



**2022 NSCA TACTICAL ANNUAL TRAINING** #NSCATactical22

# *CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT*

I have no actual or potential conflict of interest in relation to this presentation.

# Building Resilience to Stress & Trauma Through Lifting Heavy Things

## Part 1 - Concepts



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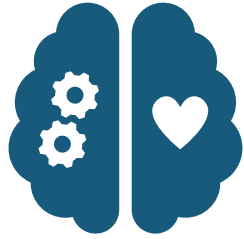
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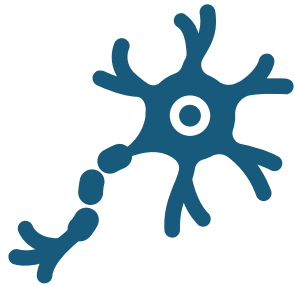


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# Learning Objectives



What is a trauma-informed approach



Trauma and the nervous system



Being trauma-informed in the weight room

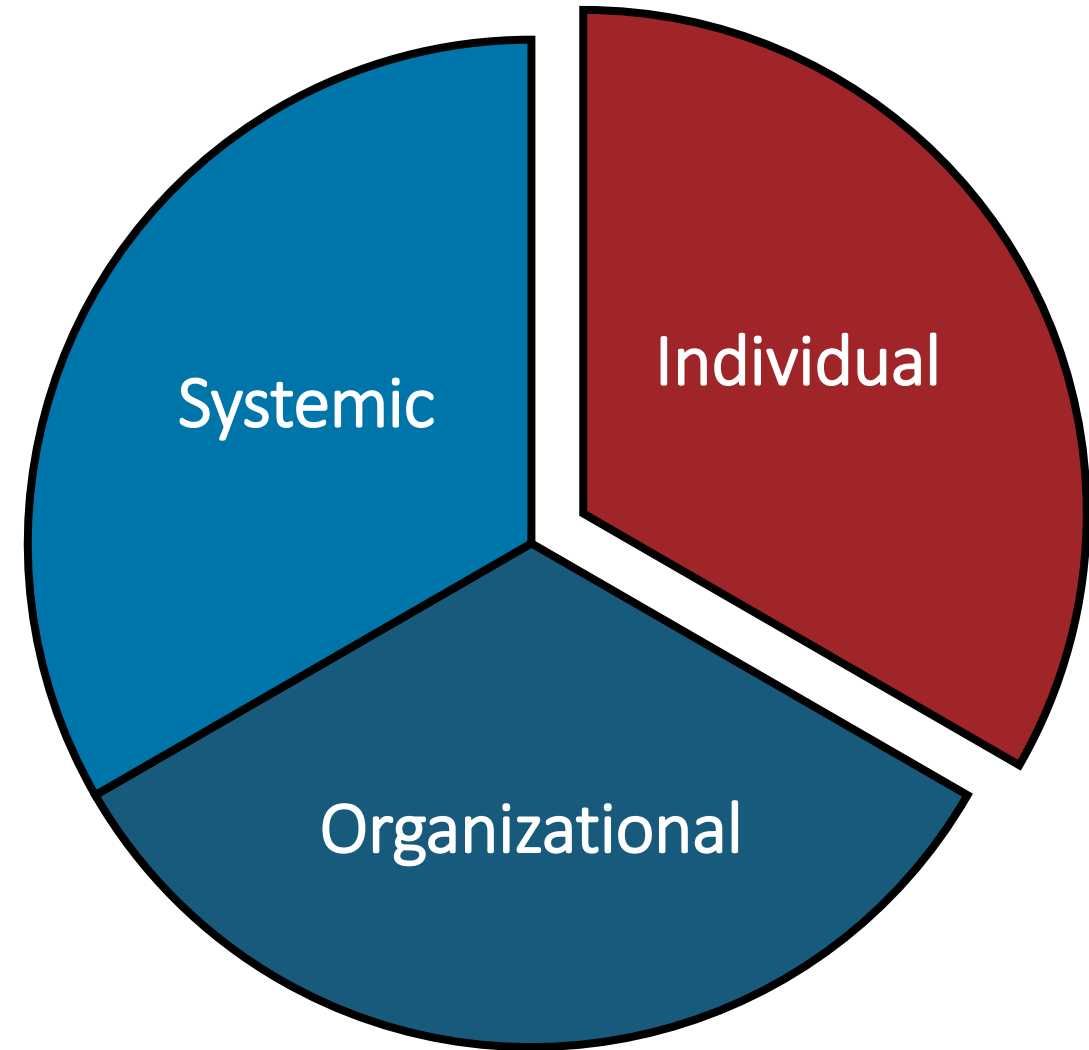


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# What is Trauma-Informed?

- ✓ A way of being in your practice
- ✓ Creating a safe and supporting environment
- ✓ Awareness of the presence & impact of trauma
- ✓ Implementing practices everyone benefits from







## TRAUMA

trōma (greek) = wound

A wound that is often invisible

When a threat to a person or group is strong enough to overwhelm their coping resources, which evokes a stress response that creates an intense feeling of helplessness, distress or fear for personal safety

(Levine, 1997 & Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, APA , 2013)

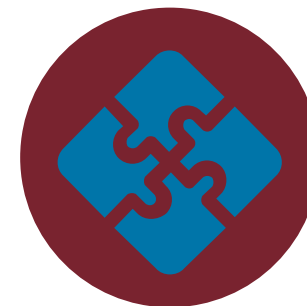
# Types of Trauma



Acute/Single Event



Chronic/Complex



Developmental



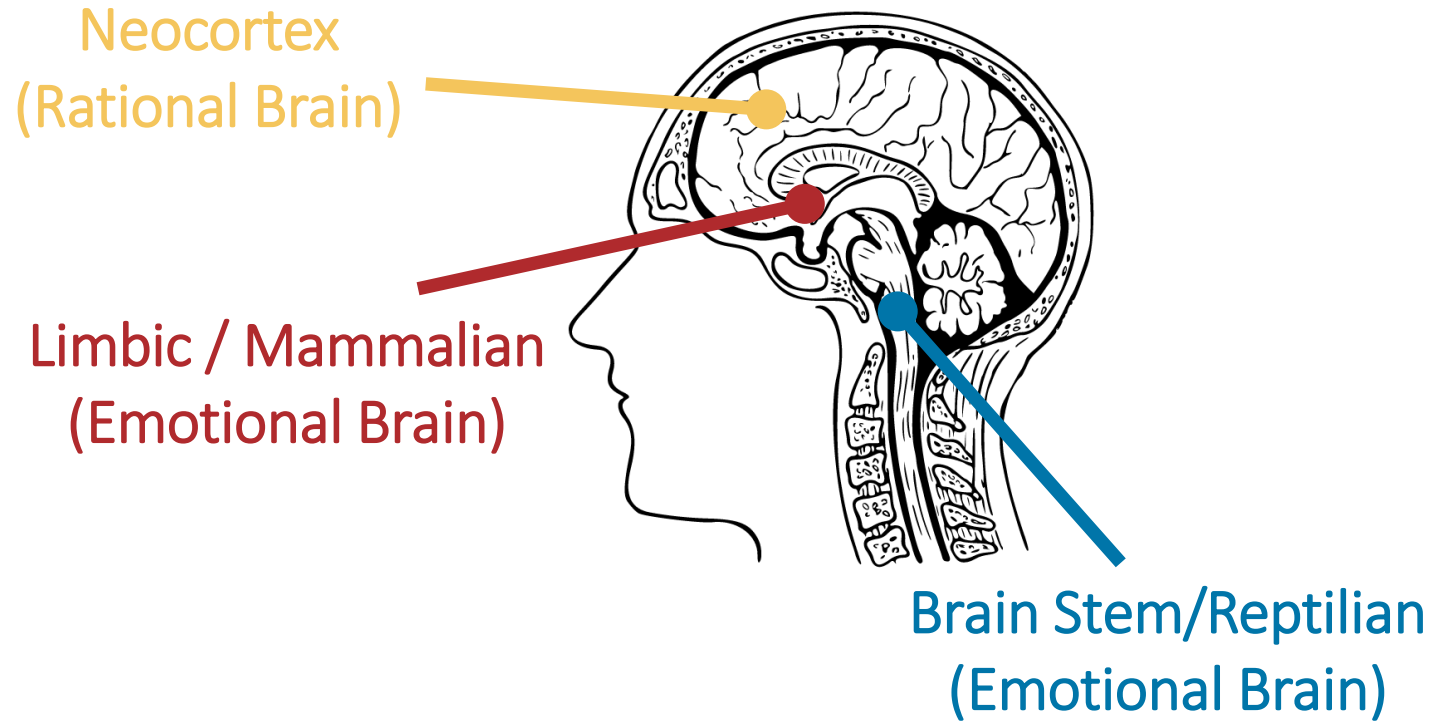
Historical



Intergenerational

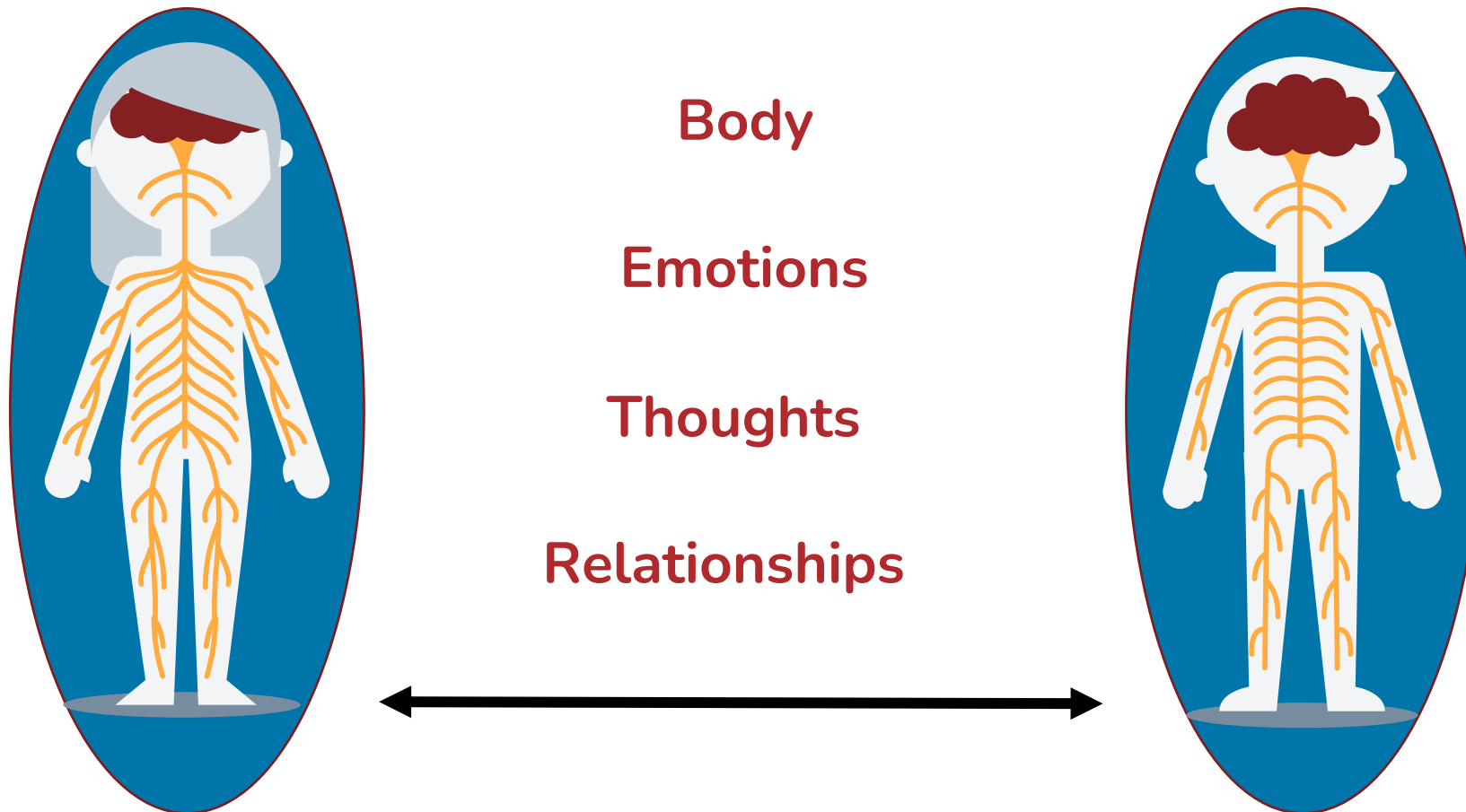
(Trauma-Informed Practice Guide, 2013)

# Biology of Trauma



(Van der Kolk, 2014)

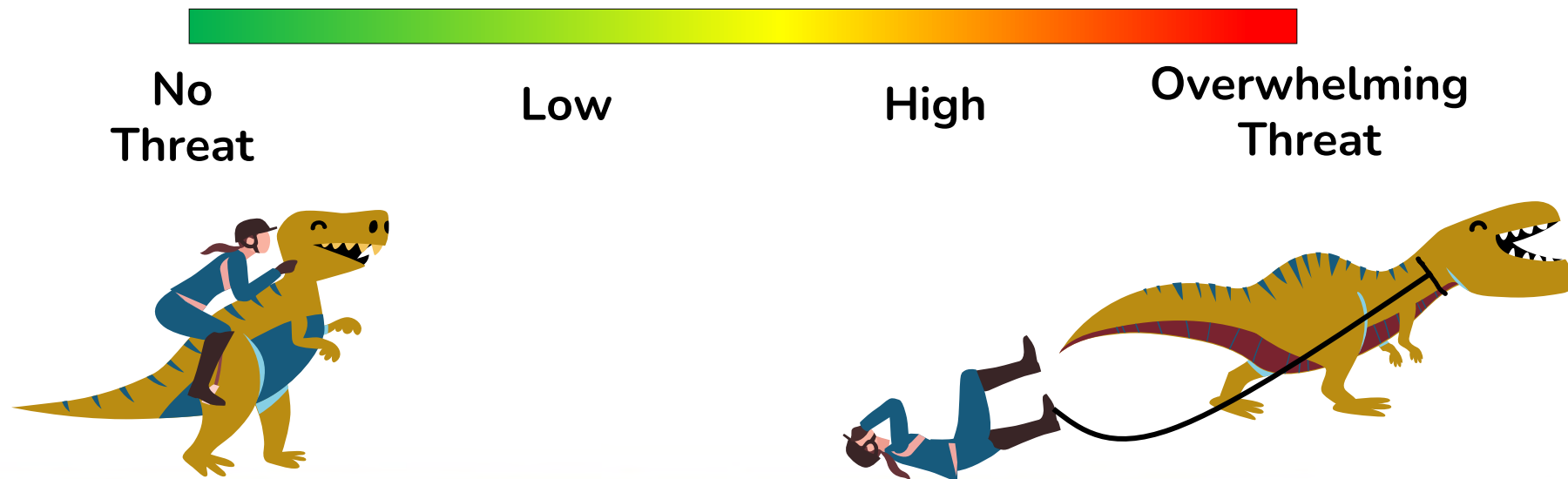
# Trauma Impacts the Whole Person



(Wilber, 2000)

# Lizard Brain

- Always assessing threats & will activate when needed
  - it may take over completely
- Its job is to keep us alive & is the main part of the brain involved with trauma



# Acute/Single Event

## Traumatic Event

Being exposed to:

- death, threatened death,
- actual or threatened serious injury
- or actual or threatened sexual violence

## Exposure

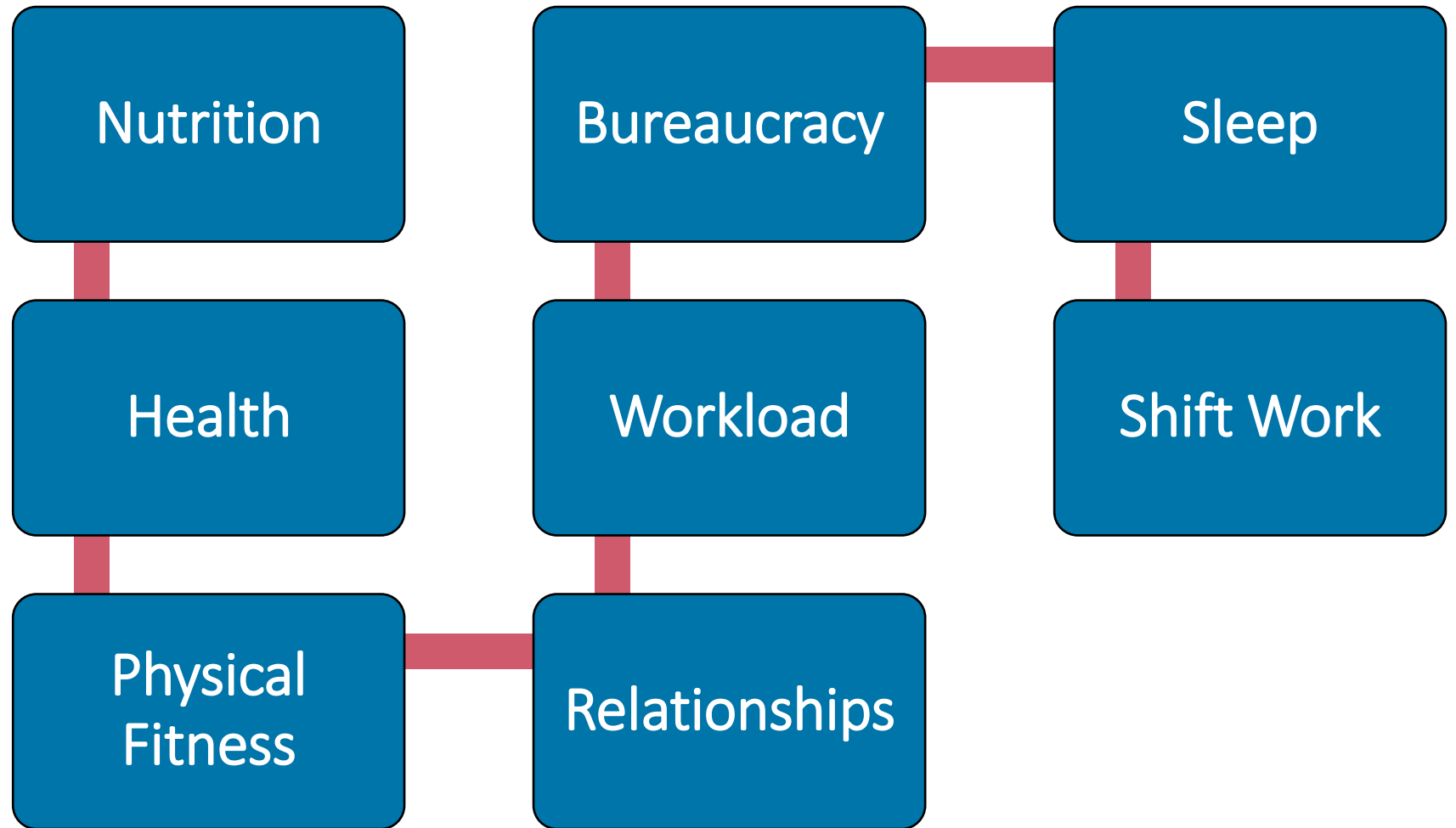
Is on or more of:

- direct exposure
- witnessing the trauma
- Indirectly through friend/family
- indirect exposure to disturbing details of the event(s)

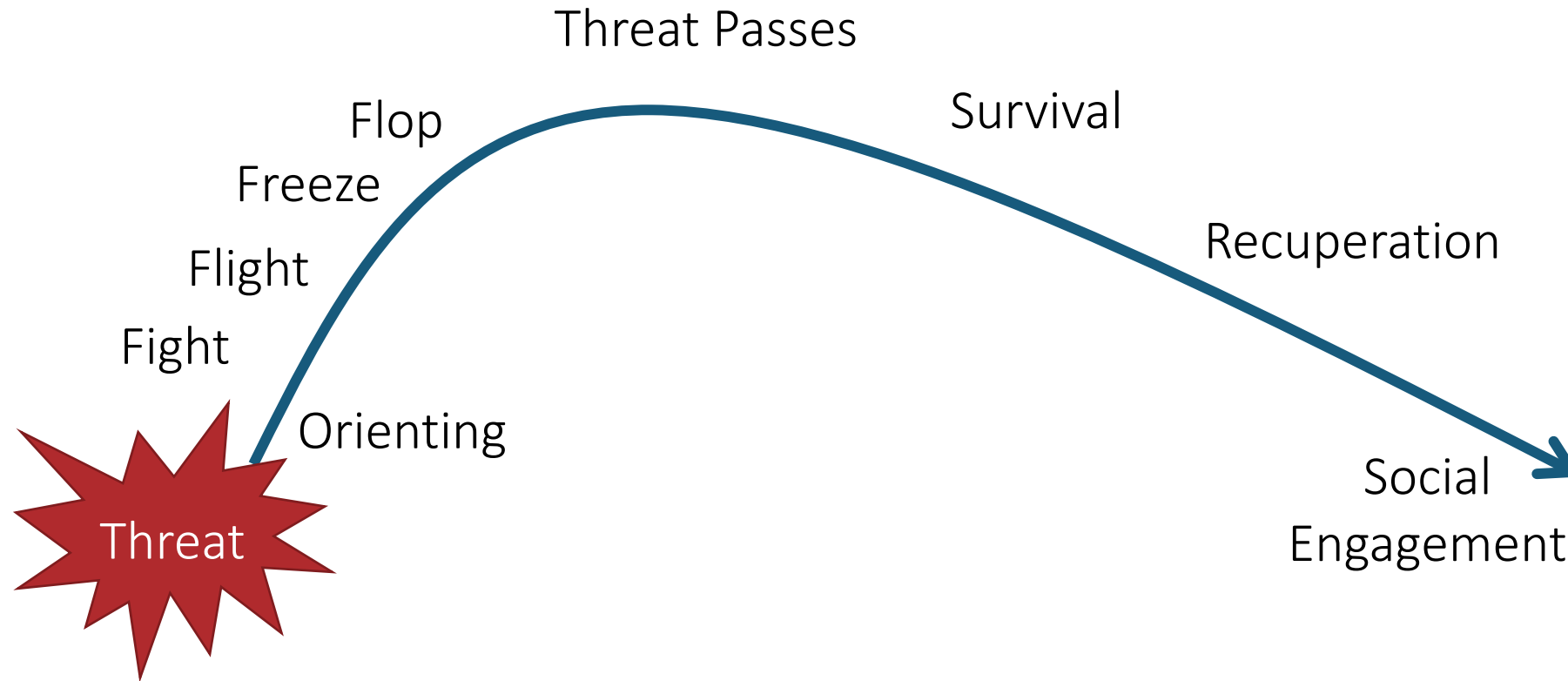
(Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, APA , 2013)



# What About Chronic Stress?



# Adaptive Stress Response



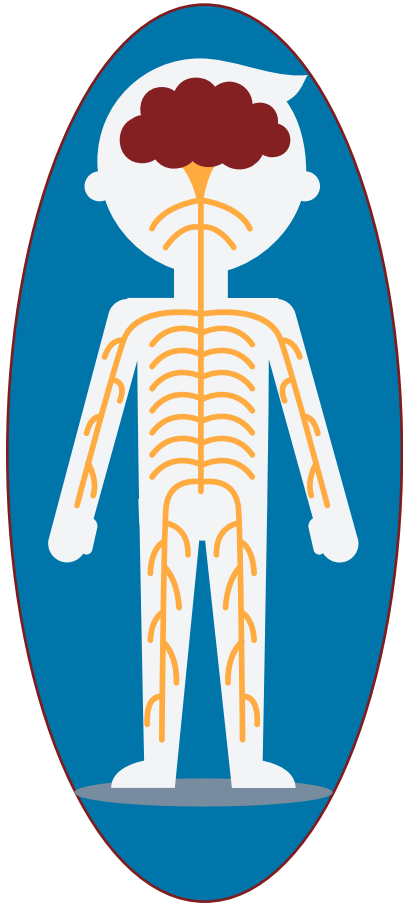
(Crisis & Trauma Resource Institute Inc., 2019)



- We cannot rush the processing and trying to avoid it does not help
- Once a person is safe, it is important to allow the body to go through the processing
- Processing can take time - up to 30 days to fully "digest" the experience

(Levine, 1997)

# Limbic Responses

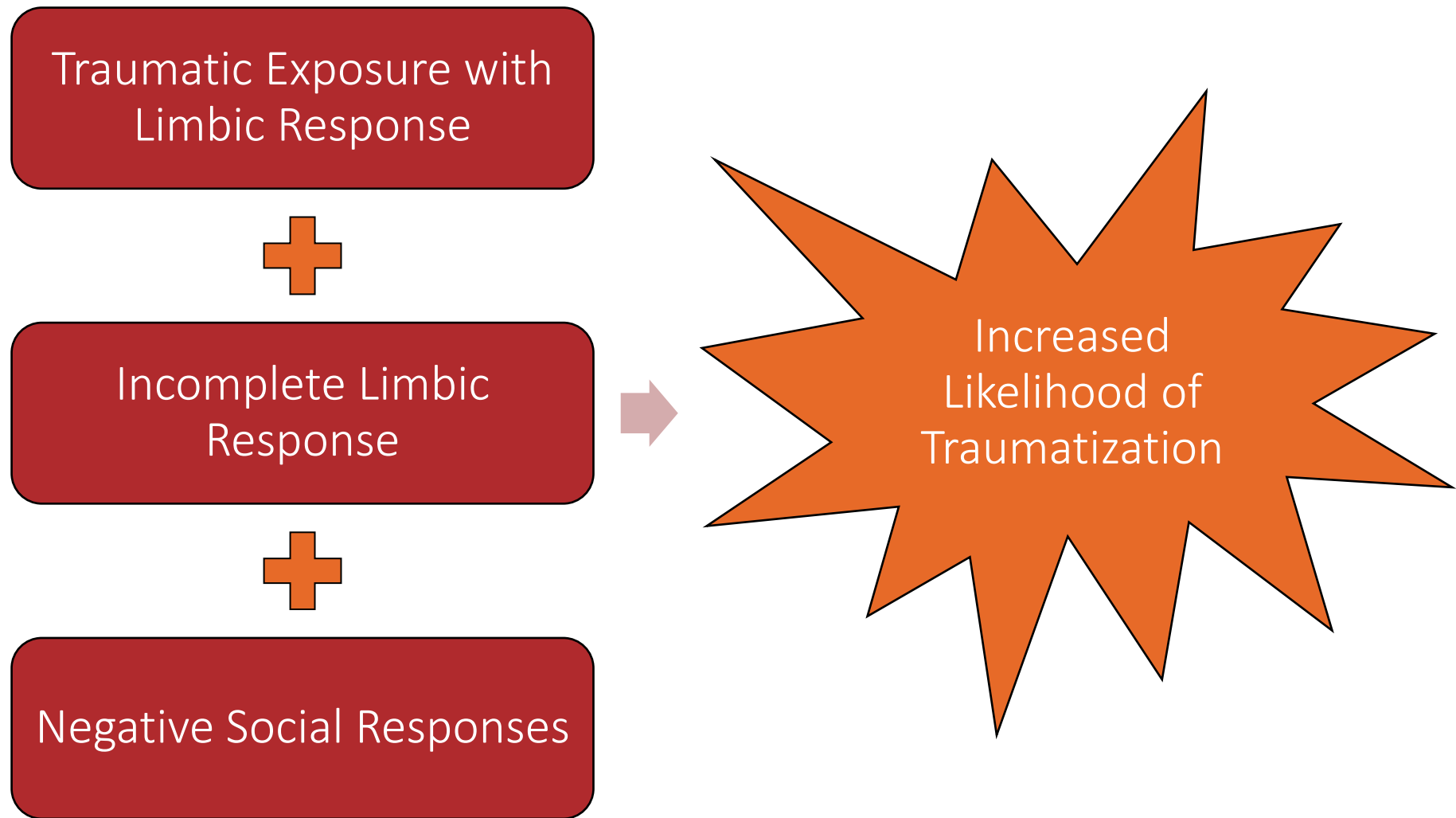


Body - HR, breathing, shaking, sleep disruption, easily startled

Emotions - negative feelings/emotions, decreased interest, feeling isolated, unable to feel positive emotions, Grief, Fear, Anger, Guilt, Shame

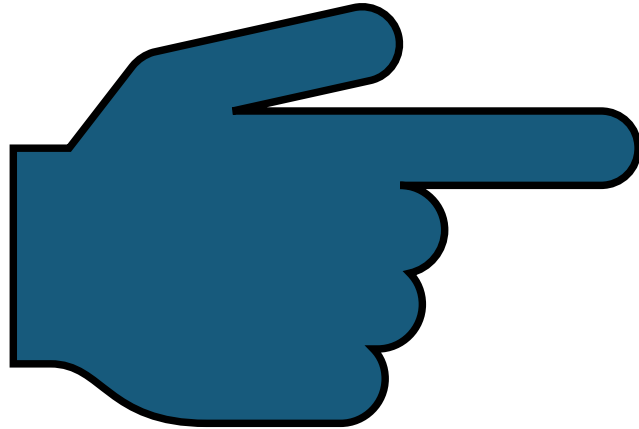
Thoughts - poor concentration, unwanted thoughts/images, nightmares, forgetting key details of trauma, negative thoughts of self/world

Relationships - avoiding people or conversations that remind them of the trauma, isolating



Being exposed to a traumatic event and having a limbic response does not mean you will be traumatized!

(Levine, 1997)



- Pushing the effects of trauma underground has negative consequences
- Hiding it is easier than dealing with it directly, but is negative in the long run
- “Pausing” the limbic response to complete your job is different than preventing it

**Important!** Have a list of mental health professionals that you can refer clients/athletes to for help

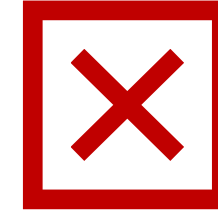
# Providing Support



- Reassure them the responses are normal
- Support and encouragement will support the “digesting” of the limbic response
- Positive social responses to individuals who are dealing with post-trauma limbic responses

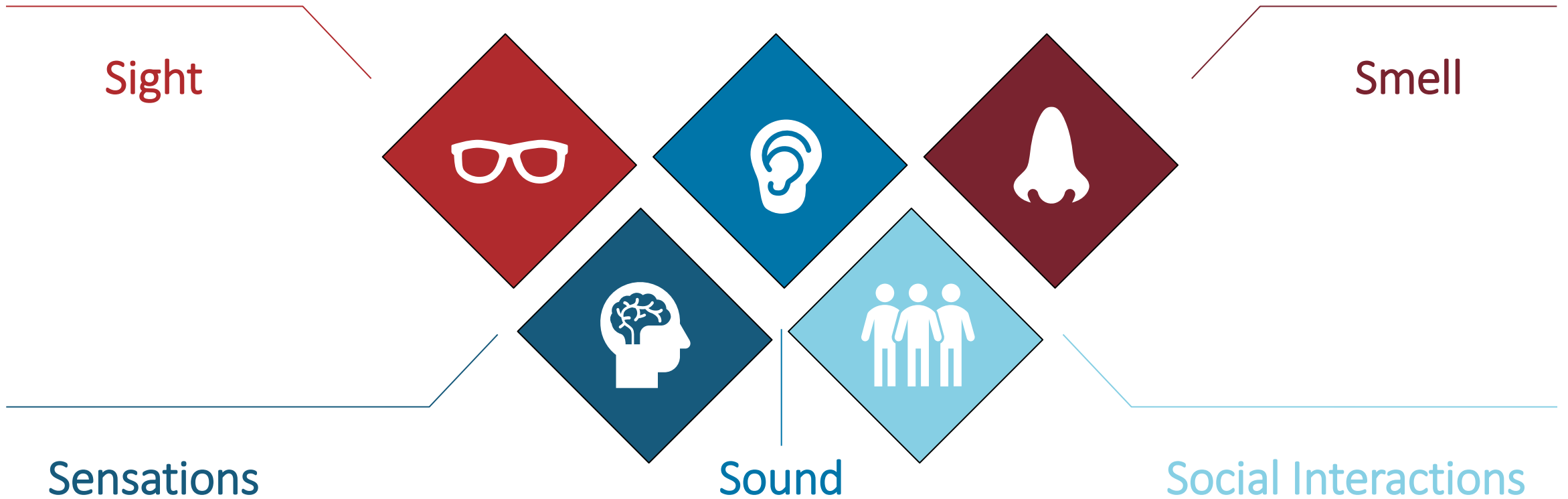
## Use positive responses:

- ✓ “I am sorry this happened to you”
- ✓ “Take the time you need to digest this”
- ✓ “Your reactions are totally understandable



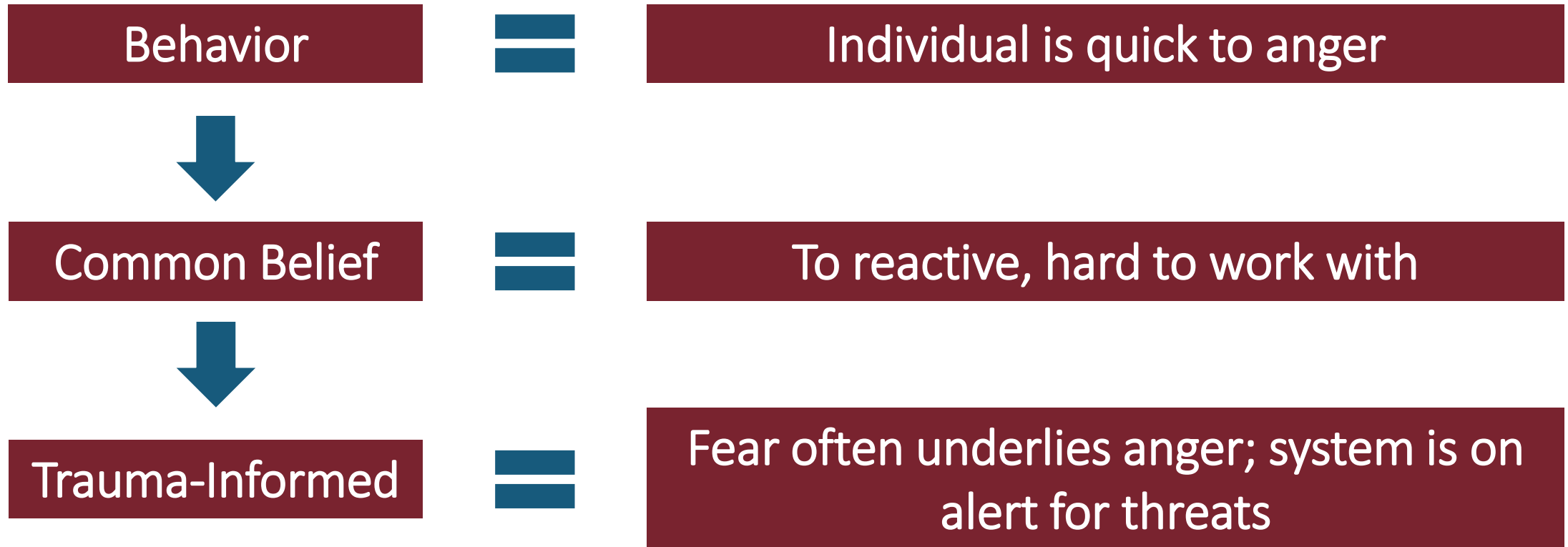
- Asking for details
- Asking questions about the event
- Joking about the event or their response
- Discuss what they did right or wrong after the event

# The Gym Can Be Challenging Due To...



One may be bumped out of their window of tolerance or their allostatic load pushed higher than the coached planned on

# Behavior Changes



# Longer Term Responses

“If these behaviors are not understood as signs of trauma, others will often respond with similar behaviors of aggression, avoidance or blame and judgement.”

Physical

Emotional

Intellectual

Social

Spiritual

(Crisis & Trauma Resource Institute Inc., 2019)



Blames Coach  
 Angry  
 Defensive  
 Irritable  
 Wants to Quit  
 Mistrustful  
 Argumentative  
 Self Critical  
 Controlling

Fight



Scattered  
 Over Working  
 Avoids Rest Breaks  
 Struggles to Commit  
 Difficulty Staying Still  
 Refusing to Talk

Flight



Spaced Out  
 Numb  
 Disconnected  
 Chronically Tired  
 Foggy Brain  
 Startles Easily  
 Zoned Out  
 Chronically Late

Freeze



Tries to Please Coach  
 Poor Boundaries  
 Apologetic  
 Ignores Injuries  
 Minimizing Needs  
 Conflict Avoidance

Flop/Fawn

# Window of Tolerance

- Arousal level where one can effectively function
- Can think rationally, reflect, make decisions from a place of being calm
- Trauma or stress can push one out of the window
- The window can widen or become more narrow



(Seigel, 1999)



## HRV

- Objective
- Allostatic load
- Recovery
- Resiliency
- Performance readiness



## Window of Tolerance

- Subjective
- Self-awareness
- Understanding of how stress affects thinking & behaviors

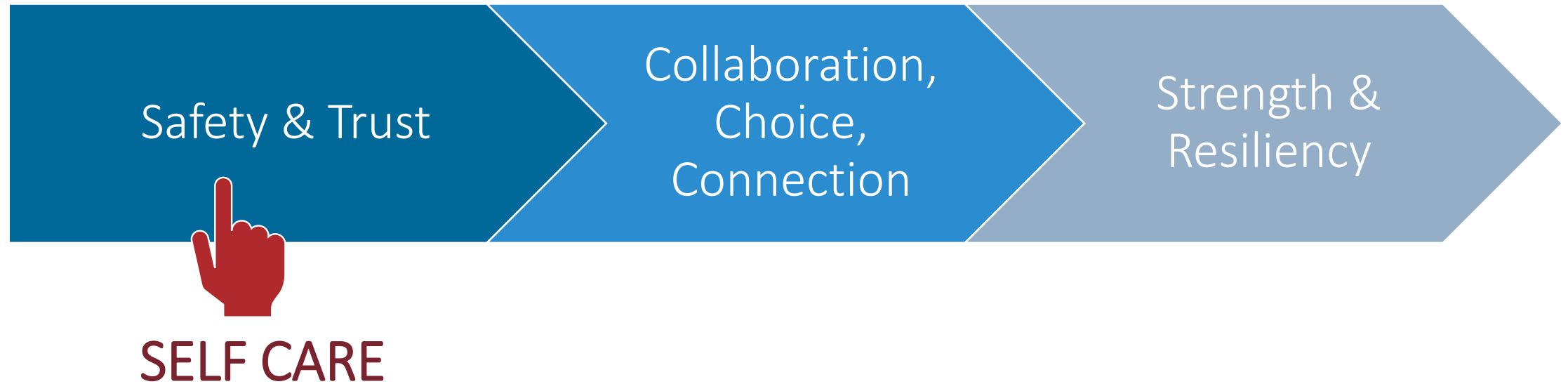


(Bennett, 2022)

# Steps We Can Take As Coaches

- ✓ Environment
- ✓ How We Coach
- ✓ Support the Window of Tolerance

# Creating the Environment

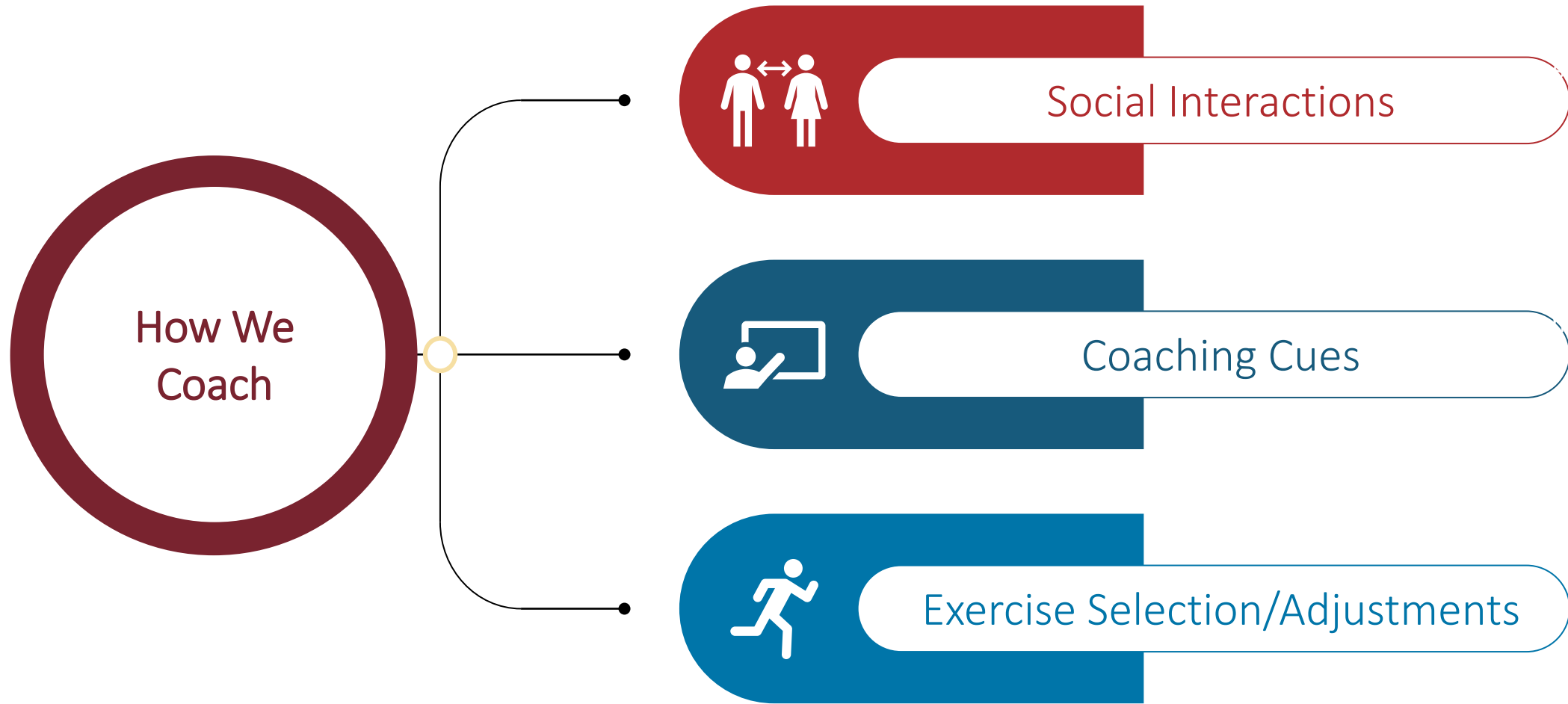


(Crisis & Trauma Resource Institute Inc., 2019)

# Self Care

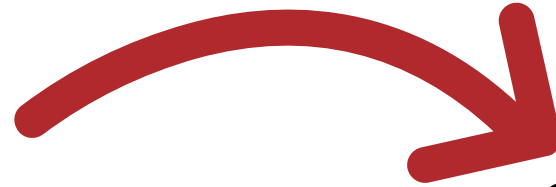
- Vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue, burnout
  - Practice reflection
  - Know your window of tolerance and self-regulate
- A** – Awareness of your needs, emotions, limits
- B** – Balance between work, leisure time, rest
- C** – Connection to ourselves, to others & to something greater

(Trauma-Informed Practice Guide, 2013)



# Adjusting the Window of Tolerance

Important for those we work with **AND** ourselves!



## Out of the Window?

- ✓ Change environment or change our selves
- ✓ Recognize unintentional actions
- ✓ Intentional actions – this can be in the gym

Once back in the window, we can help expand the window!

(Trauma Informed Weightlifting, 2022)

Pleasant ----- Sensations ----- Unpleasant

Agitated  
Anxious  
Hyper - Arousal  
Sympathetic

Fatigue  
Dissociated  
Hypo - Arousal  
Parasympathetic

## Window of Tolerance

Able to think, choose, focus,  
intentional action to resolve stress  
(High HRV, managing allostatic load well)

(Trauma Informed Weightlifting, 2022)



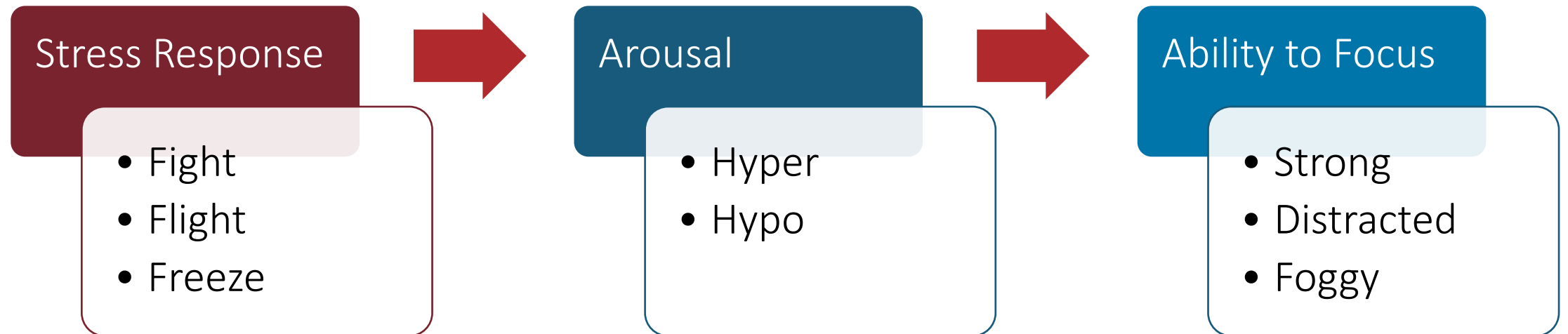
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# Cueing

- Language describing the direction of the activity
- Focusing on internal sensations (internal focus)
  - Supports re-connecting with body
  - Intentional movement
  - Limited by WOT
- Focus on the direction of movement (external focus)
  - Limited by physical capacity
  - Brings body together in a coordinated manner
  - Unintentional movement

# Program Adjustments to Support the Nervous System



The stress response may be from exposure to a traumatic event, triggered from past trauma or from stress

(Trauma Informed Weightlifting, 2022)

# Exercise Selection/Adjustments

## Hyper-Arousal

### Moving Towards Arousal

Higher Resistance  
Compound Movements  
Higher Tension  
Unpredictable

## Hypo-Arousal

### Moving Towards Calm

Isolated Movements  
Loose Focus  
Slow  
Predictable  
Gentle Breathing

(Trauma Informed Weightlifting, 2022)

- Getting back into the window
  - Passing a ball, breath work, mindfulness
- Widen the window
  - Physically, mentally, emotionally
  - Sleep and nervous system recovery
- Track mental and emotional progress, not just physical
  - Subjective and objective
  - HRV
  - Recovery-stress questionnaire (RESTQ), Profile of Mood States (POMS)

(Kellmann, 2010)



# Remember

- ✓ Being aware of the prevalence of trauma will further support how you help your operators and yourself
- ✓ You do not need to KNOW someone is dealing with trauma to be able to coach in a supportive manner
- ✓ Have a referral network – stay in your lane as a coach!
- ✓ First do no harm, then do good!

# Resources

- ✓ **Body Keeps The Score** - Bessel van der Kolk
- ✓ **Waking the Tiger: Healing Trauma** - Peter A. Levine
- ✓ **My Grandmother's Hands** - Resmmaa Menakem
- ✓ **The Polyvagal Theory** - Stephen W. Porges
- ✓ **Polyvagal Flip Chart: Understanding the Science of Safety** - Deb Dana
  
- ✓ **Lifting Heavy Things** – Laura Khoudari
- ✓ **Widen The Window** - Elizabeth A. Stanley
- ✓ **Heart Rate Variability - The Future of Trauma-Informed Care** - Matthew S. Bennett

# Thank You!



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- Trauma Informed Weigh Lifting Online Workshop, February 2022, Center for Trauma & Embodiment at JRI