



Healing- Centered Engagement: The Power of Community & Connection

Dr. Angela Marx

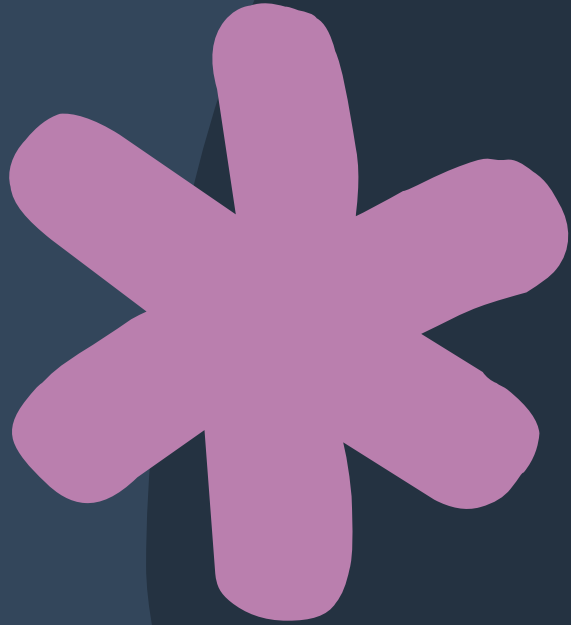
November 2024



My Lens

- De-pathologize & De-centralize mental health
- Individualize health and wellness
- Community-Based
- Brain, Human, & Keeping It Real Science





Trauma , Stress, & Healing

- In the brain and body of the beholder
- Subjective experience
- Not all stress leads to trauma
- Health that includes healing




What Happens When We Experience Trauma/ Stress:

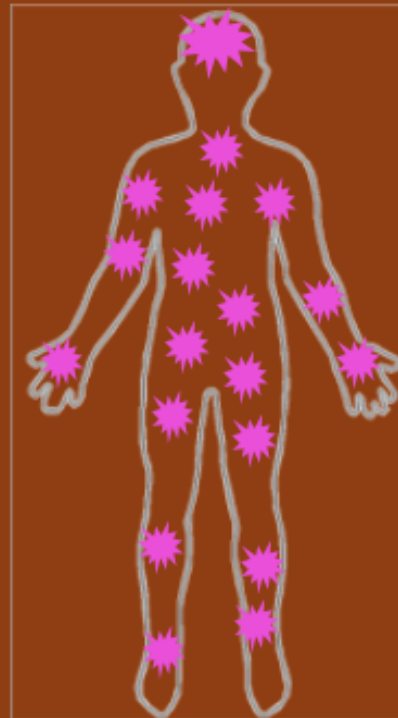
**Perceived threat turns
brain's alarm system on**



**Emotional brain
automatically activates
Thinking brain shuts
down**

 **Mind sends signals to
body to escape threat**

**Nervous system
activates**



**Increase in energy
and stress
hormones**

**Active role in
getting to safety**



Energy discharges

Threat is over



**Body returns to
normal**



What Happens When Trauma Gets Stuck/ Is Unresolved?

Perceived threat turns brain's alarm system on



**Emotional brain automatically activates
Thinking brain shuts down**

★ Mind sends signals to body to escape threat

Nervous system activates



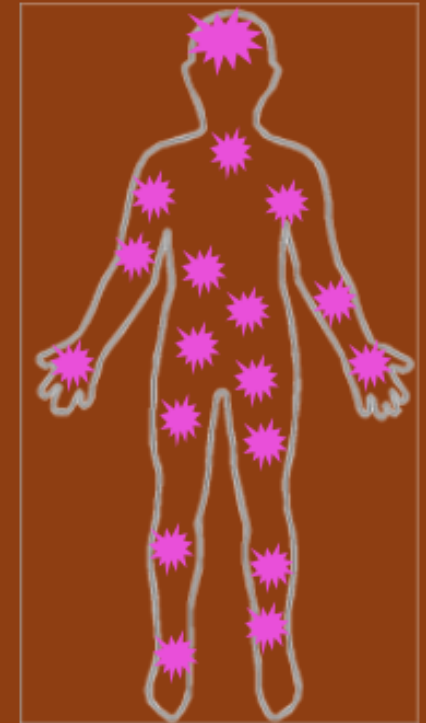
Increase in energy and stress hormones

Not able to actively get to safety



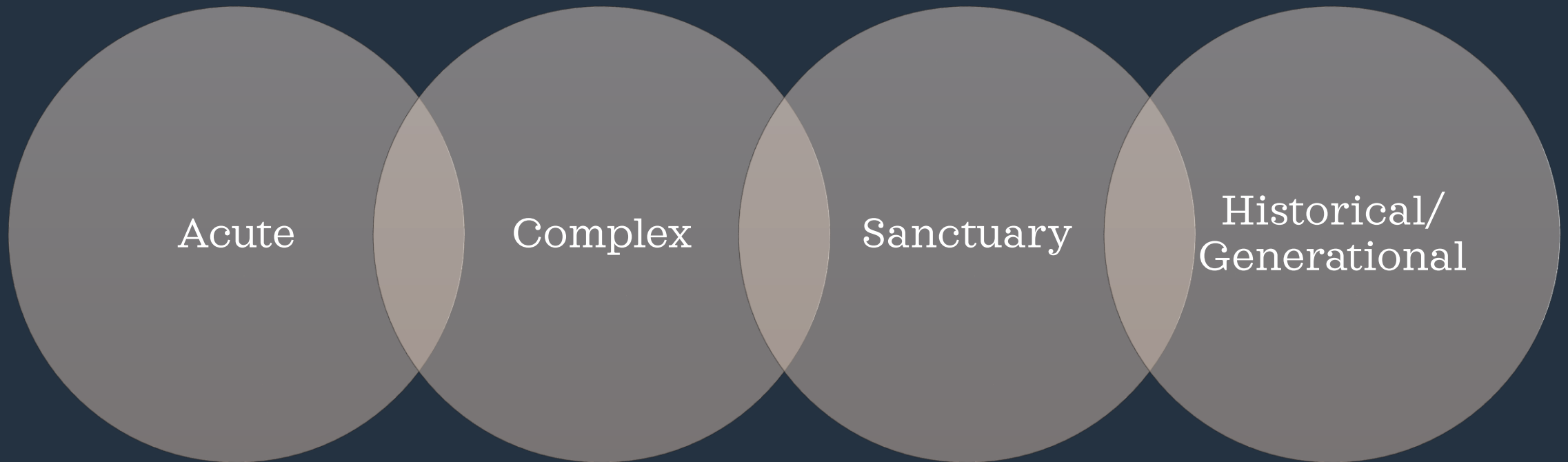
Excess energy does not discharge

Concludes still in danger



Body cannot regain balance

Trauma



Acute

- Connected to a specific event or occurrence
- Post-Traumatic Stress "Disorder" (PTSD)
- We can bounce back from these if we don't have too many



Complex

- Chronic & cumulative
- Developmental/ Attachment
 - First 2 months most critical for nervous system
- Pair of ACES
 - Adverse Childhood Experiences
 - Abuse, Neglect, Household dysfunction
 - Adverse Community Environments
 - Poverty
 - Discrimination
 - Community disruption
 - Lack of opportunity
 - Poor housing quality and affordability
 - Violence



Sanctuary

- When trauma happens in places that are sanctioned to be safe, supportive, and healing
- Not only impacts people being served but also the staff and organization itself



Historical/ Generational

- Passing on higher stress levels to children-
inherited through DNA
 - Big T and little t Traumas
 - Even if receive supportive parenting
- 3 generations sharing same biological
environment
 - 1st born son- likely to carry what's
unresolved from father
 - 1st born daughter- likely to carry what's
unresolved for mother
 - Other children- different aspects of parents'
trauma or elements of grandparents'
trauma





The Impact of Trauma



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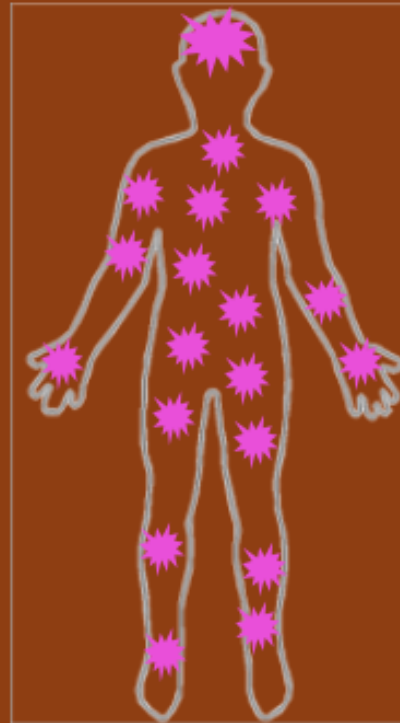
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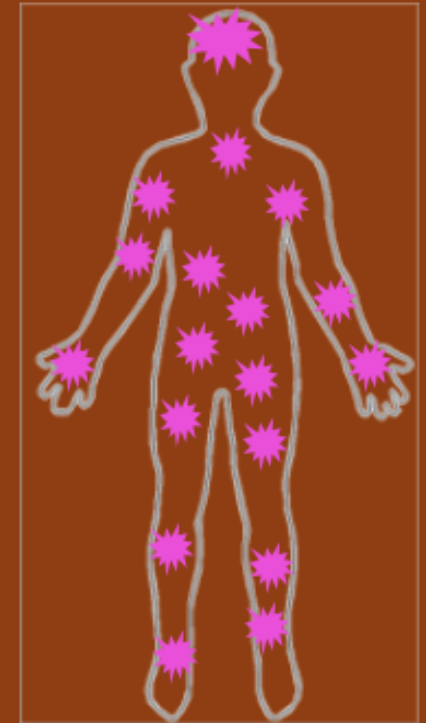
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The Impact: Individuals

- Not just that something happened to you- but what happens inside of you as a result of what happens to you
- Environment (what is there as well as what is not there- absence of health, relationships, and healing)
- Sensitized nervous system
- Fight, Flight, Freeze, Feign
- Impacts mental, physical, and behavioral health



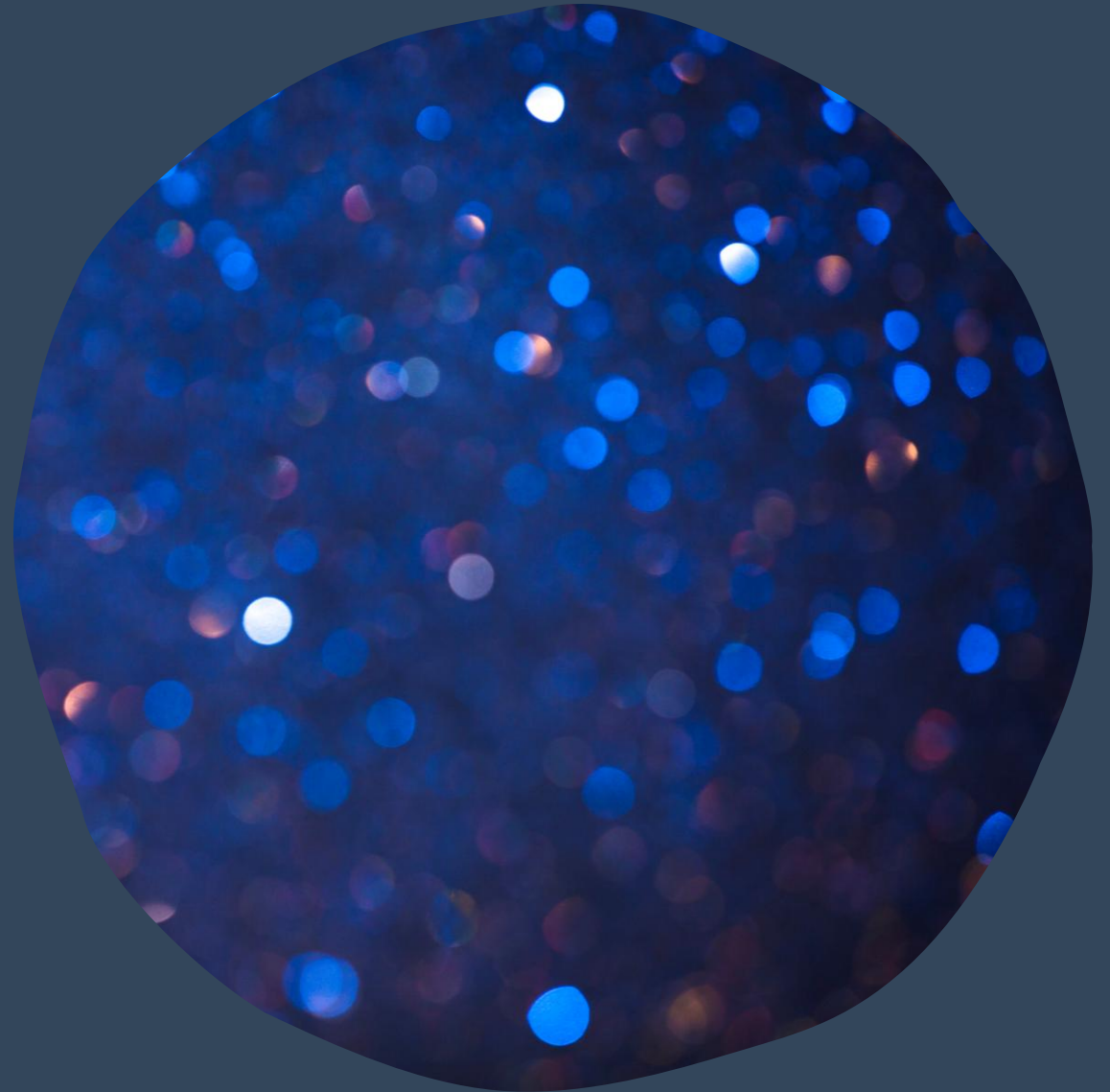
The Impact: Relationships/ Families

- What you see and experience is a result of current and past/ perception
- View of self and others
- Wired for protection over connection
- Historical/ generational trauma



The Impact: Communities & Cultures

- Collective Trauma
- Trauma impacts us all
- Freeze/ Disembodied
 - We aren't feeling together
 - Impacts relationships between people and our natural environment
- Health care that includes healing





Healing
is
Collective



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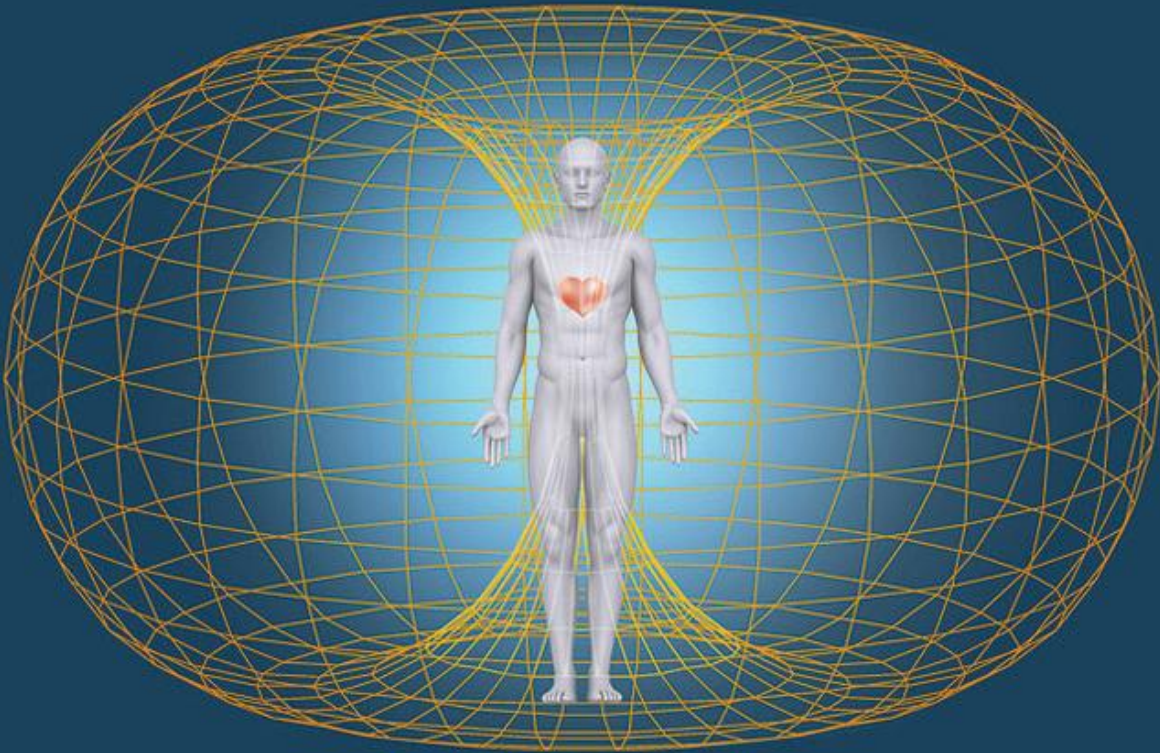


Threat is over



Body returns to normal

It Happens Automatically



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Heart's Electromagnetic Field

Brain's Mirror Neurons

Healing is Rhythmic & Relational

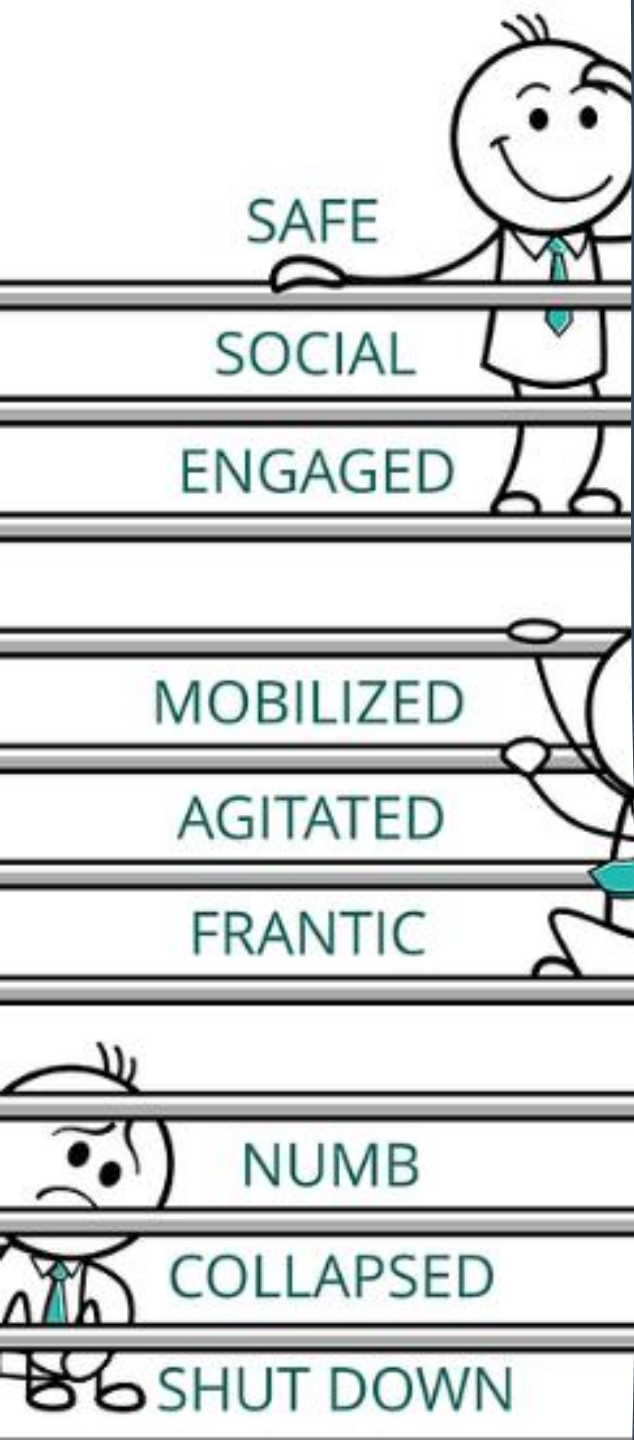


Healing-Centered Engagement: Shifting from "What Happened to You?" to "What's Right With You?"

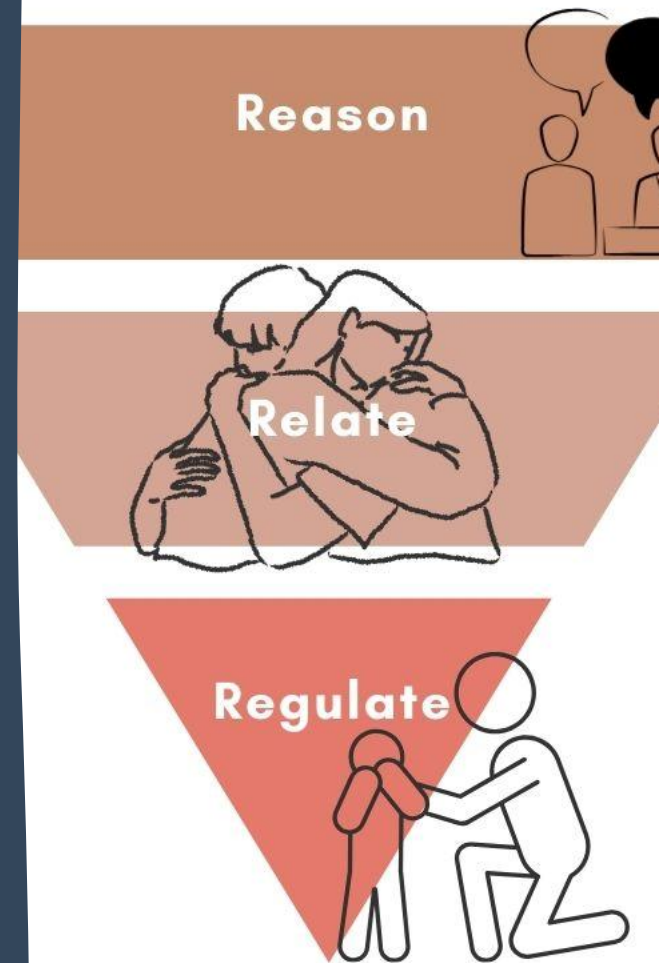


- Political rather than clinical
 - Addresses the conditions that created the trauma in the first place
- Cultural grounding and restoration of identity
 - Meaning, self-perception, and purpose
- Focuses on promoting well-being rather than suppressing symptoms
 - Builds on experiences, knowledge, skills, and curiosity
- Supports supporters in their own healing
 - An ongoing process that we all need





Healing Is an Experience:
Making New Brain Connections
that
Rewire Our Nervous Systems



Co-Regulation

- Something happens between us that influences what is within us
- Nervous systems communicating with one another automatically

Reason



Relate



Regulate



Examples of Coregulation

- Gentle eye contact
- Feeling someone's heart beat
- Hearing a calming voice
- Getting on the same level
- Meeting someone in their world
- Preparing someone for the next experience
- Sitting in supportive silence
- Doing tasks alongside each other
- Repeating back what someone's sharing
- Wanting to understand and validate

Chanelle Gordon

How to love a big kid:

- Smile when they walk into a room.
- Ask their opinion before giving yours.
- Tell them you believe they can overcome challenges.
- Apologize when you are wrong.
- Learn to communicate on their terms too, even if it's SnapChat
- Always keep their favorite snacks on hand.
- Take any hug you can get. You both need it.

Connecting: Time-In

Let it be but don't leave them be

- Commit to safe, predictable relationships
- Infuse all help with hope
- Emphasize "It's not your fault"
- Try not to take things personally
- Appreciate/ accept the person
- Keep promises
- Get to know the person
- Have fun!

Disconnecting Words

Stop crying and tell me what you need.
(demand)

No, I don't want to hear that whining. It's not pleasant.
(disconnection, judgment)

I'm right here. There is no reason to whine. Come on! I can't understand you.
(minimizing, judgment, blame)

Next time, use your big girl words or no one will want to help you.
(shame, guilt, punitive consequence = fear)

fb/TEACHthroughLove
www.teach-through-love.com

Connecting Words

You would like me to listen and you sound very frustrated.
(observation, validate feelings)

I'd like to hear you. Come, sit next to me.
(acknowledge needs, invitation to connect)

Let's try again. Take a deep breath.
(be OKAY with where your child is NOW, don't demand, focus on regulating the emotion)

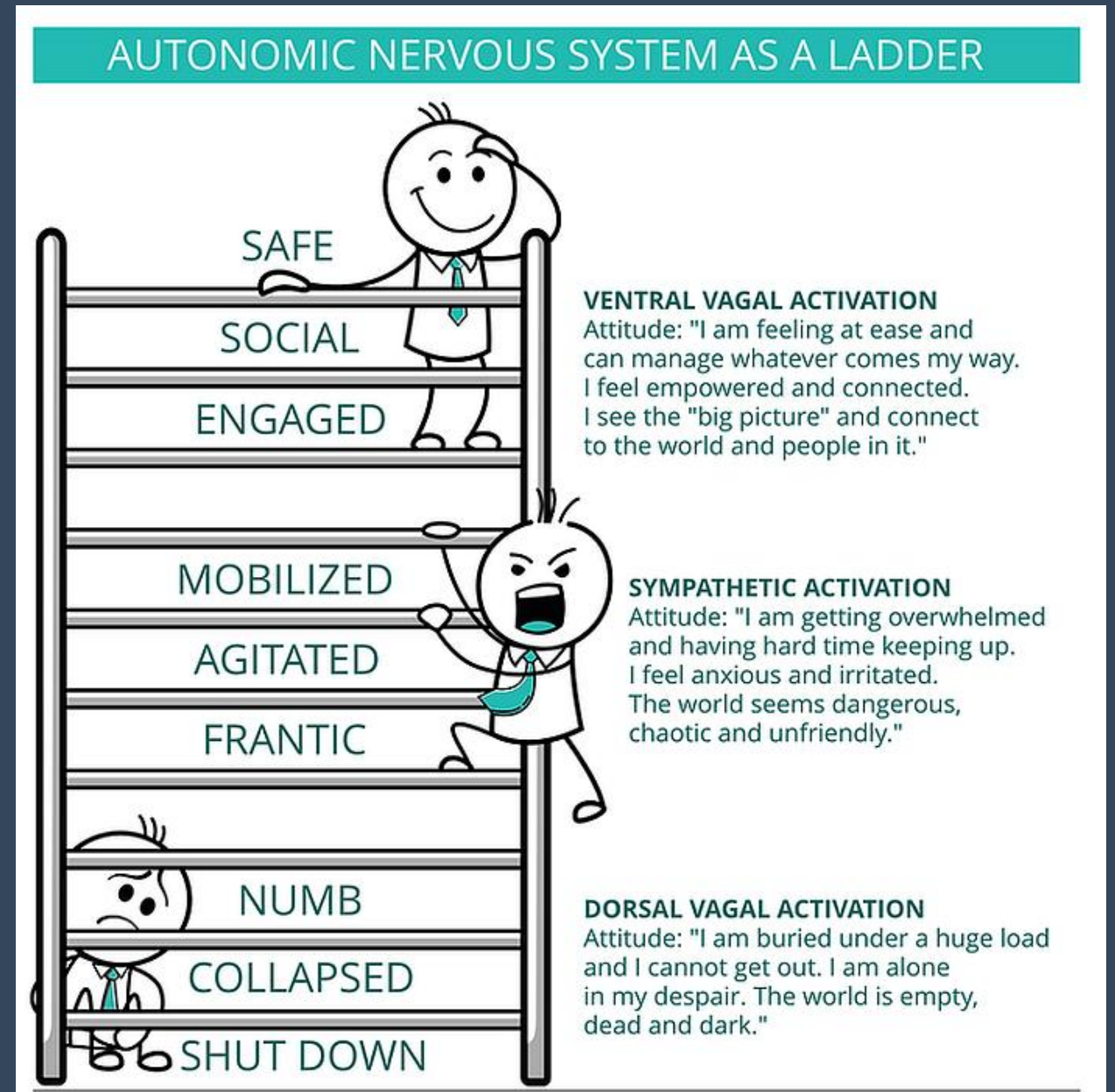
I can help you best when you use your words. Let's try that next time. When you feel upset, you can...

(take a deep breath, ask for a hug/cuddle, draw/color)
(offer to help + cooperative solutions = quality feedback)



Working with the Autonomic Nervous System

- Polyvagal Theory
- Different levels of alertness
- Striving for balance/ equilibrium/ homeostasis
- Can't skip steps



A blue and black butterfly is perched on a dark branch. The background is a soft-focus green bokeh. Three pink, pill-shaped decorative dots are arranged in a horizontal line above the butterfly, and another three are arranged in a horizontal line below it.

Regulate

The Butterfly



Calming Nervous System Activities



- Deep, slow breathing
- Visualization
- Singing, Humming, Chanting, Gargling
- Meditation/ Mindfulness
- Exercise
- Massage
- Socializing & Laughing
- Cold exposure
- Listen to your favorite music
- Gentle stretching (even if it's for just a couple minutes)
- Watch something funny (laughter)
- Hug your kid or dog (Affection)





From Self Care to Communities of Care



Reminders for Our Children and Ourselves

"It's okay to be upset- it's good to let it out."

"I hear you- I'm here for you- I'll stay with you."

"It's okay to feel how you feel. It's not okay to _____."

"How you feel right now won't last forever. It's okay to feel how you are feeling. It will pass and you will feel better again soon."

"Let's take a breath, take a break, sit down, pause for a minute..."

"You are good and kind."

"I'm here when you need me."

"Let's have a Do-over!"

"What can we learn from this? What is the lesson in this?"

"You'll remember next time."



References & Resources

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- Self Care to Communities of Care: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=be0WvqBFK3I>
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- What Happened To You?: Oprah Winfrey & Bruce Perry
- It Didn't Start With You: Mark Wolynn
- The Body Keeps the Score: Bessel van der Kolk
- Why Zebra's Don't Get Ulcers: Robert Sapolsky
- Gabor Mate: <https://drgabormate.com/trauma/>