

# Becoming a Trauma-Informed School

*January 9, 2023*

*Training series session #1:*

**The Fundamentals of Trauma**

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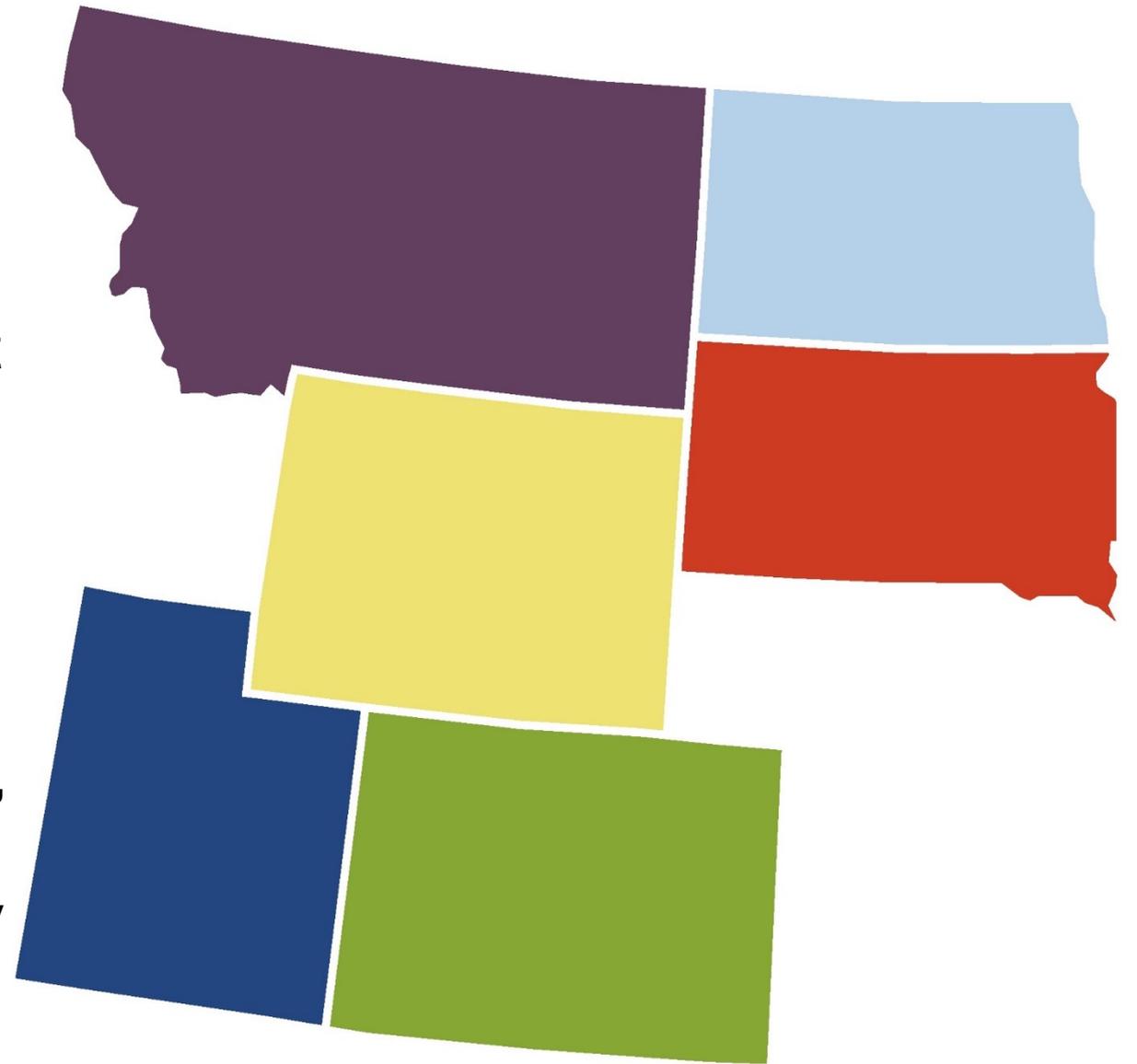
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# The Mountain Plains Mental Health Technology Transfer Center

The Mountain Plains Mental Health Technology Transfer Center (Mountain Plains MHTTC) provides training and technical assistance to individuals who serve persons with mental health concerns throughout Region 8 (Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming).

We belong to the Technology Transfer Center (TTC) Network, a national network of training and technical assistance centers serving the needs of mental health, substance use and prevention providers. The work of the TTC Network is under a cooperative agreement by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration (SAMHSA).



# Land Acknowledgement Statement

Today, the University of North Dakota rests on the ancestral lands of the Pembina and Red Lake Bands of Ojibwe and the Dakota Oyate - presently existing as composite parts of the Red Lake, Turtle Mountain, White Earth Bands, and the Dakota Tribes of Minnesota and North Dakota. We acknowledge the people who resided here for generations and recognize that the spirit of the Ojibwe and Oyate people permeates this land. As a university community, we will continue to build upon our relations with the First Nations of the State of North Dakota - the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nation, Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate Nation, Spirit Lake Nation, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, and Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians.



**The MHTTC Network uses affirming, respectful and recovery-oriented language in all activities. That language is:**

**STRENGTHS-BASED  
AND HOPEFUL**

**INCLUSIVE AND  
ACCEPTING OF  
DIVERSE CULTURES,  
GENDERS,  
PERSPECTIVES,  
AND EXPERIENCES**

**HEALING-CENTERED AND  
TRAUMA-RESPONSIVE**

**INVITING TO INDIVIDUALS  
PARTICIPATING IN THEIR  
OWN JOURNEYS**

**PERSON-FIRST AND  
FREE OF LABELS**

**NON-JUDGMENTAL AND  
AVOIDING ASSUMPTIONS**

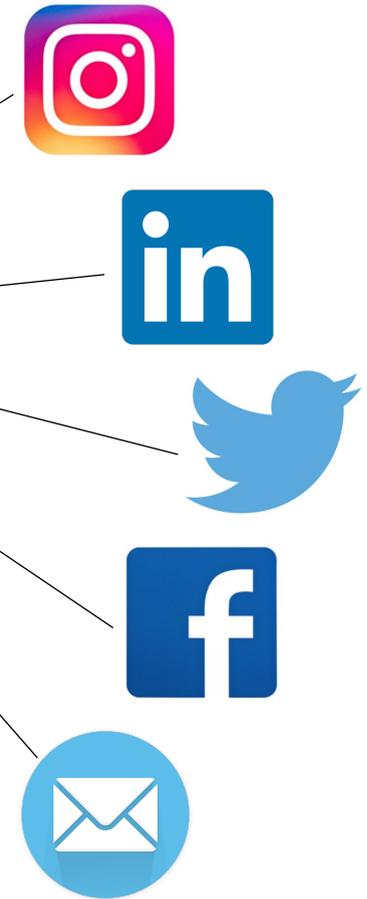
**RESPECTFUL, CLEAR  
AND UNDERSTANDABLE**

**CONSISTENT WITH  
OUR ACTIONS,  
POLICIES, AND PRODUCTS**

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# Welcome!

*Why this training is important to me:*

- Over 15 years of practicing in school-based health centers in Early Childhood Education, K-12 and at College level & currently own private practice for Trauma Resolution in Wheat Ridge, Colorado
- I have observed and supported the impact of acute and/or chronic stress over the life-span
- I believe in racially and socially equitable environments and acknowledge the systemic and institutionalized disparities that contribute to experiences of trauma
- I believe that the wellness of our caretakers is foundational to the quality of our care to others.
- It's take a community and a positive relationship with time and longitudinal impact in order to pace ourselves in our work.

# You made it another week!!!



# Training Details

*Mondays 1:00-2:30 PM MST: Jan 9, 2023, Jan 23, Jan 30, Feb 6, Feb 13, Feb 20*

1. Learn what Trauma is, what it looks like, and how to respond in a supportive way
2. Learning the key components of what it means to be “Trauma-Informed” within a host environment focused on academics
3. Identify logistical and operational elements of implementation of a trauma-informed approach to supporting public education
4. Developing relevant metrics for measuring progress and success in School-Based Trauma-Informed practices.

# What is Trauma?

*Please share what you already understand about what trauma is*

# Expanding the Definition of Trauma:

- Too much too fast, too little too late – and of course, both at once or in sequence
- Trauma is getting through something without the experience being integrated with body (somatic experiences), brain (cognitions), and heart (affect/feelings)
- Trauma is ***RELATIVE*** to each person based on existing capacities, capacity to regulate and integrate following the trauma, and supportive relationships (co-regulation).
- It's not about WHAT happened it's about the IMPACT of what happened; It's not the story it is how the story is experienced

# Categories of Trauma:

- Acute trauma results from a single incident.
- Chronic trauma is repeated and prolonged such as domestic violence or physical, emotional, or sexual abuse.
- Complex trauma is exposure to varied and multiple traumatic events, often of an invasive, interpersonal nature impacting typical maturation/development
- Historical trauma is **multigenerational trauma experienced by a specific cultural, racial or ethnic group**. It is related to major events that oppressed a particular group of people because of their status as oppressed, such as slavery, the Holocaust, forced migration, and the violent colonization of Native Americans.



# Impacts of Trauma

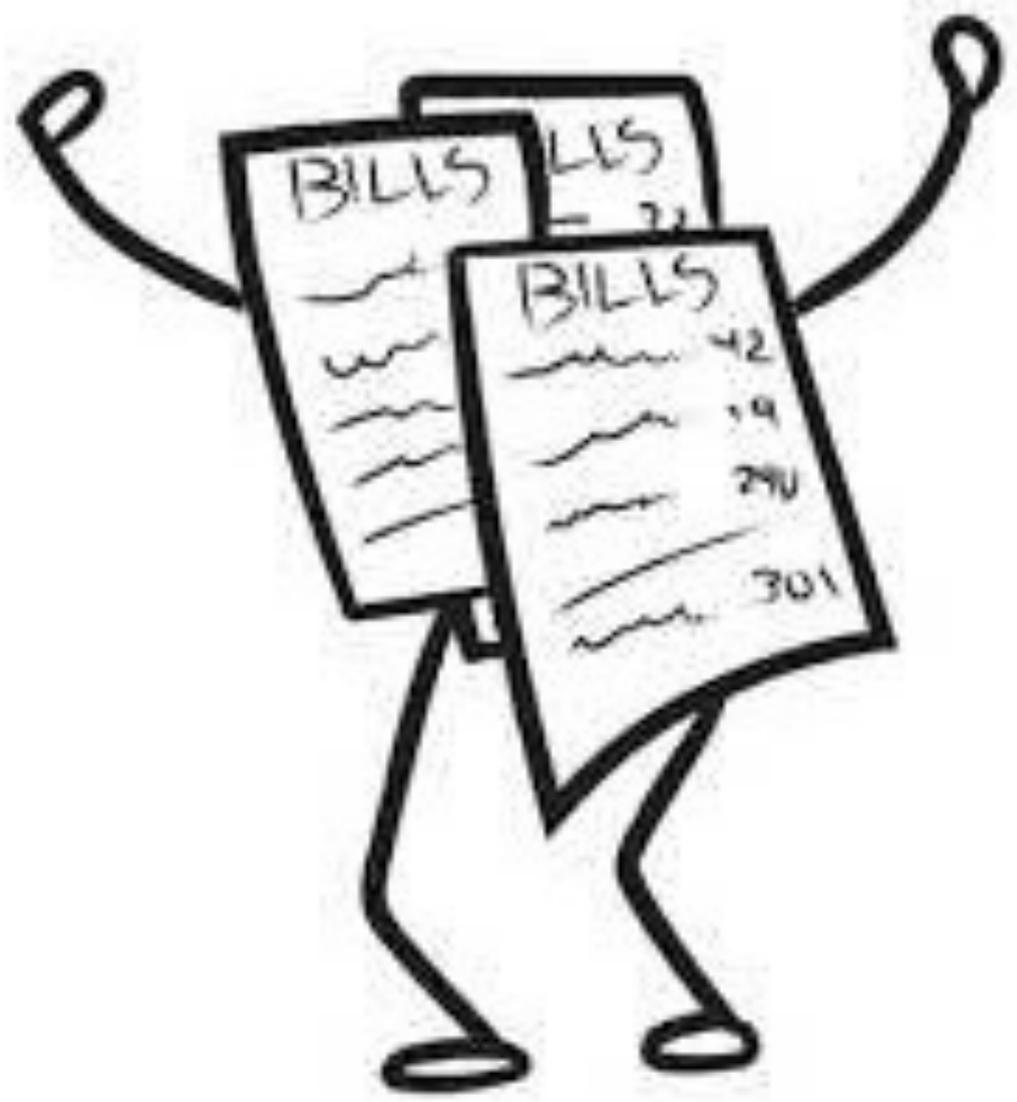
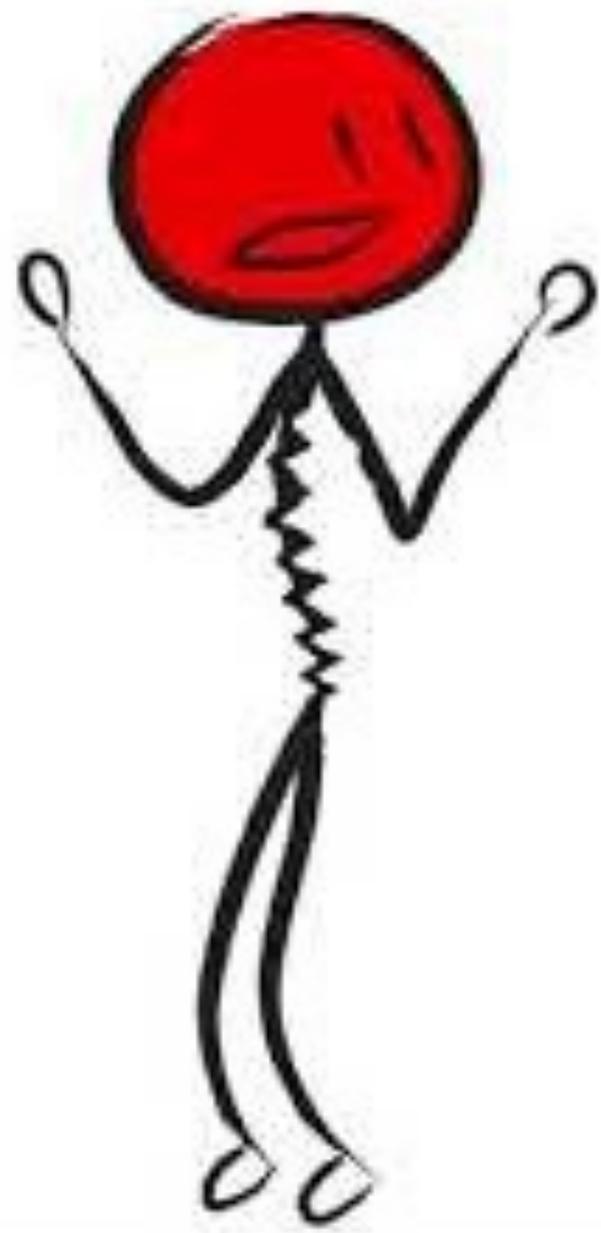
Early Adversity has Lasting Impacts



# What is the Stress Response?

- When you feel super stressed, whether you face a real threat or perceived threat, your body experiences a collection of changes known as your stress response, or your **FIGHT-FLIGHT-FREEZE-FAWN** response.
- Your stress response is the collection of physiological changes that occur when you face a perceived threat that requires more than you have available to successfully cope.
- These situations are known as stressors or triggers.





# Autonomic Nervous System

- AUTOMATIC, or without conscious effort
- Physiologically programmed into our DNA
- Includes Sympathetic Response (Threat) and Parasympathetic Response (Rest and Recoup)



## SYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM

### Stress Response

*Revs you up, preparing you to fight, take flight or freeze*

- Heart beats fast
- Breath is fast and shallow
- Pupils of eyes expand (can make you sensitive to light)
- Gut becomes inactive (difficult to digest)
- Blood rushes to your skeletal muscles and away from your brain, making it hard to think clearly
- Hormones rush through your body, making you feel anxious
- Expend your energy



## PARASYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM

### Relaxation Response

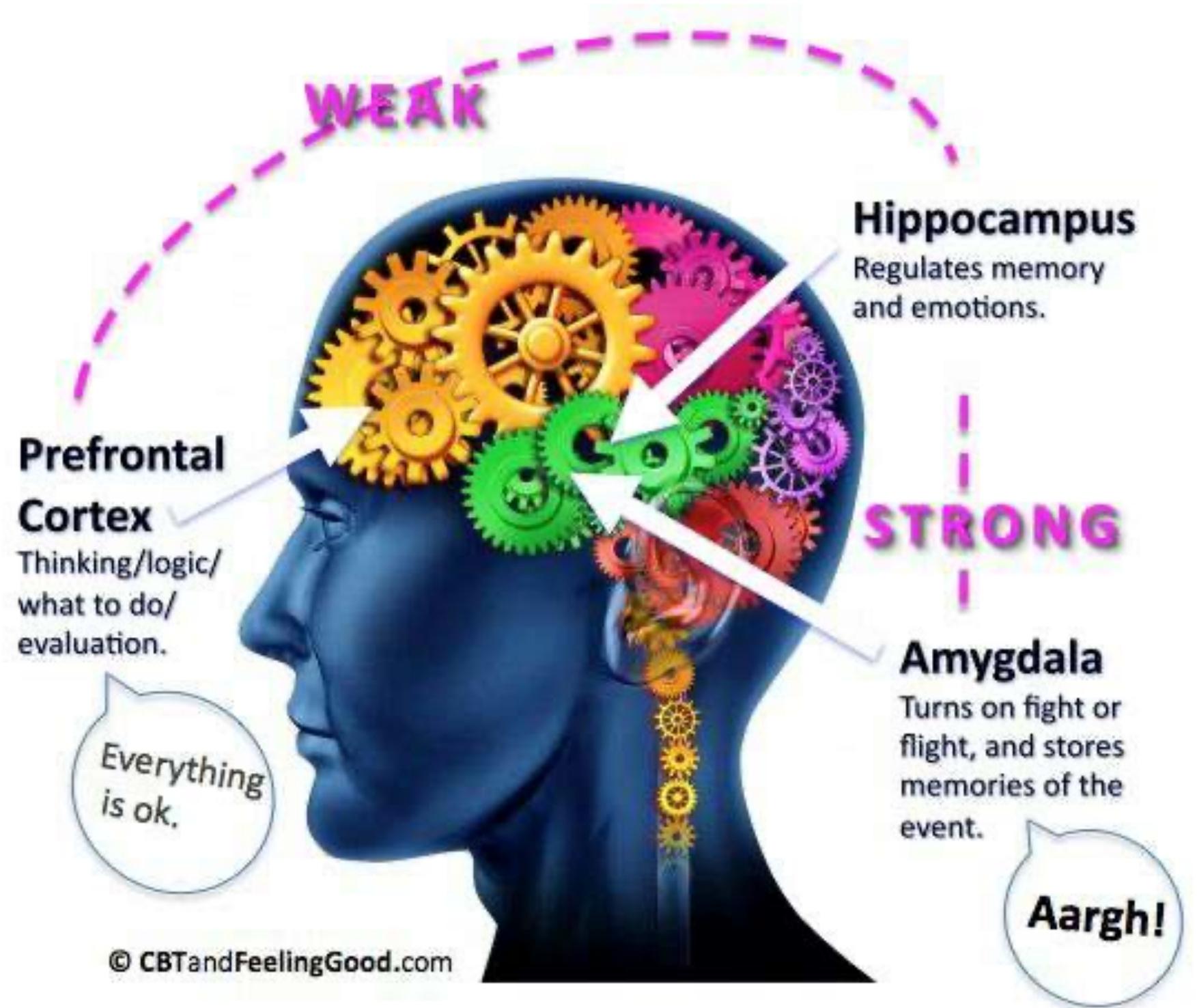
*Calms you down, preparing you to rest, think and restore*

- Heart beats in slow, rhythmic pattern
- Breath is full and slow
- Pupils of eyes shrink
- Gut is active (helps you digest and absorb the nutrients from your food)
- Increased blood flow to gut, lungs and brain
- Hormones rush in, lifting your mood and helping you to relax
- Conserves your energy

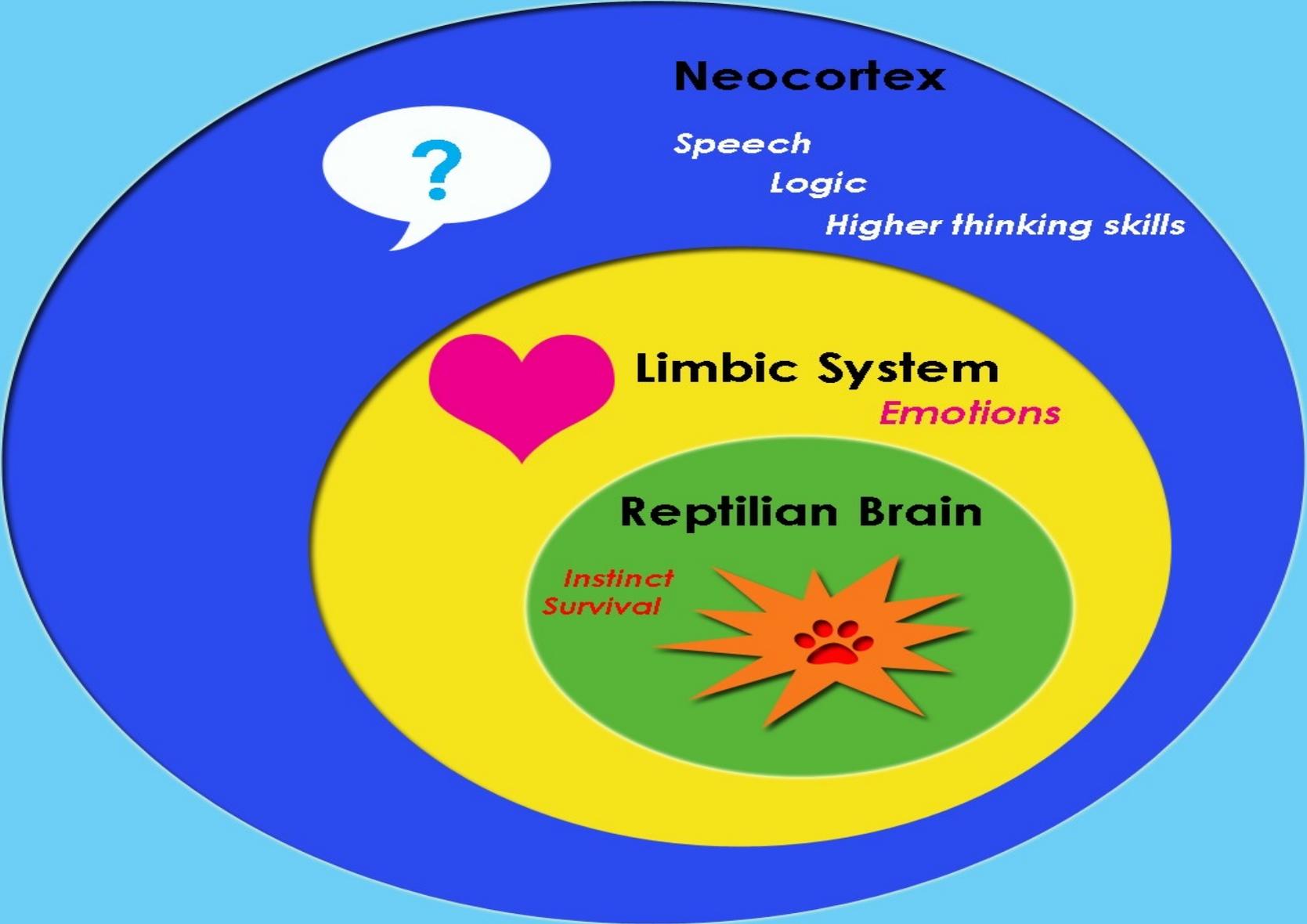


# The Lizard brain “takes over” and the Wizard Brain goes “offline”

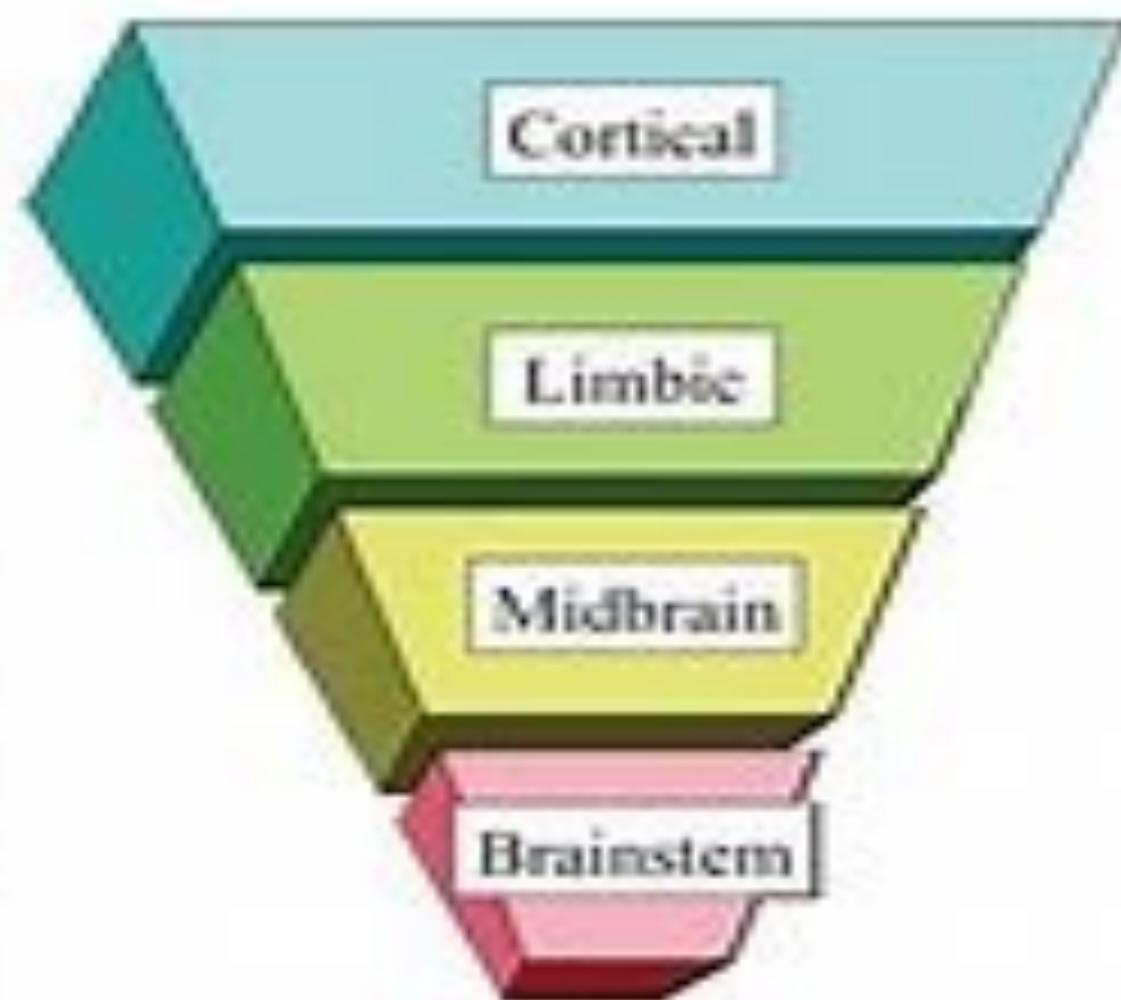
- *We cannot turn the stress response off, however,*
- *We can train our brains to **handle** our stress response better.*
- **Memory:** what we remember most is that which is repetitive and connected to strong emotions



# The Triune Brain Model



## Bruce Perry's Hierarchy of Brain Function



Abstract thought  
Concrete Thought  
Affiliation  
"Attachment"  
Sexual Behavior  
Emotional Reactivity  
Motor Regulation  
"Arousal"  
Appetite/Satiety  
Sleep  
Blood Pressure  
Heart Rate  
Body Temperature

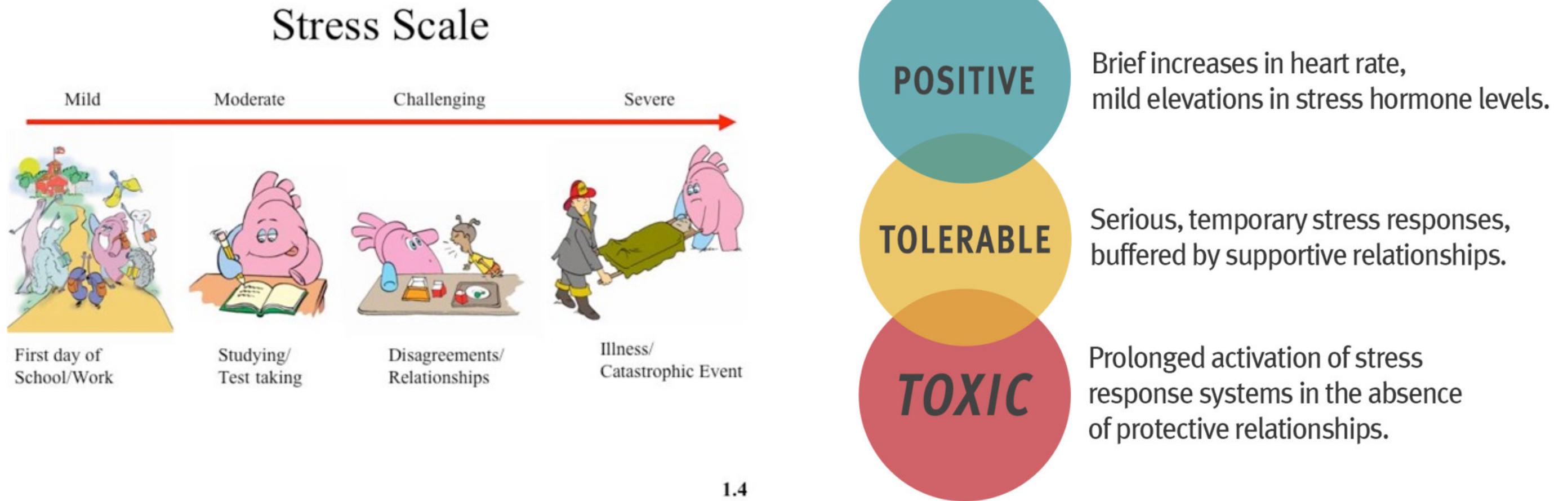
# Let's test our nervous systems....

- Notice ANY physiological changes, or body sensations as you watch this short video (this is different than noticing affect or emotion)
- *Important Disclaimer: If your nervous system currently feels fragile, you are already maxed out, or feeling on-edge – skip the video.*



# Sorry about that!

..... Think of it this way:



It's important to not tell our brains we are **OVERWHELMED** *if* we are "just" stressed out

# HYPERAROUSAL

Use mindfulness,  
grounding, Breath work

Overreactive, unclear thought,  
Emotionally distressed

Can't calm down

# WINDOW OF TOLERANCE

The body is in its optimal state, Can access both  
reason and emotion, Mentally engaged

Shutting Down

Depressed, lethargic,  
numb, unmotivated

Use mindfulness, breath work,  
physical activity

# HYPOAROUSAL

# Impact of Stress Response Over Time

- Chronic or excessive stress response triggering is toxic to our bodies AND brain – *Disease, Chronic Illness*
- Can lead to “stuck” states of arousal if stress remains unregulated in our system

# Hyper-arousal

- Exaggerated startle reaction
- Outbursts of anger
- Extreme vigilance
- Irritability
- Feelings of panic and anxiety
- Insomnia
- Reduced tolerance for pain
- Fatigue



- Difficulty concentrating
- Constantly being “on guard”
- Headaches
- Gastrointestinal complaints
- Immune system problems
- Dizziness
- Chest pain
- Or other physical discomforts

# Hypo-arousal

- Helplessness
- Inability to set boundaries
- Tired
- Automatic obedience
- Appear life-less
- Non-expressive
- Numb



- Lack of motivation
- Lethargic
- Dulled capacity to feel significant events
- Emotional constriction
- Isolation

# Regulated

- Able to think logically
- Able to think clearly
- Able to make conscious choices
- Able to make eye contact
- Display a wide-range of emotional expression
- Feel “grounded”



- Able to notice breathe
- Sleep cycles are stable
- Calm, poised
- Internal awareness of both mind and body
- “in the body”
- Able to communicate verbally in a clear manner

Let's notice our nervous systems  
again .....

*slowly & gently*















# *What This Means for you as a school practitioner?*

You will now notice these arousal states in your students, family members, friends and yourself!

## What FLIGHT, FIGHT, or FREEZE Looks Like in the Classroom:

FIGHT	FLIGHT	FREEZE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Acting out</li><li>• Behaving aggressively</li><li>• Acting silly</li><li>• Exhibiting defiance</li><li>• Being hyperactive</li><li>• Arguing</li><li>• Screaming/Yelling</li><li>• <i>LOOK FOR CLENCHED FISTS</i></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Withdrawing</li><li>• Fleeing the classroom</li><li>• Skipping class</li><li>• Daydreaming</li><li>• Seeming to sleep</li><li>• Avoiding Others</li><li>• Hiding or wandering</li><li>• Becoming Disengage</li><li>• <i>LOOK FOR WIGGLY FEET THAT WANT TO RUN</i></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Exhibiting numbness</li><li>• Refusing to answer</li><li>• Refusing to get needs met</li><li>• Giving a blank look</li><li>• Feeling unable to move or act</li><li>• <i>LOOK FOR A "FROZEN LOOK" OR COMPLETE IMMOBILITY</i></li></ul>

# Responding to Trauma

- The Goal: *is to widen our windows of tolerance NOT to eliminate stress or trauma (let's not advocate the unachievable 😊).*

Responding positively and learning to manage our stress response, means:

Learning our triggers and addressing them; Avoiding them, mitigating them, befriending them as needed.

# How do we widen our windows of tolerance?

Widening our windows of tolerance by consciously tracking ourselves under stress and responding to our self-care and body needs.  
Reminding ourselves that we “got this!” and literally telling our brains we can handle it even though it is uncomfortable

*“All symptoms of dys-regulation arise out of misperceptions of the events in our lives. When we change our perceptions, we change the symptoms in our nervous system. It is wise to master the art of how to change our perceptions and how to manage the symptoms that arise in our bodies to help return us to a more regulated state.”*

Lisa Dion, LPC, RPT-S

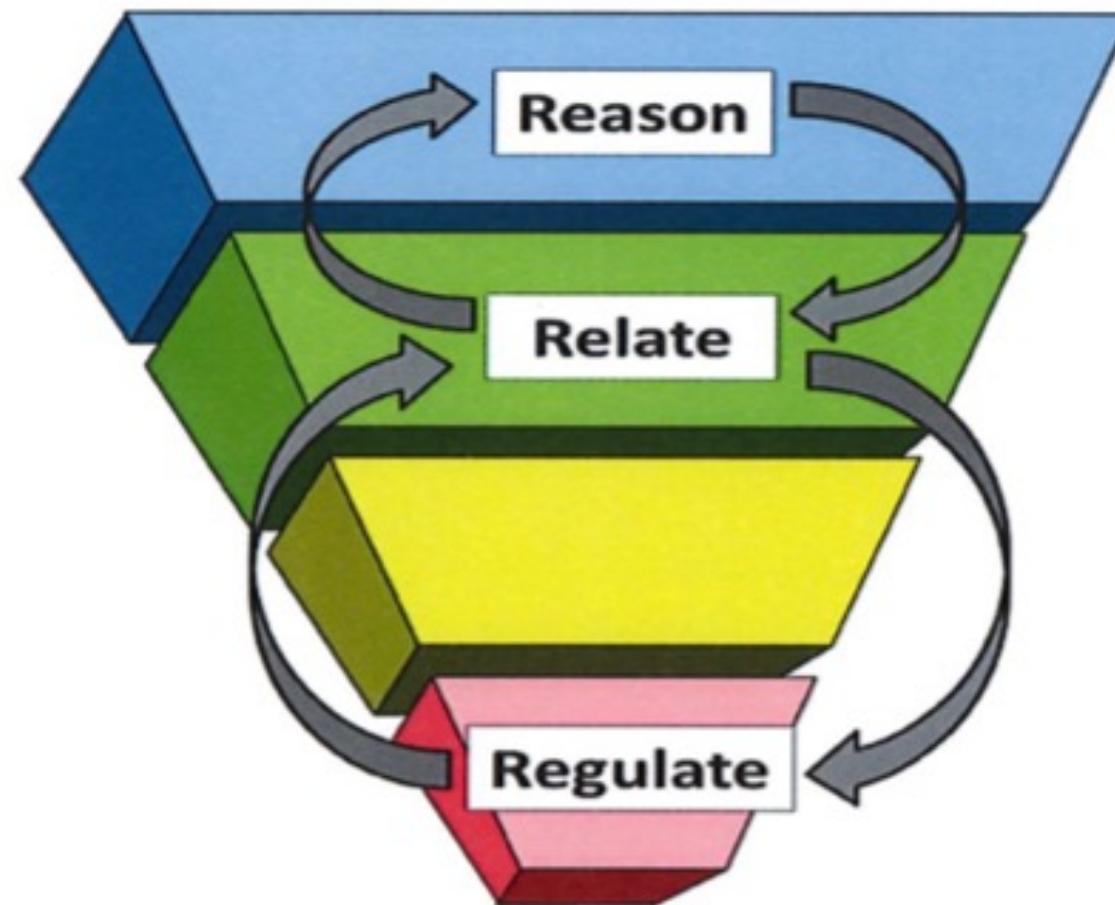
# Being a Trauma-Informed School Means:

There is **RECOGNITION** and **ACCEPTANCE** that trauma and the frequent prevalence of ACES (adverse childhood experiences) exist and have direct impact on the adult experience and student's capacity to learn and families' capacities to support their children.

The school embodies a focus on **UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF TRAUMA and SAFETY**. Trauma is relative to each person and that through strengths-based relationship building and an intentional focus on **FEELING SAFE**, students' abilities to learn, increases.

A Trauma-Informed school **RESPONDS** to trauma in a *strategic* manner, based on scientific understandings, that support trauma resolution rather than sensationalizing trauma or minimizing trauma to create the *behavioral outcomes* that ADULTS want to see.

**State Dependence:** The developing brain organizes in response to the pattern, intensity, and nature of sensory and affective experiences of events during childhood. One of the most essential elements of understanding traumatized children is that all humans process, store, retrieve, and respond to the world in a state dependent fashion. When a child is in a persistent state of fear, the primary areas of the brain processing information are markedly different than those from a child reared in a safe environment.



**Sequence of Engagement:** The order in which we engage a child, relative to state dependence and which are of the brain is dominant in the processing of information. This is related to the predictably escalating and de-escalating behavior as related to the arousal continuum. Critically important to this process is a staff member's ability to stay attuned to the child's state and to shift our interventional approach to match. Be mindful that this is not a linear process, but a circular rhythm requiring staff members to shift in approach dependent on the child's presentation.

Challenge

Relationships

Success

Engagement

Safety

# Co-Regulation

- Using the state of one's own regulation to modulate the heightened state of arousal of another person.
- To do this effectively, we need to be keenly self-aware of our own state of arousal and how our presence is communicating calm, support and safety via our verbal and non-verbal presentation.

# Co-Regulation Relies Upon Our Capacity to Self-Regulate

- **Step One:**
  - Practice OVER TIME tracking your body sensations to become familiar with how you react
- **Step Two:**
  - Acknowledge your arousal state by checking in with your body.
  - How is your breathing?
  - Does any part of your body call your attention?
  - What sensations do you feel?
- **Step Three:** Make a choice
  - **INTENTIONALLY** engage in a chosen movement or sensory experience. That is once you choose something to do; Continue to pay attention to your body and its sensations.

# *Start with Focusing On You!*

- Getting acquainted with your own nervous systems is where we start
- Prepare: Some of us may find that becoming aware of our nervous systems can create OVERWHELM as perhaps we have a lot of unresolved trauma experiences of own “stuck” in our bodies. To help manage this:
  - Interrupt thoughts about the value of your body’s sensations – they are just sensations and they will shift with time. They do not carry meaning unless you assigned it. Ex. Your head hurting does not mean you are dying, the discomfort in your gut does not mean you should quit your job. Work to simply notice the sensation without assigning a value to that sensation.
  - Utilize your coping skills for alleviating new discomfort: Take a break, take a walk, listen to music, get a hug. You are capable of responding to your body needs.
  - Slow down, Take a PAUSE if overwhelmed and its okay for now to distract from discomfort until the flooding passes. Tap in- Tap out as many times as you need.

# Common Self-Regulation Activities

- **Walk** – paying attention to your feet meeting the ground and the movement of your body.
- **Breathing** – belly breathing that is regulated by a 4 count intake, 4 count hold, and 4 count release.
- **Drinking water** – staying aware of the coolness on your tongue, the feeling of it going down your throat.
- **Listening to music** - and paying attention to how the sounds affect your body.

# Let's "Take Five":

- Our Five Senses:
  - ❖ Touch
  - ❖ Smell
  - ❖ Hearing
  - ❖ Taste
  - ❖ Sight
- A grounding exercise to help with orientation and come into a state of mindfulness

# Modeling A Guided Meditation:

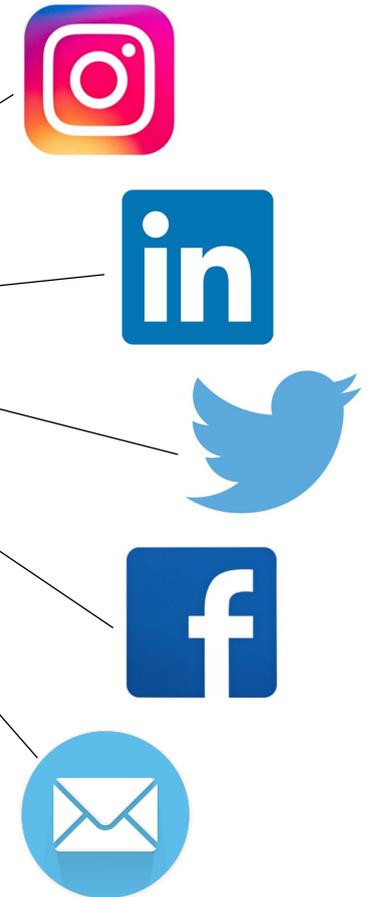
- Creating Your Safe Place 

*Thank you!*

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# Becoming a Trauma-Informed School

## The Fundamentals of Trauma

**THANK YOU!**



Mountain Plains (HHS Region 8)

**MHTTC**

Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network  
Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration