

# STRESS MANAGEMENT

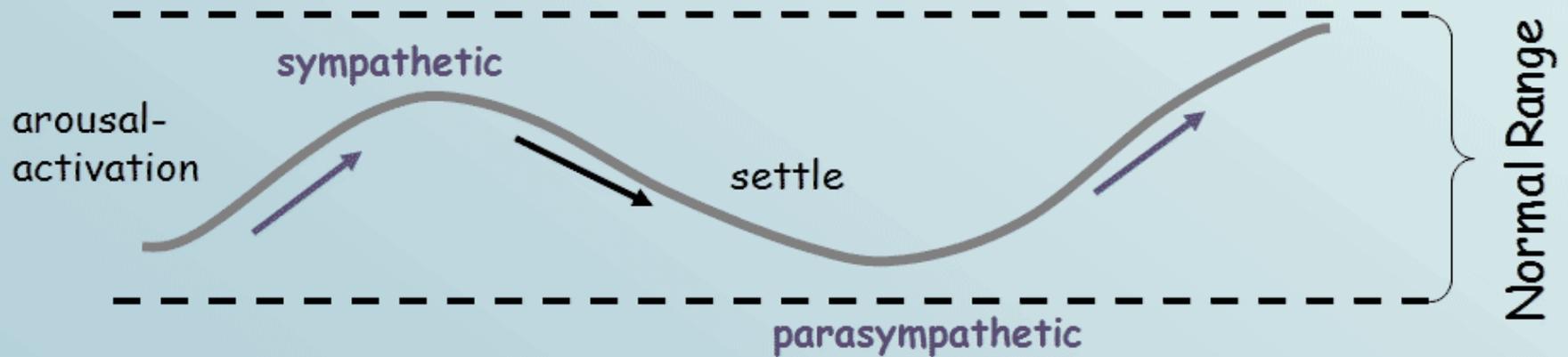
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Understanding and managing your reaction to Stress,  
Self care and Team building.

# The Autonomic Nervous System

- The sympathetic nervous system (SNS) turns on the fight, flight, freeze and connect response.
- In contrast, the parasympathetic nervous system (PNS) promotes the relaxation response.
- Used to regulate body functions like HR, BP, Breathing rate, and metabolism.
- As it states it is unconscious but learns!
- Understanding your physiology is key to managing your stress reactions and choices.

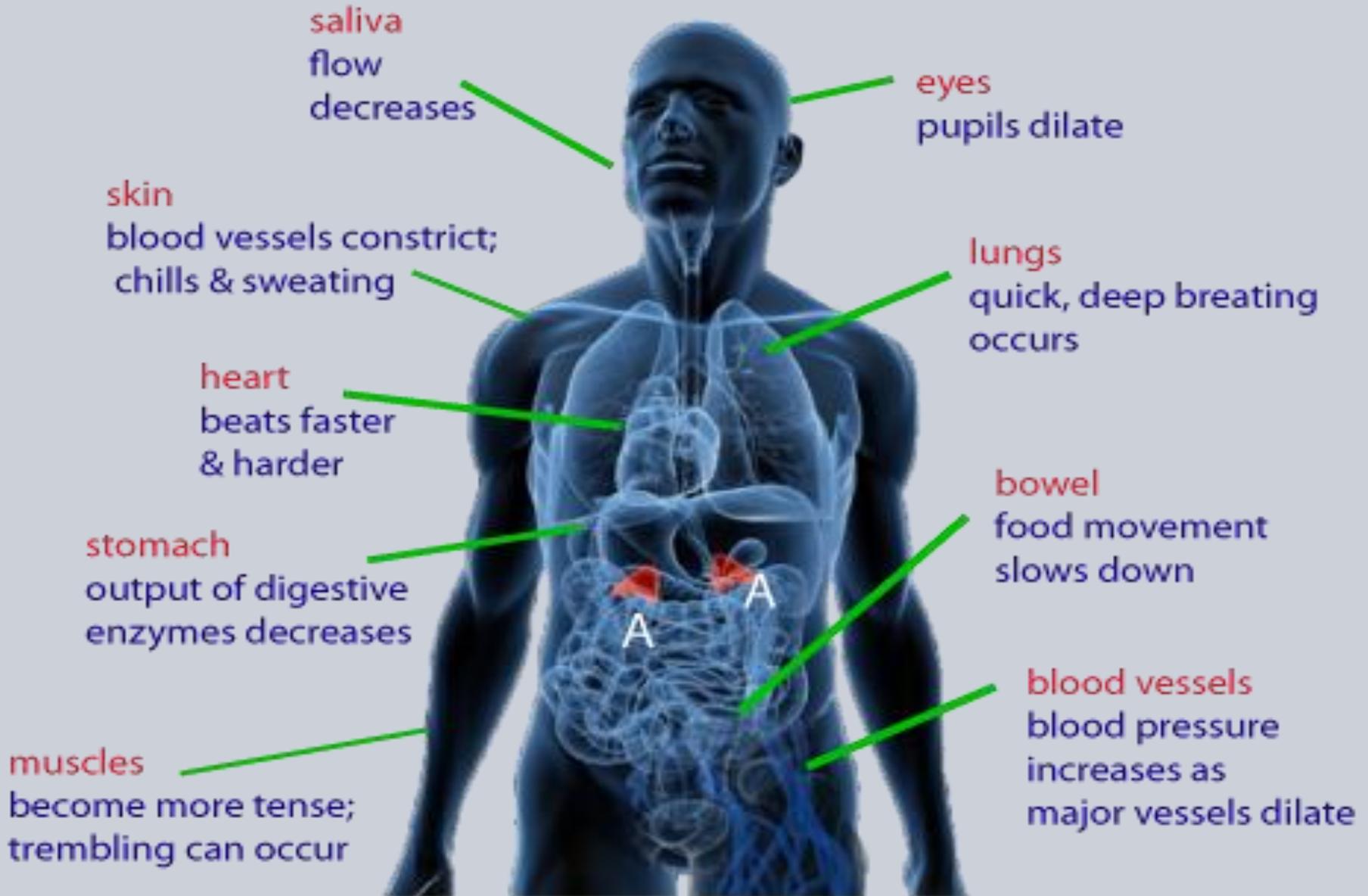
# A Healthy Nervous System



# Stress and the Brain

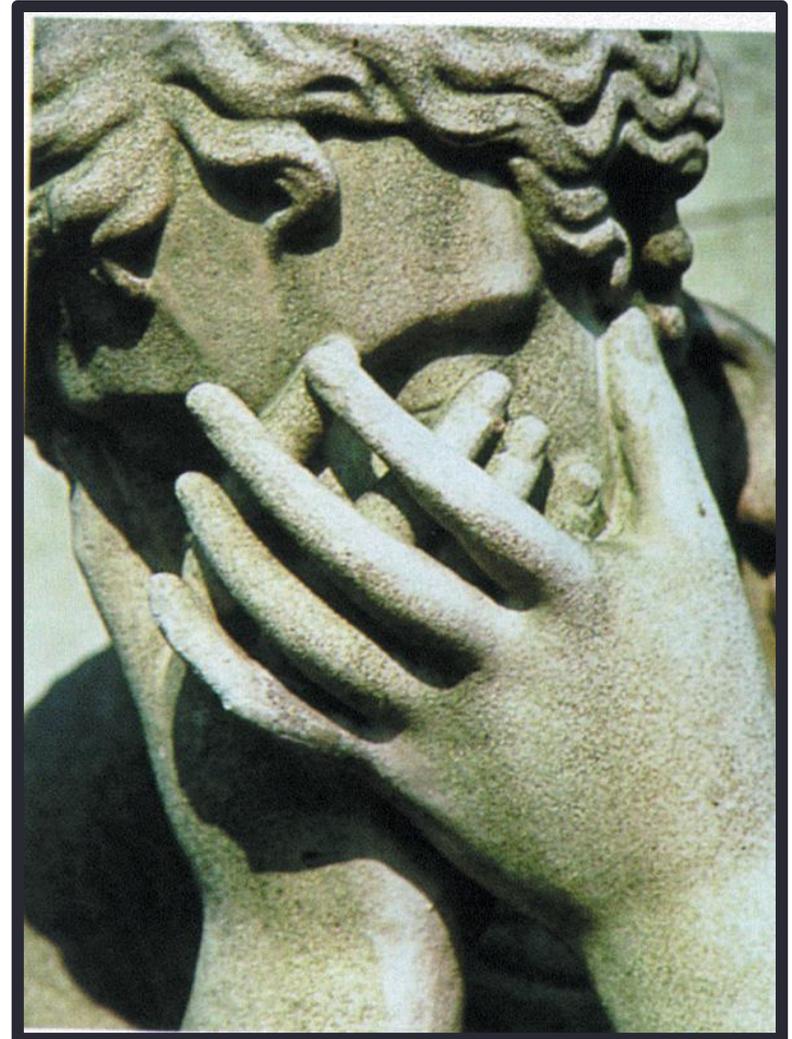
- The term "stress" is short for distress, a word evolved from Latin that means "to draw or pull apart."
- The primary area of the brain that deals with stress is its limbic system and hypopituitary adrenal axis (HPA).
- Because of its enormous influence on emotions and memory, the limbic system is often referred to as the emotional brain or mammalian brain.
- Whenever you perceive a threat, imminent or imagined, your limbic system immediately responds via your autonomic nervous system – the complex network of endocrine glands that automatically regulates metabolism.

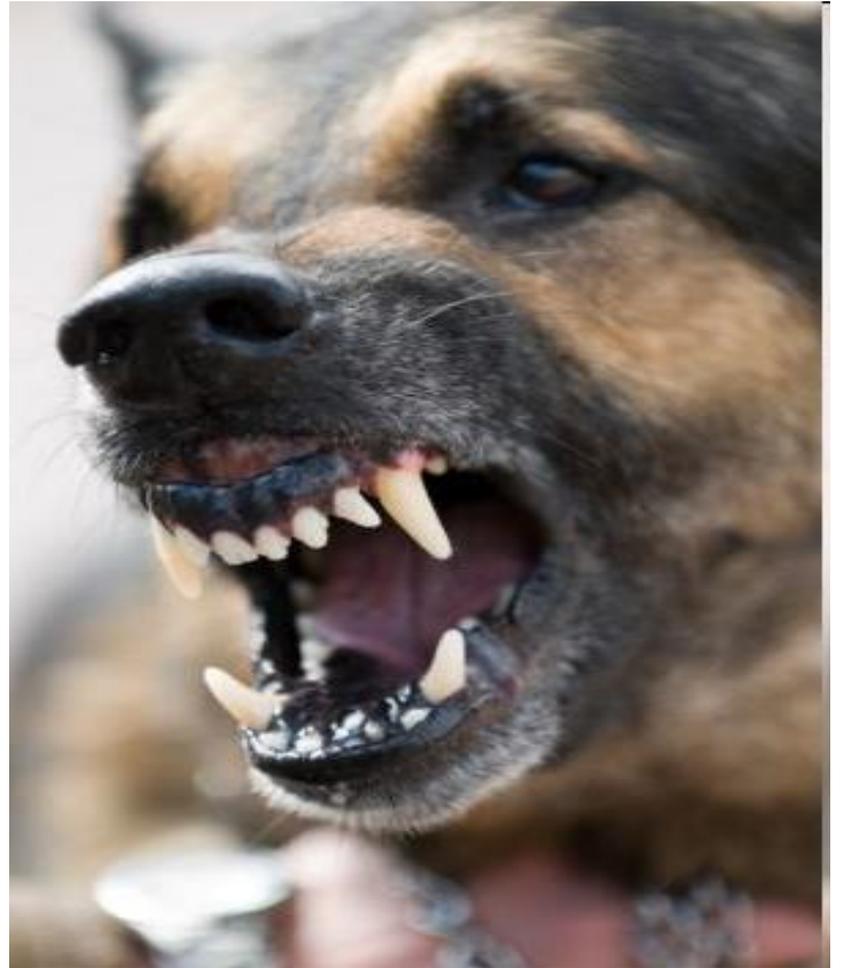
# Fight or flight response



# But there is one more option... FREEZE

- freeze = disassociation
- decreased movement, compliance, avoidance, numbing, and restrictive affect.
- serves to camouflage
- gives time to organize self and figure out response
- survival mechanism just like fight or flight







# Stress and Memory

- Have you ever forgotten something during a stressful situation that you should have remembered?
- Cortisol also interferes with the function of neurotransmitters, the chemicals that brain cells use to communicate with each other.
- Excessive cortisol can make it difficult to think or retrieve long-term memories.
- That's why people get befuddled and confused in a severe crisis. Their mind goes blank because "the lines are down." They can't remember where the fire exit is, for example.

# Why We Lose Our Memory

- Stress hormones divert blood glucose to exercising muscles (fight or flight), therefore the amount of glucose – hence energy – that reaches the brain's hippocampus is diminished.
- This creates an energy crisis in the hippocampus which compromises its ability to create new memories.
- That may be why some people can't remember a very traumatic event, and why short-term memory is usually the first casualty of age-related memory loss resulting from a lifetime of stress.

# Stress and Salmon



# Salmon Death Mystery

- Salmon amaze us with their spectacular leaps up waterfalls, in their single-minded quest to return and lay eggs in the freshwater stream of their birth.
- Then they die.
- But why? In his book, *Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers*, Dr. Robert M. Sapolsky explains.
- "If you catch salmon right after they spawn, just when they are looking a little green around the gills, you find they have huge adrenal glands, peptic ulcers, and kidney lesions; their immune systems have collapsed, and they are teeming with parasites and infections. "

Arrived but still stressed.



- "Is this glucocorticoid excess really responsible for their death?"
- Yep.
- Take a salmon right after spawning, remove its adrenals, and it will live for a year afterward."
- Stress response is responsible for getting them back and also for killing them. Stress won't kill you if you manage it and you need this response system for survival. We need to learn to manage it.

Or Not.



# Reactive vs. Receptive States

- Simple exercise:

# Reactive States

- A simple exercise demonstrating an immediate “felt” experience of the difference between reactive and receptive states.
- When the nervous system is reactive, it is actually in a fight-flight-freeze survival state.
- Brainstem feels a threat “no”, and it takes over.
- Not possible to connect with another person when our focus is on self-defense and/or survival.
- Our state of mind can turn even neutral comments into fighting words, distorting “what we hear” to fit “what we fear.”

# Can you hear me now?



# Receptive States

- A different branch of the brainstem activates.
- The muscles of face and vocal cords relax, blood pressure and heart rate normalize.
- We become more open to experiencing the present moment and connecting to others.
- We experience being safe and seen.
- Your responsibility is to know your state. Ask for time or pause if you are in a reactive state.
- Exercise and Strengthen your basic ability to enter a receptive by being aware.

# Effects of “too much” Stress

- A chronic overreaction to stress overloads the brain with powerful hormones that are **intended only for short-term duty** in emergency situations.
- Their cumulative effect damages and kills brain cells and shuts down other vital systems needed for survival, i.e. immunity, reproduction, and digestion.
- The culprits are "glucocorticoids," a class of steroid hormones.
- Stress today is not usually the bear coming out of the bushes, but all too often our “thoughts and beliefs”. Like the “yes” or “no” states.

# Conflict 101

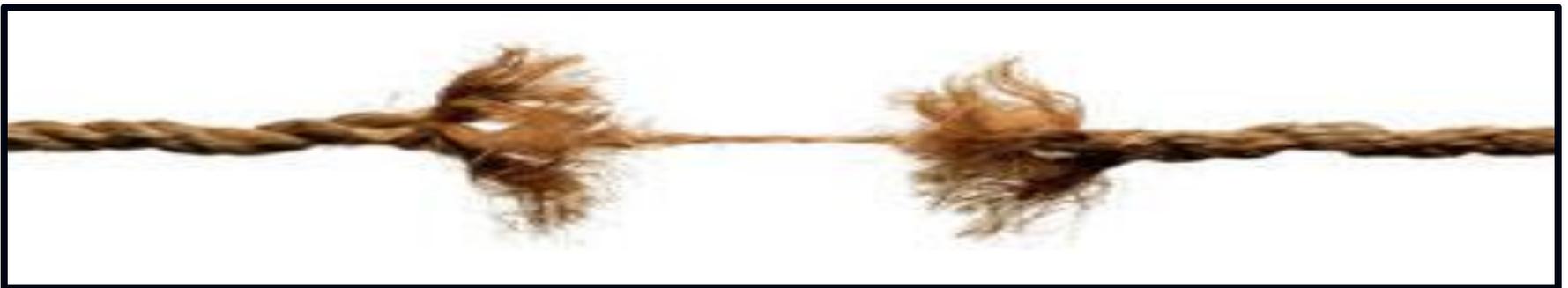
- **A conflict is more than just a disagreement.** It is a situation in which one or both parties perceive a **threat** (whether or not the threat is real).
- **Conflicts continue to fester when ignored.** Because conflicts involve perceived threats to our well-being and survival, they stay with us until we face and resolve them.
- **We respond to conflicts based on our perceptions** of the situation, not necessarily to an objective review of the facts. Our perceptions are influenced by our life experiences, culture, values, and beliefs.
- **Conflicts trigger strong emotions.** If you aren't comfortable with your emotions or able to manage them in times of stress, you won't be able to resolve conflict successfully.

# Conflict in Relationships

- Arise when differences occur.
- Whenever people disagree over their values, motivations, perceptions, ideas, or desires.
- When a conflict triggers strong feelings, a **deep personal need** is at the core of the problem, such as a need to **feel safe** and secure, a need to **feel respected** and valued in our community, or a need for **greater closeness and intimacy**.

# Stress

- Although stress and trauma are related...
  - Stress can be positive
  - Stress can be tolerable
- **It is when stress becomes toxic or overloads a system we see trauma.**



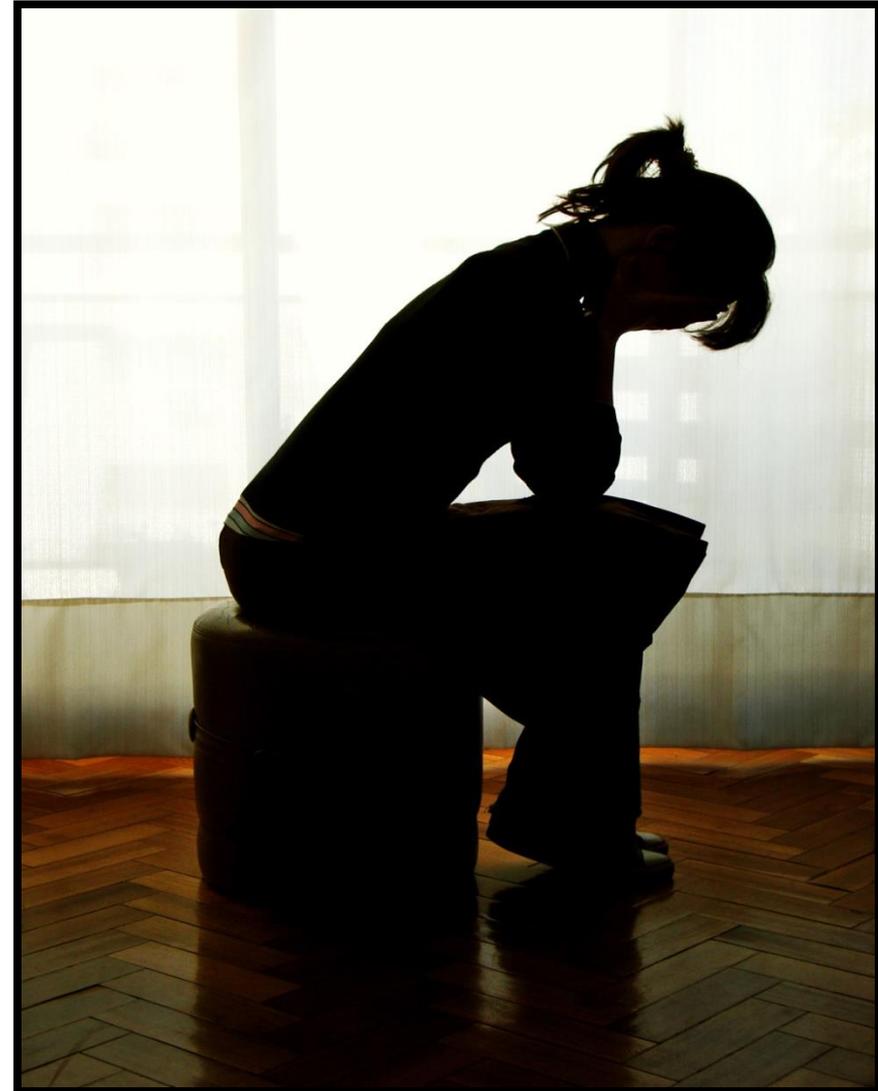
# Defining Trauma

- Experiencing a serious injury to yourself or witnessing a serious injury to or the death of someone else
- Facing imminent threats of serious injury or death to yourself or others
- Experiencing a violation of personal physical integrity

**Resulting in overwhelming feelings of terror, horror, or hopelessness.**

# Types of Potentially Traumatic Experiences

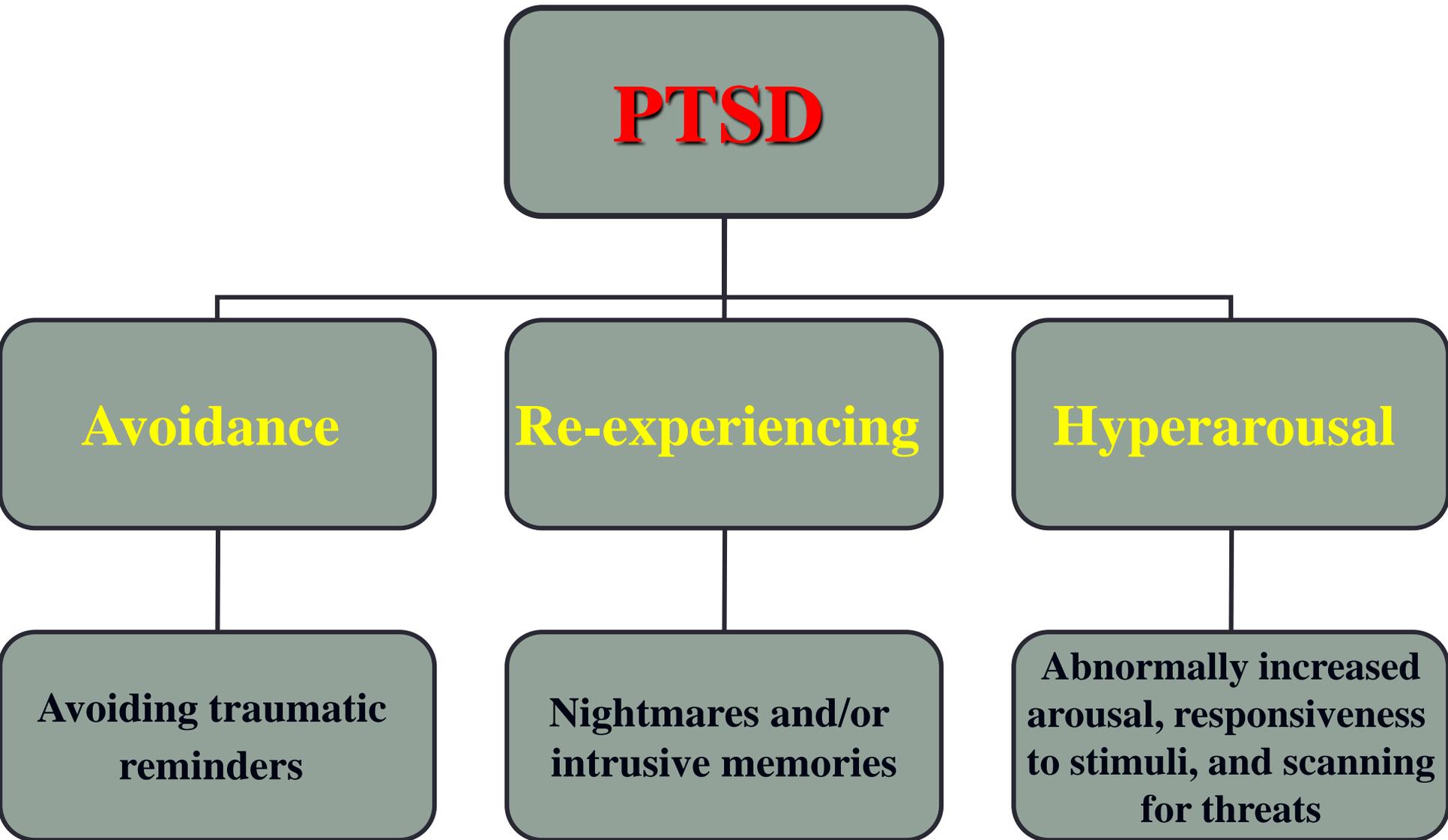
- Abuse and Neglect
- Accidents
- Interpersonal Violence
- Domestic Violence
- Medical Procedures
- Natural Disasters
- War or Terrorism



# Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

- Development of PTSD is associated with:
  - An individual's fundamental loss of ability to act on his or her environment.
  - An existentially threatening experience being "forced" upon a person.
- Survival mode changes how we interpret and respond to our environment.

# Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)



# Flashbacks

- These “Dissociated” memories from trauma get triggered and are experienced the same as if they were happening at the moment. No right brain meaning is associated with them.
- Terrifying
- Unpredictable
- Implicit memory and unconscious

Joe Klein:  
The CIA's  
Afghan Disaster

Yemen: The  
New Center  
Of Terror

Why the Recession  
Hasn't Been Cool  
To Teens

# TIME



## WHY YOUR DNA ISN'T YOUR DESTINY

The new science of epigenetics  
reveals how the choices you  
make can change your genes  
—and those of your kids

BY JOHN CLOUD

# Epigenetic Perspective

- Epi = “upon” or “above”
- Thus, epigenetic mechanisms “act upon or above” the DNA without modifying it and regulate gene expression
- Environment (toxins, stress, etc.) acts on genes<>behavior
  - physiological component
- Genes<>behavior act on environment
  - neuropsychological component

# Epigenetic Perspective Made “Simpler”

- Think of DNA as a massive library of books
- Tons of information “waiting to be read”
- Some books (genes) might not be read for any number of reasons – doesn’t mean they get thrown away
- The librarian (chemical markers) can facilitate or hinder access to books (genes) and how those books (genes) are read (expressed – either “on” or “off”)

# Epigenetics

- In contrast to evolution, manifestations of gene expression or suppression can occur within the lifetime of the organism.
- Heritable without expression in prior generations
- **Future environmental stress can activate “switched on” or “switched off” genes.**
  - **Now (e.g., delayed onset PTSD)**
  - **Later (e.g., offspring anxiety disorder)**

# One Approach: Universal Precautions

- From public health (think HIV/AIDS protocols)
- Assumes all appearing in court are injured in some way
- Seeks to develop environments, practices, and policies that:
  - Limit unnecessary arousal
  - Reflect an understanding of trauma triggers
- **Promote healing**
- Good for all, whether
  - consumer or service provider
  - traumatized or not traumatized



# (1) Safety = ✂ Traumatic Reminders

- When faced with something that reminds them of traumatic events, people may experience intense and disturbing feelings tied to the original trauma.
- These “**trauma reminders**” can lead to behaviors that seem out of place, but were appropriate — ***and perhaps even helpful*** — at the time of the original traumatic event.

You are part of a healing community...

It is hard to create healing environments when staff do not feel safe, are not engaged or do not have a sense of control, and are traumatized themselves.

# What can courts do about it?

- Environmental assessment
  - Consider navigability, signage, availability of information
  - Comfort level, noise, potential trauma triggers
  - Facilities for children and families?
  - Waiting areas- separate for victims and perpetrators?

# What can courts do about it?

- Ensuring physical and emotional safety
  - Procedures for separating victims and perpetrators throughout the court process
  - Privacy- e.g., spaces for clients to consult with social workers, attorneys, etc.
  - Opportunities to speak to the judge in private

# What can courts do about it?

- How are court users treated?
  - Security practices
  - Patience, understanding, listening, RESPECT
  - Opportunities to provide a sense of control, agency, choice
- Are services tailored and relevant?
  - Assess qualifications of service providers and agencies

# What can courts do about it?

- Staff needs/self-care:
  - get enough sleep
  - Food is medicine. Eat real food/healthy food.
  - Spend time with friends
  - exercise/movement is medicine
  - Shared understanding of trauma and its effects
  - Clear policies and procedures in place to support staff affected by vicarious trauma

# What can courts do about it?

- Staff needs
  - Training and continued education
  - Shared understanding of trauma and its effects
  - Recognition of the experience and effects of vicarious trauma
  - Clear policies and procedures in place to support staff affected by vicarious trauma

# Emotional Awareness and Conflict Resolution and the Stress Response

- Conflict and communication breakdowns can trigger strong emotions.
- In turn these strong emotions lead to activation of the stress response.
- If you are out of touch with your feelings or so stressed that you can only pay attention to a limited number of emotions,
- You will have a hard time communicating with others and staying in touch.
- Emotional Awareness is the key to understanding yourself and others. This is called Emotional IQ and is the biggest predictor of success in life.

# Bottom line

- Emotional awareness—consciousness of your *moment-to-moment* emotional experience is critical to a happy, healthy life.
- This ability to manage all of your feelings appropriately is the basis of a communication process that can resolve conflict.
- Brings stress and emotions into balance.
- Stress compromises your ability to communicate.
- When you're stressed out, you're more likely to misread other people, send off confusing or off-putting nonverbal signals, and lapse into unhealthy knee-jerk patterns of behavior.

# Wild Horse of Feelings



- Full of fear
- Unbridled energy
- Unbalanced
- Reactive
- Angry
- Lashing out
- Overwhelmed
- Anxious
- Dangerous
- Deadly

# You have nothing to fear. You are safe!

Instantly create safety with your breath. It's neutral, free and always with you. Naturally creates a "pause" button.

1. 4-7-8 technique:
2. Breath in for a count of 4, hold for 7 and out for a count of 8.
3. Balance breathing – breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth for equal times.
4. Gratitude breathing: hold your hand over your heart and breathe in with the thought of gratitude.



# Connection – Reach Out and Touch Someone

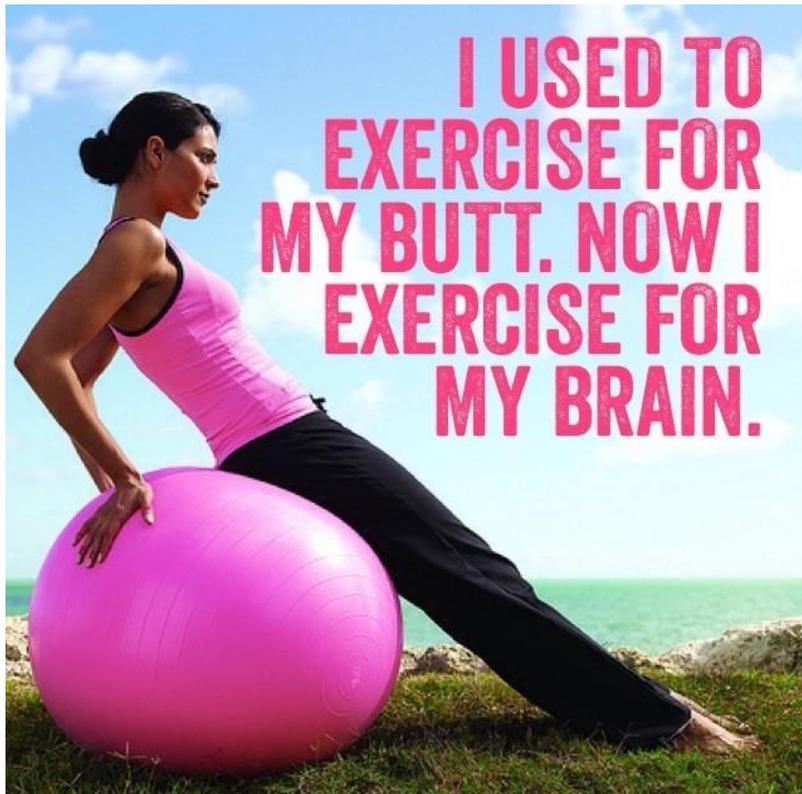
We are hard-wired to connect with each other.

Take the time to reach out when you are stressed.

Active Listening is a skill that needs practice and is harder than it sounds.



# Movement is Medicine and Food is Medicine



# “See one, do one, teach one”



- The only way to accept and tame these feelings is to learn how to ride them.
- Mindfulness, meditation and these other techniques teaches you how to harness all your emotions—even the uncomfortable or “wild horse” ones you may have tried to avoid.
- With practice, you will learn how to take back the reins of your emotional life!
- So now lets move on to another tool to understand how we “see” and experience the world.

Thank you

Questions?