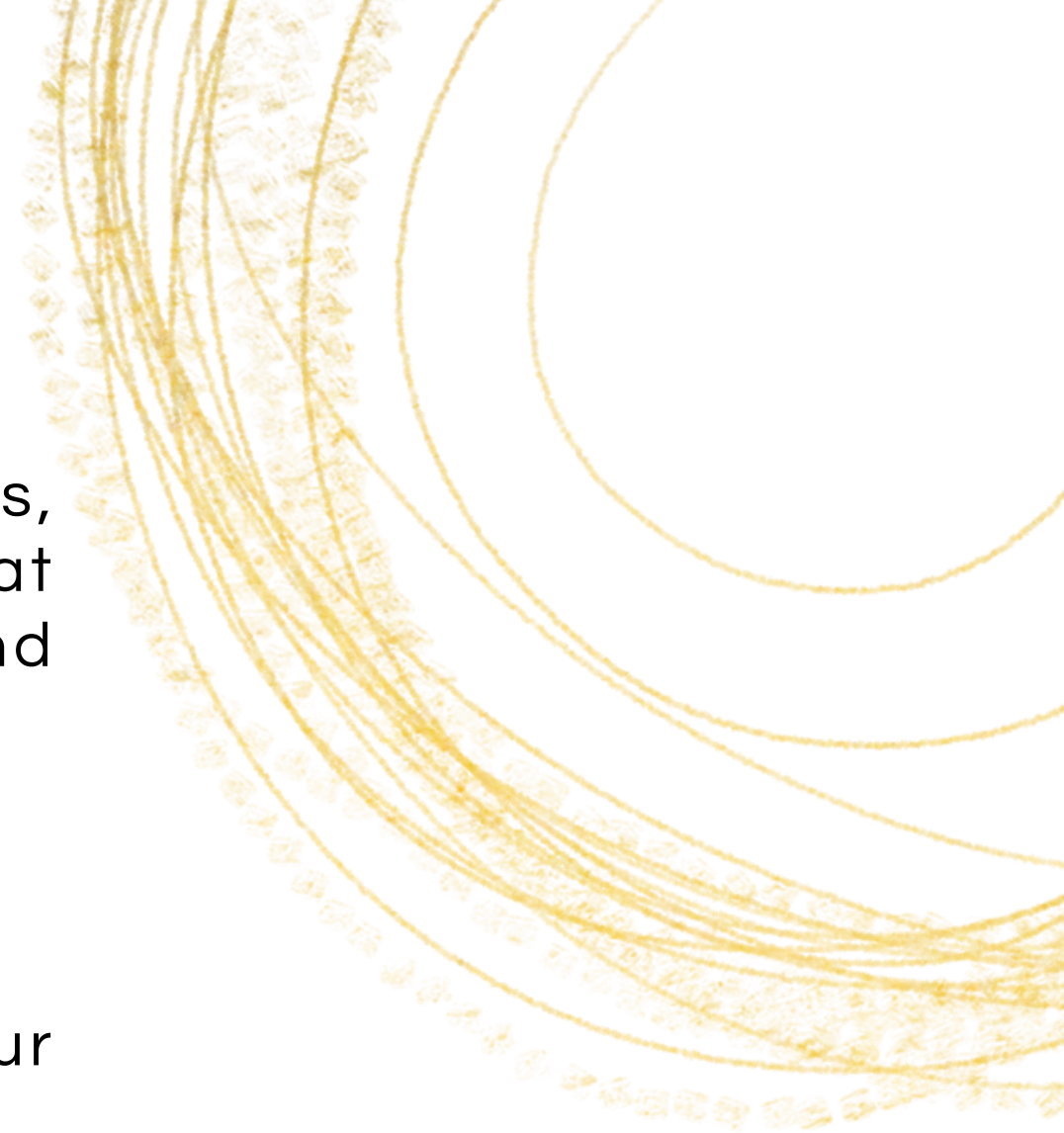




Understanding Trauma in Schools

**Abbi Schuh- Vineland 3rd - 5th grade Counselor, LPC
DeSoto #73 School District
DeSoto, Mo**

Session Outcomes

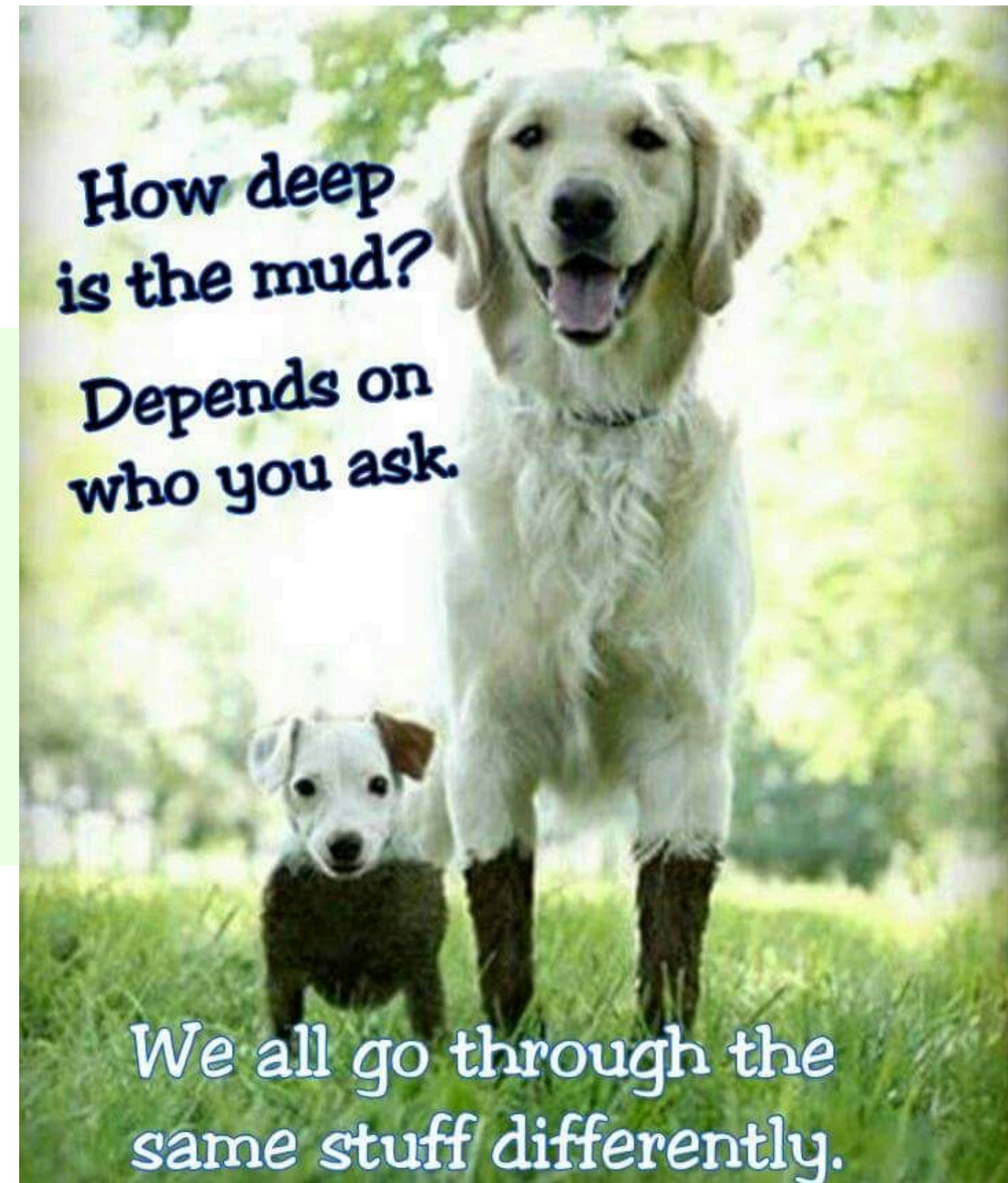


- Receive a basic understanding of what trauma is, what can be a traumatic event, as well as what effects trauma has on the brain, body, and development

- Understanding what trauma might look like in your students, in their families or in yourself

- Learn what traumatic responses are and what secondary trauma can look/sound like & receive examples of trauma-informed strategies to use within your classroom & school

What does
this image
have to do
with trauma?



What is trauma?

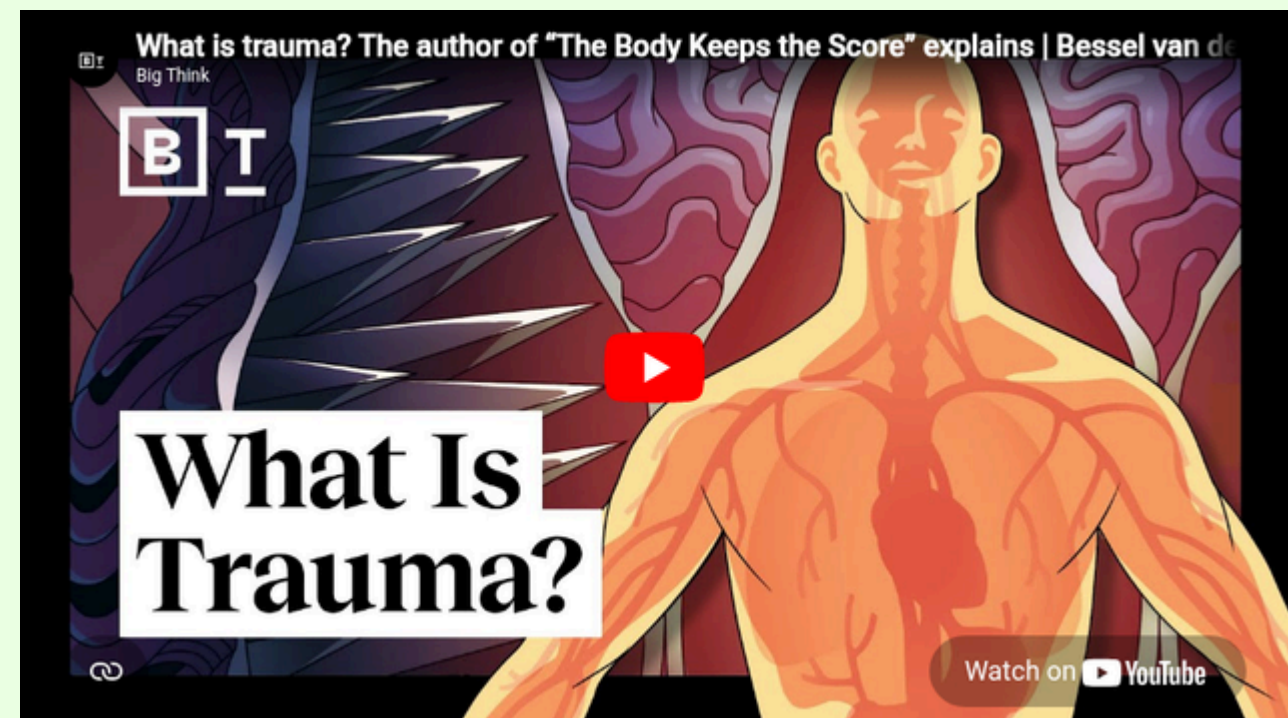
Can be direct experience, witnessing of or learning about events perceived as physically or emotionally harmful or threatening & that can have lasting adverse effects on an individual's functioning & physical, social &/or emotional well being such as, but not limited to:

- **Sexual Abuse or Assault**
- **Physical Abuse**
- **School Violence**
- **Fires**
- **Traumatic Loss/Separation**
- **Abandonment**
- **Domestic Violence**
- **Bullying**
- **Suicide/ Death of a loved one**
- **Mass Disasters**
- **Kidnapping**
- **Witnessing police activity**
- **Travel Accidents**
- **Community Violence**
- **Weather-related events**
- **Terrorism**
- **Medical Trauma**
- **Incarceration of relative**

Trauma is....

- Our brain & body's response to an event.
- Our brain's way of keeping us safe in a situation perceived as dangerous.
- Dependent on the individual's personality & previous experiences.
- Impacted by the individual's relationship & attachment to their primary caregiver

What is trauma?- Bessel van der Kolk

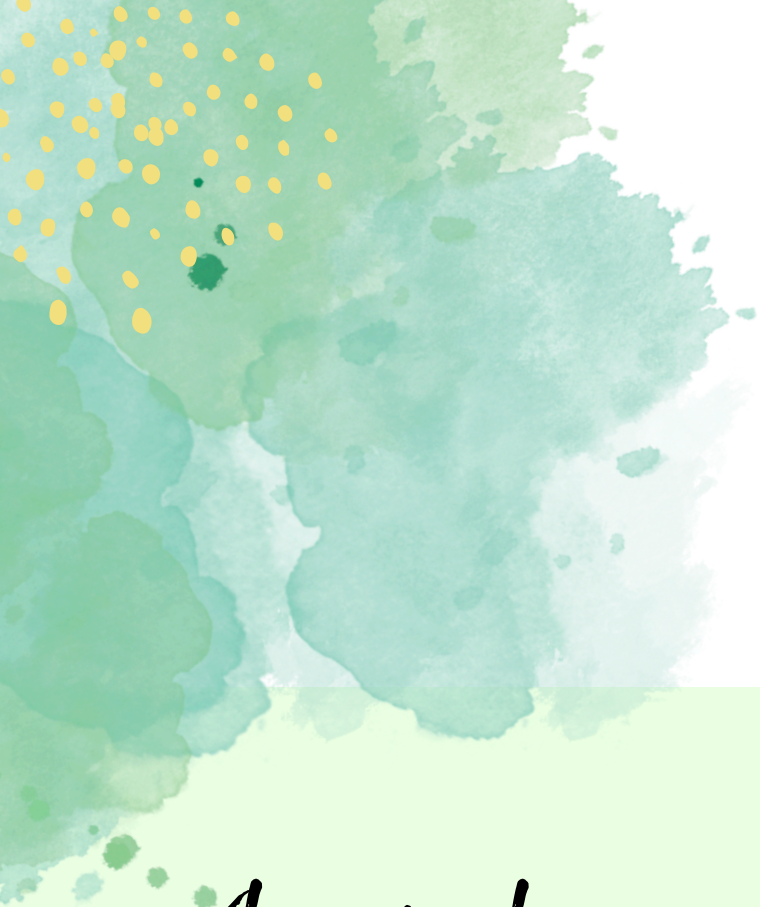




What can Trauma look like?

Trauma can look like...

- Anxiety, fear or worry about safety of self and others (more clingy with teacher or parent/caregiver)
- Worry about recurrence of violence/event
- Increased distress (unusually whiny, irritable, moody)
- Changes in behavior: increased activity level, decreased attention/concentration, withdrawal from others or activities, angry outbursts or aggression, absenteeism
- Distrust of others, affection interactions with both adults and peers
- A change in ability to interpret and respond appropriately to social cues
- Increased somatic complaints (e.g. headaches, stomachaches, overreaction to minor bumps and bruises)
- Changes in school performance
- Recreating the event (e.g. repeatedly talking about, “playing out”, or drawing the event)
- Over- or under-reacting to bells, physical contact, doors slamming, sirens, lighting, sudden movements
- Statements and questions about death/dying
- Difficulty with authority, redirection, or criticism
- Re-experiencing the trauma (e.g. nightmares or disturbing memories through the day)
- Hyperarousal (e.g. sleep disturbance, tendency to be easily startled)
- Avoidance behaviors (e.g. resisting going to place that remind or could remind them of the event)
- Emotional numbing (e.g. seeming to have no feelings about the event)

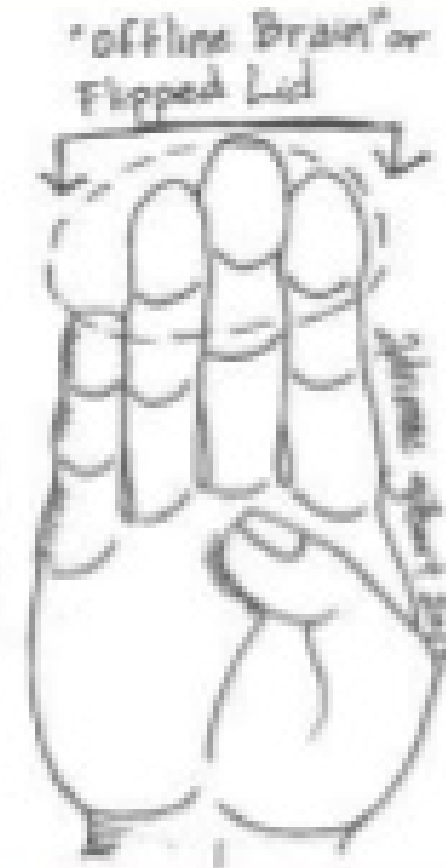
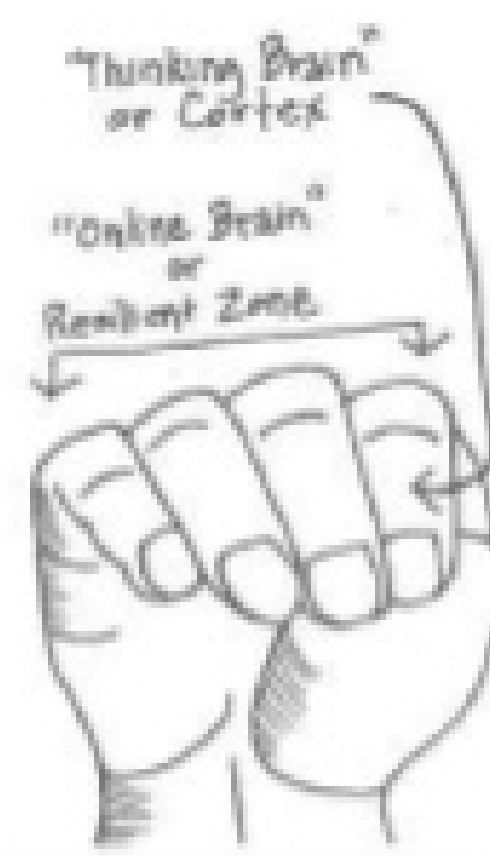
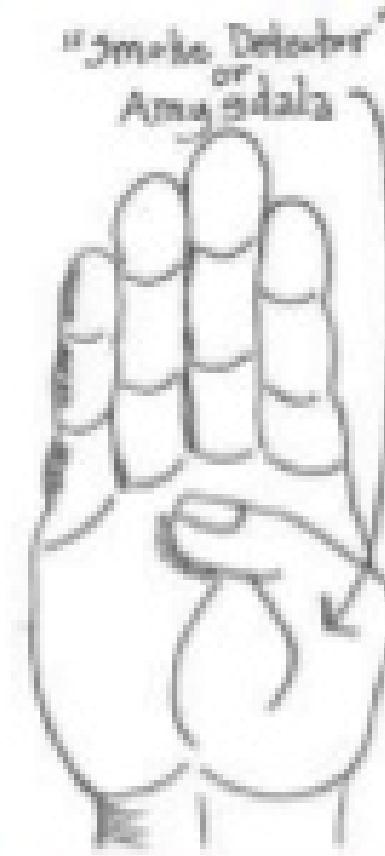
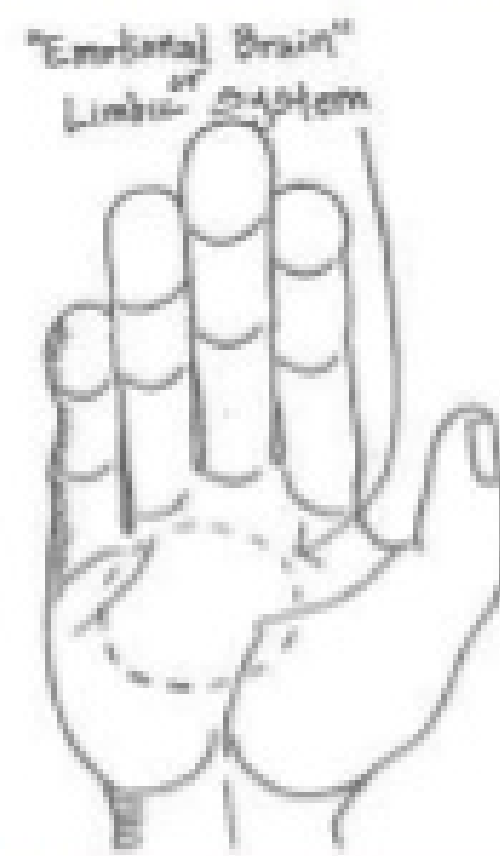


What happens in your brain when you experience trauma?



Understanding the Brain

Hand Brain Model, Dr. Dan Siegal



Survival Brain

Sensation
Autonomic functions
Survival strategies:
fight, flight,
freeze, submit,
& collapse

Emotional Brain

Expression/
regulation of
feeling
Memories
relationships/
attachment

Amygdala

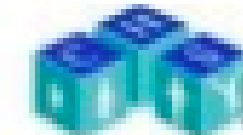
Smoke alarm

Thinking Brain

Critical thinking
Problem solving,
planning,
creativity,
beliefs, impulse
control

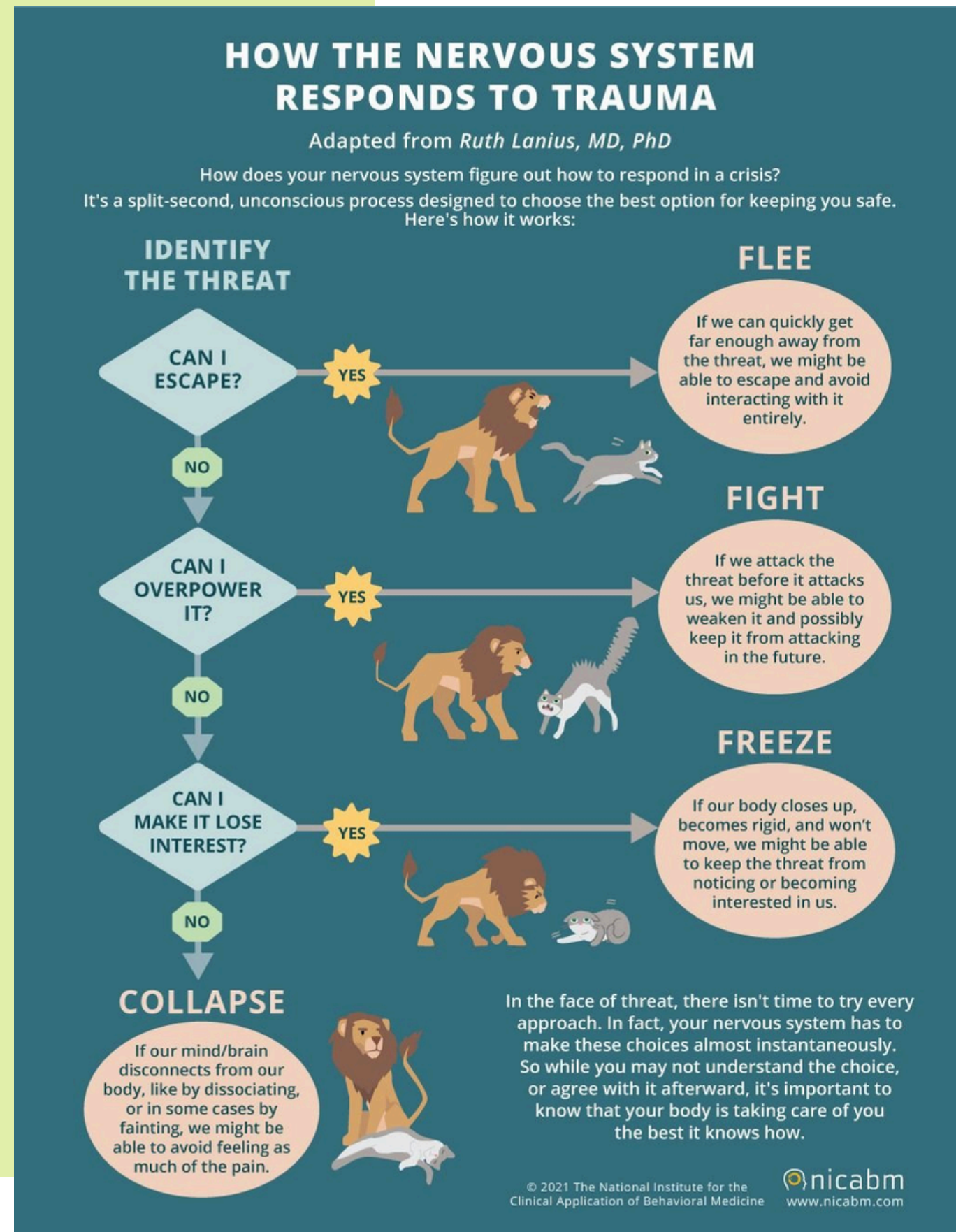
Offline Brain

Survival brain
in control
Not able to
access the
thinking brain.



Children's Home Society

How the Nervous System responds to Trauma



Flee: Can I get far enough away that this is no longer a threat?

Fight: If I attack first, I could weaken it & might stop it from attacking me in the future.

Freeze: Maybe they won't notice me? (Body becomes rigid, stuck in place)

Collapse: Brain & body disconnect or sometimes individuals faint to avoid feeling as much pain

* * Fawn: appease, please or comply; avoid conflict to ensure safety

-Instantaneous response by your nervous system;
NOT a cognitive choice

The image features a central horizontal band of light green color. Above and below this band are decorative watercolor-style splashes in various shades of green and teal. Small yellow dots are scattered within the watercolor areas, particularly in the top-left and bottom-right corners. A thin vertical black line runs through the center of the page, passing through the middle of the light green band.

What can Trauma do to your body & brain?

What does Trauma do to the body?

Short term effects on the body:

- Sleep disturbances (restless sleep, frequent waking, nightmares)
- Gastrointestinal issues (stomach aches, digestion issues, changes to appetite)
- Cardiovascular (increases heart rate; fluctuation in heart rate; elevated blood pressure)
- Musculoskeletal (unexplained pains & aches; muscle tension)
- Respiratory (shortness of breath; shallow breathing)
- Self-medication (substance abuse)

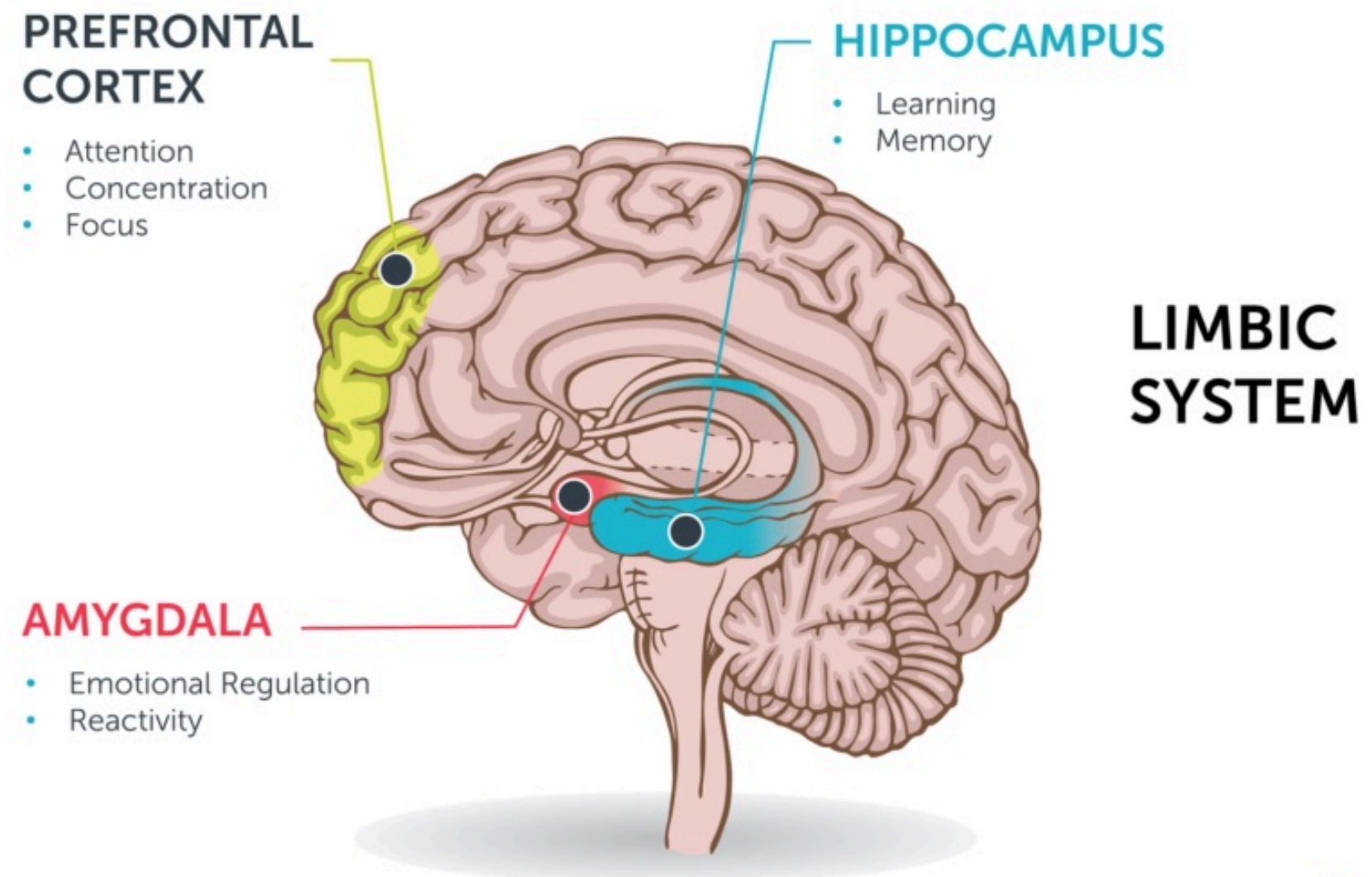
Long term effects on the body (based on research from ACE's):

- 1.4 times more likely to have diabetes
- 2 to 2.3 times more likely to have a stroke, cancer, or heart disease
- 3 times more likely to smoke cigarettes
- 3.2 times as likely to have chronic lower respiratory disease
- 5 times more likely to have major depression
- 10 times more likely to experience "problematic drug use"
- 37.5 times more likely to attempt suicide
- Many symptoms, if left untreated, can lead to early death

How does trauma affect the brain?

Each individual has a different emotional response to a traumatic event; the brain's response will also vary between individuals.

- -Amygdala (detect/react): becomes hyperactive
 - -Medial prefrontal cortex (mPFC) (controls): less effective functions
 - -Hippocampus (learning & memory): may shrink in size
- Memory & attention issues
- Emotional Dysregulation
 - Re-experiencing/avoidance
 - Neuropsychiatric issues (risk for depression, suicidality & substance use)



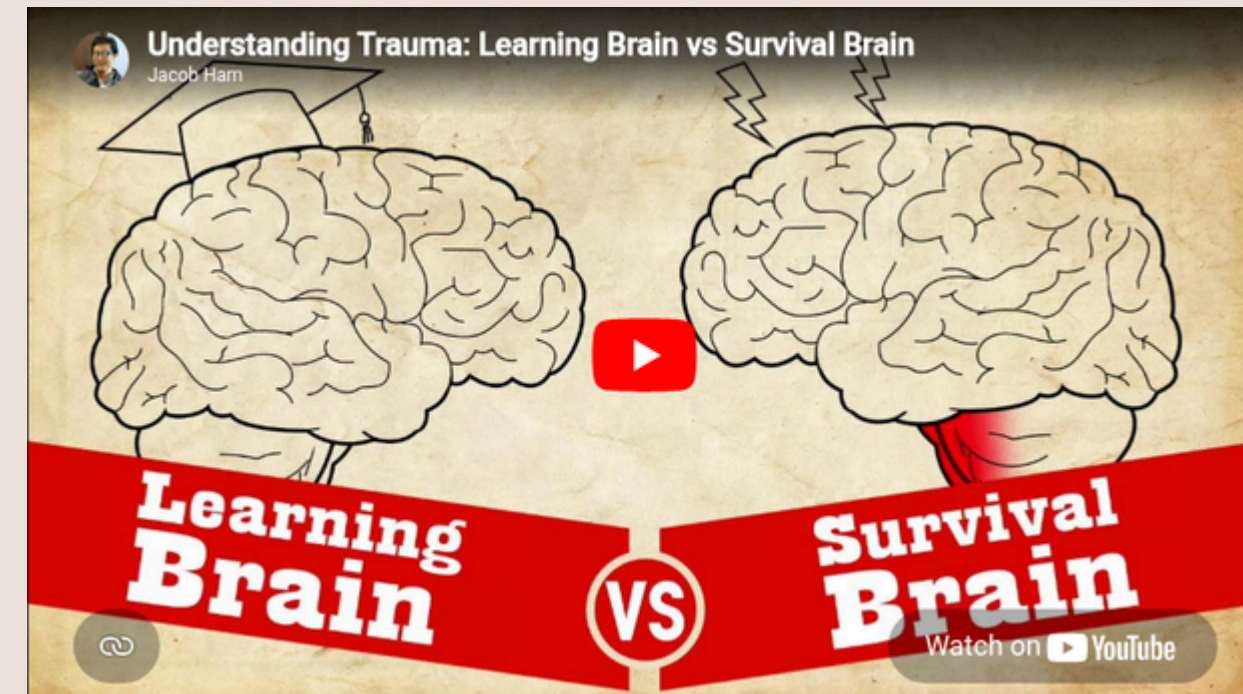
Learning Brain VS. Survival Brain

Trauma can:

- impact school performance
- impair learning
- cause physical & emotional distress
- increase behavioral or academic problems

Learning Brain: open to new information, comfortable with ambiguity, emotionally calm, peaceful, excited about learning, curious & not afraid to make mistakes.

Survival Brain: hyperfocused on (potential) threats, doesn't like ambiguity, thinks in black & white





What can you do in the classroom?

Strategies to manage your emotions

- **Identify your stress responses**- before an emotional response, our nervous system will send physical sensations through our body to prepare it to fight, flight or freeze; monitoring our own body signals is important in maintaining regulation
- **Use a sensory regulatory practice**- Our reactions to stress can be physical, but so can our responses to try to remain calm; we can use movement & sensory practices to help calm our nervous system
- **Reframe your thoughts**- Our immediate reactions are often biased or defensive & our bodies are often filled with anxiety, causing us to respond irrationally. How can you think about the same situation in a different way?
- **Use Focused-Attention Practices**- like sensory regulation practices, focused-attention practices can help us when we're dysregulated; 100 Focused-Attention Practices
- **Continue to Practice Awareness**- Every Day: Mindfulness is a skill that we develop over time; it's important to implement these practices even when we're not feeling stressed or overwhelmed.

SENSORY AND NERVOUS SYSTEM PRACTICES FOR CALM AND DE-ESCALATION

A MENU FOR STUDENTS & ADULTS

- Chew on ice
- Place a baggie of ice on an area on the body
- Wrap up in a blanket
- Take your shoes off and walk in the grass or a surface in nature for a bit
- Hum, whistle, or sing
- Place a fan in front of you and feel the moving air
- Drum up and down your legs and arms to increase circulation
- Doodle
- Rock or swing
- Sit on your hands or legs
- Drum, tap, or snap fingers
- Write/describe who you are in a calm regulated state, flight/fight state, and shut down state
- Create a personal calming space for yourself at school and home
- Hand massage
- Run your hands under warm water
- Take a walk outdoors
- Splash cold water on your face
- Text/call a trusted friend or family member
- Three deep breaths
- Find a smooth stone & roll it on your hands for a few seconds with deep breaths
- Run your hands through uncooked rice, beads, marbles, sand, etc.
- Make a sensory table or space
- Write a letter or draw an image of how you feel in the moment

SENSORY AND NERVOUS SYSTEM PRACTICES FOR CALM AND DE-ESCALATION

MENU #2 FOR STUDENTS & ADULTS

- Play with a slinky
- Feel a shell
- Feel a smooth stone
- Eat crunchy snacks such as veggie sticks
- Four deep breaths
- Put on small wrist weights
- Place an outline of hands on the wall and push on them.
- Tapping
- Hand cream
- Sit on therapy ball
- Play with and feel a fabric square
- Listen to the birds for two minutes. Find a rhythm in their chirps. How are they different or similar?
- Jumping-jacks
- Rub gently on clothes - really feel it!
- Draw, color, any art project
- Eat sweet, hard candies or sour candies
- Put on a worry bead bracelet
- Push against the wall
- Create yarn balls
- Kneel on the ground or on a chair to ground yourself
- Hold and squeeze a soft pillow
- Chew gum, eat raisins, eat lollipops
- Joint compression: stand, hang hands on head, bounce on heels gently

10 De-escalation Tips:

- Tip 1: Be empathetic & non-judgemental- just because you don't understand their reaction or feelings doesn't mean they can't feel what they feel.
- Tip 2: Respect personal space- remain 1.5 to 3 feet away.
- Tip 3: Use non threatening nonverbals- think about your tone & body language
- Tip 4: Avoid overreacting- remain calm & rational or find someone to take over for you.
- Tip 5: Focus on feelings: listen for emotion words
- Tip 6: Ignore challenging questions
- Tip 7: Set limits: offer choices
- Tip 8: Choose wisely what you insist upon- Be flexible; again offer choices
- Tip 9: Allow silence for reflection- sitting with someone through difficult/uncomfortable emotions can mean more than words.
- Tip 10: Allow time for decisions- if possible, walk away & come back



Let's practice a reset!

5 Senses Grounding Technique

5 4 3 2 1

SLOW DOWN & CALM DOWN

FIRST- TAKE 3 SLOW BELLY BREATHS!

5 List 5 things you can SEE



4 List 4 things you can FEEL



3 List 3 things you can HEAR



2 List 2 things you can SMELL

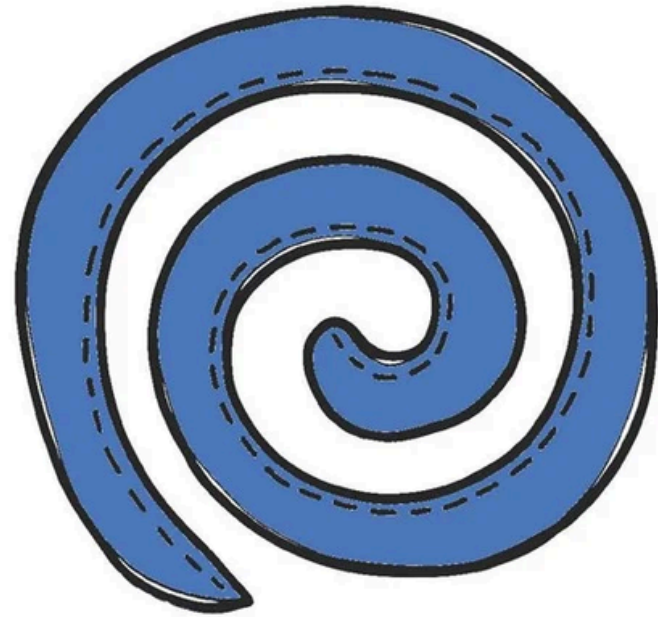


1 List something you like to TASTE



Breathing strategies

Spiral Breathing

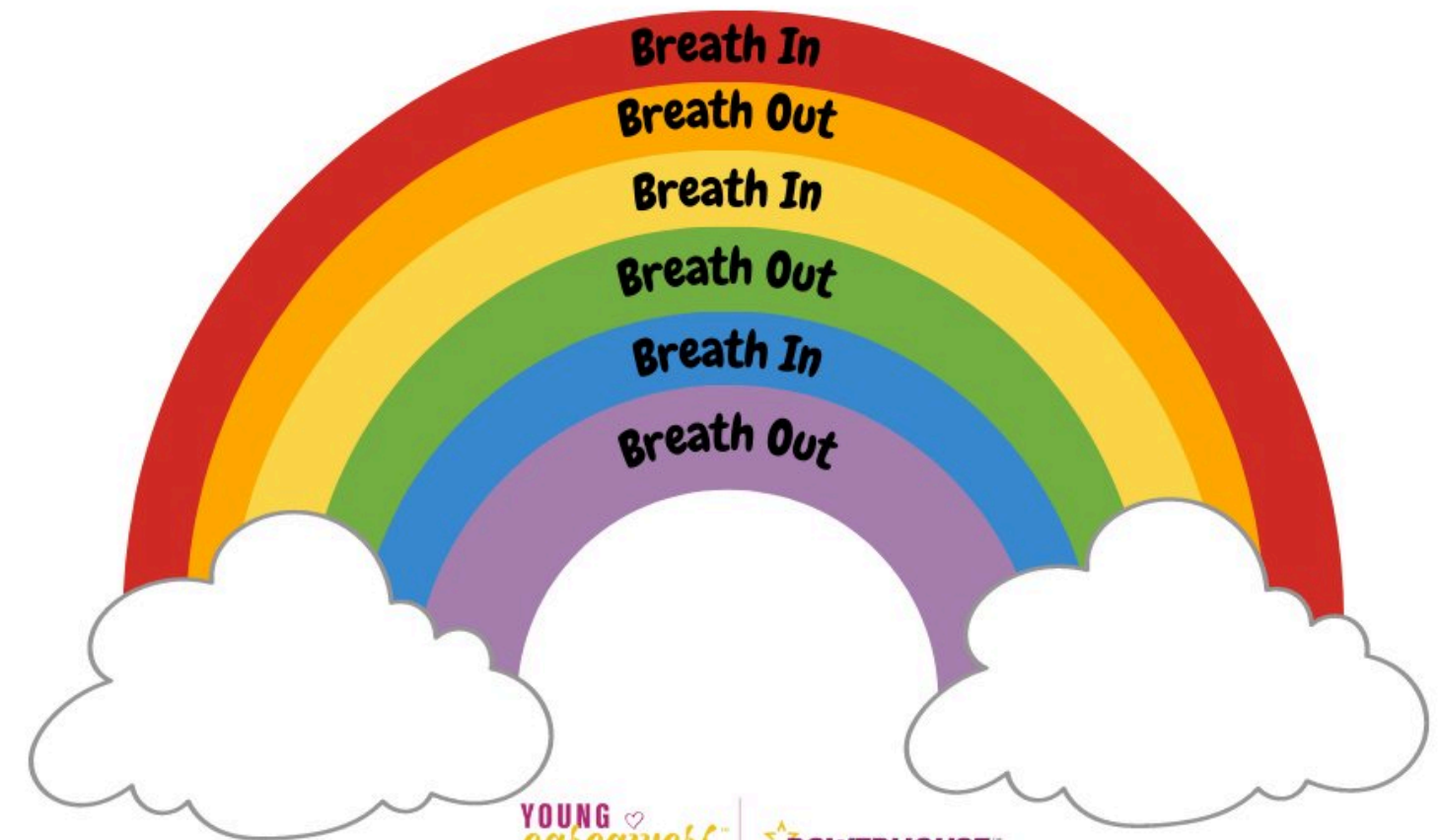


1. Put your finger in the air and place it in the middle of the spiral
2. Breathe in slowly while drawing a spiral as many times around until you run out of breath.
3. Then breathe out slowly while drawing the spiral back to the center.
4. Repeat as many times as necessary.

THE ENCOURAGING
CLASSROOM

Rainbow Breathing

Breathe in and out while tracing each corresponding colour. Repeat as needed



YOUNG
caregivers
ASSOCIATION

POWERHOUSE

Youngcaregivers.ca

Daily Affirmations

- The Affirmation Song- Doggyland Kids Songs & Nursery Rhymes by Snoop Dogg
- I Can Do Hard Things- Doggyland Kids Songs & Nursery Rhymes by Snoop Dogg
- I Am Enough- Positive Affirmations Song
- 1 Minute Morning Affirmations for Kids



Compassion Fatigue (Secondary Trauma)

What is it??

-A state of emotional, physical & psychological exhaustion that can occur when someone cares for people who are traumatized or in emotional distress.

What can it look like?

- **Helplessness**
- **Emotional Detachment**
- **Reduced Empathy/sensitivity**
- **Powelessness**
- **Irritability/anger**
- **Loss of Interest/motivation**
- **Headaches, GI issues**
- **Sleep issues, insomnia, restlessness**

How to handle it:

- **Self-care!!**
- **Healthy eating habits**
- **Regular exercise/physical activity**
- **Adequate sleep**
- **Time off/away from stressors**
- **Healthy emotional boundaires**
- **Therapy**
- **Mindfulness, mediation, yoga**
- **Social support networks**

Self-Care Newsletters

WEEK 2: IMPORTANCE OF SELF-CARE

Self-Care

Self-Care & Your Brain

- Consistent self-care can reduce activation in the amygdala (smoke alarm of the brain) which leads to less production of stress hormones, like cortisol.
- Self-care can also increase Neuroplasticity (a fancy word for the ability of our brains to grow new neural connections/pathways).
- Self-care can also strengthen the Prefrontal cortex (thinking brain) by improving focus, self-regulation, & decision making.
- Happy brain chemicals are released through self-care, which we will learn more about later.
- Self-care leads to an overall more resilient, healthy brain with improved coping strategies for everyday stressors, emotional stability, and cognitive performance & reduced burnout.

How do I start?

Give yourself permission (HERE is a permission slip to make it official)

Take small steps - over the next week, commit to including **one** small shift in your self-care

Ask for help/support!

Try out some of the tool & tips included

Give yourself grace and patience as you figure out what works for you

Questions to consider

- What is my current level of self-care?
- Are there changes I would like to make to my self-care?
- What are my reasons for wanting to make changes?
- What currently brings me joy?
- Who can support me on my self-care journey?
- What would that support look like?

Tools & Tips

- [Self-Care Rating Scale](#)
- [How to FEEL your feelings](#)
- [Self-Care Daily Check-in](#)
- [Self-Discovery Journal Prompts](#)
- [Mood Meter](#)
- [Daily Affirmations](#)
- [Sensory & Nervous System Practices](#)

Additional Resources

Check out this TEDx Talk [Self-Care Simplified](#)
[Understanding Compassion Fatigue](#)

Week 3: JOURNALING & SELF-REFLECTION

Why is journaling helpful? What is self-reflection?
What are the benefits? How do I get started?

Journaling

Journaling can help you clarify how you're thinking/feeling, know yourself better, reduce stress, solve problems and work through conflict more easily. The mental health benefits also have a positive impact on physical health/well-being.

Journaling Benefits

- Reduces stress
- Improves mood
- Increased Emotional Intelligence
- Improvement in memory & problem solving
- Help achieve goals
- Improvement in self-awareness

Did you know??

Journaling rewires your brain by connecting emotions to rational thoughts, encouraging self-reflection, enhancing resilience by identifying coping strategies that worked in high stress situations, & engages both hemispheres of the brain leading to improved cognitive functioning.

How do I get started?

- Pick a journal, notebook or journaling app.
- Commit to a time daily, weekly or monthly & **STICK TO IT!**
- Write about your day, a tough conversation/situation, your goals, challenges, or use a prompt to get you going.
- Journaling can look however you need it to look & may change depending on the situation.

Self-Reflection

One's ability to take time to give serious thought to, meditate on, or evaluate one's character, actions, and motives.

Benefits:

- Increased self-awareness
- Improved personal growth/fulfillment
- Enhanced Emotional Intelligence
- Increased confidence
- Clearer perspective & greater resilience

Additional Info:

- [Why Journaling Improves Your Brain Health](#)
- [Self-Reflection Tips/Info](#)
- [Daily Self-Reflection Journal Prompts](#)
- [Journaling Prompts for Self-Reflection](#)

Check out these Journals on Amazon!

Or these journals with prompts

Here are some journaling apps

WHAT IS IT?

Practice of focusing your full attention on the present moment, acknowledging your thoughts, feelings and body sensations without judgement.

This practice can help prevent us from getting caught in the spiral of negative thoughts that often happens when we are stressed or overwhelmed.

CHECK OUT THIS ARTICLE BY THE MAYO CLINIC!

WHAT DOES IT DO?

- Reduces stress
- Increases focus
- Improves emotional regulation
- Enhances self-awareness
- Physical benefits including lower blood pressure, better sleep, less chronic pain

WHAT IS MINDFULNESS? (YOUTUBE VIDEO)

WEEK 10: MINDFULNESS

MINDFUL WALKING

One way to practice Mindfulness is through Mindful Walking. The intention is to focus on the physical sensations, body movements, and breathing. Take time to notice sights, sounds and smells around you. If your mind wanders or finds its way back to your to-do list, redirect your attention back to the present moment & physical sensations. If you need help getting started with this practice, check out some of the great resources on YouTube (an example linked the the left).

MINDFUL WALKING - AUDIO GUIDED

MINDFUL JOURNALING

Practice of writing your thoughts, feelings & experiences in a non-judgmental way to increase self-awareness and decrease ruminating thoughts (repetitive, intrusive negative thoughts). How to do it:

- Write without judgement
- Explore your feelings
- Focus on the present moment
- Use prompts if needed

OTHER STRATEGIES

- [5 Minute Morning Meditation for Teachers](#)
- [Mindful Walking Activity](#)
- [1 Minute Breathing Exercise](#)
- [10 Minute Yoga: Stress & Anxiety](#)
- [Mindful Breathing Exercise](#)
- [Mindful Eating](#)
- [4-7-8 Breathing](#)

CHECK OUT THESE JOURNALS!

50 MINDFUL JOURNALING PROMPTS

Resources

- Trauma-Informed Care in Behavioral Health Services, Chapter 3: Understanding the Impact of Trauma (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK207191/>)
- Center to Advance Trauma Informed Health Care: How Trauma Affects Our Health (<https://cthc.ucsf.edu/why-trauma/>)
- [What is trauma? The author of "The Body Keeps the Score" explains | Bessel van der Kolk | Big Think](#) Bessel van der Kolk- What is trauma?
- [Understanding Trauma: Learning Brain vs Survival Brain](#) Understanding Trauma: Learning Brain vs Survival Brain
- [3 Trauma-Informed Practices Backed By Science](#) 3 Trauma-Informed Practices Backed By Science
- [Fast Facts: Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences |Violence Prevention|Injury Center|CDC](#) ACEs Fast Facts
- CPI with Dr. Lori Desautels, June 13, 2023 ([Regulating our Emotions in the Classroom: Practical Tips for Educators](#))
- [STRESS & EARLY BRAIN GROWTH Understanding Adverse Childhood Experiences \(ACEs\)](#) STRESS & EARLY BRAIN GROWTH: Understanding Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)
- <https://drdansiegel.com/hand-model-of-the-brain/>
- [Teaching Self-Regulation Skills in the Classroom: A 3-Step Approach](#) Teaching Self-regulation in the classroom
- [Emotional Self-Management: 8 Tips for Educators | Learning Sciences International](#) Emotional Self-Management: 8 Tips for Educators to Self-Regulate and Co-Regulate Emotions and Behaviors
- [Teaching Self-Regulation by Modeling](#) Teaching Self-Regulation by Modeling
- [Survival Responses Handout](#) <https://www.nicabm.com/how-the-nervous-system-responds-to-trauma/>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T65M1VxJIT0> Sloth Breaths
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PGFBxoWqOV0> Daily Affirmations Pt 1 (Snoop Dogg)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Y9t65JDJhI> 5,4,3,2,1 Grounding Technique
- CPI with Dr. Lori Desautels, June 13, 2023 ([Regulating our Emotions in the Classroom: Practical Tips for Educators](#))
- Child Trauma Toolkit for Educators | October 2008-The National Child Traumatic Stress Network www.NCTSN.org
- <https://cte.openlcc.net/400-words/learning-brains-vs-survival-brains/>
- <chrome-extension://efaidnbnmnibpcapjpcgclclefindmkaj/https://tfcbt.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Trauma-and-the-Brain-Handout-2014.pdf>
- <https://earlyconnections.mo.gov/professionals/trauma-informed-care>
- Child Trauma Toolkit for Educators | October 2008 - The National Child Traumatic Stress Network www.NCTSN.org
- <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/compassion-fatigue>
- [Compassion Fatigue: Symptoms to Look For](#)

Thank you!

Contact Info: Abbi Schuh, LPC
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** Don't forget to fill out the session feedback survey