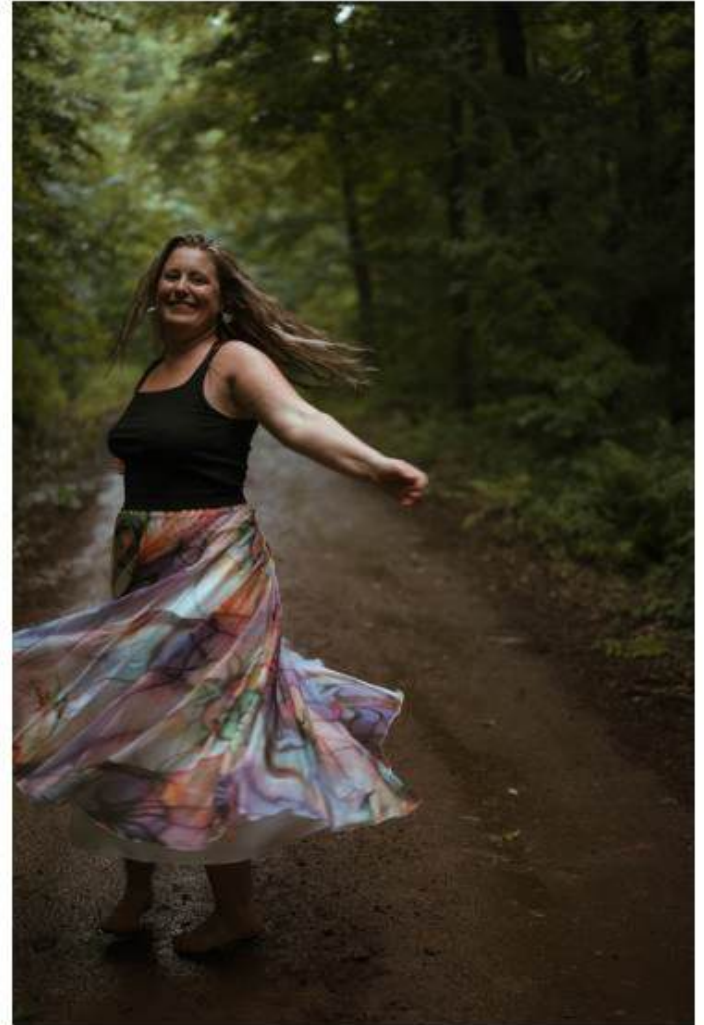


A dark, textured circular shape, resembling a watercolor blot or a dark planet, is centered on a solid teal background. The text is overlaid on this circle.

welcome to
UN-TRIGGERED

I am Lindsey Lockett.

- > raised on a Quarter Horse and Paint Horse ranch in the Texas Panhandle
- > living in the woods of NE MN on 5 acres today
- > 10 chickens
- > foraging for food & medicines, making plant medicines, growing food
- > food blogger prior to the work I do today



I am not a licensed therapist, counselor, or healthcare provider. This presentation is for informational and educational purposes only and is not intended to diagnose or treat any physical or mental health condition, nor is this presentation or its author a substitute for mental or physical healthcare. You are responsible for your healthcare choices.

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Basically, don't steal my shit. ;)

The next workshop in the series is called...
OVERCOMING HEALTH ANXIETY

9/25 @ 10am CST

Group coaching call on Tuesday, 10/1 @ 2pm CST

Even if you don't have health anxiety specifically, the info in this workshop applies to ALL forms of anxiety: relationship, money, social, etc.

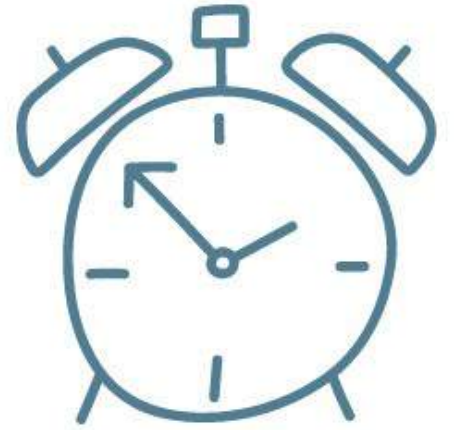


TRIGGERS, YOUR BRAIN, & YOUR NERVOUS SYSTEM

WHAT IS A TRIGGER?

**a present-moment
resurrection of past trauma
or emotional experiences**

When faced with a present-moment situation or person that elicits an uncomfortable emotional response similar to a past trauma, you are "triggered". Although the trauma isn't happening in the present, the body (and ego) are reacting as if it is.



Triggers are FLASHBACKS.

(Remember: a trigger is a present-moment resurrection of past trauma.)

"Many people may not be aware of the connection between their 'crazy' feelings and reactions and the traumatic events that are being replayed. They have no idea why they respond to some minor irritation as if they were about to be annihilated."

— Dr. Bessel van Der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*, p. 66

Whether it's a present-moment resurrection of past trauma or a normal, empathetic response to disturbing things, your nervous system is dysregulated and from that dysregulation, unhealthy coping mechanisms, avoidance, and unconscious reactions occur.

“A trigger is an external or internal stimulus that activates us into an emotional flashback. This often occurs outside the boundaries of normal consciousness.”

— Pete Walker, Complex PTSD: from Surviving to Thriving

"The bottom line is that the threat-perception system of the brain has changed, and people's physical reactions are dictated by the imprint of the past" (The Body Keeps the Score, pg. 67).

A TRIGGER CAN ALSO BE...

normal but intense feelings of disgust, disturbance, fear, and helplessness in response to disturbing things (such as images of graphic violence, animal cruelty, destruction of the planet, human trafficking, etc.).

However, these are NOT the same as the more complex, often subtle and nebulous triggers of C-PTSD.

People who are triggered/in flashback "often organize their lives around trying to protect against them."

"If elements of the trauma are replayed again and again the accompanying stress hormones engrave those memories ever more deeply in the mind. Not being able to deeply take in what is going on around them makes it impossible to feel fully alive. It becomes harder to feel the joys and aggravations of ordinary life, harder to concentrate on the tasks at hand. Not being fully alive in the present keeps them more firmly imprisoned in the past" (The Body Keeps the Score, pg. 67).

Your brain & nervous system do not behave differently depending on whether the threat is real (actual danger) or perceived (not real, triggered).

When you are "triggered", you are having a present-moment nervous system response to a past event, situation, person, or feeling.

Until the trigger is faced, you will continue to live in fear of being triggered. This most often looks like AVOIDANCE: avoiding people, places, situations, social media accounts, etc. because they trigger those overwhelming past emotions and sensations.

Sometimes, it's not avoidance of the trigger itself, but avoidance of the responsibility.

Sometimes, it's a misdirected fight response that looks like blaming, shaming, gaslighting, and manipulating others so you don't have to feel the discomfort of your triggers or take responsibility for yourself.

However, it's not a failure or avoidance of triggers if you feel deeply disturbed by disturbing things.

Humans are naturally empathetic. We're wired to feel others' pain. These are not the types of triggers we want to "get over" because that would be an attempt to transcend our humanity, which is not only impossible but also not what we want to do anyway.

You can absolutely work through facing triggers on your own or with a trusted friend or partner. You may need a therapist or coach to help you work through some big triggers or tricky triggers. It's smart to proceed carefully — but not too carefully, as that can lead to avoidance.

Neutral statement: when you are triggered, your nervous system is dysregulated.

**Your triggers matter.
Whether you face them or not, is entirely
up to you.**

**LITERALLY ANYTHING HAS THE
POTENTIAL TO BE A TRIGGER.**

(including the all-caps on this slide!)

TRIGGERS CAN BE EXTERNAL and INTERNAL.

EXTERNAL TRIGGERS:

- >> people, places, things, events, facial expressions, styles of communication that remind us of our original trauma
- >> visiting your parents
- >> trauma anniversary
- >> hearing someone use a shaming tone
- >> the way someone looks at you
- >> public speaking
- >> authority figures

TRIGGERS CAN BE EXTERNAL and INTERNAL.

INTERNAL TRIGGERS:

- >> physical pain or other sensations
- >> making a mistake/not being perfect
- >> negative noticing
- >> perseverating about what has or could go wrong
- >> thoughts of catastrophization or endangerment
- >> basically, having an off-the-rails Inner Critic

Don't see your specific trigger listed?

That's ok! It can still be a trigger because

LITERALLY ANYTHING CAN BE A TRIGGER.

Yes, triggers can feel scary, overwhelming,
even like we're dying. It is very
uncomfortable to be triggered.

And also...



Triggers are pathways to consciousness, if
we allow them to be.

TRIGGERS ARE...

- >> are an invitation to deeper self-awareness & healing
- >> are opportunities to make conscious choices that support the reality & outcome we desire
- >> are an open doorway to freedom if we're willing to walk through it
- >> are invitations to self-responsibility & agency
- >> prove that we can feel/experience hard, uncomfortable things & still be ok
- >> show us where our boundaries have been crossed or where we need to set a boundary

Complex PTSD triggers (emotional flashbacks) can present with both overt, obvious cues and subtle cues that many people don't recognize as a trigger.

Sometimes, these flashbacks last a few moments and pass with a slight bit of uneasiness.

Sometimes, flashbacks last days, weeks, or months.

I'd like to share about a prolonged and repeated emotional flashback (trigger) that I had to intensely work through for over a year, starting in the Fall of 2022.

The trigger?

Abandonment. (Or rather, my PERCEPTION that I was going to be abandoned.)

I'm really sensitive to the non-verbal and verbal communication cues of others, especially those with whom I am in emotionally intimate relationships. I tend to be more hypervigilant around these people — an unconscious adaptive survival pattern that I developed to protect me from potential abandonment as a child.

The pattern?

Hypervigilance would perceive that I had disappointed someone or they disapproved of me, based on their tone, facial expression, etc.

I struggled to stay present and instead dissociated and collapsed. I couldn't speak up for myself, or if I could, I was very defensive and unable to hear the other person.

My lived experience?

1 of 2 possible outcomes:

1. They leave. Maybe not physically walking out the door, but their loving, nurturing presence and the safety in the relationship leaves. The silent treatment is how I most often experienced this type of emotional abandonment.
2. I leave myself in an attempt to keep them from leaving me. Self-abandonment = fawning, people-pleasing, not setting a boundary, reactivity, earning them back.

The clues that I was in an emotional flashback?

trying to avoid the person, dread hanging out, making up excuses to avoid hanging out

second-guessing myself & the relationship, negative noticing, dwelling on facial expressions, body language, & tone as "proof" that I was "right"

self-abandonment by avoiding the topic, not speaking up for myself, not setting boundaries

hypervigilance when we're together, looking out for any "sign" that they're upset with me, trying to be perfect

**Remember my "ONLY 2 options"? Either they leave me
or I leave myself to avoid them leaving me?**

**Those WERE the only options when I wasn't aware of my
triggers or my ability to feel without fear and regulate
my nervous system.**

These 2 options are no longer CONGRUENT with who I am today. I am a more aware, more curious, more embodied woman than I've ever been. My perspective is open to so many more possibilities — like speaking up for myself, asking for clarification, conscious communication, and setting boundaries.

NEUROPLASTICITY: the brain's ability to re-wire itself in response to stress or stimulus.

A trigger is definitely a stress and a stimulus!

We NEED neuroplasticity to re-wire our brains, calm down the limbic brain, and re-program the RAS. We also NEED opportunities to be in emotional flashbacks to practice feeling, meeting ourselves with compassion, setting boundaries, and widening our windows of tolerance to stress and discomfort.

Whether triggered, moderately dysregulated, or mildly dysregulated, the goal is to NOTICE, to come into awareness (hopefully quickly, but no shame if not quickly because it takes practice).

Notice what the dysregulation feels like. Don't try to judge it or fix it or make it go away. Don't pick up your phone to escape the dysregulation. BE PRESENT WITH IT.

This means you will have to SLOW DOWN.

Our fast-paced, rushed, hustling, urgent lifestyles keep us in a chronic state of dysregulation anyway.

"But!" you object. "I don't have time to slow down when I'm dysregulated! I'm dysregulated all the time! I'd never do anything but be present with my dysregulation!"

ahhhhhh....

This is actually GREAT awareness!

Let's get curious about it.

Isn't it interesting that you're dysregulated so much of the time? Isn't it interesting that you have resistance to slowing down?

I wonder why your nervous system is dysregulated so much?

Is it because you're over-scheduled? Do you work too much? Are your kids enrolled in lots of extracurricular activities? Is your commute really long? Are you so used to a frantic, fast lifestyle that slowing down seems boring, empty, and strange?

Is the way you're living your life stressing out your nervous system?

I wonder what shifts you could make so that slowing down is a non-negotiable instead of a luxury?

So, what does all the nervous system & brain stuff have to do with triggers?

let's start with some nervous
system review...



WHAT IS THE AUTONOMIC NERVOUS SYSTEM?

>> the main communication network between the brain & the rest of your organs & systems — COMMAND CENTRAL

>> electrical operating system that communicates through felt sensations which tell us how we are in relationship to our internal & external environments

WHAT IS THE AUTONOMIC NERVOUS SYSTEM?

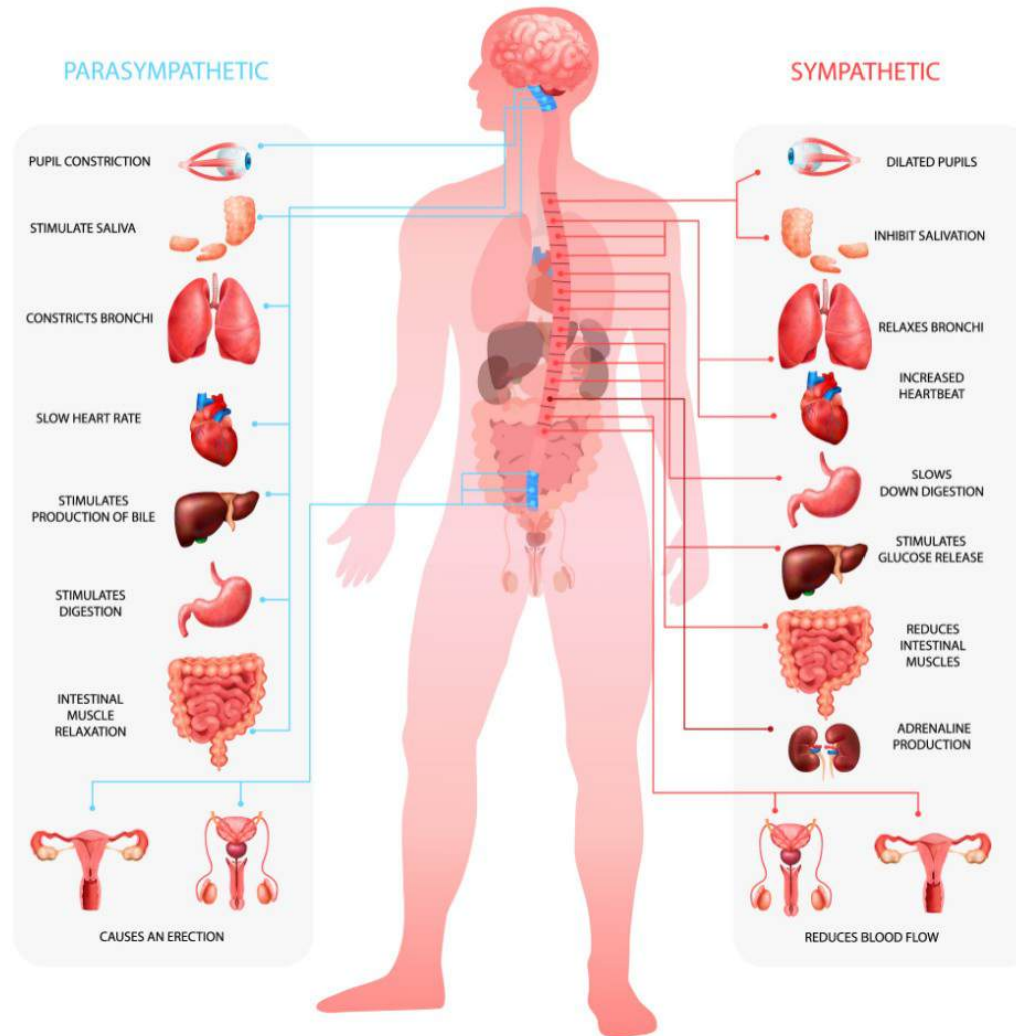
>> coordinates emotions & how intensely we react to stressors

>> has 3 branches: sympathetic, parasympathetic, social engagement system

when functioning optimally, the ANS orchestrates everything **AUTOMATIC** in your body, like:

- > heart rate
- > respiration
- > circulation
- > digestion
- > elimination
- > hormone production
- > temp & sweat reg.
- > sleep cycle
- > reproduction
- > detoxification
- > blood pressure
- > blood sugar

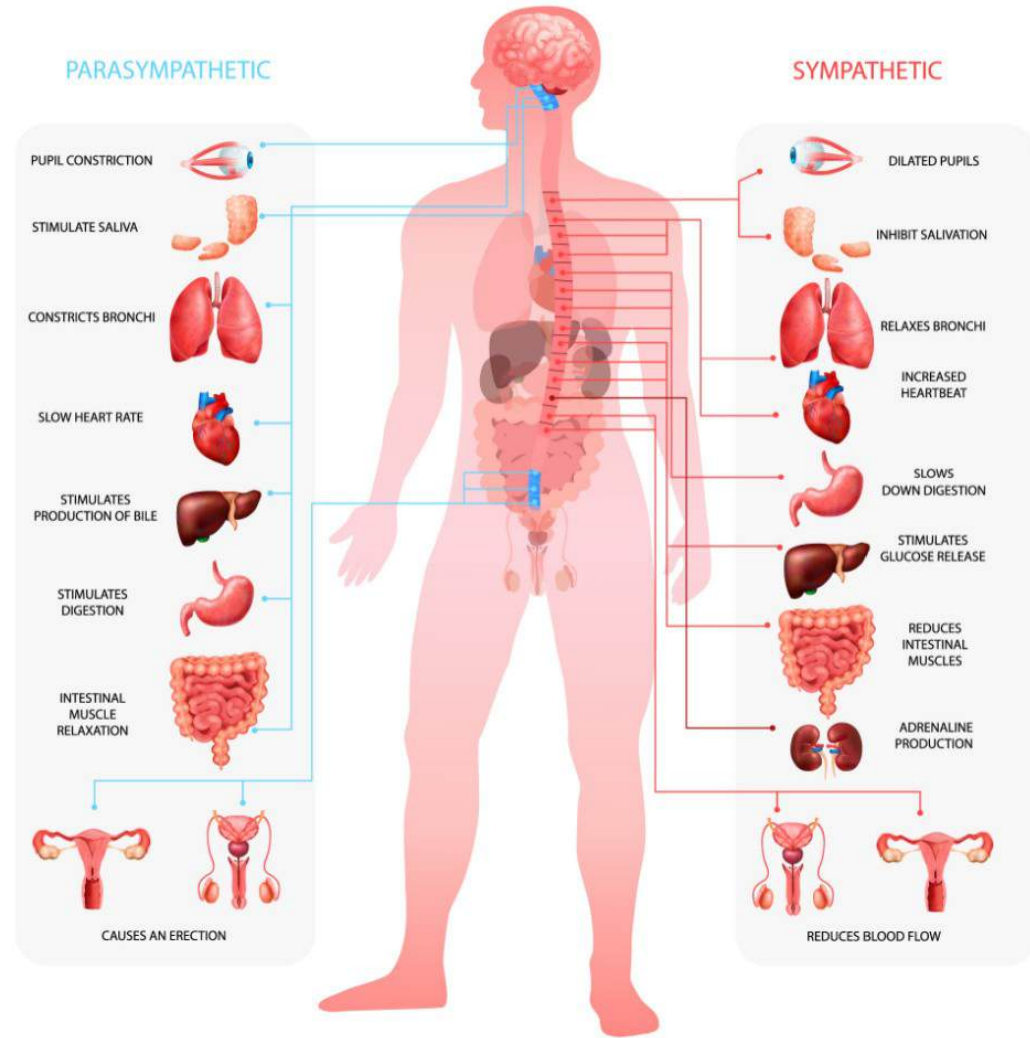
HUMAN NERVOUS SYSTEM



HUMAN NERVOUS SYSTEM

PARASYMPATHETIC:

- > energy conservation
- > "rest & digest"
- > "feed & breed"
- > usually labeled "good"
- > PVT: dorsal vagal
- > the "brakes"

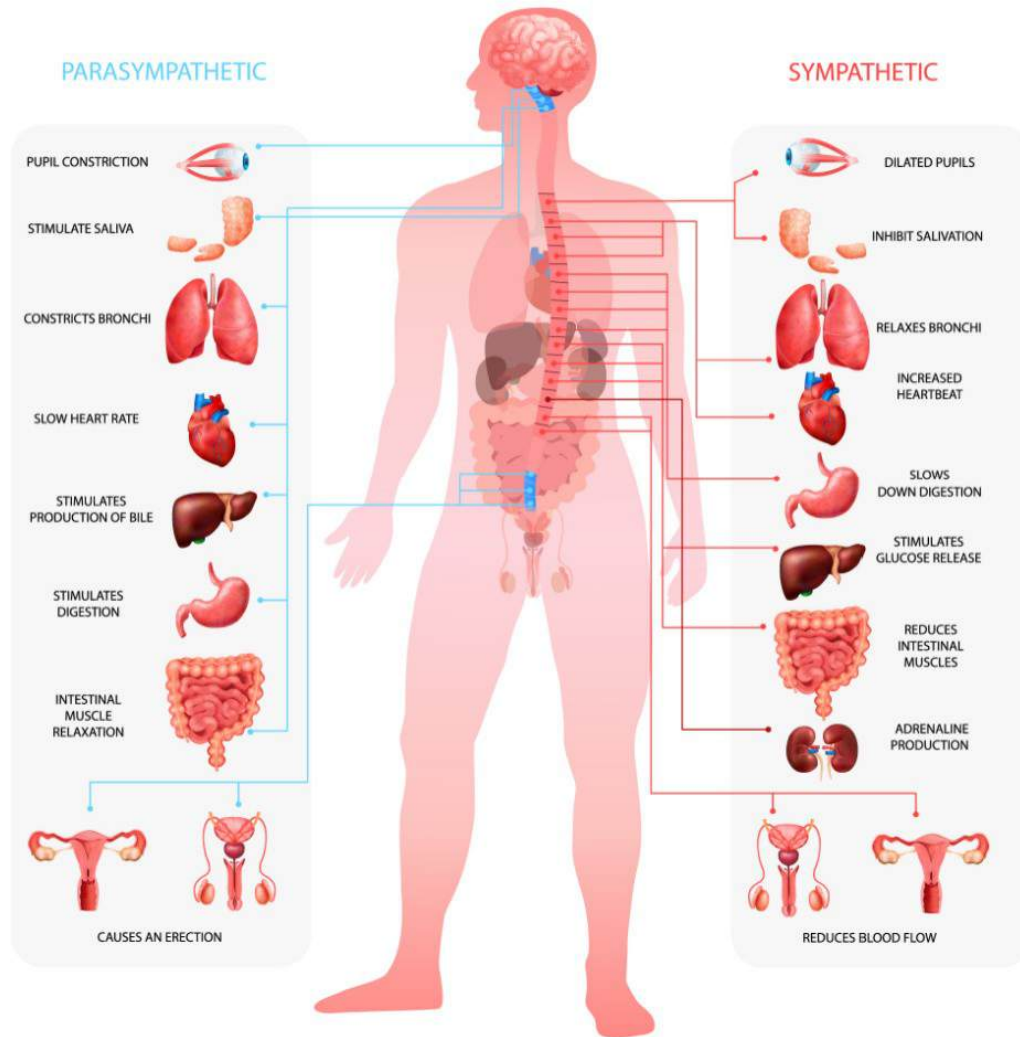


When the parasympathetic (dorsal vagal) is too aroused, the situation or threat is too much or out of control, we shut down or "freeze". Mammals, reptiles, birds, and fish have the ability to "freeze" in the face of overwhelming danger.



"Freeze" can be full collapse, dissociation, or partial freeze like the inability to use words, think clearly, or move.

HUMAN NERVOUS SYSTEM



SYMPATHETIC:

> energy expenditure

> "fight or flight"

> usually labeled "bad"

> PVT: sympathetic

> the "gas"

POLYVAGAL LADDER

- primary state
- secondary state



Social Engagement System

play/work flow state/
creativity

sympathetic

freeze

shutdown

stillness

"Polyvagal Theory helps us understand that behaviors are manifestations of our internal nervous systems taking actions in the service of survival. People develop habits based in early adaptive survival responses, and these habits naturally continue into adulthood. **When we can recognize how these responses once served a person by helping them tolerate seemingly unbearable circumstances, we are able to cultivate a sense of appreciation for how an individual has survived, adapted, and learned through the difficult experiences and predicaments of their life.**

This leaves us with the option of recovery paradigm that creates meaning out of the varied experiences within an individuals body-mind-spirit continuum, rather than putting emphasis on a need to overcome the so-called 'mental illness'." — Deb Dana

"When the ANS is balanced, flexible, and resilient, we have a reasonable degree of control over our response to minor frustrations and disappointments, enabling us to calmly assess what's going on [...]. Effective arousal modulation gives us control over our impulses and emotions. **As long as we manage to stay calm, we can choose how we want to respond.**

Individuals with poorly modulated ANS are easily thrown off balance, both mentally and physically. Lack of resilience and flexibility in the ANS not only has negative effects on thinking and feeling, but also on how the body responds to stress."

— Dr. Bessel van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*, p. 267

The goal is NOT to be at the top of the Polyvagal Ladder (Social Engagement System) all the time.

The goal IS to have a nervous system that can flexibly move up and down the ladder and respond appropriately to the threat.

Every move up and down the ladder is our nervous system's effort to keep us safe and alive.

The more primitive (immobilization) responses are only activated when the more evolved (SES) or sympathetic functions fail.

Literally ANYTHING has the potential to be stored in the body as trauma depending on how your individual nervous system responds.

This also means literally ANYTHING has the potential to be a trigger.

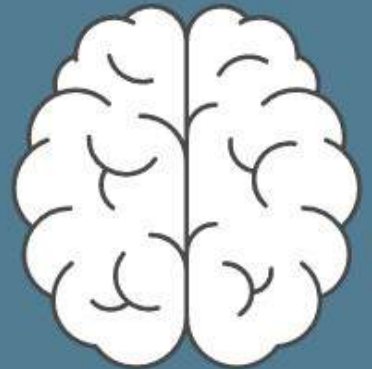
Every nervous system on Earth functions exactly the same way.

However, some nervous systems are more resilient & flexible than others.

Your nervous system may be intolerant of things & people that other nervous systems can tolerate & vice versa.

Let's talk about what happens in the
brain when we're triggered...

(hint: it's the same thing that happens when a real
threat is present)



AMYGDALA

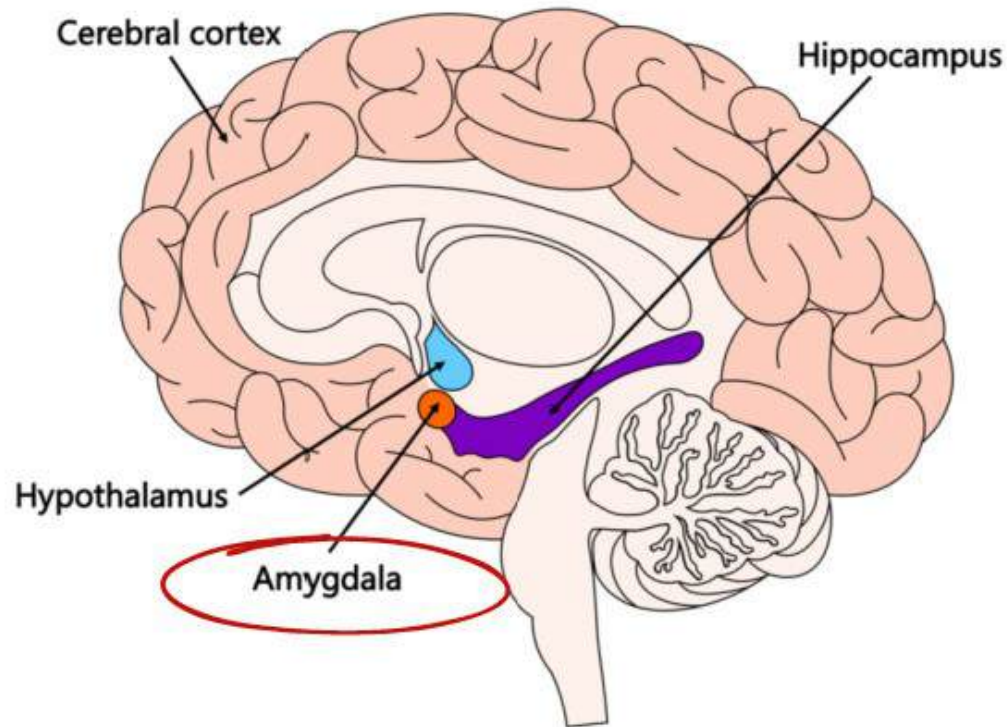
>> brain's fear center

>> pleasure-based
emotional learning

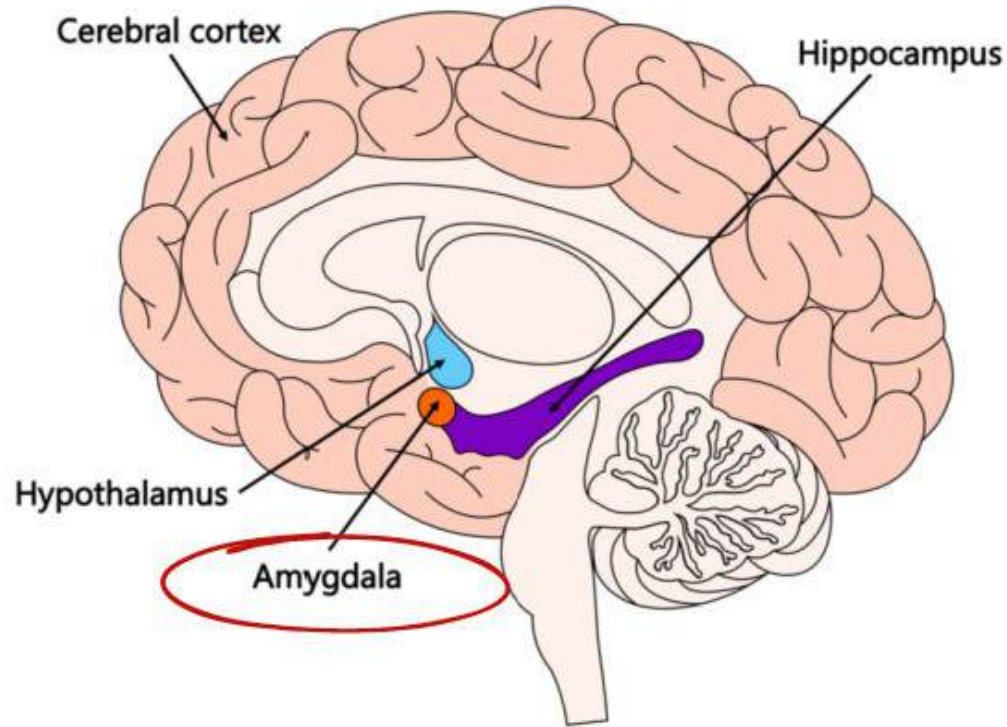
>> fearful emotional
learning

> stores memories of
stimuli related to fear

>> expression of fear &
aggression



AMYGDALA



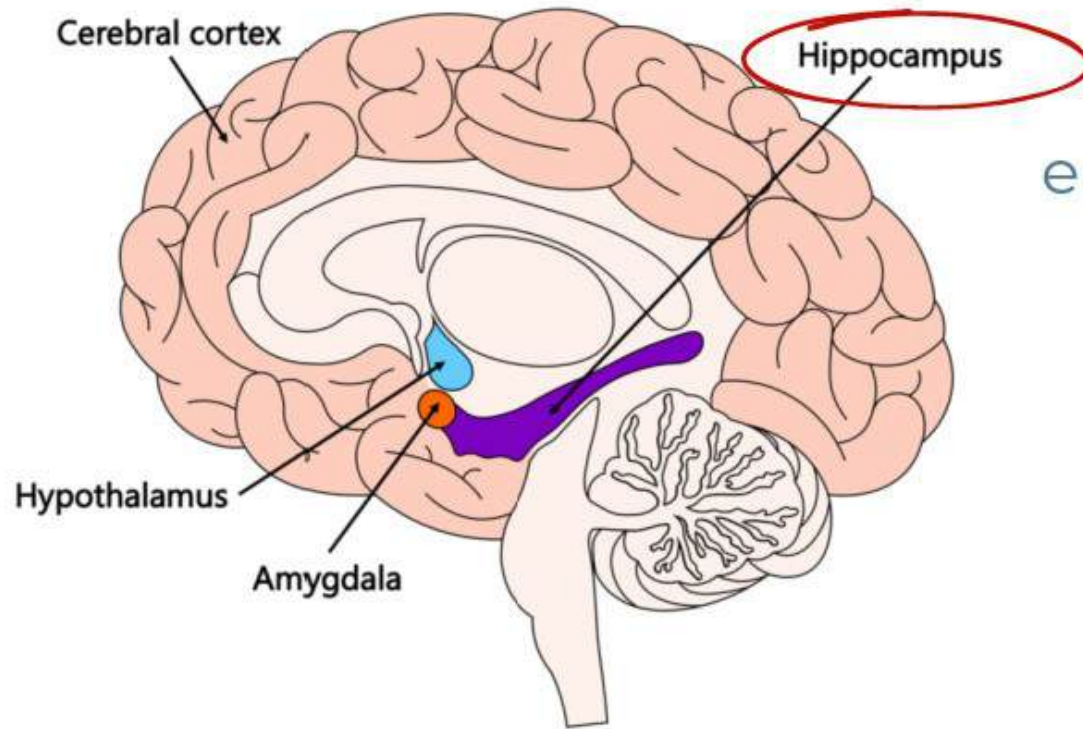
>> ONLY concerned w/
survival, not quality of life

>> may increase in size due
to trauma

>> instinctive memories for
survival (doing what
worked last time)

>> works w/ hippocampus

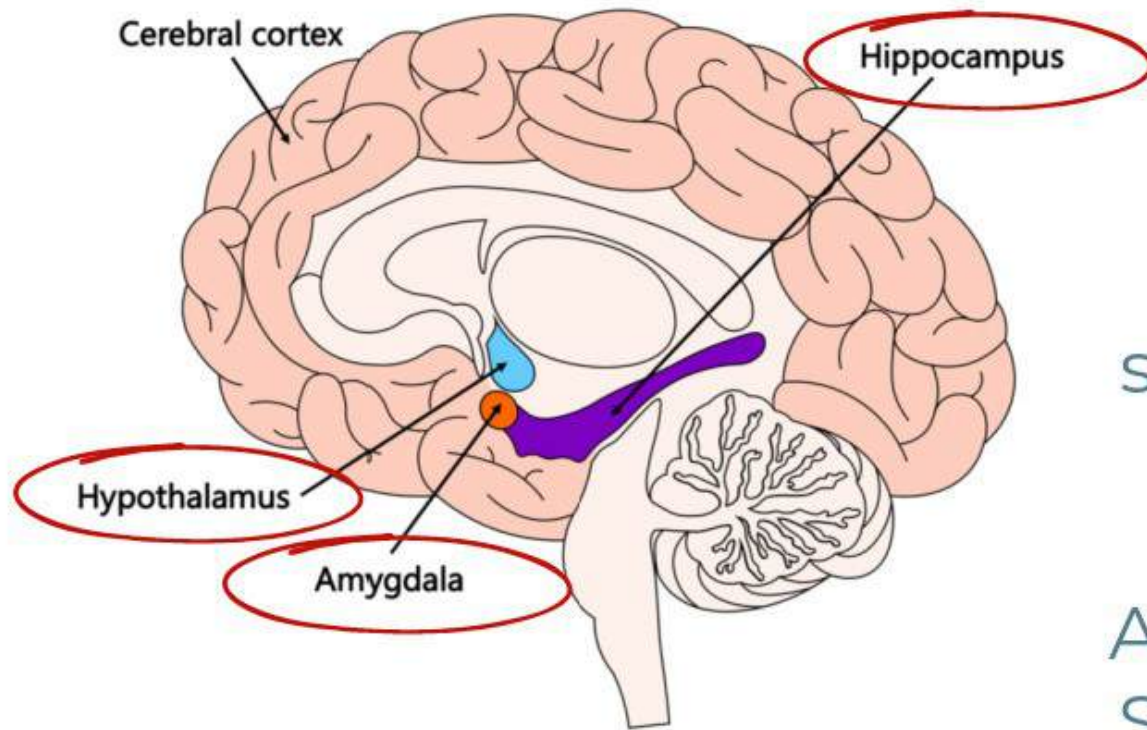
HIPPOCAMPUS



>> creates memory of environment, space, events, & facts

>> behaviors linked to emotional responses

>> receives input from amygdala & prefrontal cortex

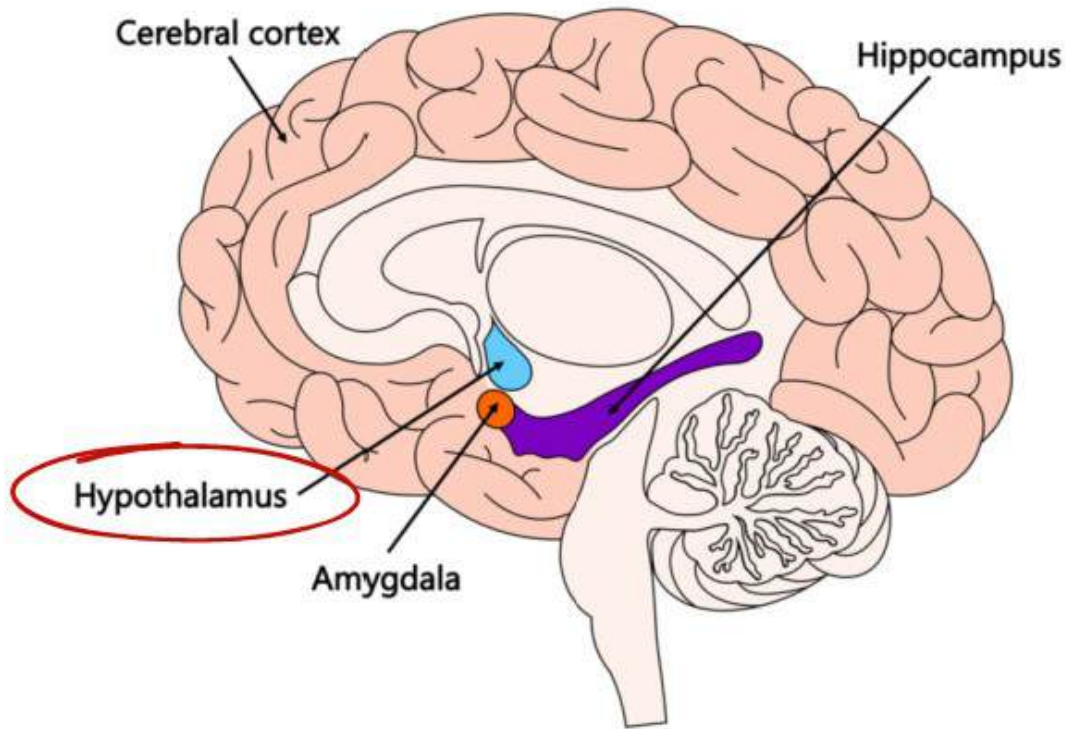


The AMYGDALAE and HIPPOCAMPUS work together to declare a threat. The HYPOTHALAMUS sends a message down the brain stem to activate the AUTONOMIC NERVOUS SYSTEM to fight, flee, or immobilize.

HYPOTHALAMUS

>> releases
corticotropin-releasing
hormone (CRH) that
signals to the PITUITARY
gland to secrete
adrenocorticotrophic
hormone (ACTH) into
bloodstream

>> turns emotions into
physical responses (ie.
increase heart rate in
response to fear)



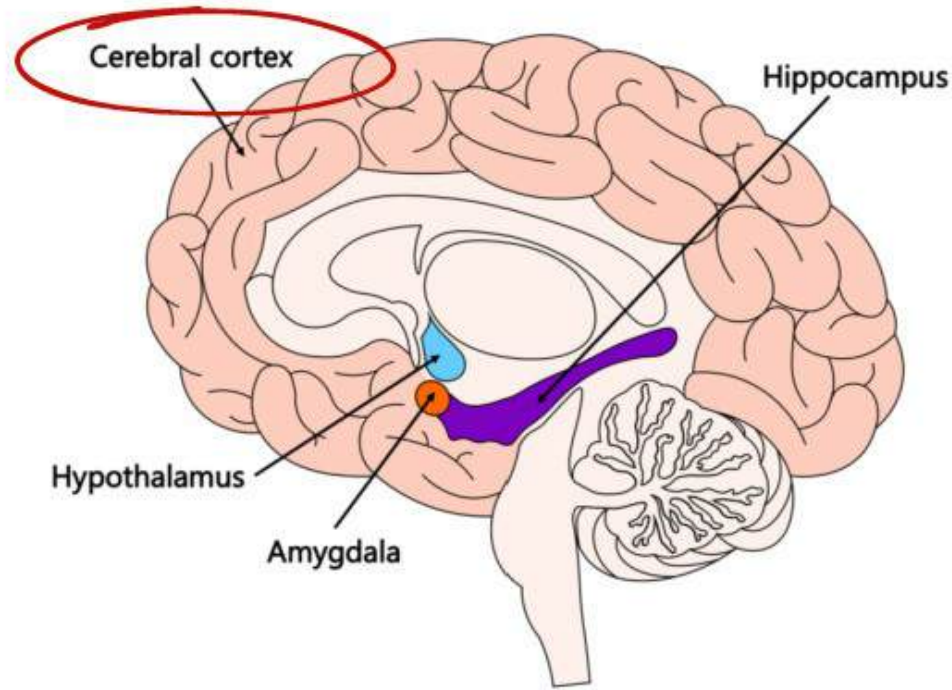
The AMYGDALA —> HIPPOCAMPUS —>
HYPOTHALAMUS —> AUTONOMIC NERVOUS
SYSTEM

response to stress and stimuli happens in real
time with any sort of trauma.

THE EXACT SAME SERIES OF EVENTS
HAPPENS WHEN WE'RE TRIGGERED, TOO.

EXACTLY THE SAME.

**Our limbic systems DO NOT know the
difference between a real-time trauma and
a trigger.**



But, the **prefrontal cortex** DOES know the difference. This is why triggers can be so confusing. Part of you feels like the threat is happening right now, while the rational, logical part of your brain knows it's not happening right now.

RETICULAR ACTIVATING SYSTEM (RAS)

- >> receives & filters input from sensory pathways (sight, sound, touch, etc.)
- >> connects the brain stem w/ spinal cord, cerebrum, & cerebellum
- >> reinforces our deepest subconscious beliefs (such as those about belonging & worth) which tend to form before age 7



- >> confirmation bias
- >> is the "echo chamber" of the mind & beliefs

"[The RAS] is a sophisticated filter system that allows certain information to your brain and filters out other information. Guess who programmed that filter? You did and so did the people from your past. The RAS seeks data that validates your beliefs. It screens the world through the parameters you give it and your beliefs form those parameters. Everything in your life is a reflection of your inner state. If you constantly feel unlovable or you think people don't like you at work.....your RAS is going to point out every single piece of evidence that confirms that negative belief all day long." — Jane Fuller

**So, how do we calm down the amygdala when it is
"hijacked" during a trigger?**

HAVENING — more on this later!

**And, how do we re-program a RAS that's hell-bent on
confirming our subconscious beliefs over and over?**

VISUALIZATION! Your subconscious mind responds
powerfully to visualization.

Remember... your limbic brain, nervous system, and RAS DO NOT keep linear time. This is why you can have a physical reaction or sensation to simply imagining something happen. To your brain and nervous system, that thing IS actually happening in real time.

So when you visualize yourself setting a boundary, feeling without fear, shifting a pattern, etc., that is happening RIGHT NOW as you visualize it. With consistency and repetition, you can train your RAS to filter differently — less based in the past trauma and more based in the present moment.

Hopefully, if you feel any shame or anger toward yourself due to your triggers and how you've reacted and hurt others when you were triggered, you can be more compassionate with yourself. Your body and brain were simply trying to protect you in the most primitive way. And yes, there may still be consequences to your actions, relationships to repair, accountability to take, etc.



POLYVAGAL LADDER



Social Engagement System

play

sympathetic fight

sympathetic flight

freeze

shutdown

Now that you know HOW your BRAIN and AUTONOMIC NERVOUS SYSTEM work together to protect you from threats — real or perceived — you need to know how to recognize the physiological and emotional signs that you're triggered AND the trauma responses associated with your reactions.

"Recognizing the moment of triggering is even more important than recognizing the trigger itself."

— Pete Walker

We will discuss each trauma response in detail, including how we can meet each response with awareness instead of enacting unconscious reactions on Self and others.

FIGHT RESPONSE

The fight response is an activation of the SYMPATHETIC branch of the nervous system. The body prepares to defend itself against danger, using physical force if necessary.

Fight Response

EMOTIONS:

- >> irritability
- >> frustration
- >> anger
- >> rage
- >> aggression
- >> out of control

SENSATIONS:

- >> increased heart rate
- >> quick, shallow breathing
- >> dry mouth
- >> muscle tension
- >> face/skin flushes red

UNCONSCIOUS

REACTIONS:

- >> slamming doors
- >> pounding fists
- >> yelling
- >> needing to be "right"
- >> attempt to control
- >> mock, taunt, shame
- >> "grrrrr!"/"ugh!"
- >> violence



INTEGRATED FIGHT RESPONSE

- >> assertiveness
- >> boundaries
- >> self-protection/
protection of others
- >> courage
- >> leadership
- >> motivation & drive

UNINTEGRATED FIGHT RESPONSE

- >> narcissism
- >> explosive
- >> controlling
- >> demanding
- >> entitlement
- >> condescending
- >> intimidating
- >> bullying
- >> demanding
perfection

POLYVAGAL LADDER



Social Engagement System

play

sympathetic fight

sympathetic flight

freeze

shutdown

FAWN RESPONSE

Fawning is not actually a nervous system state. It is not on the Polyvagal Ladder.

However, there is often a high level of nervous system activation in someone who fawns. Fawning, rather, is behavioral modification in reaction to a nervous system state. You are willing to do/say/become whatever is necessary to stop the unbearable feelings of discomfort.

FAWN RESPONSE

EMOTIONS:

- >> unworthy
- >> unloved
- >> resentment
- >> depleted
- >> anxious
- >> like you want to hide/blend in
- >> don't know what you feel b/c you're always focused on others

SENSATIONS:

- >> anxiety
- >> physically or emotionally drained
- >> knot in throat
- >> sick to stomach
- >> disconnection or distraction from bodily sensation

UNCONSCIOUS BEHAVIORS:

- >> people-pleasing
- >> co-dependency
- >> ignoring your own needs
- >> no boundaries
- >> over-caring/over-giving
- >> won't say no
- >> flatters others
- >> denial or avoidance of conflict

INTEGRATED FAWN RESPONSE

- >> service
- >> compromise
- >> peacemaking
- >> caretaking
- >> parenting
- >> fairness
- >> listening
- >> meeting attachment needs of children

UNINTEGRATED FAWN RESPONSE

- >> over-serving/giving
- >> people-pleasing
- >> doormat
- >> groveling
- >> social perfectionism
- >> says yes, means no
- >> loss of self
- >> resentful w/o boundaries
- >> self-abandonment

If your nervous system goes into sympathetic FIGHT/FLIGHT mobilization when you're triggered, you will experience the same increased heart rate, quick, shallow breathing, muscle tension, dry mouth, sweating, and flushing as you'd experience if you came face to face with a bear in the woods. Physiologically, the body/nervous system doesn't know the difference.

If you don't meet that FIGHT response with awareness, you may UNCONSCIOUSLY REACT by...

- >> yelling at others
- >> getting defensive
- >> hurting someone out of anger
- >> arguing with strangers on the Internet
- >> blaming/shaming others



If you don't meet that FLIGHT mobilization response with awareness, you may **UNCONSCIOUSLY REACT** by...

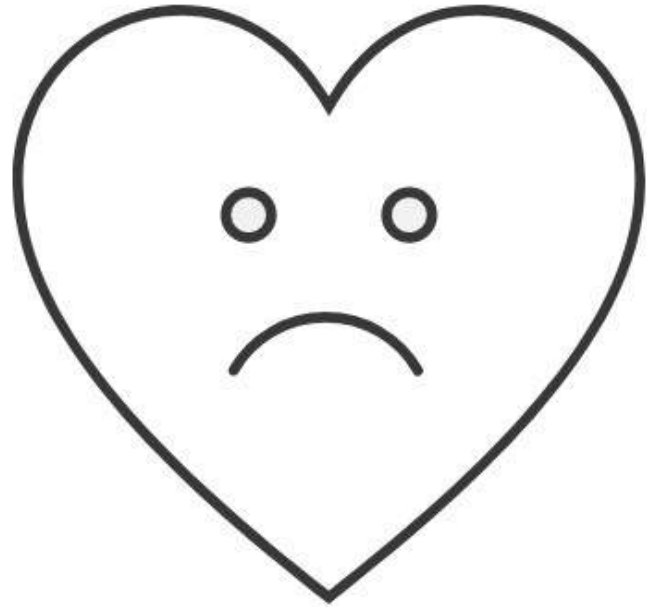
- >> panicking
- >> avoiding people, places, potential other triggers
- >> over-thinking
- >> fawning
- >> quitting
- >> trying to be more perfect



If your nervous system goes into parasympathetic
IMMOBILIZATION when you're triggered, you will
experience the same loss of words, dissociation,
stuckness, and shame as when you are
overwhelmed with any experience in real time.
Physiologically, the body/nervous system doesn't
know the difference.

**If you don't meet that IMMOBILIZATION
response with awareness, you may
UNCONSCIOUSLY REACT by...**

- >> shaming yourself
- >> fawning
- >> scrolling/zoning out
- >> dissociating
- >> giving up
- >> hidings



MORE COMMON TRIGGER FEELINGS:

- >> small, helpless, hopeless
- >> intense shame, want to run & never be seen again
- >> fragile, on-edge, delicate
- >> major drop in self-confidence & self-esteem
- >> all-or-nothing, binary thinking
- >> increasingly loud Inner Critic
- >> increased drastacizing or catastrophizing
- >> emotional reaction is out of proportion to the trigger itself

MORE COMMON TRIGGER FEELINGS:

- >> feeling especially judgmental of others
- >> a minor upset feels like an emergency
- >> angering at and shaming self for hours or days
- >> self-digust and self-hatred
- >> unfairly exploding on someone who is "innocent"
- >> intensified self-criticism, self-shaming
- >> only finding fault w/ yourself or, conversely, only finding fault with others



quick break

HOW TO FACE & OVERCOME TRIGGERS...

How to Face & Overcome Triggers

#1 — AWARENESS

Notice that you're feeling triggered.

Maybe even say out loud, "I notice that I'm feeling triggered."

Notice what you feel in your body. What does it feel like? See if you can describe it in detail.

Is it hot? Cold? Tense? Pulsing? Is it a certain color? Shape? Get familiar with the sensation. This also helps you slow down and stay in your body — necessary for triggers especially because they often happen so fast we don't know what hit us.

How to Face & Overcome Triggers

#2 — PRESENCE & LOVE

Be fully present with what you're noticing in your body. Place a loving hand on the area of your body where the triggered feeling lives. If it feels like it's your whole body, hold yourself.

You may like to remind yourself, "I am safe. I am having a flashback. I feel afraid but I am not in danger."

The area of your body where this trigger lives is important. It's a part of you who feels very unsafe and uncertain, who may not actually realize what's happening is rooted in the past and not the present. This part wants to be held and loved, not shamed, judged, rejected, abandoned, or fixed.

How to Face & Overcome Triggers

#3 — NERVOUS SYSTEM CPR

If you are very overwhelmed and uncomfortable, you are outside your window of tolerance. Before you go any further with trying to face and heal anything, you need to bring yourself back inside your window of tolerance.

Use a simple Nervous System CPR tool — this is what they're for! Your "oh shit" nervous system moments (like triggers).

Havening, box-breathing, shaking, physiological sigh.

LindseyLockett.com/CPR

How to Face & Overcome Triggers

#4 — NOTICING

Notice the stories/voice in your head about this trigger.

What is the voice in your head saying about what you're feeling or what you're triggered by? Is it blaming someone else? Is it shaming you? Is it saying this is too much or you can't handle it? Or that this doesn't work? Just notice and remain in loving presence in your body.

The mind is a meaning-making machine. What meaning is it making about what you're feeling? NOT the meaning of the trigger, but what YOU are feeling? This is how we notice our judgments and attachments to our state and our stories.

How to Face & Overcome Triggers

#5 — CHOOSE

Make a conscious choice. Choose how you want to respond to what you're feeling.

When triggered, we react instead of respond.
Responsibility = the ability to respond

How can you use your agency and sovereignty to take care of yourself? What would your Highest Self choose?

To set a boundary? To stay in the discomfort? To walk away and take a break? To unfollow or block?

SACRED PAUSE

From the moment you become aware that you're triggered, notice the sensation in your body, and hold yourself and BEFORE you make a choice, there is a SACRED PAUSE.

The energy of a trigger is very fast. Awareness requires slowing down. Slowing down is a conscious choice.

You're more likely to interrupt the pattern/trigger by responding in a way that supports your goal to face your trigger and widen your window of tolerance when you pause before choosing.

awareness >> feel >> hold >> CPR >> notice the voice >> pause >> choose

You will have to practice this process over and over.

Maybe the voice in your head is already creating a story about this: "Ugh? Seriously? Why does it have to be so hard and take so long?"

"There must be something wrong with me if I can't get this right on the first try."

"Why do I have to practice? It's not fair!"

"I just want to fix this and forget it! I don't want to practice!"

**Again, BECOME AWARE, PRESENT,
HOLD, and LOVE YOURSELF, NOTICE
THE STORIES, PAUSE, and CHOOSE.**

**What if I don't know the past stuff
that's bringing up present-moment
feelings?**

**The Million-Dollar Question:
Do we have to remember, re-live,
or recount traumatic events
and experiences to heal from
them?**

NO. But...

We do have to change how we relate to our bodies' sensations. This requires changing our relationship to our bodies and to sensation. This is true whether your "typical" pattern is hyper-arousal (feeling EVERYTHING) or hypo-arousal (feeling NOTHING).

The main reason we avoid triggers is because it is likely a child part of us who is triggered, not our adult Self.

This child part does not know how to hold himself/herself because he/she is a child. This child doesn't know they can feel hard things and still be ok.

So, we stop feeling and we react instead. An adaptive survival pattern comes up to protect us from the feeling.

We dissociate (immobilize). We avoid (flight). We blame others for not posting a trigger warning and call people harmful (fight).

**But, if you could trust yourself to
hold yourself in love and compassion
while feeling hard feelings...**

**would you have to avoid? dissociate?
run away? blame? get defensive?**

The goal is NOT to stop feeling.

**The goal is to FEEL WITHOUT
FEAR.**

FEEL your triggers. Yes, FEEL them.

**FEEL the overwhelm, the fear, the
anger, the sadness, the disgust, the
anxiety, the threat.**

**If you're not feeling it, you're not
healing it.**

**It's also important to remember that
nothing is black and white.**

**As we heal, we have to leave room
for the complexities.**

For example...

Maybe something is outside your window of tolerance NOW, but you leave room for the possibility that it won't ALWAYS be outside your window of tolerance.

There's a difference between avoiding triggers and setting healthy boundaries.

You can feel triggered and also the person you're triggered by isn't a "bad" or "harmful" person.

More complexities that deserve space...

You have agency. You are not required to face/heal everything.

You are not a failure if you get triggered and react unconsciously. This does not make you a "harmful person" even if you inadvertantly cause harm when you're triggered.

MORE WAYS TO MEET YOURSELF WITH COMPASSION WHEN TRIGGERED:

>> Give your Inner Child or Kid on the Bus some reassurance. Let them know you love them unconditionally and you believe this is hard/scary for them. Let them know you're here to protect them and comfort them.

>> When triggered, we are likely to use eternity statements like "always" and "never". Remember this trigger will pass just like every other time you've been triggered.

MORE WAYS TO MEET YOURSELF WITH COMPASSION WHEN TRIGGERED:

- >> Remind yourself that you are an adult now, not a child, and you have resources, skills, and safe relationships now that you did not have as a child.
- >> Refuse to hate, shame, or abandon yourself. Instead, channel any anger you feel at yourself toward your Inner Critic. Replace with your positive qualities and accomplishments (ie. I came into awareness more quickly this time!)

MORE WAYS TO MEET YOURSELF WITH COMPASSION WHEN TRIGGERED:

>> Seek support. Shame isolates; notice this and choose to seek support anyway. You need intimate relationships where you can share about your triggers/flashbacks and talk/feel your way through them.

>> Refuse to go into patterns of perfectionism.

>> BE PATIENT. Recovery takes time.

"Be patient with a slow recovery process: it takes time in the present to become un-adrenalized, and considerable time in the future to gradually decrease the intensity, duration and frequency of flashbacks. Real recovery is a gradually progressive process [often two steps forward, one step back], not an attained salvation fantasy. Don't beat yourself up for having a flashback."

— Pete Walker

A dark, textured circular shape, resembling a watercolor blot or a dark ink smudge, is centered on a solid blue background. The text is overlaid on this dark shape.

**5-minute break
then...
Q&A!**