

# How to Effectively Address Compassion Fatigue by Building Resiliency

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McMaster University, Canada

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Mountain Plains (HHS Region 8)

**MHTTC**

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

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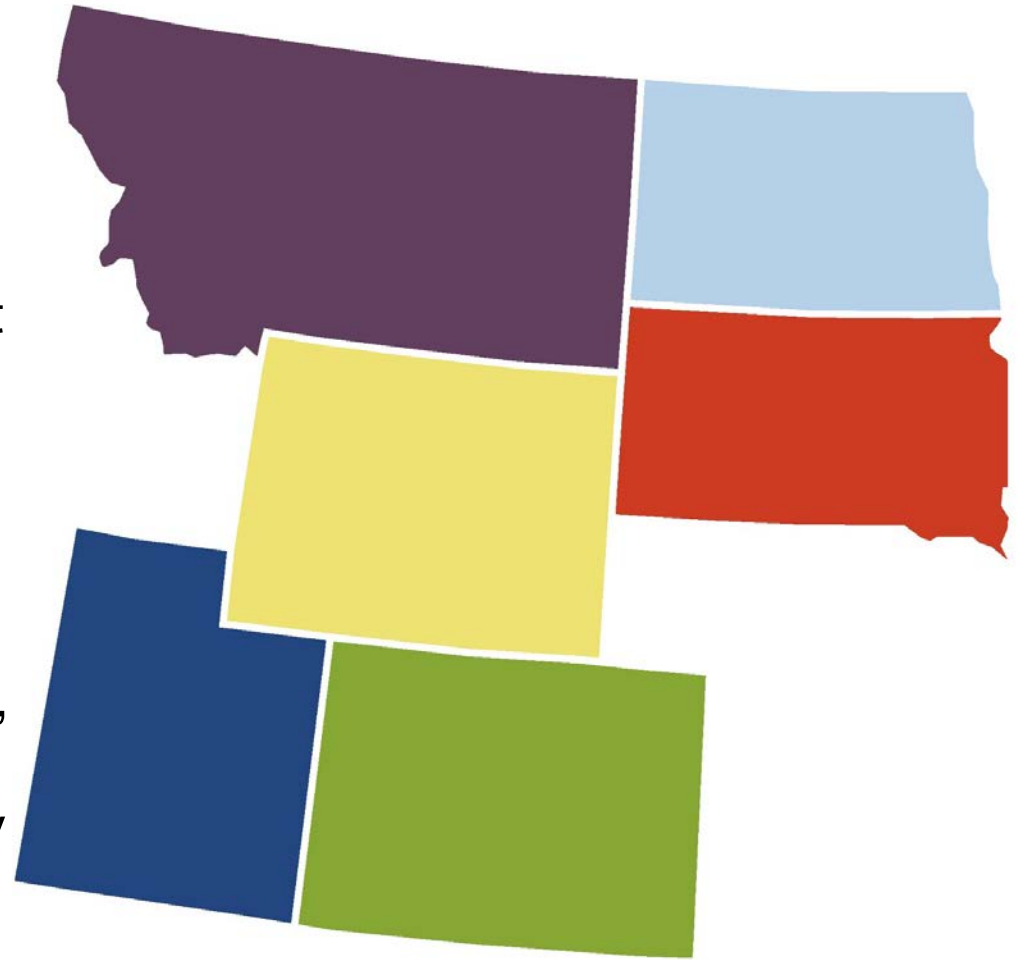
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# The Mountain Plains Mental Health Technology Transfer Center (MHTTC)

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).



**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**



# Compassion Fatigue



Christina Ruggiero, MCP, CCC, RP



- **Compassion** – Compassion starts with empathy (“share” the feelings of others) then turns outward, with an intent to help them. With compassion, helpers make the conscious choice to turn emotion (empathy) into action. - *Wikipedia*
- **Compassion Satisfaction** - The pleasure you derive from being able to do your helping work well. You may feel positively about your ability to contribute to the work setting, home caretaker setting, or even the greater good of society. – *ProQOL scale*



## COMPASSION FATIGUE

A condition characterized by emotional and physical exhaustion leading to a diminished ability to empathize or feel compassion for others, often described as the negative cost of caring.

Compassion fatigue is considered to be the result of working directly with victims of disasters, trauma, or illness, especially in the health care industry.



## BURNOUT

A state of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress. It occurs when you feel overwhelmed, emotionally drained, and unable to meet constant demands.

**Both consist of compromised physical and emotional health!**

- **Compassion fatigue could have a more rapid onset, and comes from bearing witness to others struggles, trauma, or illness; while burnout often emerges over time and can be from any stressors in the environment. - *Françoise Mathieu***



What work do you do that you feel is a cause of your compassion fatigue?

Let us know in the chat!

# Professional Quality of Life Scale (ProQOL)

- When you [*help*] people you have direct contact with their lives. As you may have found, your compassion for those you [*help*] can affect you in positive and negative ways.
- Next are some questions about your experiences, both positive and negative, as a [*helper*].
- Select the number that honestly reflects how frequently you experienced these things in the *last 30 days*.
- Compassion Satisfaction
- Burnout
- Secondary Traumatic Stress

1=Never 2=Rarely 3=Sometimes 4=Often 5=Very Often

- 1. I get satisfaction from being able to *[help]* people.
- 2. I feel invigorated after working with those I *[help]*.
- 3. I like my work as a *[helper]*.
- 4. I am pleased with how I am able to keep up with *[helping]* techniques and protocols.
- 5. My *[helping]* work makes me feel satisfied.
- 6. I have happy thoughts and feelings about those I *[help]* and how I could help them.
- 7. I believe I can make a difference through my work.
- 8. I am proud of what I can do to *[help]*.
- 9. I have thoughts that I am a "success" as a *[helper]*.
- 10. I am happy that I chose to do this work.

To find your score on **Compassion Satisfaction**, add your scores

<b>The sum of my Compassion Satisfaction questions was</b>	<b>My Level of Compassion Satisfaction</b>
22 or less	Low
Between 23 and 41	Average
42 or more	High

Higher scores on this scale represent a greater satisfaction related to your ability to be an effective caregiver in your job. Lower scores mean you are at risk for, or already experiencing compassion fatigue.

# 4 stages of compassion fatigue

- Tracy Zaparanick, MSSW



## Zealot

- Enthusiastic, excited, committed to making a difference.
- Go the extra mile, volunteer to pitch in without being asked.
- Sign up for everything, take on a lot.



## Irritability

- Start avoiding contact with those your helping.
- May cut corners and occasionally lose concentration and focus.
- Start to become crabby.
- Start pulling back from others.
- Realize you cant fix everything, and notice what is lacking resource wise.
- Start to feel the weight of being the only one that is stressing about the person that needs help.



## Withdrawal

- Enthusiasm for your work falls.
- Exhaustion is more frequent and severe.
- More irritated by those you help.
- Others notice your enthusiasm is gone and you are much more withdrawn.
- May notice your detachment from others is unhealthy.
- May stop reaching out for help.
- Endless list of things to do, thinking you're not doing enough.





## Zombie

- Go on auto-pilot
- Hopelessness or even outright anger in yourself.
- May start to ask yourself, “how did this happen to me – how did I get so disconnected?”.
- May be experiencing periods of sleeplessness, hypervigilance, worry, anxiety
- Overwhelmed with that feeling that something is not right.



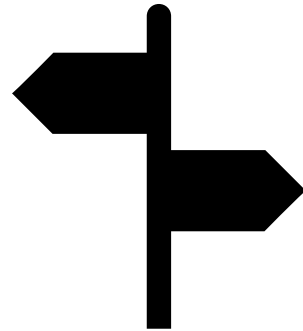
Have you experienced compassion fatigue before? ProQOL results?

If so, how were you thinking, feeling, and behaving? What are your warning signs?

# Reflection



# Potential Signs



Write in the chat your warning signs!

- Trouble sleeping
- Decreased ability to empathize
- Anxiety
- Sense of hopelessness
- Self-doubt
- Decreased productivity
- Apathy
- Chronic physical ailments
- Increased use of drugs or alcohol
- Overeating
- Denial

**It's important to note that compassion fatigue is a normal human response commonly seen in highly empathetic individuals. It isn't a disease or illness. It's a temporary state—a spectrum—that you can shift further out of.**

**Compassion fatigue is more easily managed than burnout. You can build your empathy back up again.**

*How to Deal with Compassion Fatigue: 3 Mindset Shifts to Help You Feel Better <https://thewellnesssociety.org/>*

# 2 Minute Stretch Break!



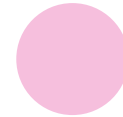
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AA387CRKs9o>

## Build Resiliency

1. Set Strong Personal Boundaries
2. Focus On What Is In Your Control
3. Practice Self-Care Regularly
4. Expand Your Window of Tolerance



# Set Strong Personal Boundaries



# Focus On What Is In Your Control





# Practice Self Care Regularly

How Full Are My Buckets Right Now?

# S

## Social

- Connecting Daily with others (eg. Phone, text, skype, in person)
- Deep connections with others on a regular basis
- Disconnecting (eg. Social media, “turning off”)



# P

## Physical

- Eating
- Sleeping
- Exercise
- Relaxation



# E

## Emotional

- Opportunity to experience emotions
- Checking in with emotional flags
- Laughing until your stomach hurts



# M

## Mental

- Not school work directly
- Mentally stimulating activities (e.g. playing instrument, art work, poetry, reading for pleasure, puzzles, crafts)
- Vegging out



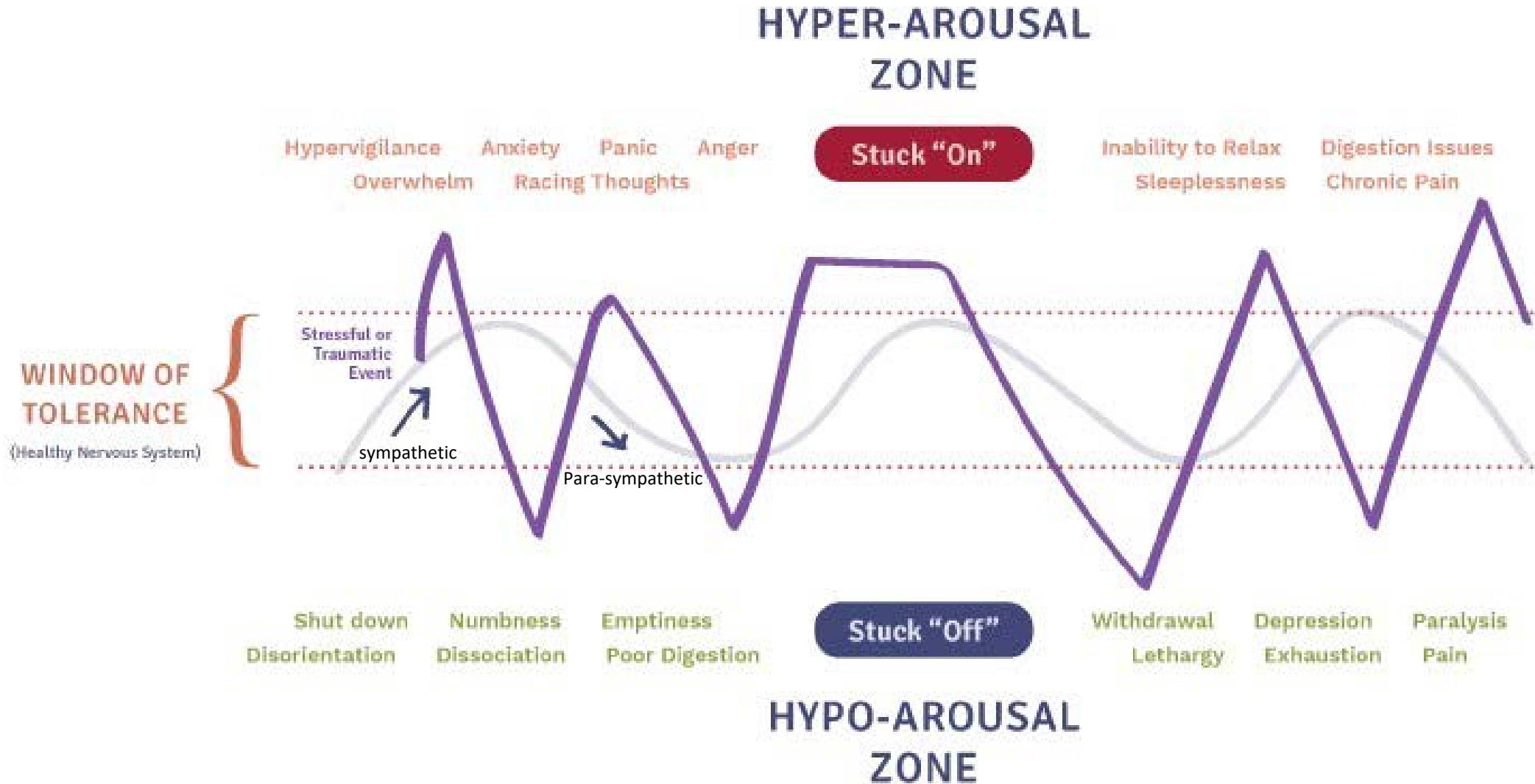
# S

## Spiritual

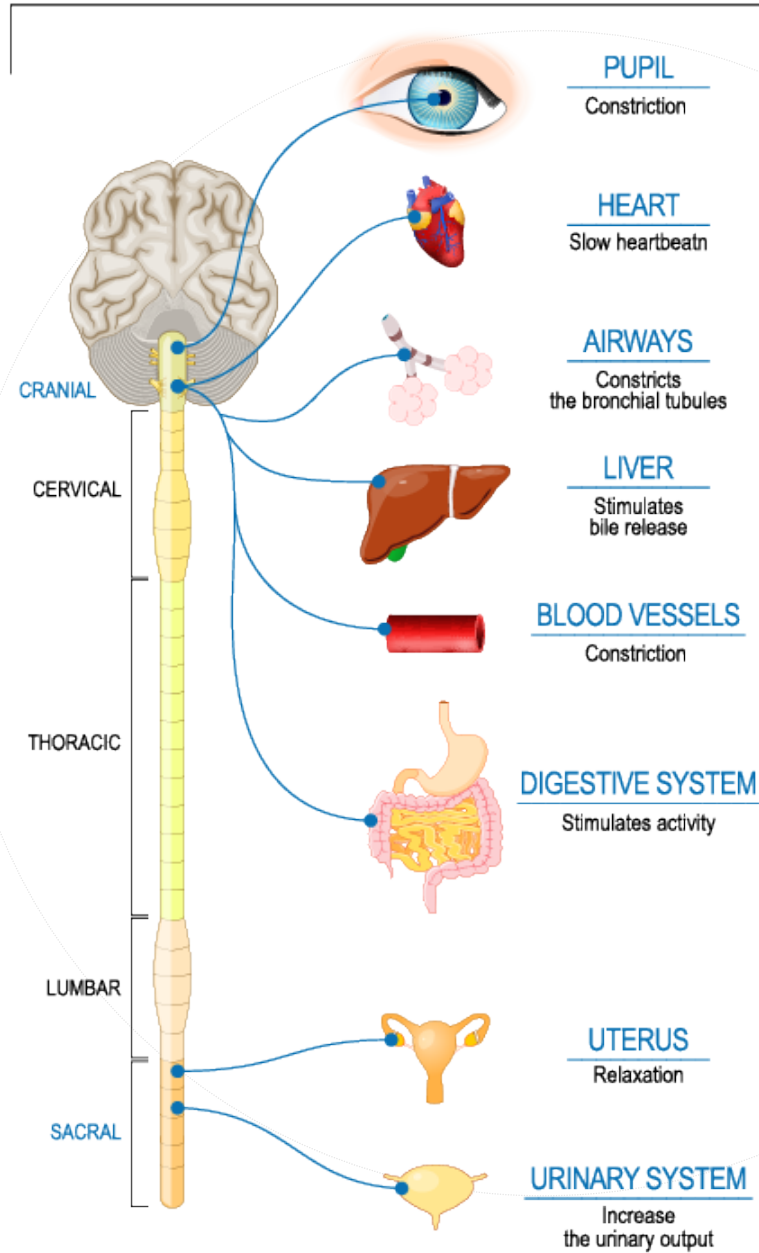
- Giving back to your community
- Feeling connected to something bigger than yourself
- Faith/Religion
- Connection to Nature
- \*Remember you are more than your “helper” role



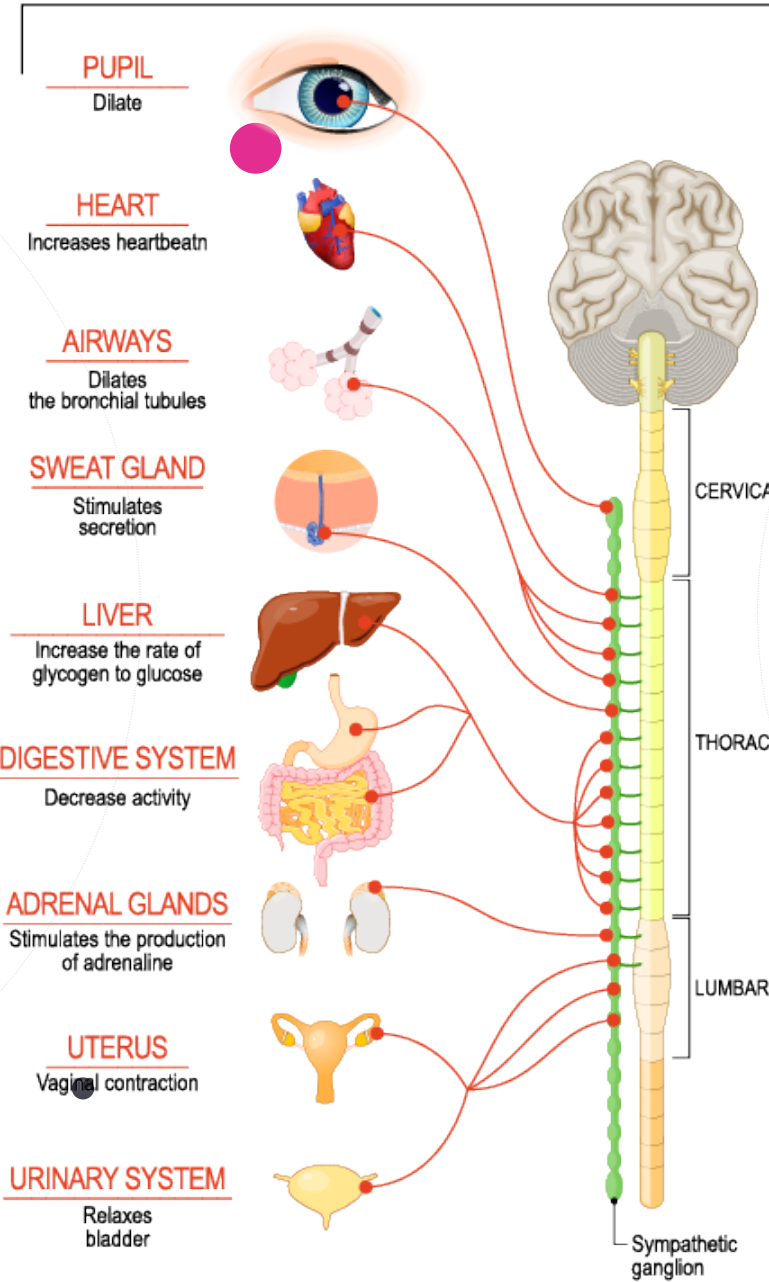
# Expand Your Window of Tolerance



# Parasympathetic



# Sympathetic



Vagus nerve opens up parasympathetic branch, allows for regulation

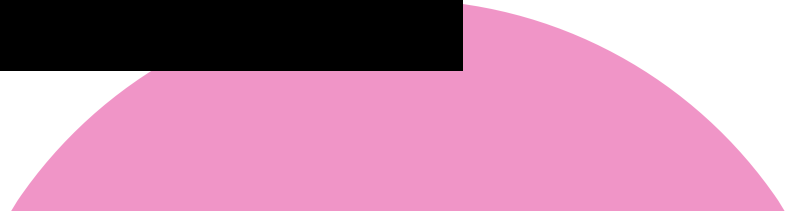
# Expand your window of tolerance

- Activate the regulating system aka build up the Vagus Nerve:
- Cold Exposure
- Deep and Slow Breathing
- Singing, Humming, Chanting, Gargling (“voo”)
- Socializing and Laughing
- Probiotics
- Omega 3 Fatty Acids
- Exercise
- Massage
- Meditation

*How to Stimulate your Vagus Nerve for Better Mental Health:*

[https://sass.uottawa.ca/sites/sass.uottawa.ca/files/how\\_to\\_stimulate\\_your\\_vagus\\_nerve\\_for\\_better\\_mental\\_health\\_1.pdf](https://sass.uottawa.ca/sites/sass.uottawa.ca/files/how_to_stimulate_your_vagus_nerve_for_better_mental_health_1.pdf)

# Practicing “Voo”



"The expectation that we can be immersed in suffering and loss daily and not be touched by it is as unrealistic as expecting to be able to walk through water without getting wet."

***Rachel Naomi Remen***



# Stay Connected



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Thank you for joining us today!



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