

Fostering the Trauma Informed Classroom: Understanding Trauma, the Brain, and Interventions for Responsive Classrooms

WCRIS August 11, 2017

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Presentation at WCRIS August 11, 2017



Part I Agenda

1. To understand the stress response system
2. To better understand different types of trauma
3. To promote empathy-based & culturally responsive approaches
4. To identify self-care and reflective practices

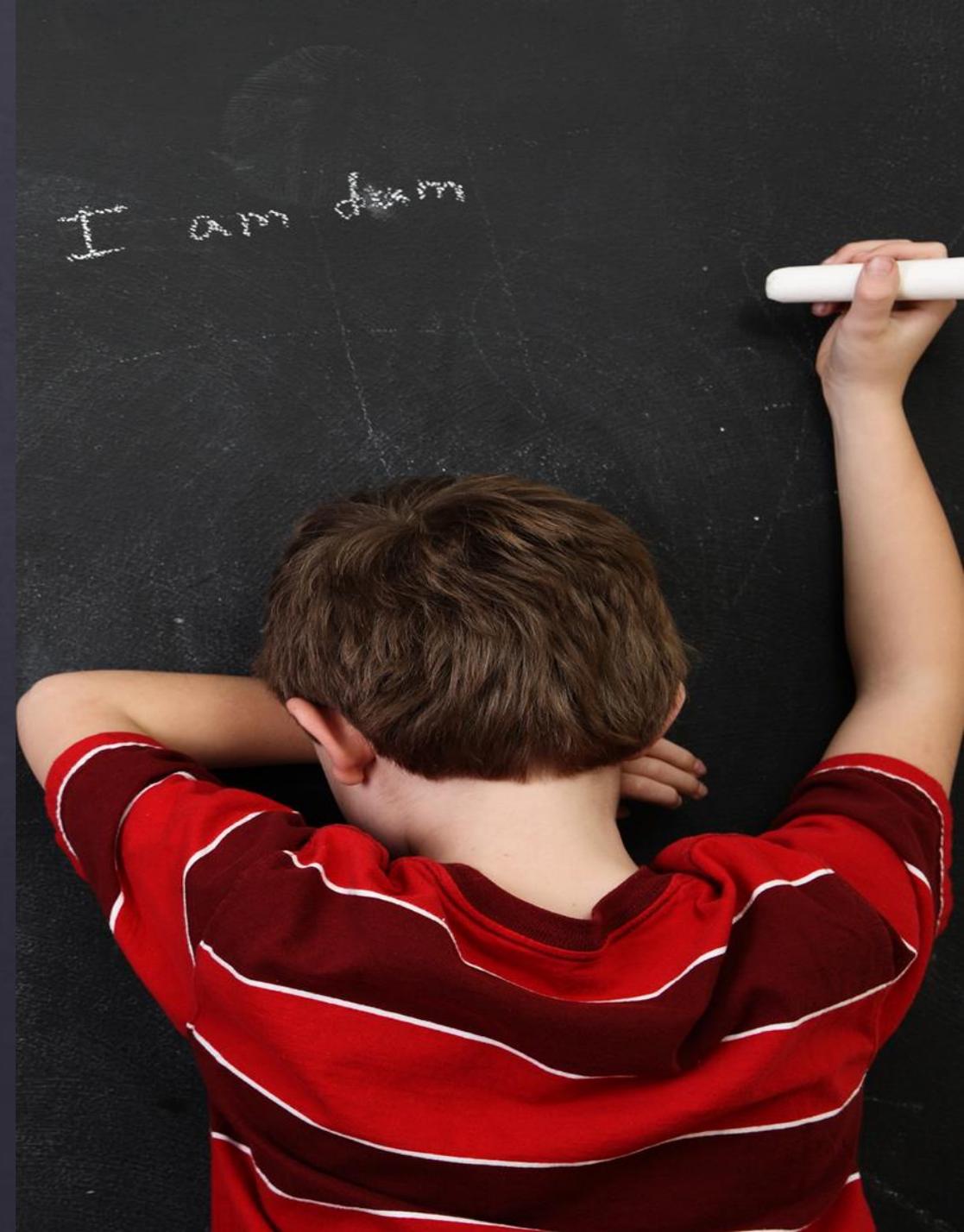


In order to develop normally, a child requires progressively more complex joint activity with one or more adults who have an irrational emotional relationship with the child. Somebody's got to be crazy about that kid. That's number one. First, last and always.

— *Urie Bronfenbrenner* —

AZ QUOTES

The Human Stress Response



“Remember: everyone in the classroom has a story that leads to misbehavior or defiance. 9 times out of 10, the story behind the misbehavior won't make you angry, it will break your heart.

- Annette Breaux

FIGHT



FLIGHT oohlala!



FREEZE





Trauma is everywhere

- ◆ 1 in 3 couples engage in physical violence
- ◆ 1 in 4 people were hit or beaten as a child
- ◆ 1 in 5 people have been sexually abused (this number increases with gender and racial differences)
- ◆ 46 million of the 76 million kids experience violence, crime, or abuse
- ◆ More kids will die by their caregivers than of leukemia
- ◆ The ACE's is more common than we initially realized

Types of trauma

“Big T” Trauma

- major events, normally seen as traumatic
- emotions, beliefs and physical sensations occur in both the body and mind

Examples

- serious accidents
- natural disasters
- robbery, rape and urban violence
- major surgeries/life threatening illness
- chronic or repetitive experiences e.g. child abuse and neglect,
- war, combat, concentration camps

“Small t” trauma

- overwhelming but often not seen as traumatic
- emotions, beliefs and physical sensations occur in both the body and mind
- unprocessed traumas have a long-lasting, negative effect
- can cause concentration, self-esteem & emotional regulation difficulties
- stunts and colors later perceptions
- often no intrusive imagery
- most common in neglected/abused children
- become part of a negative spiral when a Big T

Naming pain

Diagnostic terms applied to symptoms have included shell shock, hysteria, Soldier's Heart, Battle Fatigue, War Neurosis, Da Costa's Syndrome, Tunnel Disease, Railway Spine Disorder, Shell Shock, Gross Stress Reaction, Adjustment Reaction of Adult Life, Transient Situational Disturbance, Traumatic Neurosis, Post-Vietnam Syndrome, Rape Trauma Syndrome, Child Abuse Syndrome, and Battered Wife Syndrome (Everly, 1995; Meichenbaum, 1994).



Loss of...

- ◆ Safety
- ◆ Stability
- ◆ Predictability
- ◆ Boundaries
- ◆ Trust
- ◆ Power and control
- ◆ Innocence
- ◆ Protection
- ◆ Attachment
- ◆ Possessions
- ◆ Sense of self, body image
- ◆ Belonging
- ◆ Neurocognitive developmental insults



“Neurons that fire together wire together.”

~ Hebb's Rule





Neurocognitive insults

- ◆ Decreased IQ and reading abilities
- ◆ Lower grade-point average
- ◆ More days of school absence
- ◆ Decreased rates of high school graduation
- ◆ Increased expulsion and suspension

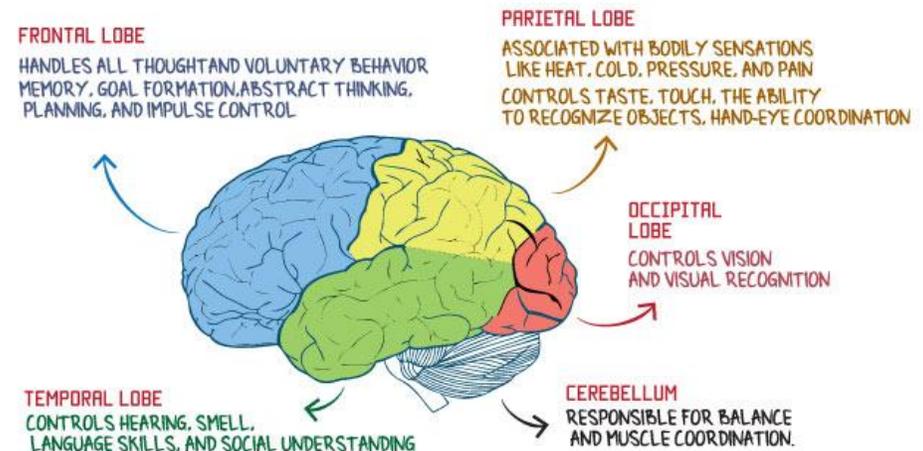
Childhood experiences & associated adult outcomes

- ◇ Emotional abuse
 - ◇ Physical abuse
 - ◇ Contact sexual abuse
 - ◇ Exposure to alcohol or other substance abuse
 - ◇ Mental illness of caregiver
 - ◇ Violent treatment of mother figure
 - ◇ Criminal behavior in home
 - ◇ Parental separation/divorce
- ✓ Mental health disturbances (panic, depression)
 - ✓ Somatic disturbances (sleep problems, obesity)
 - ✓ Substance abuse
 - ✓ Impaired memory of childhood
 - ✓ Sexuality (early intercourse, promiscuity, dissatisfaction)
 - ✓ Perceived stress, anger control problem, risk of partner violence

The human brain

- ◆ The brain develops in a Neurosequential way starting from the brainstem (bottom/downstairs part of the brain) all the way up to the Prefrontal Cortex (top/upstairs part of the brain) and then from the inside – out
- ◆ 90% of a child's brain development happens before the age of 5
- ◆ Trauma and toxic stress impacts the trajectory of brain growth
- ◆ The human brain across the lifespan is state dependent. This means your ability to regulate your emotions will depend on what part of the brain you are operating out of out of i.e., calm/relax, vigilance, alarm, fear, terror. These states correlate with behavioral responses such as rest, vigilance, freeze, flight, fight, embolize

90% OF A CHILD'S BRAIN DEVELOPMENT HAPPENS BEFORE AGE 5



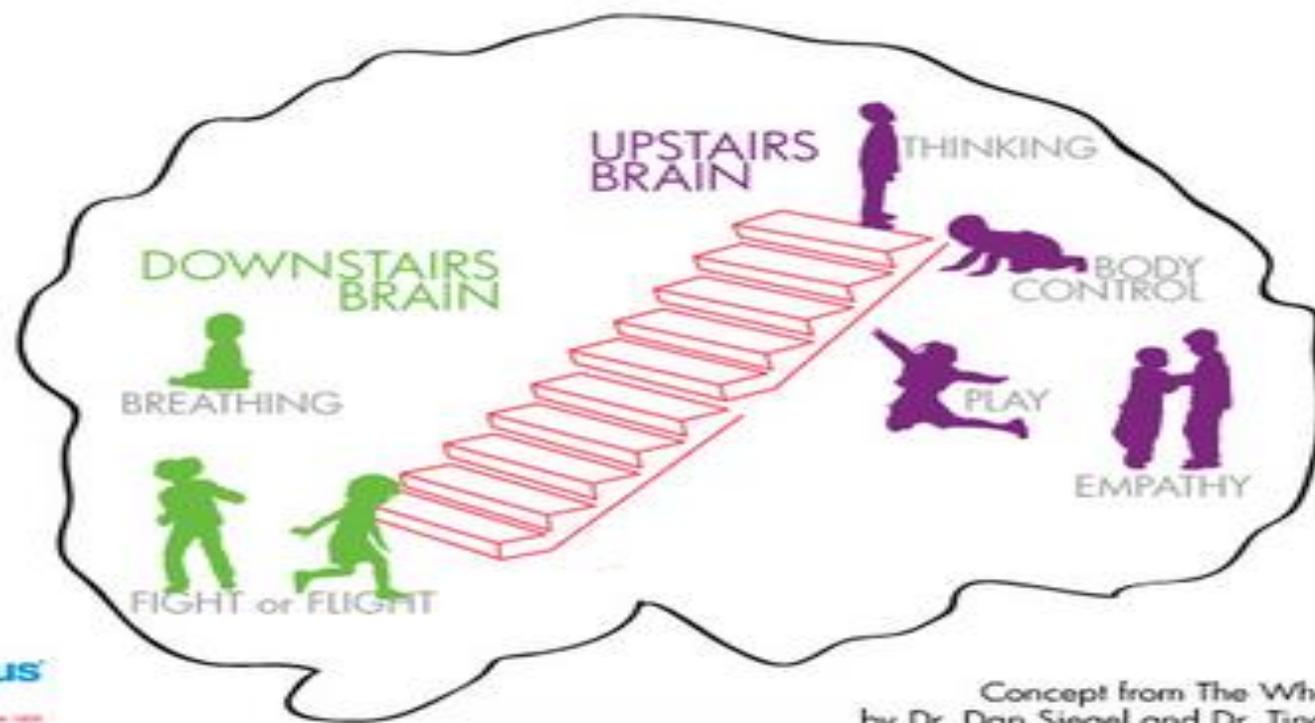
SOURCES:

[HTTP://WWW.URBANCHILDINSTITUTE.ORG/WHY-0-3/BABY-AND-BRAIN](http://www.urbanchildinstitute.org/why-0-3/baby-and-brain)
[HTTP://WWW.BABYCENTER.COM/INSIDE-A-CHILDS-MIND-A-VISUAL-GUIDE](http://www.babycenter.com/inside-a-childs-mind-a-visual-guide)
[HTTP://WWW.CREMEDELACREME.COM/PRESCHOOL_TIPS/YOUR_CHILDS_BRAIN_DEVELOPMENT.HTM](http://www.cremedelacreme.com/preschool_tips/your_childs_brain_development.htm)
[HTTP://BRAININSIGHTS.MYSHOPIFY.COM/BLOGS/NEWS/5291502-IT-HAPPENS-IN-THE-BRAIN-AND-IT-BEGINS-EARLY](http://braininsights.myshopify.com/blogs/news/5291502-it-happens-in-the-brain-and-it-begins-early)
[HTTP://BRAINMIND.COM/BRAINLECTURE7.HTML](http://brainmind.com/brainlecture7.html)

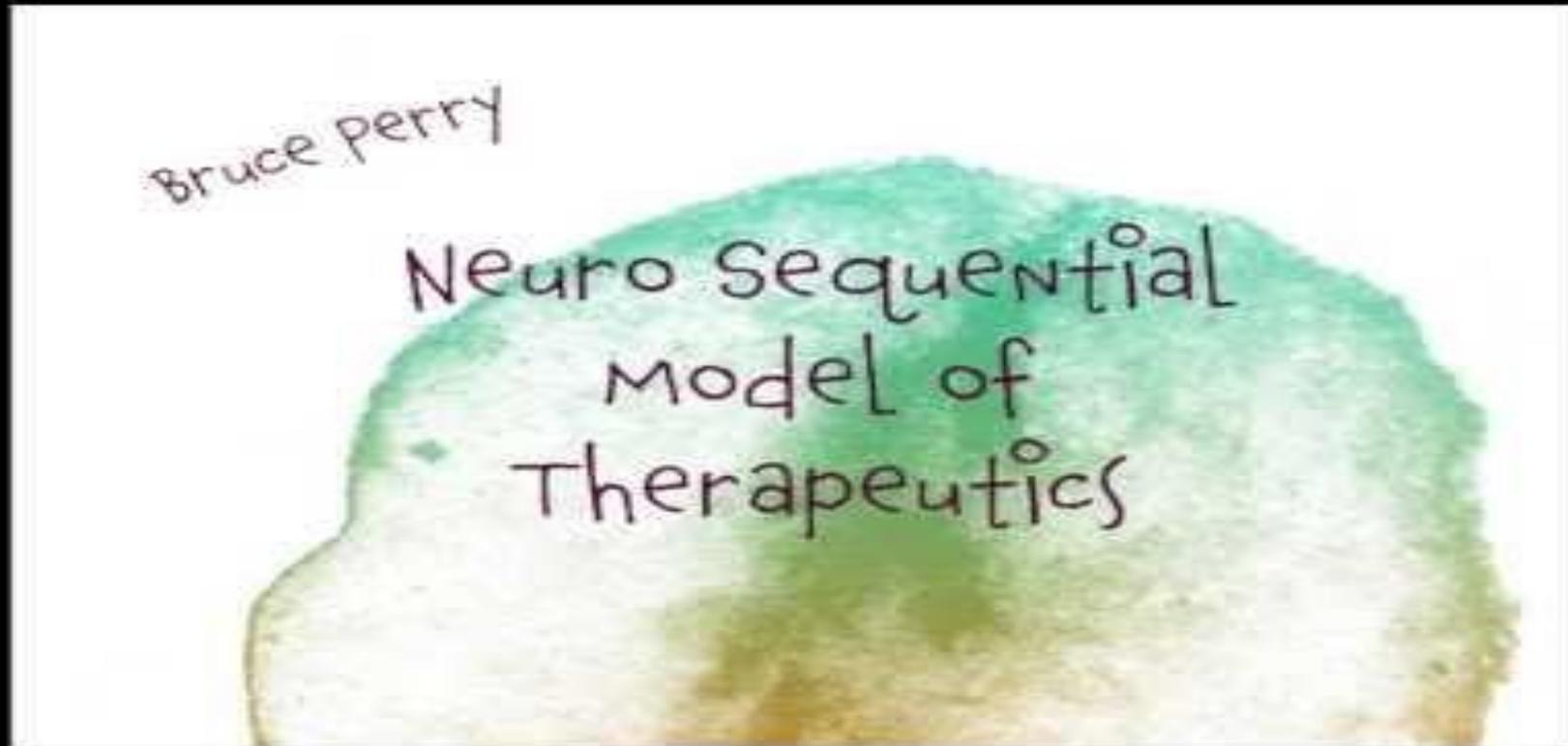
<https://www.developinghumanbrain.org/healthy-brain-development-babies-toddlers/>

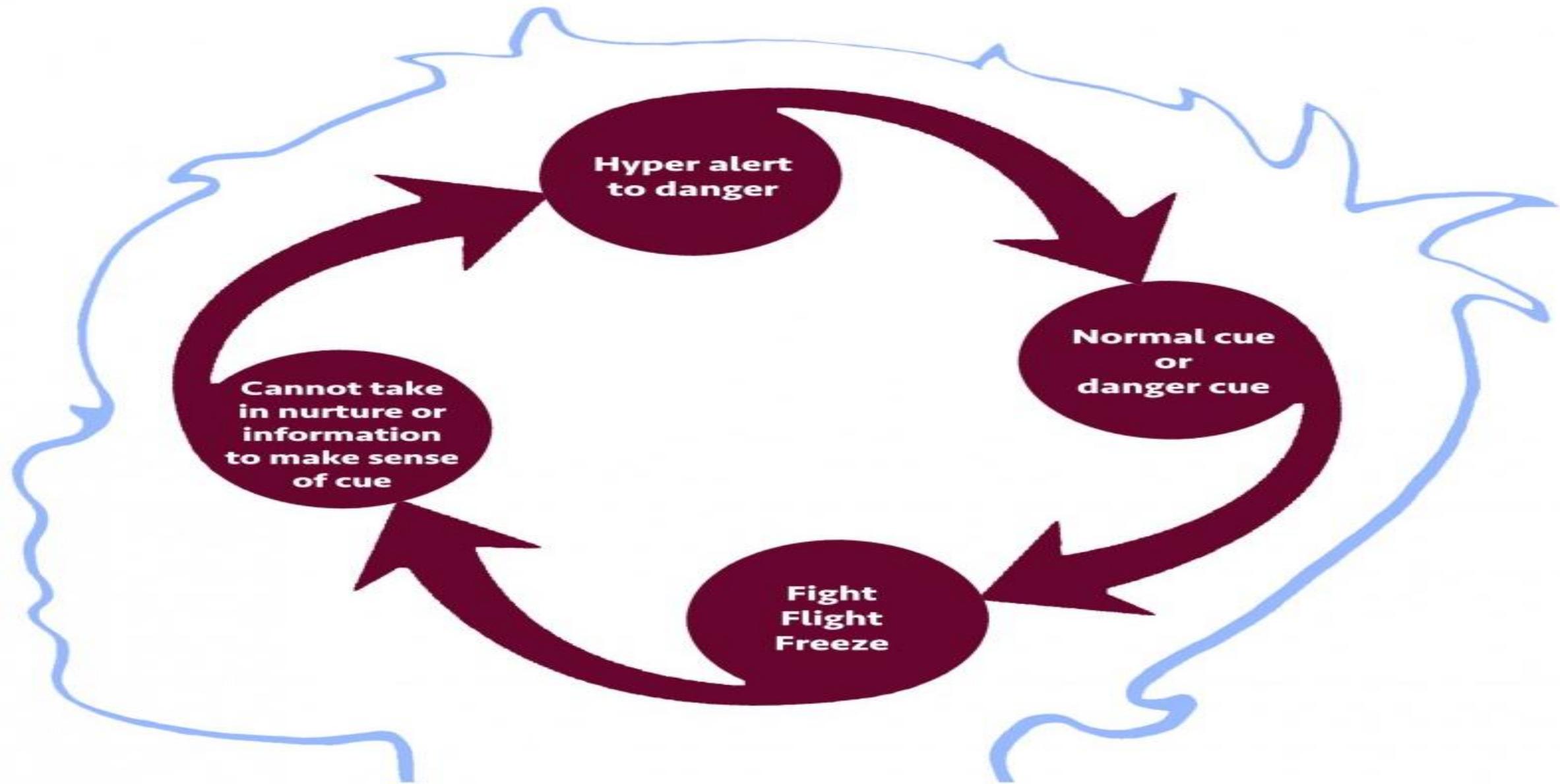
Picture a brain like a house. Downstairs is where important things live. Basic functions like breathing, strong emotions, and innate reactions to danger, like fight, flight or freeze. It's like the downstairs of a house, which is where we almost always find the basics—kitchen, living room, bathroom.

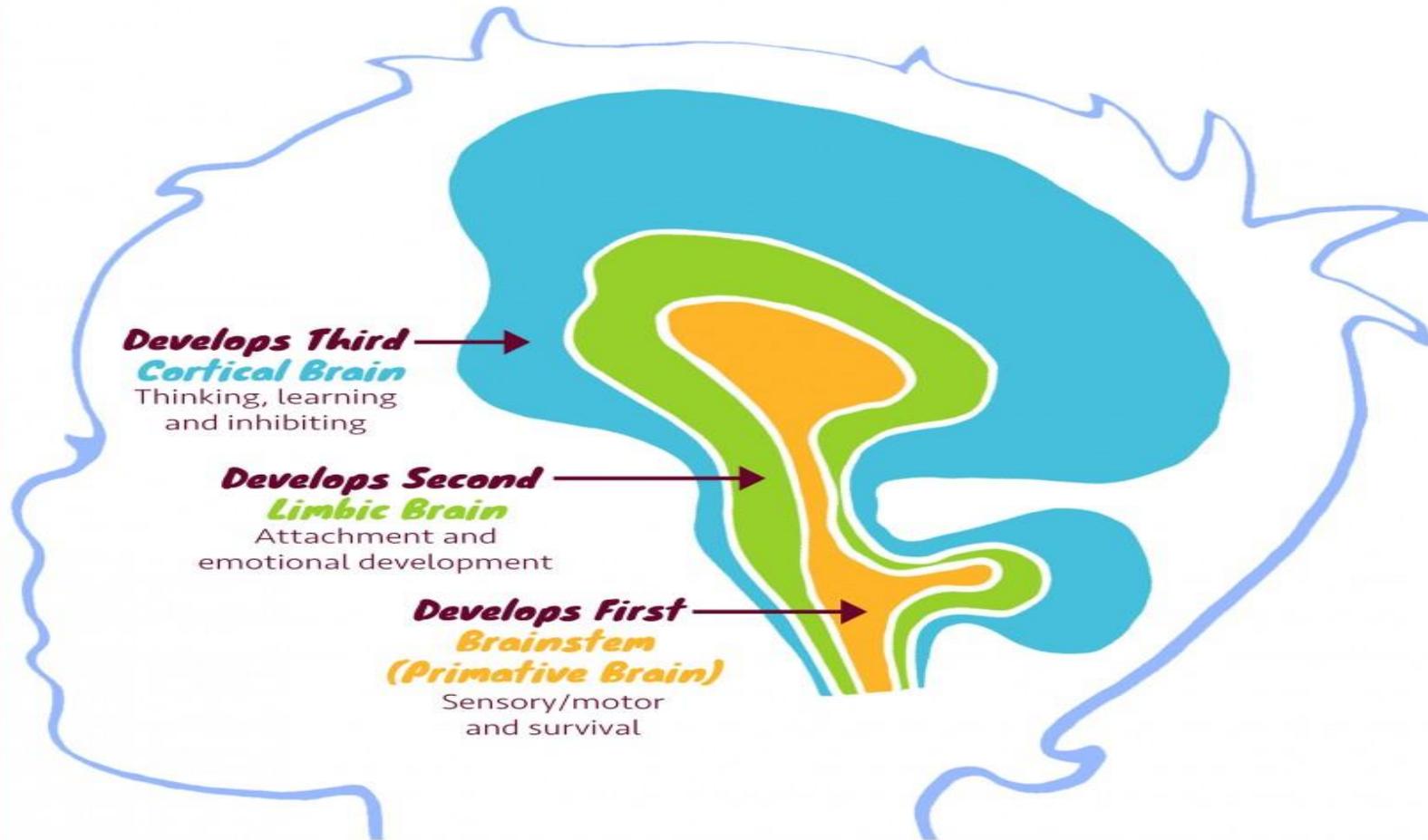
The upstairs brain is more complex. Thinking, imagining, planning – these things come from the upstairs brain. We use the upstairs brain to think critically, problem solve, and make good decisions. Important to note for those of us working with teens, the upstairs brain is not fully formed until our mid-20s!



Developmental Trauma







Children's brains develop
from the bottom up.





Beacon House

Therapeutic Services and Trauma Team

Developmental Trauma

Brain Area:
Brainstem (Primitive brain)

Developmental Trauma:
1. Somatic/Sensory

Examples:

- Sensory processing difficulties
- High or low arousal (fight/flight/freeze/submit)
- Impulsivity and pervasive anxiety
- Impaired sleep patterns
- Poor muscle tone and co-ordination
- Taste and texture preferences
- Heart rate difficulties
- Abnormal breathing
- Unexplained medical symptoms
- Body flashbacks to states of fear

Moves up to



Brain Area:
Limbic Brain

Developmental Trauma:
2. Attachment
3. Emotional regulation
4. Behavioural regulation

Examples:

- Clinging
- Oppositional
- Rejecting
- Distrustful
- Overly compliant
- Loss of expectancy of protection by others
- Loss of trust in social agencies
- Heightened emotions: anger, rage, fear, sadness, excitement, joy
- Deadened emotions: numbness, emptiness, low mood
- Re-creating traumatic situations
- Self-harming
- Aggression
- Running
- Hiding

Attachment
Emotional Regulation
Behavioural Regulation

Moves up to



Brain Area
Cortical Brain

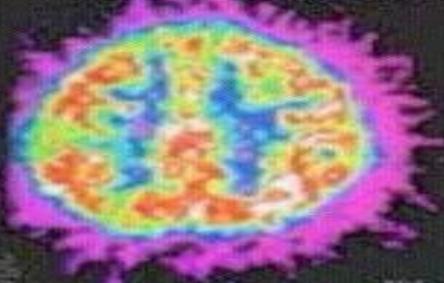
Developmental Trauma
5. Self esteem
6. Dissociation
7. Cognitive problems

Examples

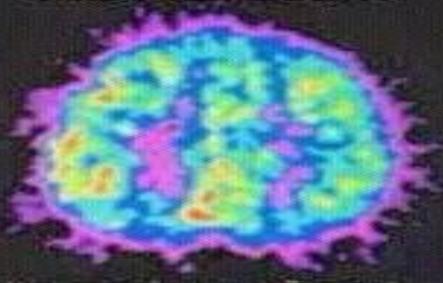
- Information processing impairments	Cognitive problems
- Executive dysfunction (problems in planning, organising and executing)	
- Inadequate problem solving	
- Remembering and recalling information	Dissociation
- Identity confusion	
- Flashbacks	
- Disorientation	Self esteem
- Memory lapses	
- Self hate	
- Self blame	
- Self loathing	
- Self doubt	
- Worthlessness	
- Helplessness	



Normal brain



ADHD brain



"It's just a made up ailment to give kids an excuse for not paying attention"

ADHD

Normal brain



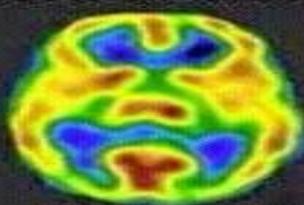
PTSD brain



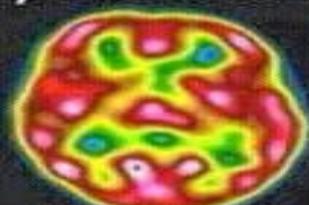
"What happened to you wasn't even that bad"

PTSD

Normal brain



Bipolar brain



"Why can't you control yourself and try and act like a normal person?"

Bipolar Disorder

Normal brain



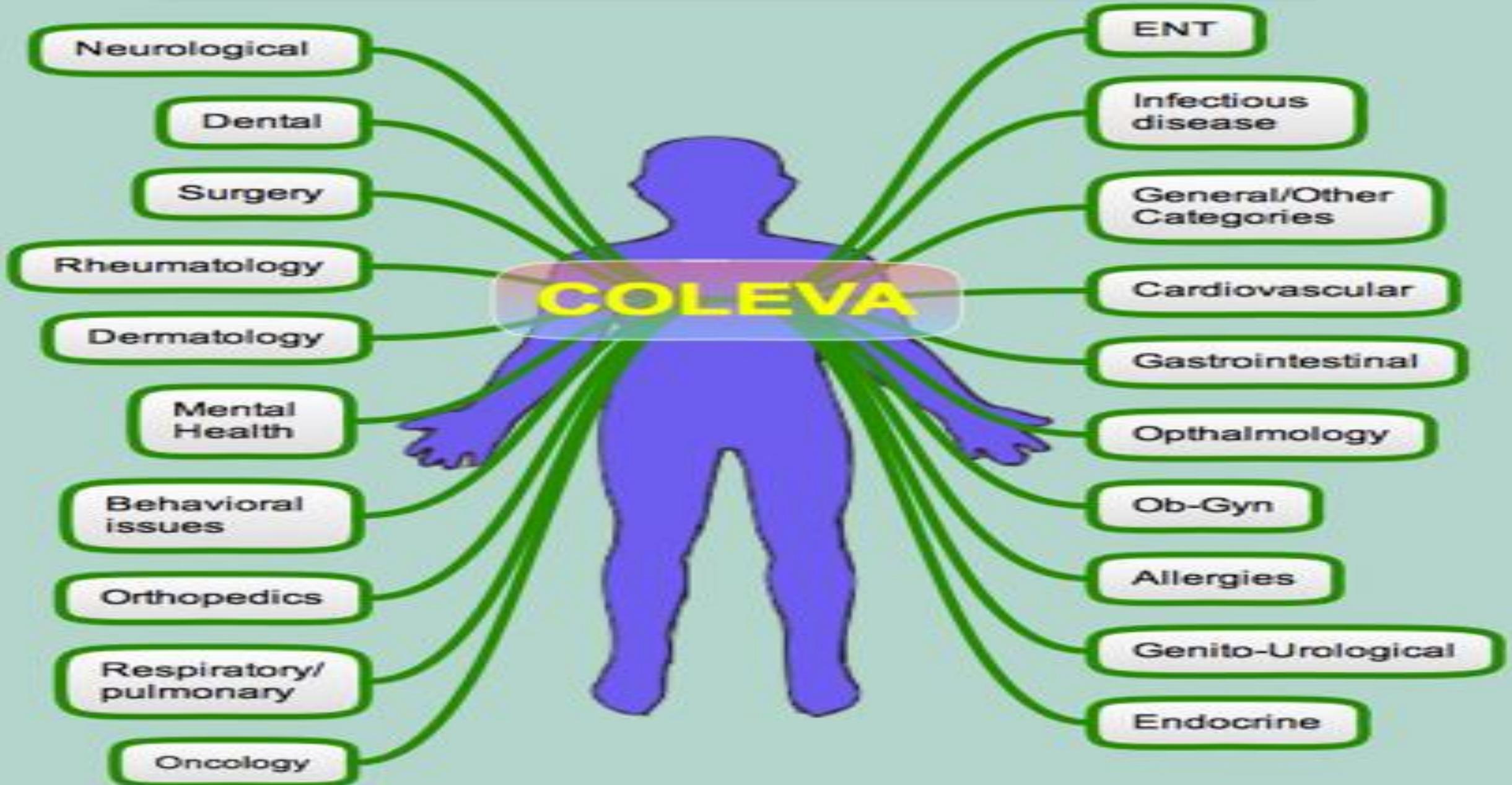
Depressed brain



"Get over it lots of people have it worse"

Depression

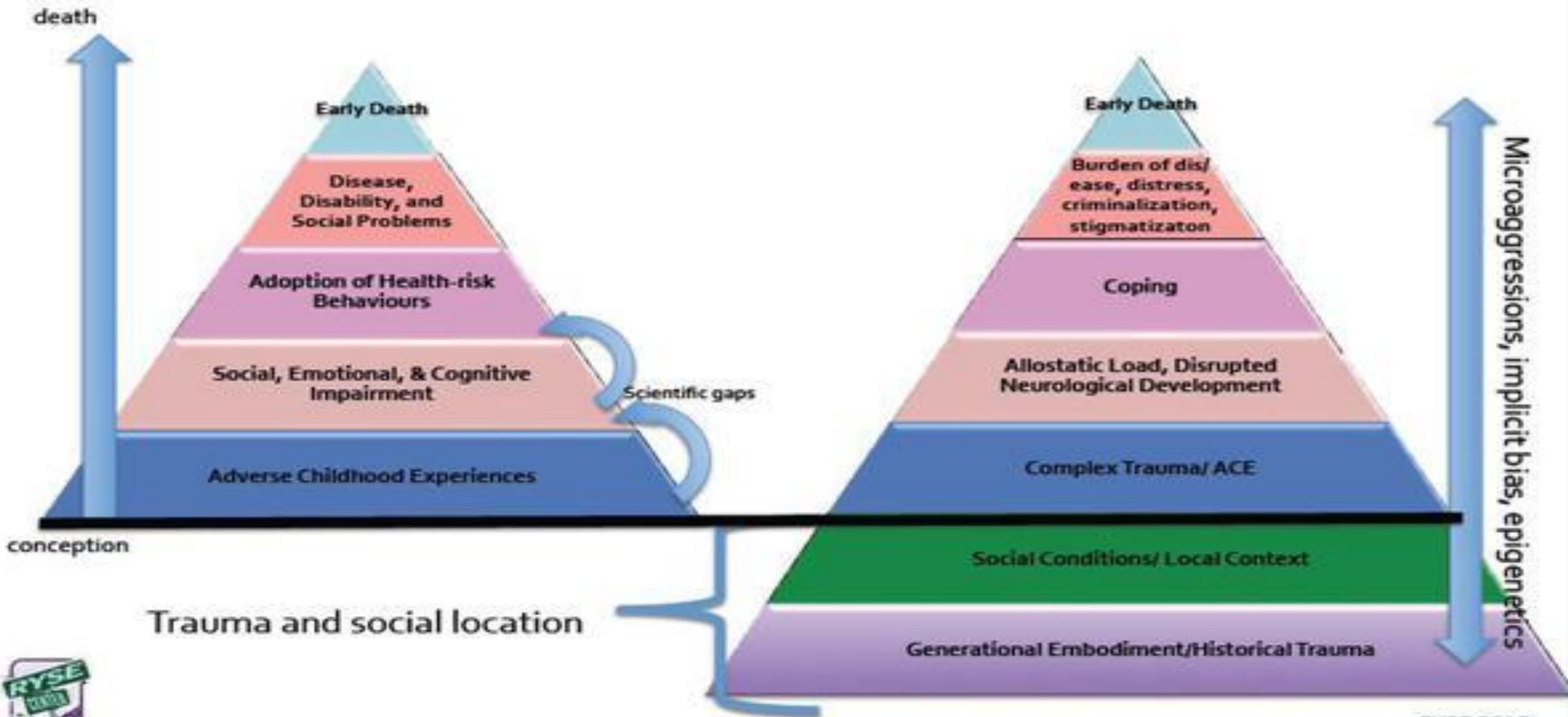
Consequences of Lifetime Exposure to Violence and Abuse



Trauma and Social Location

Adverse Childhood Experiences

Historical Trauma/Embodiment



The Pair of ACEs

Adverse Childhood Experiences

Maternal
Depression

Physical &
Emotional Neglect

Emotional &
Sexual Abuse

Divorce

Substance
Abuse

Mental Illness

Domestic Violence

Homelessness

Incarceration

Adverse Community Environments

Poverty

Violence

Discrimination

Poor Housing
Quality &
Affordability

Community
Disruption

Lack of Opportunity, Economic
Mobility & Social Capital

How do you assess for trauma in the classroom?

- ◇ The existence or origin of the trauma is not important in general, except to the folks delivering mental health counseling. In fact, such information is not to be common knowledge and protected under HIPPA and FERPA.
- ◇ What you need to know is that something could happen or have happened to any student and the use of responsive school strategies help to address the child's background by creating safety, trust, relationships, high expectations, etc.
- ◇ **Assess problems and strengths. Not trauma.**
- ◇ Avoid using the ACES to study in schools.



What should you use?

- ◇ Measures that look at strengths and difficulties
- ◇ Measures that encourage teacher and parent self-reflection
- ◇ [http://www.sdqinfo.org/py/sdqinfo/b3.py?language=Englishqz\(USA\)](http://www.sdqinfo.org/py/sdqinfo/b3.py?language=Englishqz(USA))



“It is always better to offer children substitute means of accessing resources than trying to suppress their troubling behaviors”

Dr. Michael Ungar

NON TRAUMA INFORMED

- POWER OVER
- YOU CAN'T CHANGE
- JUDGING
- PEOPLE NEED FIXING FIRST
- OPERATE FROM THE DOMINANT CULTURE
- PEOPLE ARE OUT TO GET YOU
- RIGHT/WRONG
- HELPING
- "YOU'RE CRAZY!"
- COMPLIANCE/OBEDIENCE
- NEED-TO-KNOW BASIS FOR INFO
- PRESENTING ISSUE
- "US AND THEM"
- LABELS, PATHOLOGY
- FEAR-BASED
- I'M HERE TO FIX YOU
- DIDACTIC
- PEOPLE MAKE BAD CHOICES
- BEHAVIOR VIEWED AS PROBLEM
- WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU?
- BLAME/SHAME
- GOAL IS TO DO THINGS THE 'RIGHT' WAY
- PRESCRIPTIVE
- PEOPLE ARE BAD
- CONSIDER ONLY RESERCH AND EVIDENCE

- POWER WITH
- YOUR BRAIN IS 'PLASTIC'
- OBSERVING
- PEOPLE NEED SAFETY FIRST
- CULTURAL HUMILITY
- PEOPLE CAN LIVE UP TO THE TRUST YOU GIVE THEM
- MULTIPLE VIEWPOINTS
- LEARNING
- "IT MAKES SENSE"
- EMPOWERMENT/COLLABORATION
- TRANSPARENCY AND PREDICTABILITY
- WHOLE PERSON AND HISTORY
- WE'RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER
- BEHAVIOR AS COMMUNICATION
- EMPATHY-BASED
- SUPPORT HEALING
- PARTICIPATORY
- PEOPLE WHO FEEL UNSAFE DO UNSAFE THINGS
- BEHAVIOR VIEWED AS SOLUTION
- WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?
- RESPECT
- GOAL IS TO CONNECT
- CHOICE
- PEOPLE ARE DOING THE BEST THEY CAN
- CONSIDER ALSO LIVED EXPERIENCE

TRAUMA INFORMED CARE



What is culture?

- ◇ Is it race?
- ◇ Is it ethnicity?
- ◇ Is it nationality?
- ◇ Is it language?
- ◇ Is it food?
- ◇ Is it religion?
- ◇ Is it norms, beliefs, values, and roles?
- ◇ Is it group formation and identify?

Define your culture...

It's complex

What is Cultural Humility?

Requires that organizations and professionals have a defined set of ethics and principles, and demonstrate behaviors, attitudes, policies, and structures that enable them to work effectively cross-culturally. This is a developmental process that evolves over an extended period.

What does this look like?

Cultural Humility



Cultural humility is the ability to understand, communicate with and effectively interact with people across cultures.

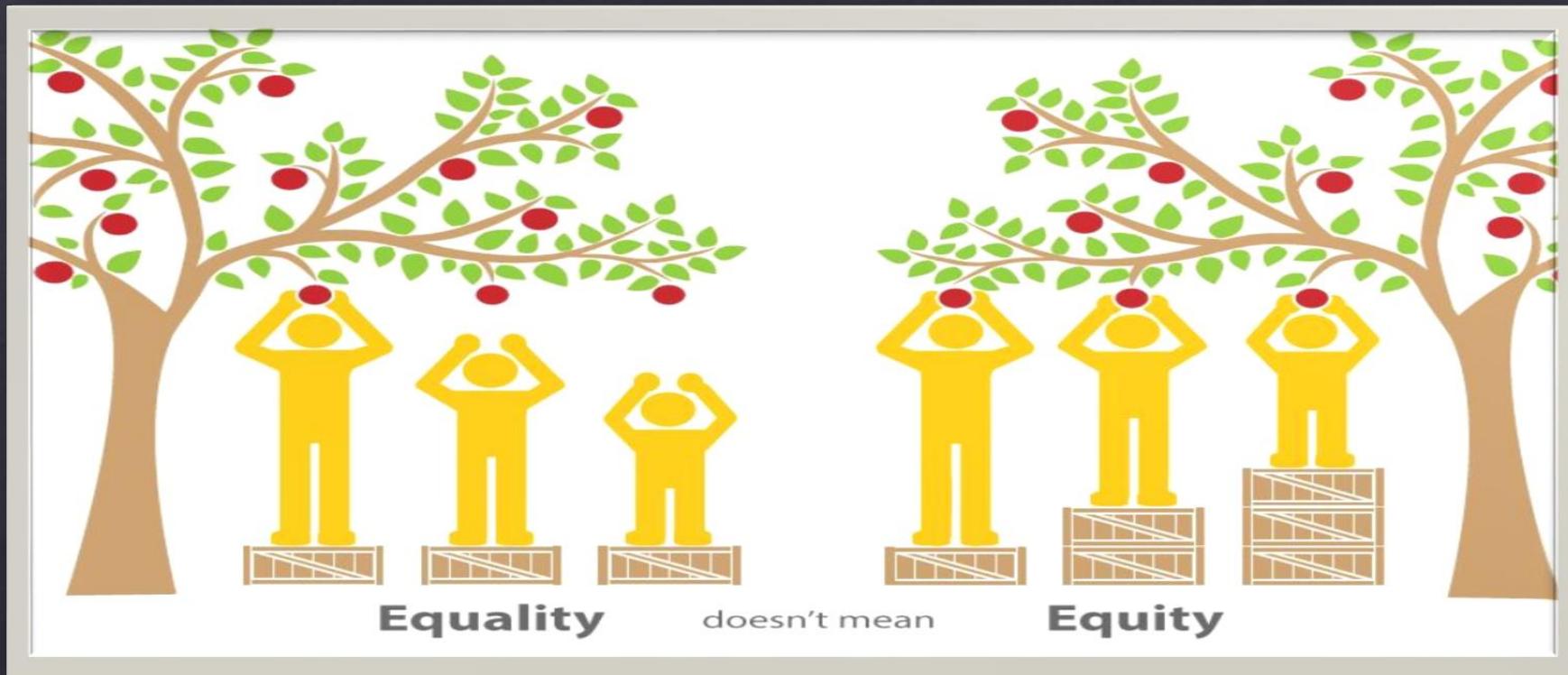
Cultural competence encompasses:

- ◆ Deeper than skin tone
- ◆ Diversity makes us smarter!
- ◆ Being aware of one's own world view Developing positive attitudes towards cultural differences
- ◆ Gaining knowledge of different cultural practices and world views

Proportional Universality

“All children and adults need resources but some need the same resources as their peers but in larger amounts.”

– Dr. Michael Ungar



Growing your
practice

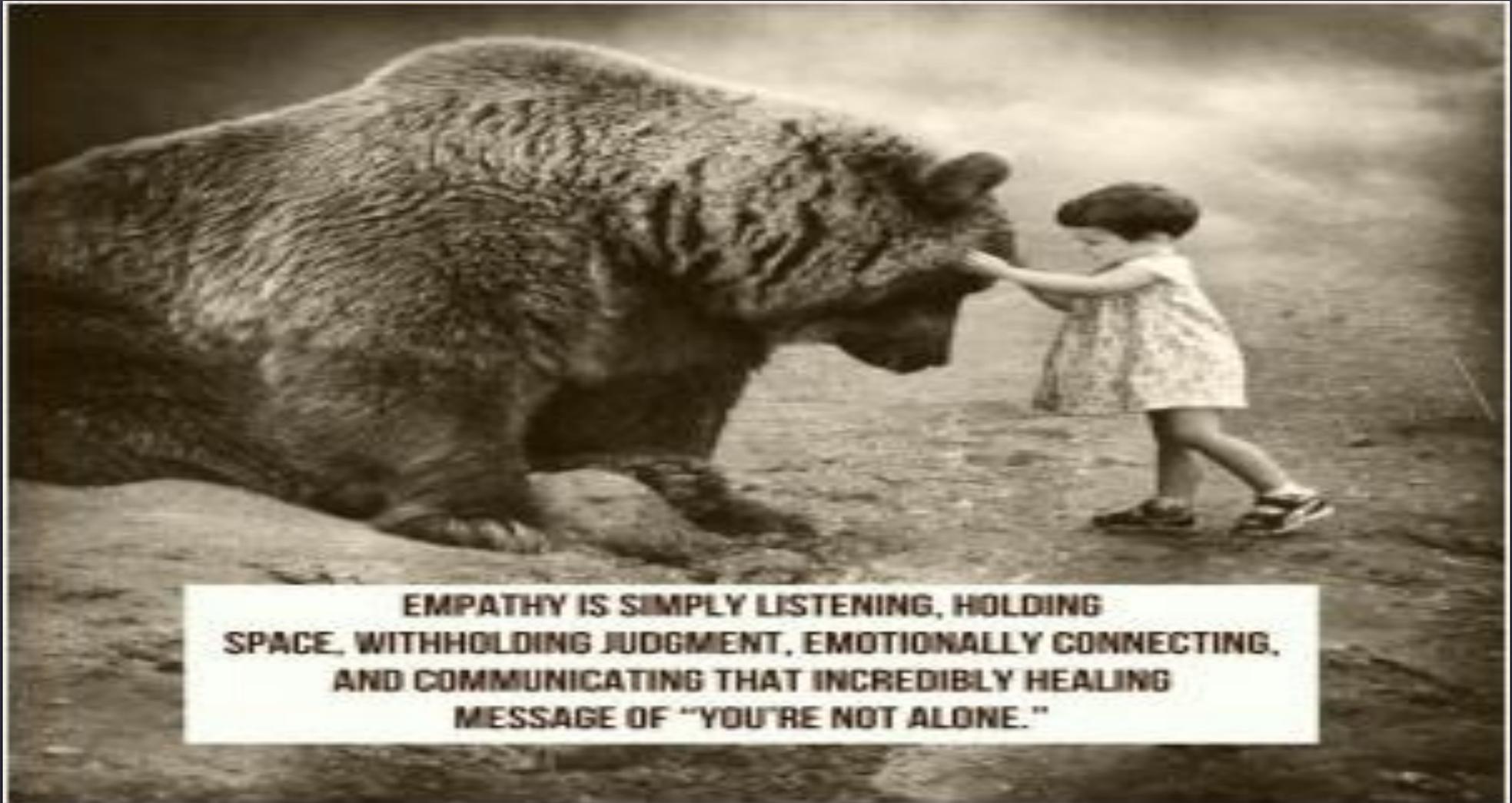


Empathy-Based
Practice

Self-care for teachers

Reflective practice

Empathy-Based Practice



EMPATHY IS SIMPLY LISTENING, HOLDING SPACE, WITHHOLDING JUDGMENT, EMOTIONALLY CONNECTING, AND COMMUNICATING THAT INCREDIBLY HEALING MESSAGE OF "YOU'RE NOT ALONE."

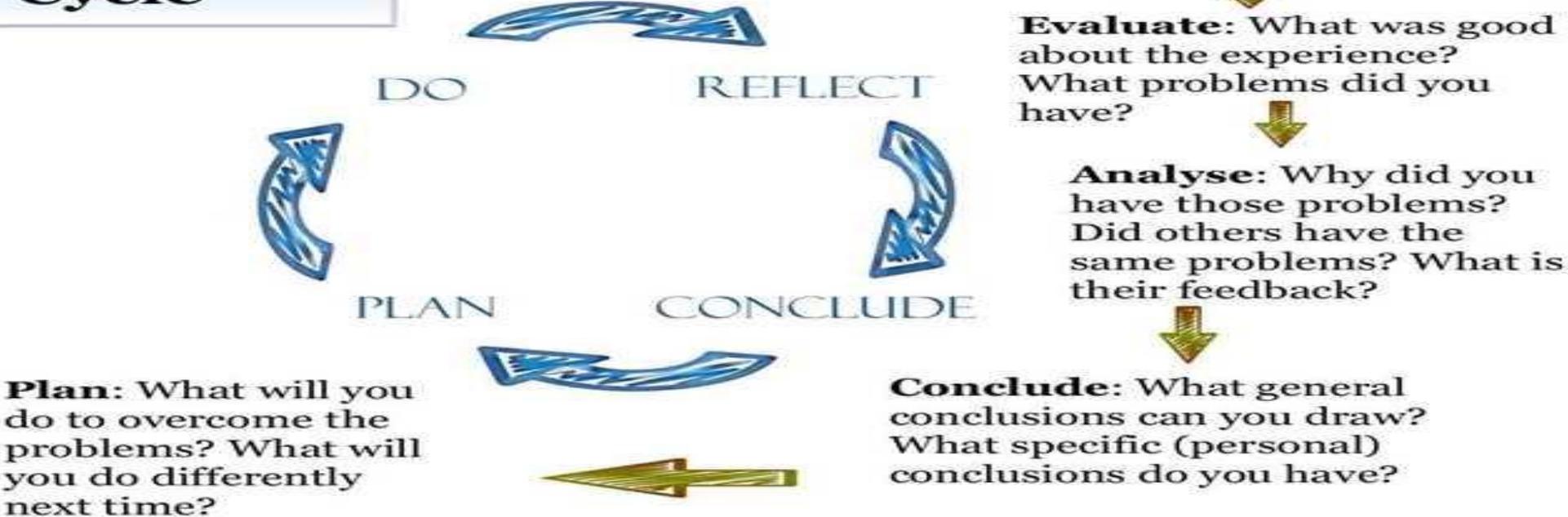
What could this look like?

- ◆ Attempting, as far as possible, to understand another person's situation, feelings, and perspective, recognizing the difficulties in putting oneself in another's shoes
- ◆ It's taking into consideration the human stress response and state dependency
- ◆ Communicating that understanding, checking its accuracy
- ◆ Acting on that understanding in a helpful way.



Reflective process takes top-down brain activity!

The Gibbs Reflective Cycle



The Rescuing Hug



“Connection before Correction”



Cost of Caring

- ◆ Mental health and wellness
 - ◆ Chronic fatigue
 - ◆ Feeling isolated / loneliness
 - ◆ Anxiety/ racing thoughts
 - ◆ Feeling
 - ◆ Reactive v. responsive
 - ◆ Somatic pain



Did you know?

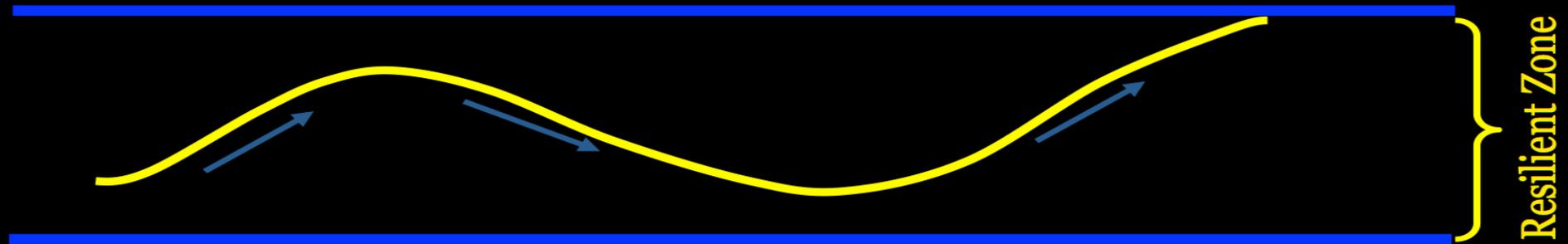
- ◇ According to the CDC over **80%** of doctor visits are stress related
- ◇ **Over 50 stress responses:**
 - ◇ Sympathetic Nervous System (fight and flight)
 - ◇ Consequences of stress
- ◇ **Body self-repair system:**
 - ◇ Parasympathetic system
 - ◇ Release of calming neurotransmitters

How someone's trauma impacts you

- ◆ The role of the helper can have unintended consequences
 - ◆ Compassion fatigue
 - ◆ Countertransference (redirection of helpers feelings toward a consumer—or, more generally, as a helpers emotional entanglement with a consumer)
 - ◆ Secondary traumatic stress (STS)
 - ◆ Vicarious traumatization
- ◆ Unlike other forms of job “burnout”, STS is precipitated not by work load and institutional stress but by exposure to clients' trauma

Natural Rythmn of the Nervous System

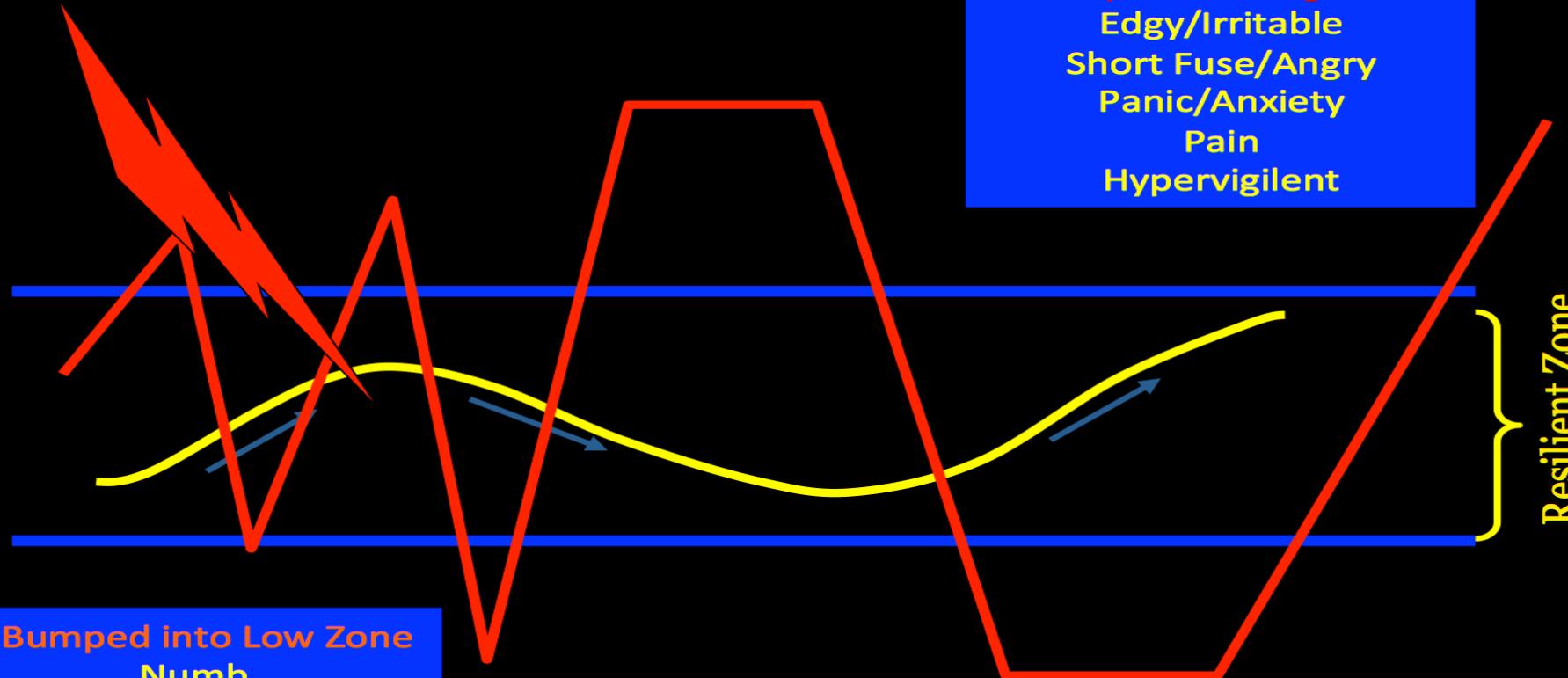
Resilient Zone



When in the Resilient Zone
We feel whole in mind, body and spirit
We are better able to handle the ups and downs of daily living

The Resilient Zone can become stronger by
practicing the skills of the Community Resiliency Model

**Stressful/Traumatic
Events/Trigger**



Bumped into High Zone
Edgy/Irritable
Short Fuse/Angry
Panic/Anxiety
Pain
Hypervigilant

Bumped into Low Zone
Numb
Sad/Depressed
Isolated
Exhaustion/Tired
Disconnected

We can get bumped out of the Resilient Zone and get stuck in the High Zone or the Low Zone or go back and forth between the two.



Self-Care Plan (Practice)

- ◇ Repetitive
- ◇ Rhythmic
- ◇ Relevant
- ◇ Relational
- ◇ Respectful
- ◇ Reparative

IT'S SUPPOSED TO RELIEVE STRESS...



SELF-CARE WHEEL



Awareness brings change...

- ◇ What beliefs do you have about yourself that hold you back from feeling confident about yourself?
- ◇ How often do you hold back your true feelings?
- ◇ How often do you experience shame , self-doubt, or negative self-care?
- ◇ How do you settle for less than what you want?
- ◇ What holds you back and feeling stuck?
- ◇ What is really bothering you and how are you dealing with it today?
- ◇ What makes you feel safe and loved?
- ◇ How do you care for yourself?



Know your physiological responses to stress

- ◇ Where do you feel stress or anxiety in your body?
- ◇ Where do you feel the most tension in your body?
- ◇ Do you ever notice that you hold your breath when you are stressed?
- ◇ Do you noticed that your body temperature changes?
- ◇ Do you notice your heartrate change?
- ◇ Does your face get flushed or hands get cold?
- ◇ Do you get lower back pain or stomach pains?
- ◇ Do you get headaches?
- ◇ Do you notice you talk more or less?



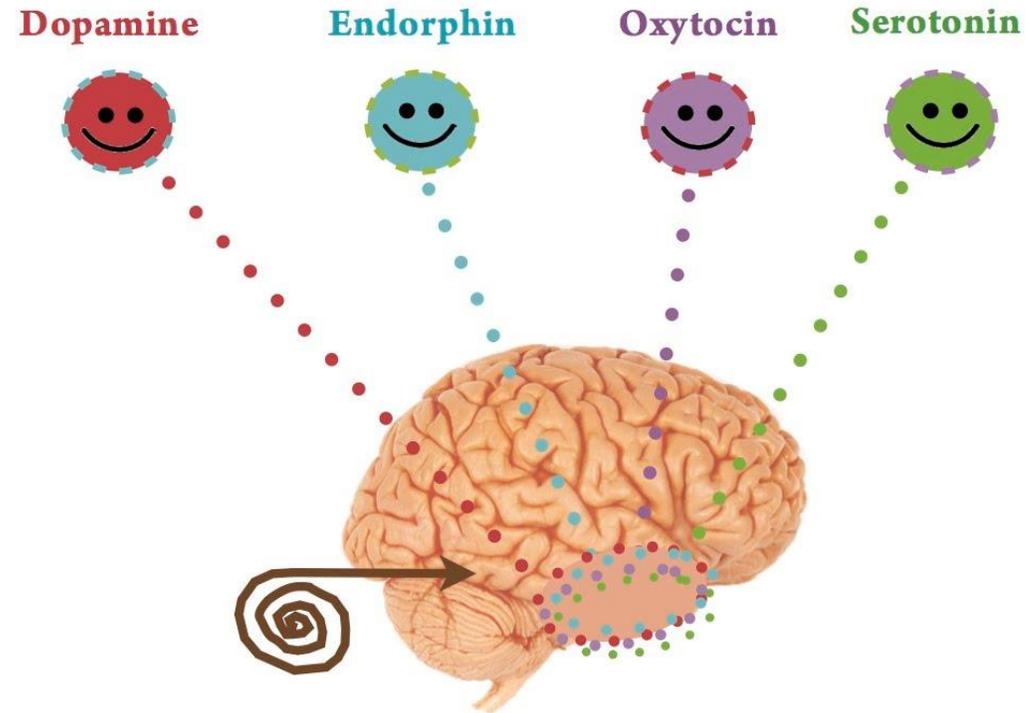
You can't pour from an empty cup.
Take care of yourself first.

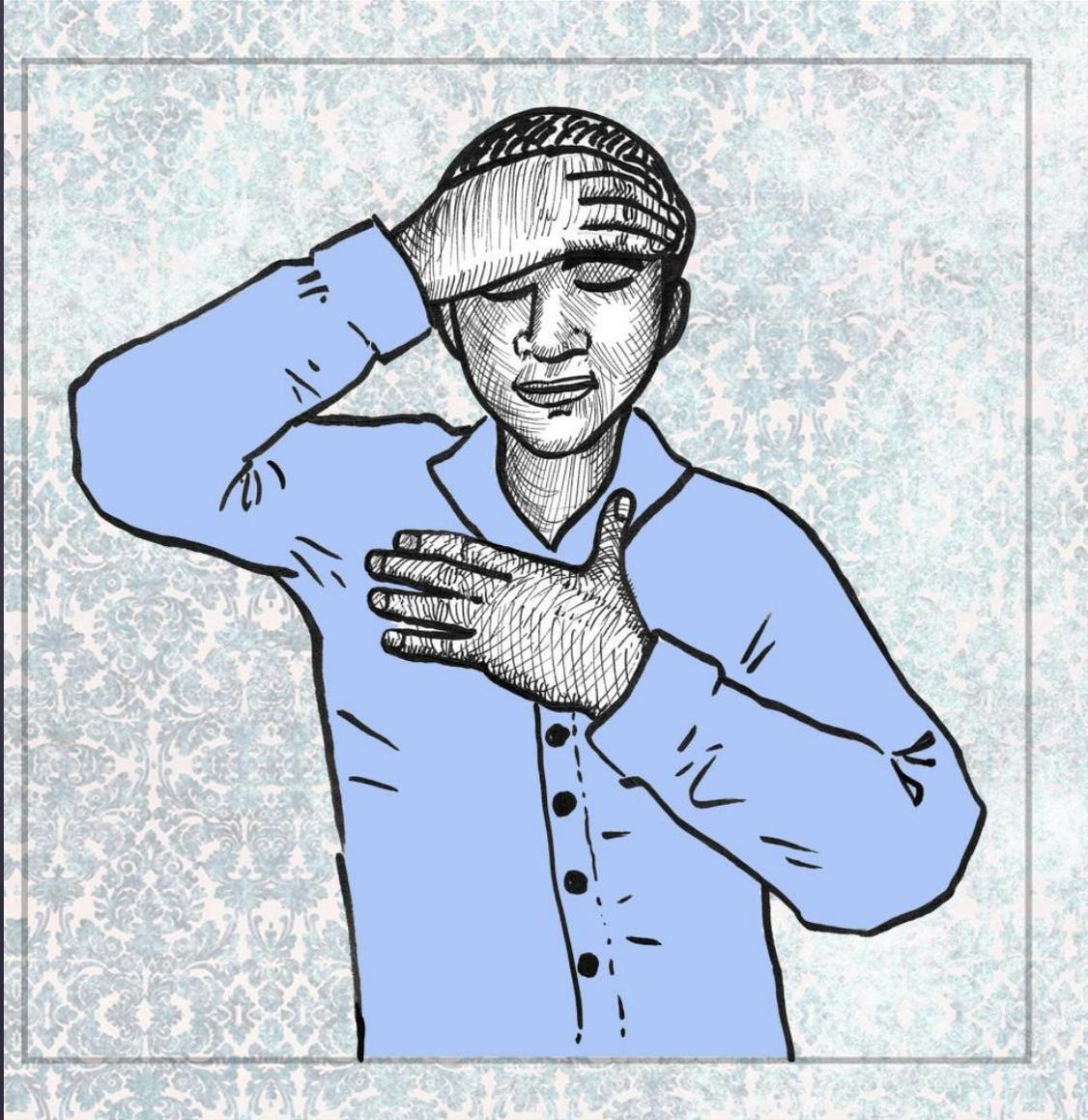
Ways to practice self-care

- ◇ Create a routine, rhythm, repetitive, respectful practices
- ◇ Read a good book
- ◇ Binge watch your favorite Netflix show
- ◇ Cook
- ◇ Square breathing (3 in and 6 out)
- ◇ Connect with a good friend or family member
- ◇ Practice kindness or email someone something nice to say
- ◇ Notice what you are feeling in the current moment
- ◇ Take a nap
- ◇ Listen to guided meditation
- ◇ Smile at your self in the mirror
- ◇ Pop bubble wrap
- ◇ Write down your short-term and long-term goals
- ◇ Practice relaxation techniques
- ◇ Do a craft
- ◇ Take a walk outside
- ◇ Pray

Activating your happy chemicals!

- ◇ **Dopamine**- Motivation
- ◇ **Serotonin**- 80% in your gut! Governed by hunger.
- ◇ **Oxytocin**: Activated by closeness with another
- ◇ **Endorphins** –Helps to relieve pain, stress, and alleviate anxiety and depression
- ◇ Smile your brain won't know the difference!







Thank You For Making A Difference

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