

Befriending the Nervous System,

A Body Centered Approach to
Managing Difficult Situations



EXPERIENTIAL
CONSULTING
*Risk Management
for
Outdoor Programs*

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- Invitation to practice connecting to your body
- Present an overview of the human nervous system and stress physiology
- Intro to Somatic Experiencing as a tool for nervous system regulation and crisis response
- Practice techniques to apply in stressful situations using knowledge of the nervous system

Goals

Outline for Today

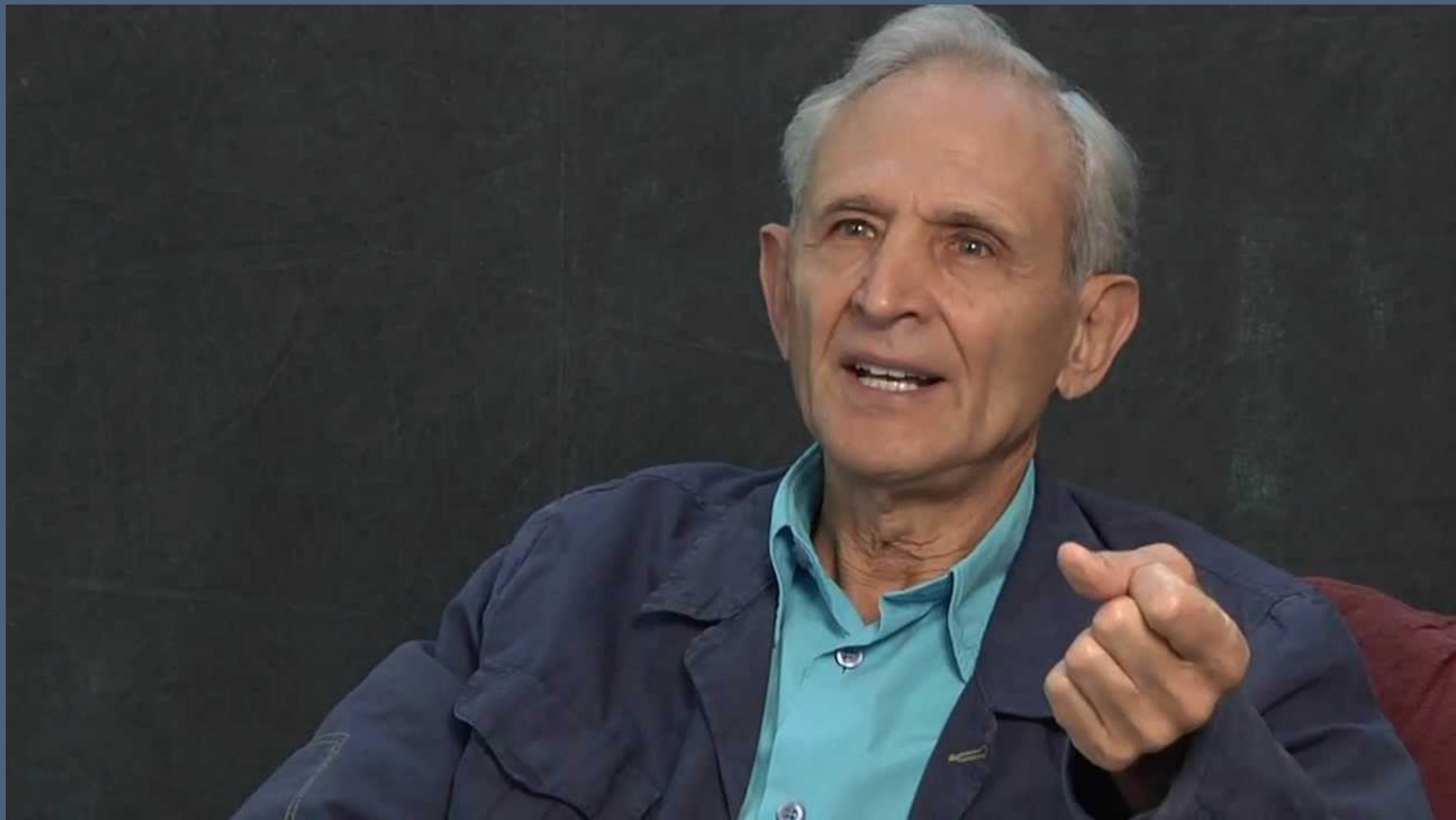
- What is Somatic Experiencing?
- Stress vs trauma vs nervous system injury
- Autonomic Nervous System - Polyvagal theory
- Nervous system states / Polyvagal ladder
- Physiology of trauma
- Threat response cycle
- Cycles of Activation
- Regulation tools before, during and after and incident

What is Somatic Experiencing®?

Somatic - relating to the body

Somatic Experiencing® (SE)

A body centered healing modality that aims to reduce the impact of stress injuries, shock or trauma that can accumulate in the human nervous system following a difficult experience or after longer periods of cumulative stress



“Trauma is not what happens to us but what we hold inside in the absence of an empathetic witness”

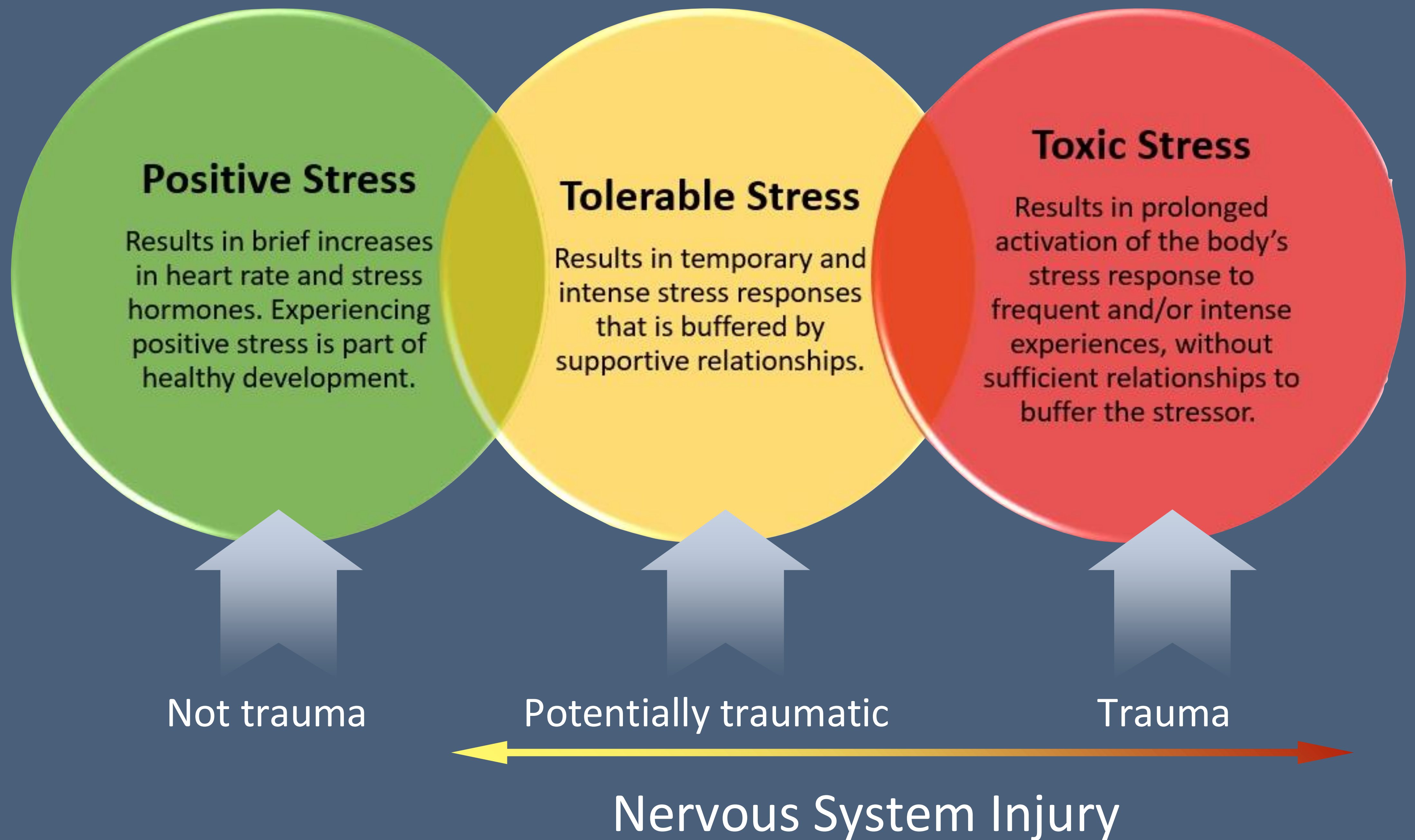
Peter Levine, PhD, founder of Somatic Experiencing

“Trauma is not what happens TO you. It’s
what happens INSIDE you as a result of
what happened TO you”

Dr. Gabor Maté, MD

But, is it *really* trauma?

at overwhelms the nervous system's ability to re



Nervous System

Central

(brain and spinal cord)

Peripheral

Somatic
(Voluntary)

Autonomic
(Involuntary)

Sympathetic
(gas)

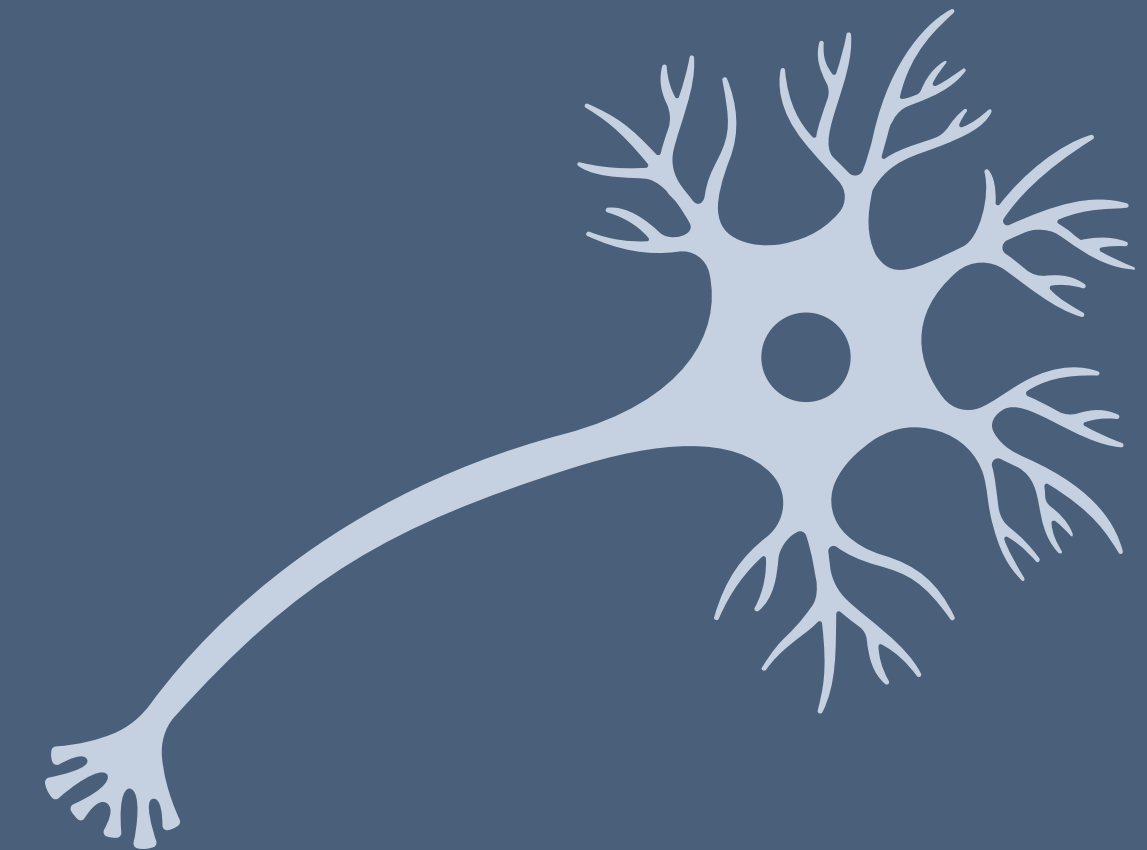
Parasympathetic
(brake)

Dorsal Vagal
Complex

(shut down)

Ventral Vagal
Complex

(socially engage)



NERVOUS SYSTEM STATES



Polyvagal Ladder

Neuroception

The subconscious process of
scanning the environment for
cues of safety or danger



VENTRAL VAGAL

Neuroception of Safety

socially engaged and connected

SYMPATHETIC

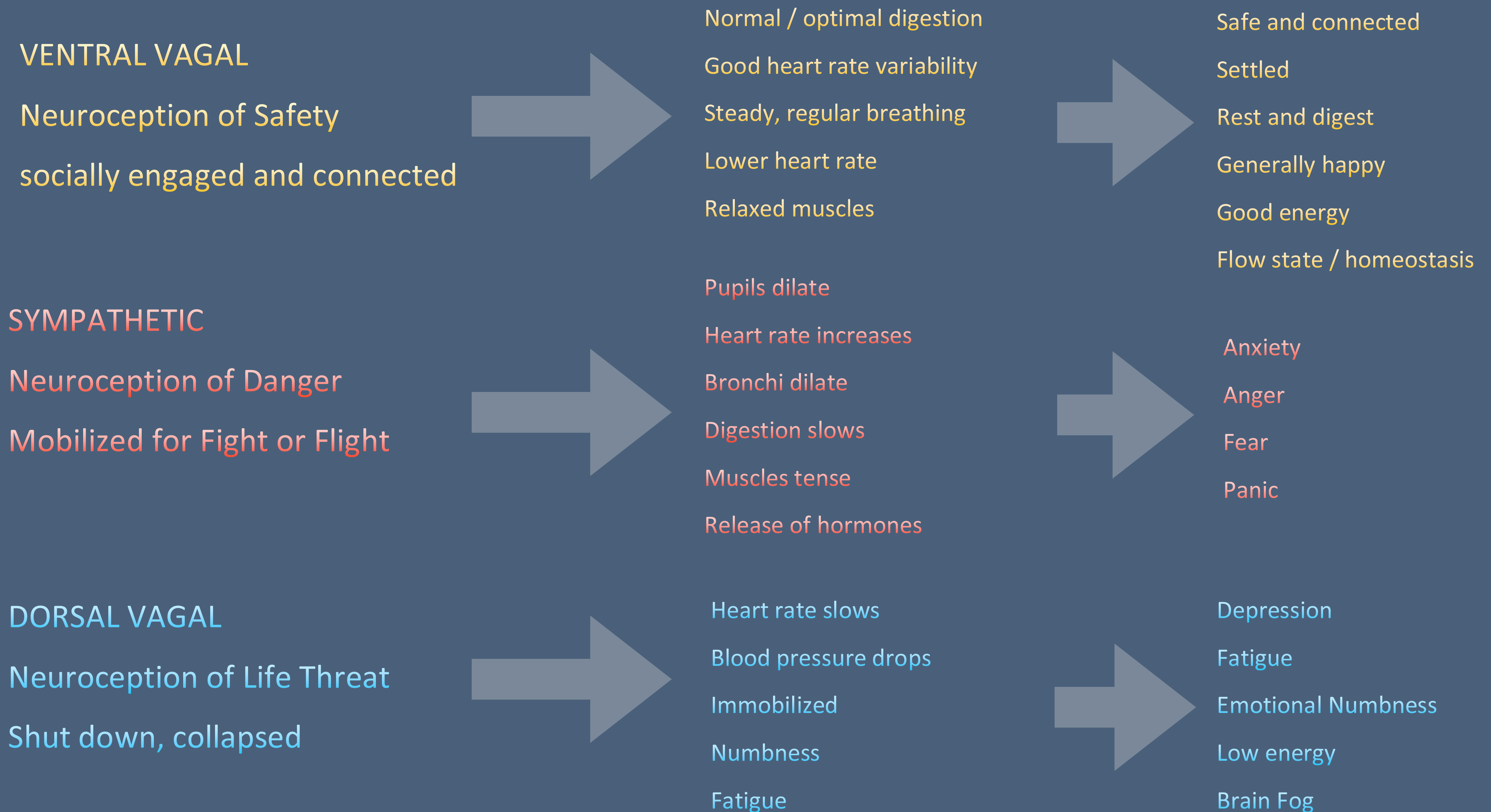
Neuroception of Danger

Mobilized for Fight or Flight

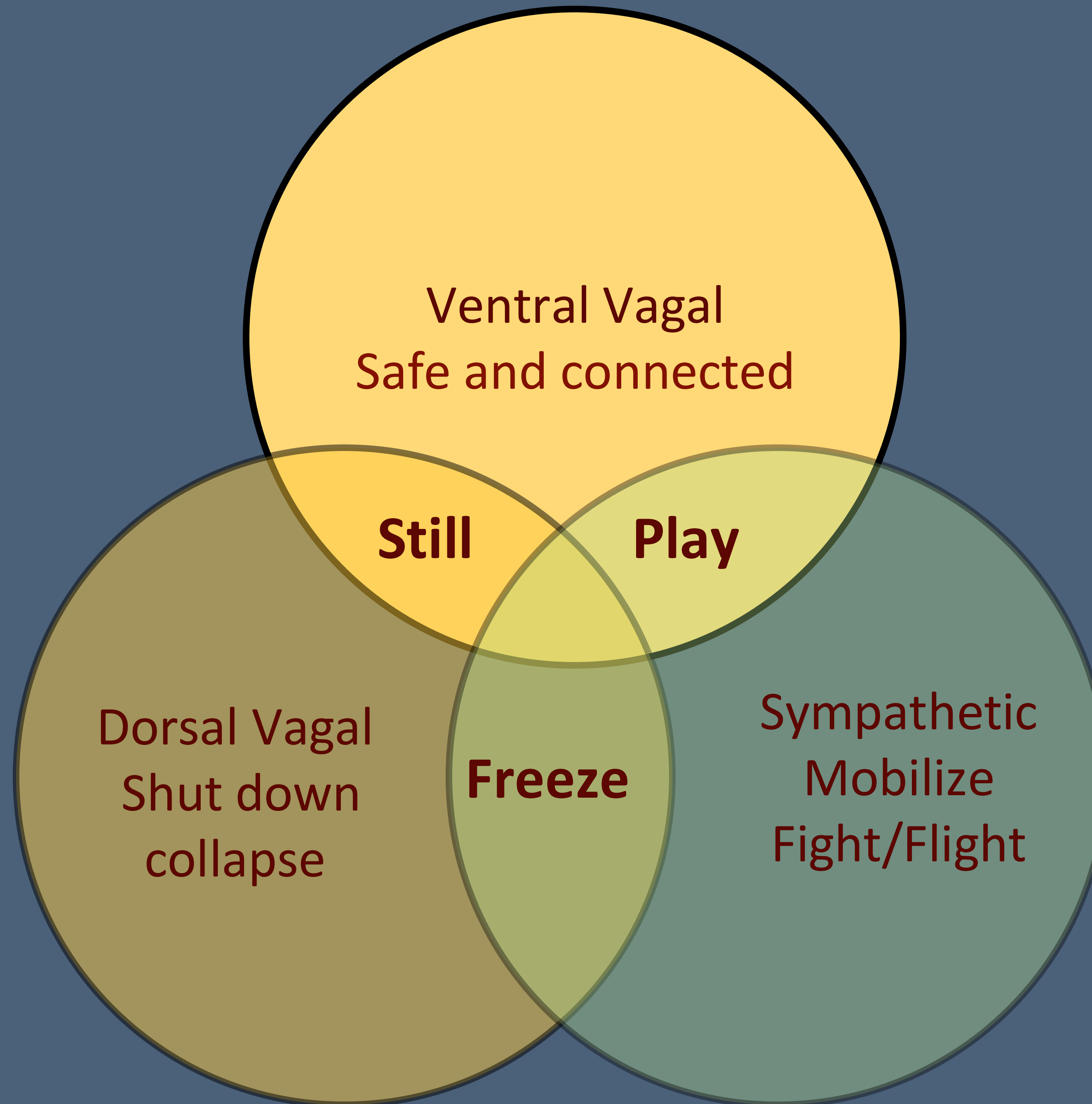
DORSAL VAGAL

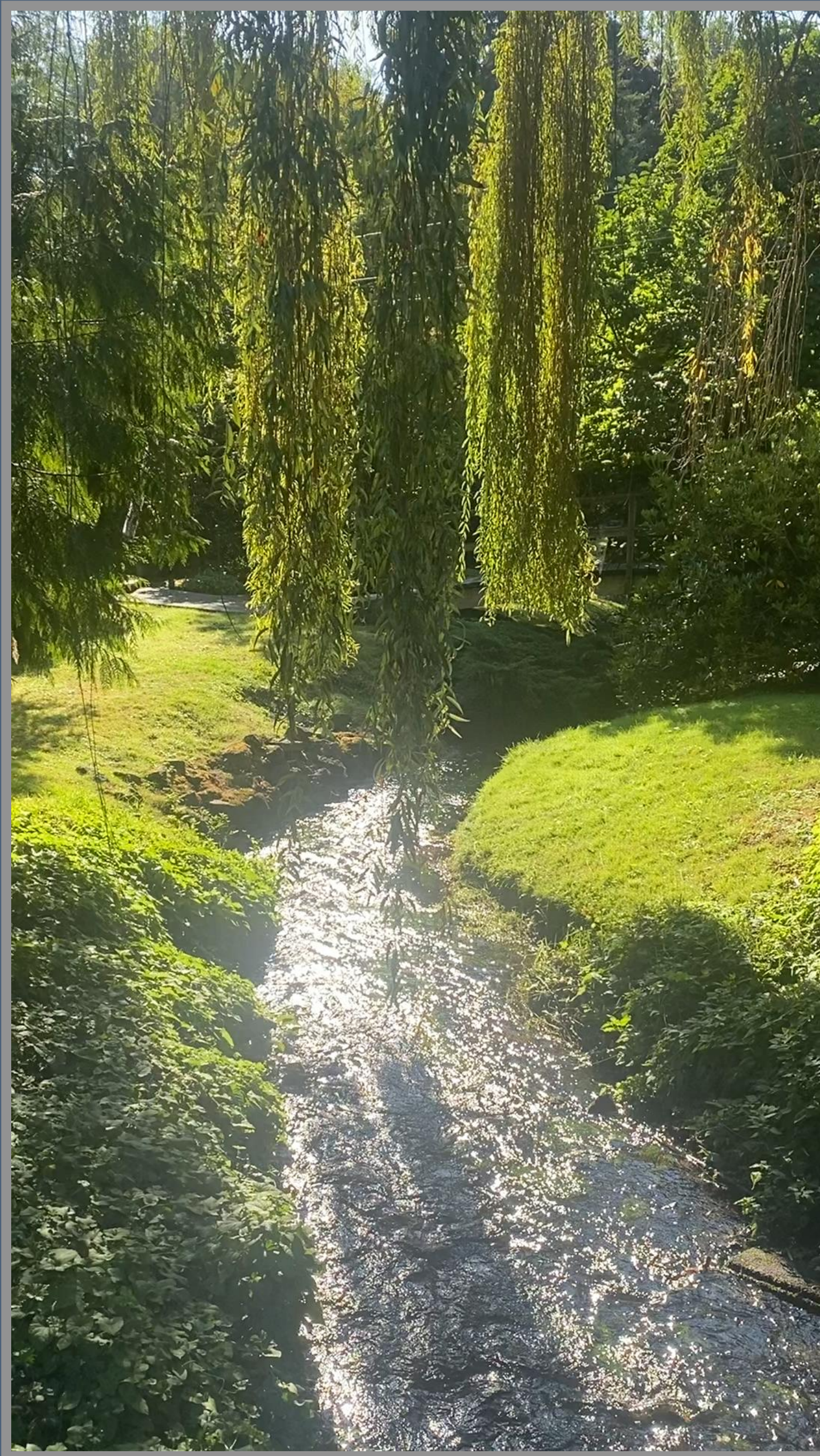
Neuroception of Life Threat

Shut down, collapsed



Blended States





LET'S PRACTICE!

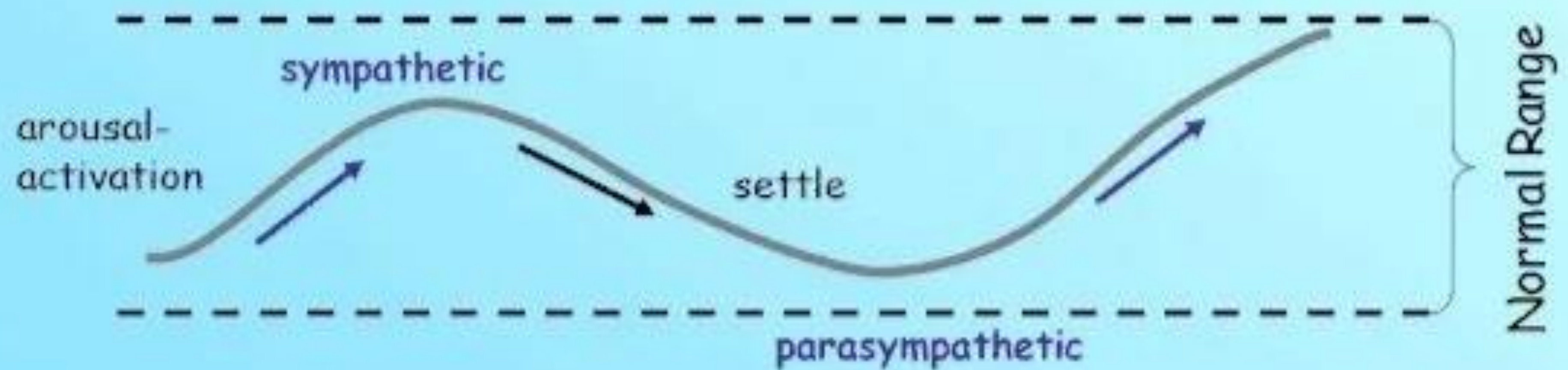


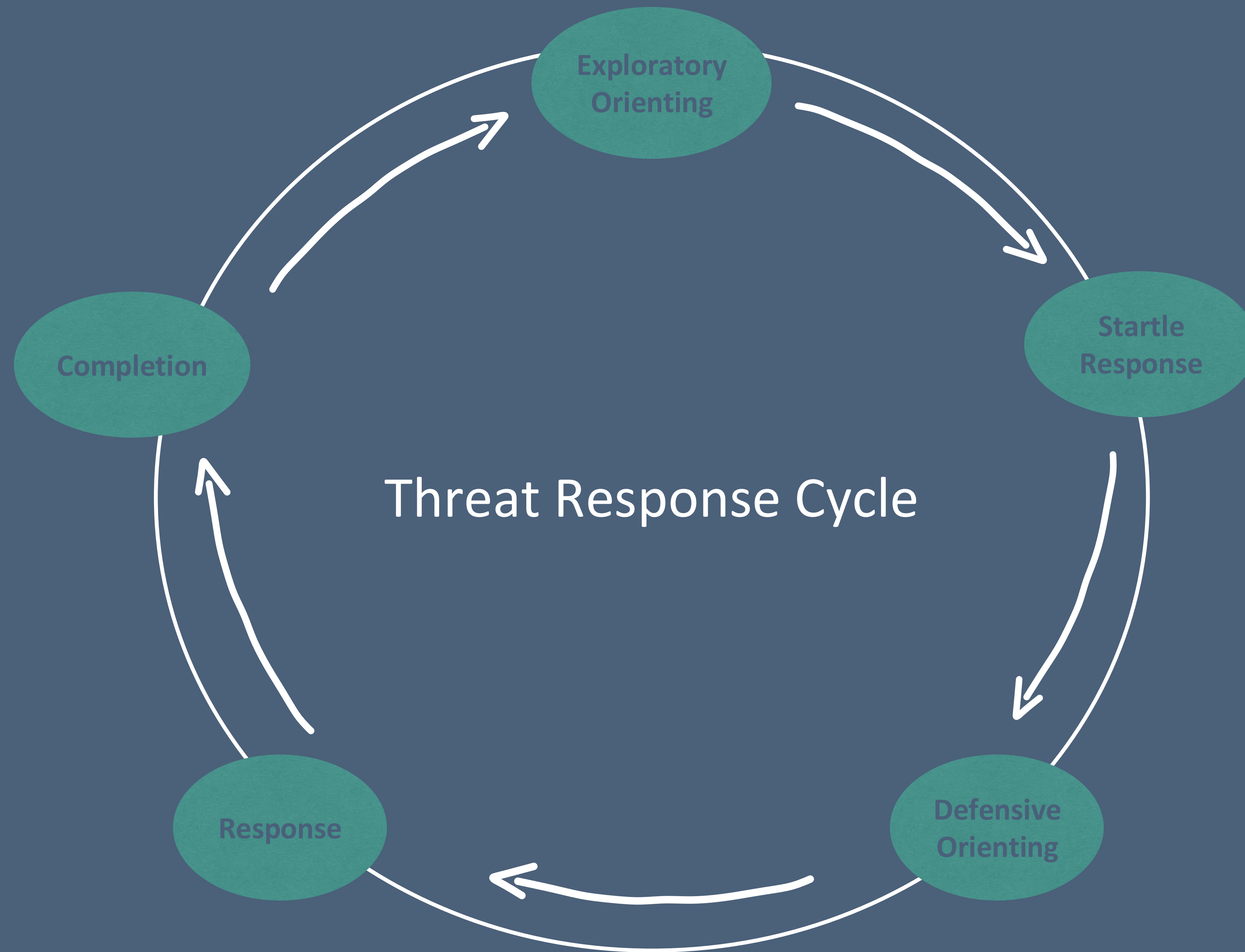
RESPONDING TO THREAT

Nervous system activation and the
threat response cycle



A Healthy Nervous System

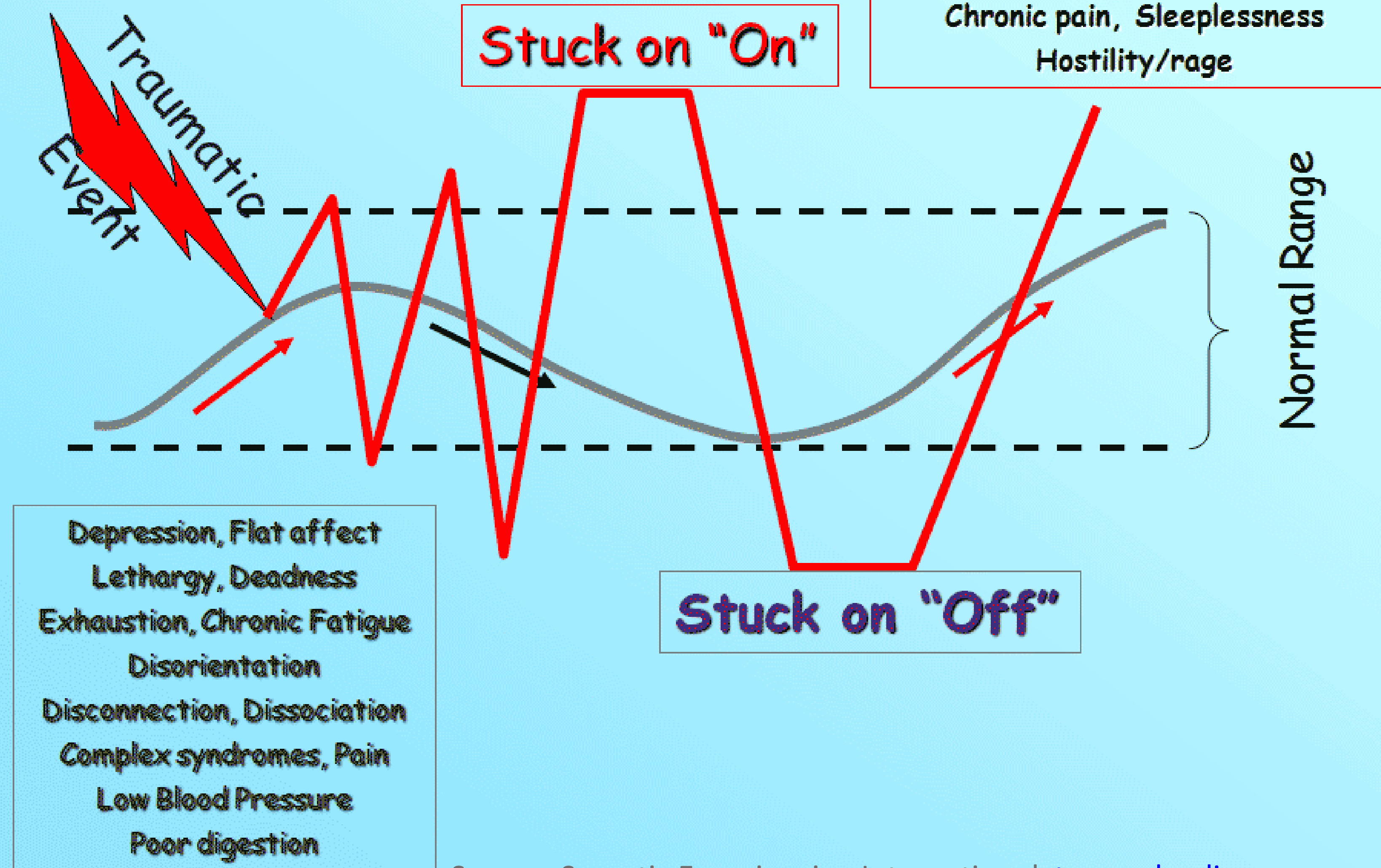






100100Channel

Symptoms of Un-Discharged Traumatic Stress



Source, Somatic Experiencing International, traumahealing.org



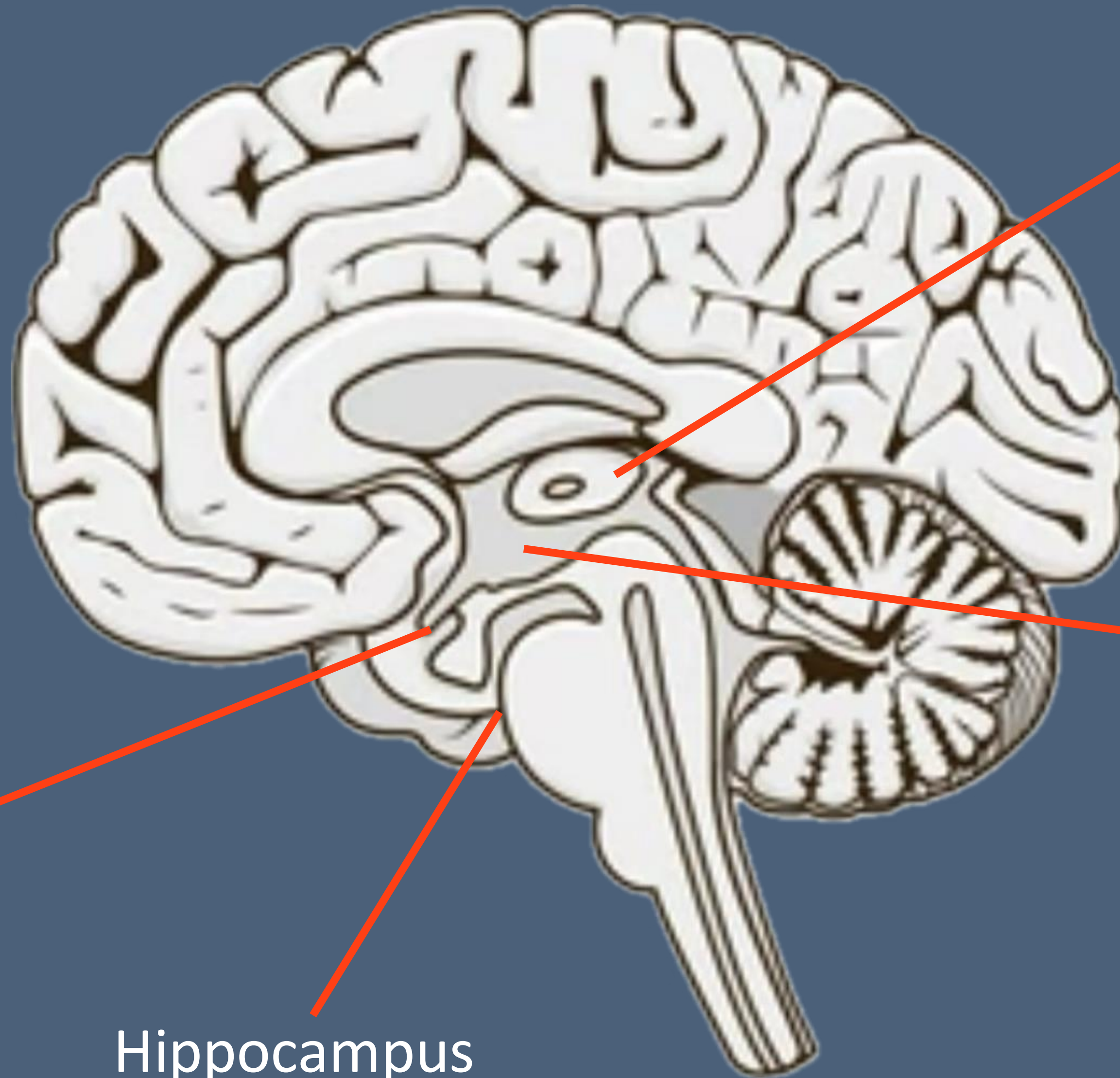
Physiology of trauma

Amygdala

Hippocampus

Hypothalamus

Thalamus





Before, During and After an Incident (Threat) ~ through a nervous system lens

Prevention, Preparation and Resilience Building



- Capacity vs Tolerance
- Window of Tolerance / Faux window
- Connect to Body

Capacity vs Tolerance

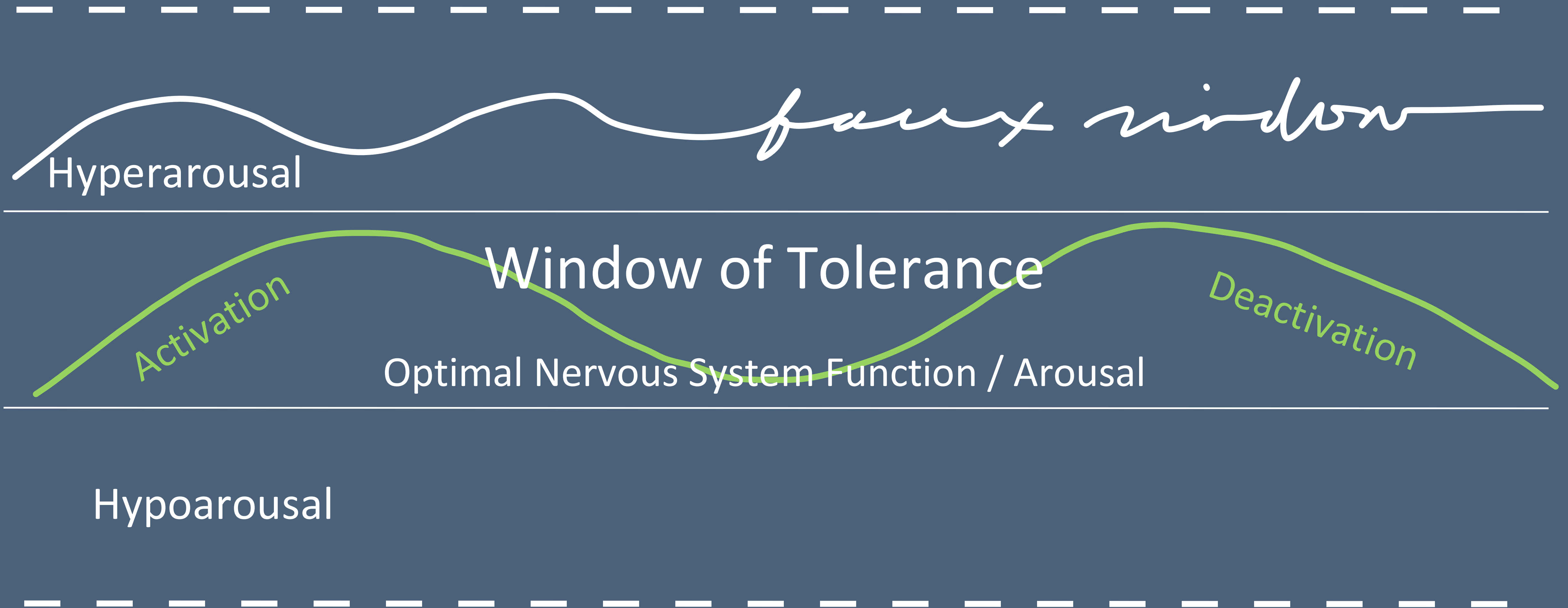
- Feels manageable
- Involves thoughtful, conscious choice
- What you can comfortably be WITH when you don't override what your body is telling you.



- Pushing through
- Keeping it together
- Saying we are fine when we are not

When we tolerate things our body is telling us we don't have the capacity for, we increase the chances that we will move into overwhelm and dysregulation. In the context of a traumatic event, we increase the likelihood that the trauma physiology will stay stuck in the body and continue to disrupt our lives and our ability to thrive.







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Connect to Body

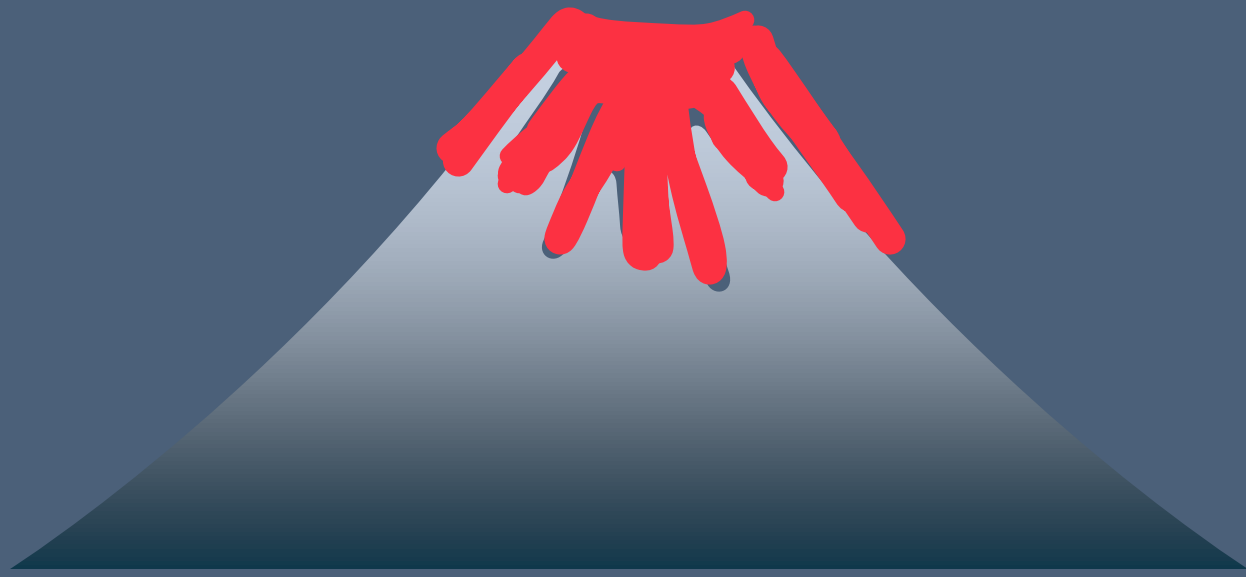
Why?

- 80/20 - Sensory / Motor nerves
- Gut / Brain Axis - “Gut Feeling”

Let's Practice!

Body Yes, Body No

Language of Sensation



Before, **During** and After an Incident (Threat) ~ through a nervous system lens

Response / **Stabilization**



- Slow Down
- Orient
- Co Regulate
- Use of Touch

S

Slow Down

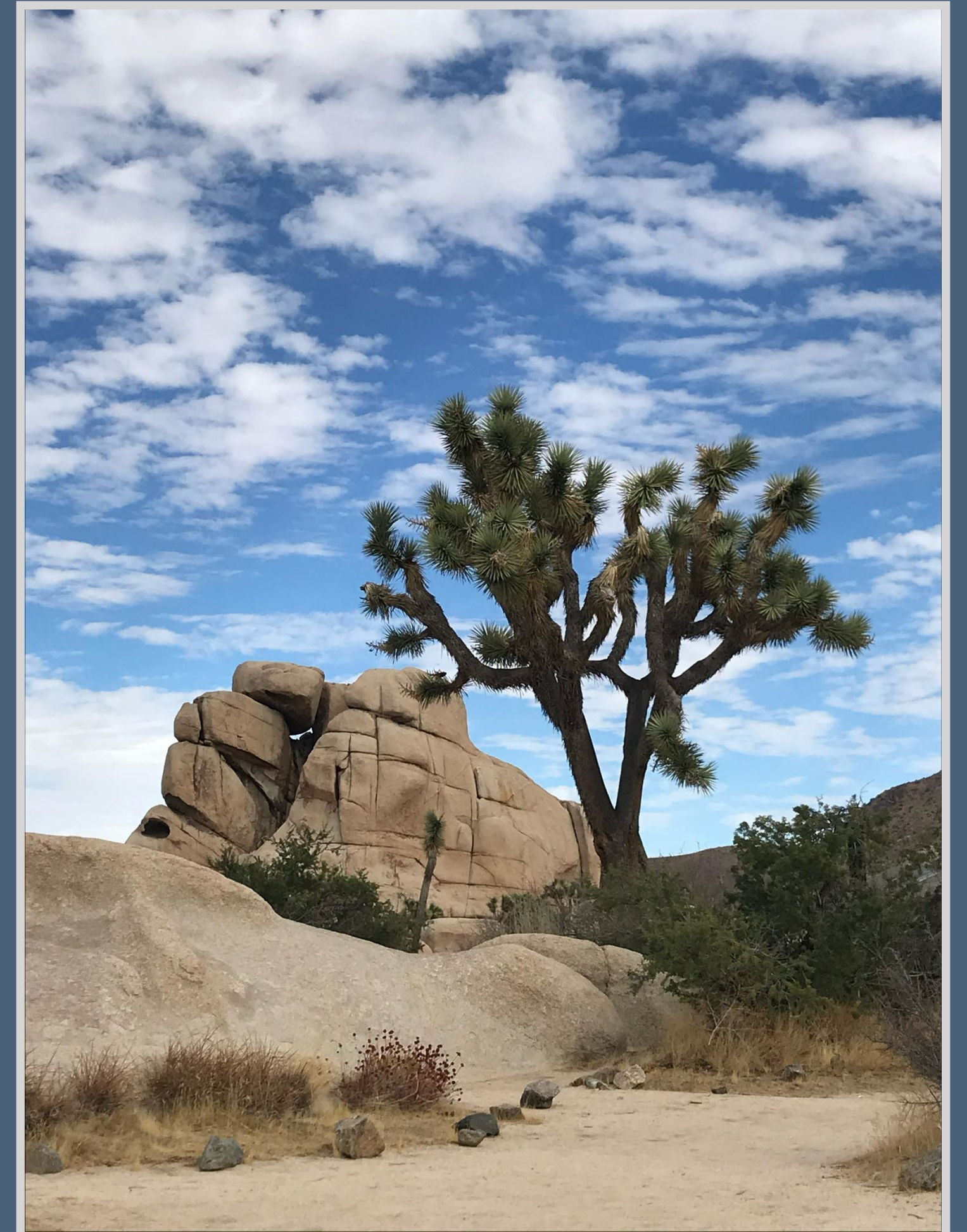
- Decreases the level of activation in the body
- Bring the Ventral Vagal Parasympathetic system back on line
- Access the prefrontal cortex - the thinking/problem solving brain



O

Orient (to the Environment)

- Orienting is our body's threat detection system.
- Physiology of orienting is mostly in the head and neck muscles and the senses
- Exploratory orienting signals the nervous system that we are safe and grounded in the present moment and that no immediate threats are present.



C

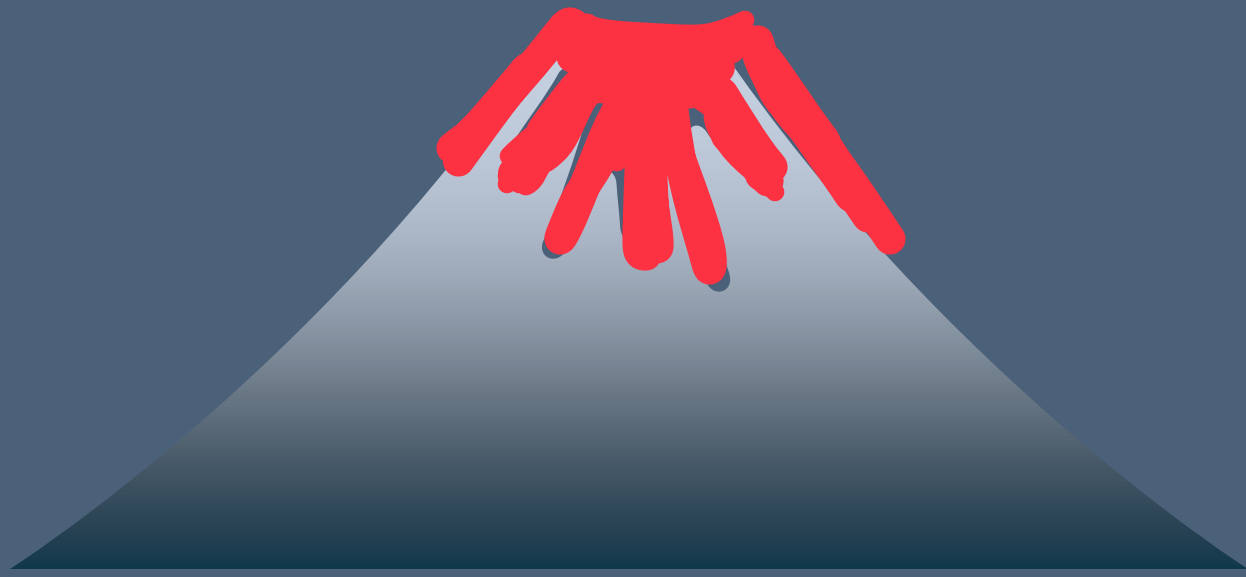
Co Regulate

- When the heart and the ANS are in sync, a coherent electromagnetic field is created
- This field extends up to 8 feet around us and is most pronounced within 3 feet
- Less regulated systems will organize around more regulated systems.

A large, stylized white letter 'T' centered within a light blue square that has a subtle gradient.

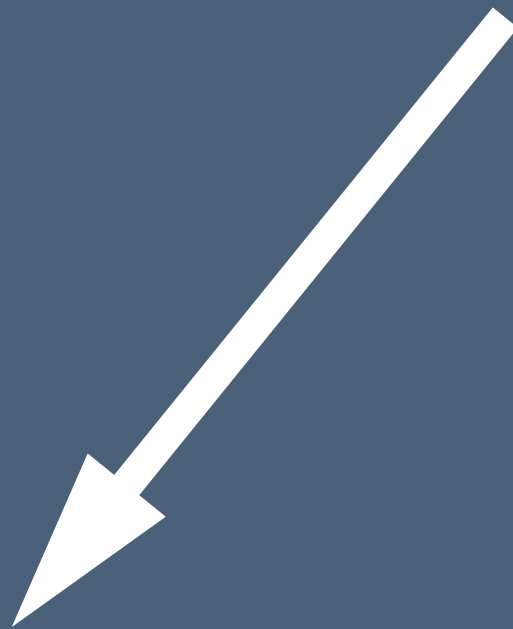
Use of Touch

- Vast amounts of research validating the need for and the benefits of human touch
- Harlow's monkeys
- Cautions, Considerations and Consent

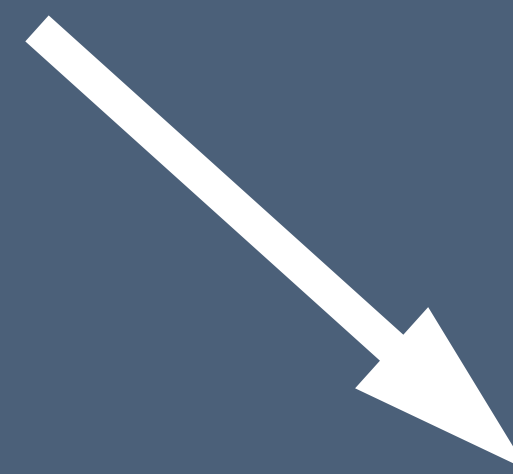


Before, During and **After** an Incident (Threat) ~ through a nervous system lens

Recovery / Completion / Integration



- Normalize
- Co Regulate
- Attune



- Discharge of Sympathetic Activation from the Body



C

Completion of Activation

- Shaking
- Heat
- Sweating
- Yawning
- Deep breaths
- Vibration
- Muscle / Body spasms
- Trembling

Creating Safety and Connection

- On personal trips?
- On courses?
- In offices?
- In relationships - personal / professional?

Discuss!

Is your answer different than it would have
been at the beginning of today?

How?



Thank you for coming!

Reach out with questions.

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