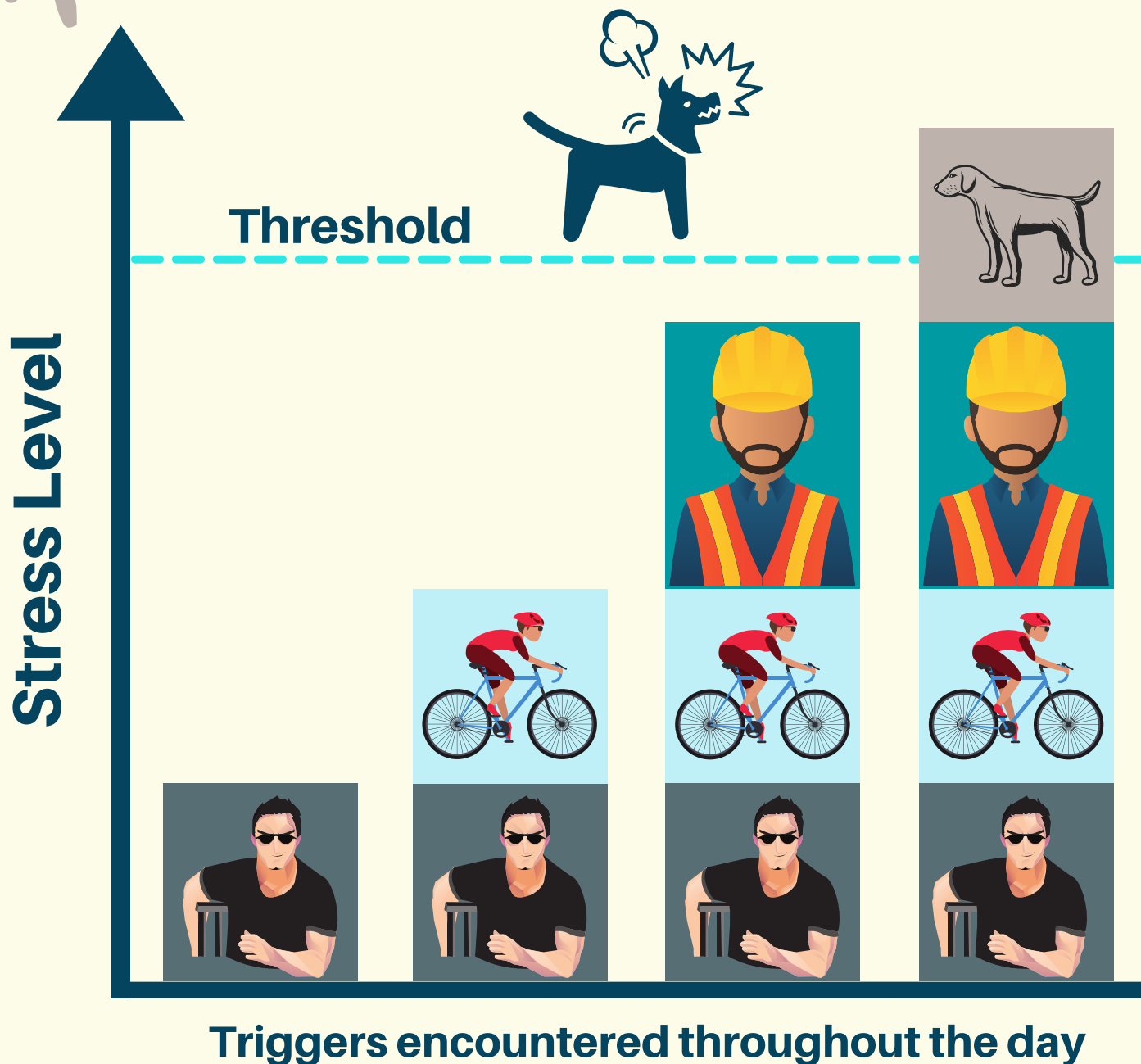


# TRIGGER STACKING

WHAT IT IS, WHY IT MATTERS, AND WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT.



Has your dog ever reacted to something they don't always react to?

This could be due to trigger stacking which is accumulated stress caused by exposure to triggers either simultaneously or close enough together that the dog has not had time to de-stress from the previous trigger.

Sometimes dogs may react to something they normally wouldn't as a result of trigger stacking.

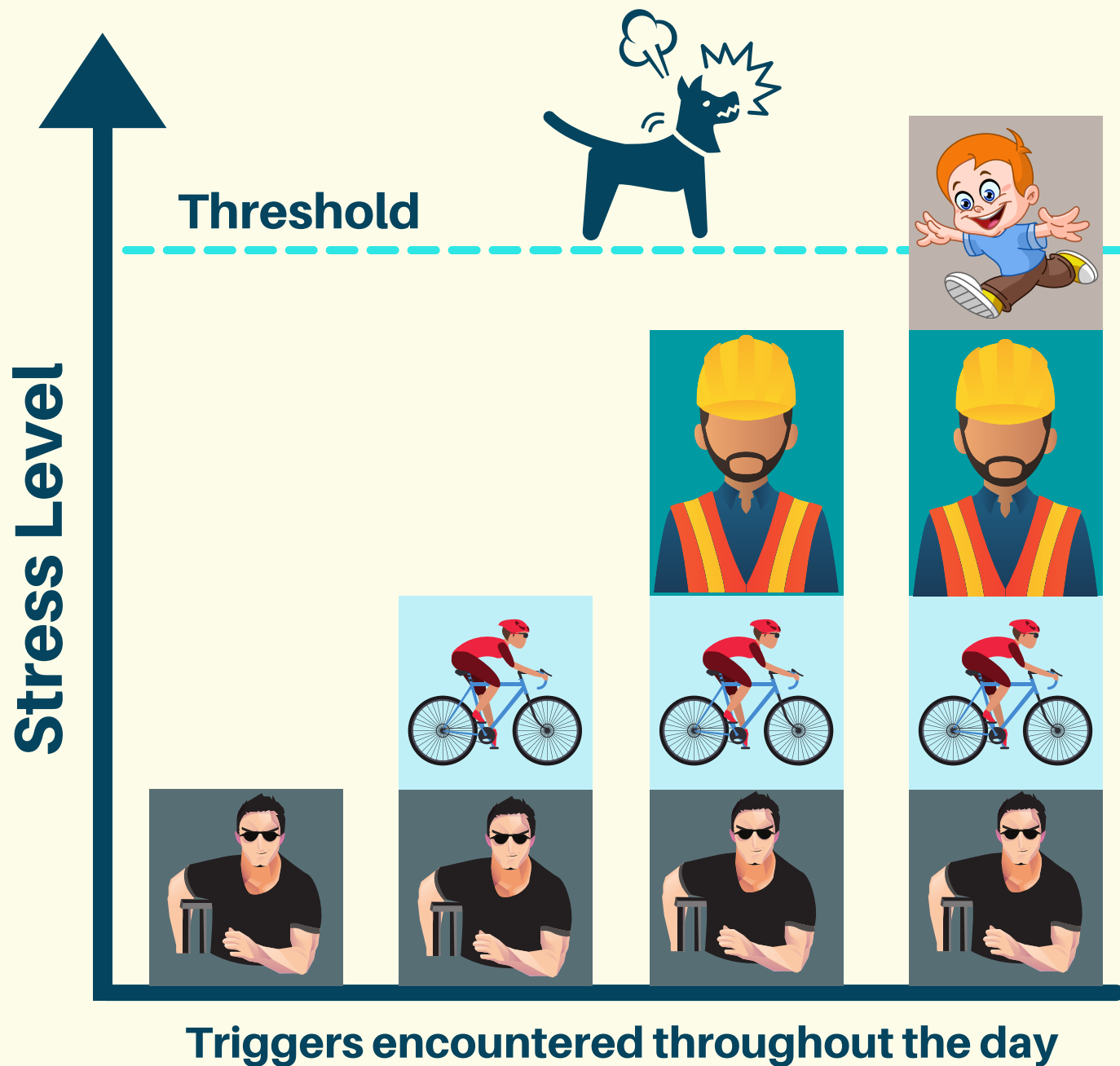
Let's put ourselves in a dog's position for a minute. You head out for the first walk of the day and as soon as you walk out the front door there is a strange man in dark clothes walking towards you. You are slightly startled by it but just move along as you really need to eliminate! You and your person start walking down the street and out of nowhere a cyclist whizzes by and startles you. You're starting to get a little stressed but go along on your way sniffing to see who has been walking the street before you. You're sniffing, minding your own business and as you pass a construction site there is a construction worker who starts jack-hammering and your heart starts racing. There is something that just isn't right about today so you pull your owner to go home, you've had enough! As you are heading straight for home you see the dog who lives across the street heading towards you. Normally you don't pay them any attention but today is different. You are startled, your heart is racing and you don't want this dog anywhere near you so you make sure that the other dog knows today is not the day.



The accumulation of stressful events can cause a dog to have a reaction to a thing they don't normally react to.

The next time your dog has a reaction to something that seems "out of the blue" have a think about what else has happened throughout the day that may have caused your dog some stress. Your dog might not be giving you a hard time, maybe he/she is just having a hard time. Try to lead with compassion and understanding.

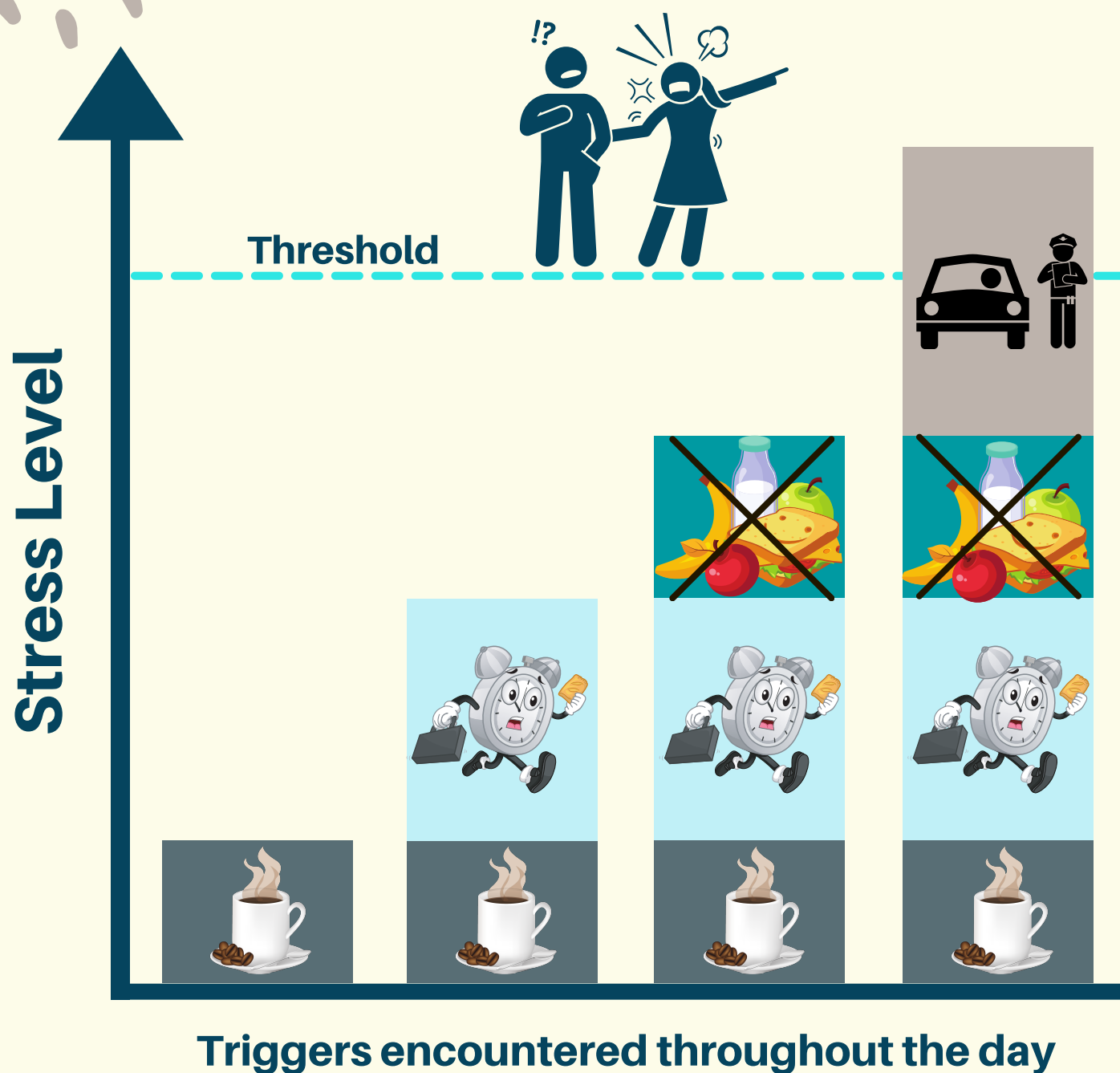
# TRIGGER STACKING & KIDS



Remember what happens with trigger stacking and a dog's normal reaction to a situation?

Think about an overly excited child being the trigger that sets the dog off. This is something that can absolutely cause a dog to bite a child seemingly "out of the blue" and one of the many reasons we need to be careful with kids around dogs

# TRIGGER STACKING IN HUMANS



When looking at behaviour problems I always find it easiest to try to put myself in the dog's shoes (or paws!). This way when my dog is experiencing something similar it is easier for me to empathize rather than react in a negative way.

You start your day with a nice cup of coffee. When you take your first sip you spill on your white work shirt and need to change. After a quick switch of shirt you get in your car to head to work and there is more traffic than normal that causes you to be late. Once you get to the office you realize that you are behind for a deadline and work through lunch to meet it. Since all you've had is coffee your body and mind are stimulated and not in a good way! On your way home you get pulled over for speeding and get a ticket. When you get home your partner asks you to help them bring in the groceries and you go off on them for even asking. If these things happened independently of each other you likely would not have reacted in such an over the top way. All the events of the day were too much for you that caused you to act out of character.