

Why Do We Press Harder on the Remote Control When We Know the Batteries Are Dead?

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Why yes, I'm a bit stressed.
Why do you ask?

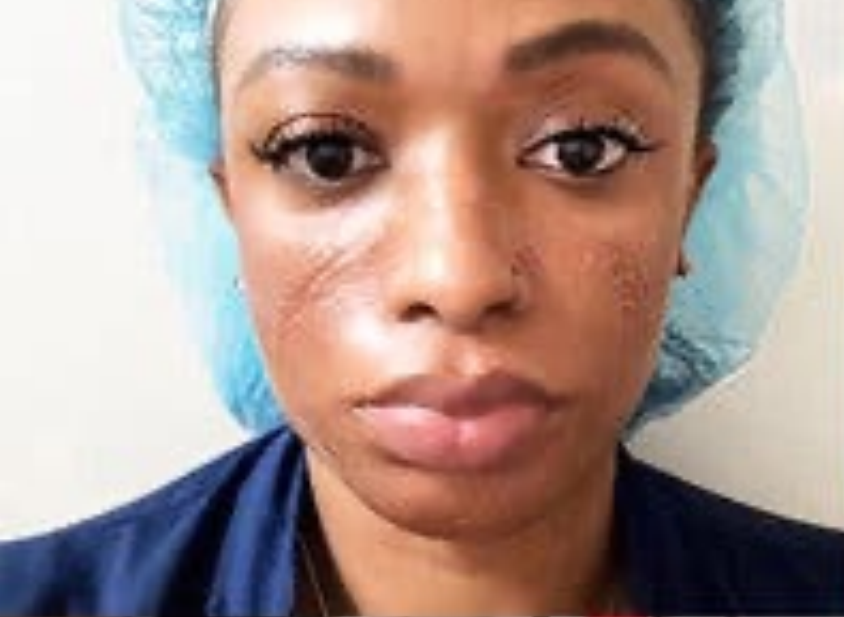
Objectives

- ◊ Understand the psychobiology of stress and trauma that contribute to some of the puzzling behaviors and feelings that can dominate us
- ◊ Develop a shared understanding and language of stress and trauma
- ◊ Provide guiding principles and practical tools to support wellness at work



Is anyone here the same
person you were when you
first started your career in
healthcare?

Context



I AM
NOT A
THREAT



PIM
AR
HI
SO



Garner

Taylor

Rice

Castile

Floyd

Take a Slow Deep Breath



Definition of Trauma

Individual trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has **lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.** (SAMHSA)

Or. . .

- ◆ Any experience that overwhelms our *already developed ability* to cope

Trauma is not what happens to you; **trauma is what happens inside you as a result of what happens to you.**

(Gabor Mate, *The Myth of Normal*, 2023)



Kinds of Trauma

- ❖ **Acute trauma:** a single event that is time-limited, i.e injury accident, pregnancy loss, sudden death of a loved one, assault, divorce, job loss, etc.
- ❖ **Complex trauma:** exposure to multiple traumas or stressors that are often invasive or interpersonal and have wide-ranging, long-term impact, i.e. childhood neglect and sexual abuse, domestic violence.
- ❖ **InterGenerational:** happens when the effects of trauma are not resolved in one generation. When trauma is ignored and there is no support for dealing with it, the trauma will be passed from one generation to the next.
- ❖ **Historical:** occurs in history to a specific group of people causing emotional and mental wounding both during their lives and to the generations that follow , i.e. land removal from Native Americans, slavery, the Holocaust.
- ❖ **System-induced:** when systems designed to help trauma victims inflict trauma or re-traumatize people (unjust policies, harmful practices, invasive procedures, racial/cultural bias, etc.).

Toxic Stress

Is associated with prolonged and intense activation of the body's stress response to such an extent that it can change the way a child's brain develops, the very architecture of the brain, with problematic long-term consequences. (Sandra Bloom)

Consensus-Based Definition

"a strengths-based framework that is grounded in an understanding of and responsiveness to the impact of trauma, that emphasizes physical, psychological, and emotional safety for both providers and survivors, and that creates opportunities for survivors to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment" (Hopper, Bausik, and Olivet, 2010).

Trauma
Informed
Care



The problem we see on the surface is typically not the problem, but an attempt to solve an entirely different problem.

◊ It all goes back to context.



- Behavioral Problems
- Physical Illness
- Emotional Dysregulation

- Trauma & Loss
- Chronic Hyperarousal &
Chronic Inflammation
- Adverse Childhood
Experiences

Trauma- Informed Guiding Principle

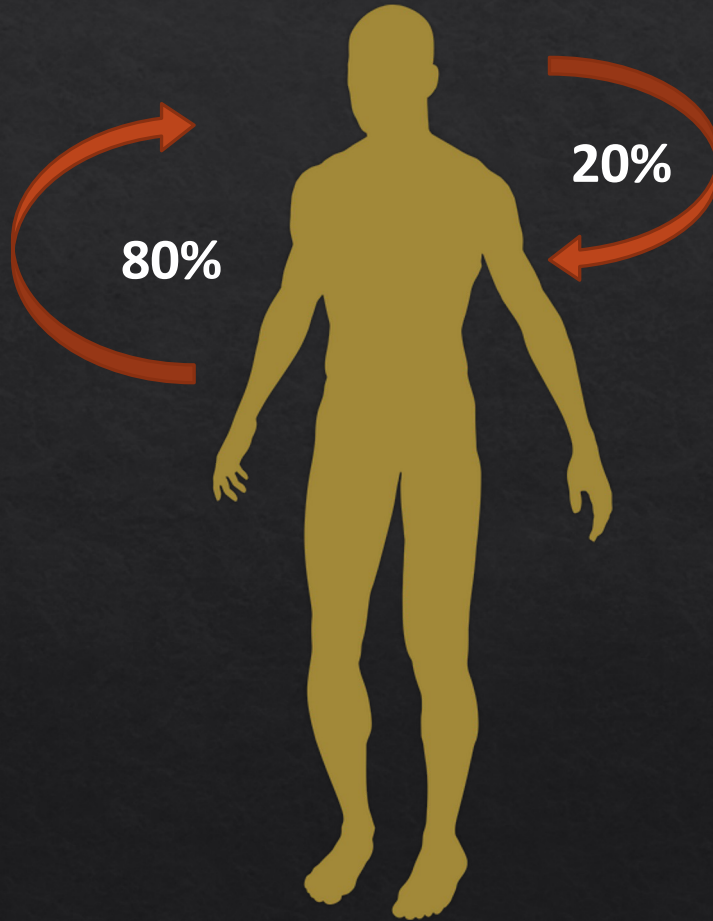
- ◆ “Learning about the psychobiology of stress, toxic stress, and trauma is liberating for people. It gives us explanatory reasons for some of the puzzling behaviors we engage in and the feelings that can come to dominate us.” (Sandra Bloom)

Thinking Brain and Survival Brain

- **Thinking Brain = Rider**
 - Makes informed, rational decisions
- **Survival Brain = Horse**
 - Protective instincts based on feelings
- **When triggered, the rider falls off the horse**



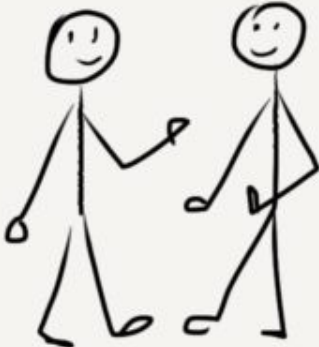


Brain and Body Feedback Loop



POLYVAGAL THEORY

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Sympathetic	Dorsal Vagus	Ventral Vagus
<p>Fight/Flight</p>  <p>Mobilization First line of defence</p> <p>Location: Along spinal cord</p> <p>Increased heart rate, shallow breath, muscle tension.</p> <p>Mobilising the body's resources to deal with stressor.</p>	<p>Shut down/ Collapse/ Freeze</p>  <p>Immobilization Second line of defence</p> <p>Location: Diaphragm, gut, viscera</p> <p>The last resort if fight/ flight isn't possible. When life needs to be preserved, freeze occurs.</p>	<p>Social Engagement System</p>  <p>Communication and connection.</p> <p>Location: Face, throat, chest</p> <p>Helps us rest/digest Engaging with ourselves and others.</p>

As our biology changes, so do our stories



- ◇ In the **ventral vagus (grounded and connected) state**, the stories are of possibility and choice where connection and challenges feel manageable, and we are feeling safe enough in the world to venture out and explore.
- ◇ In **sympathetically mobilized (fight/flight) state**, the stories are about adversaries. Connection isn't important; survival is. These are stories of "anger and anxiety, action and chaos."
- ◇ In **dorsal (shutdown) state**, the stories are about losing hope, being lost, or feeling untethered to the world and others. Stories of not belonging and being a misfit, unseen and alone.

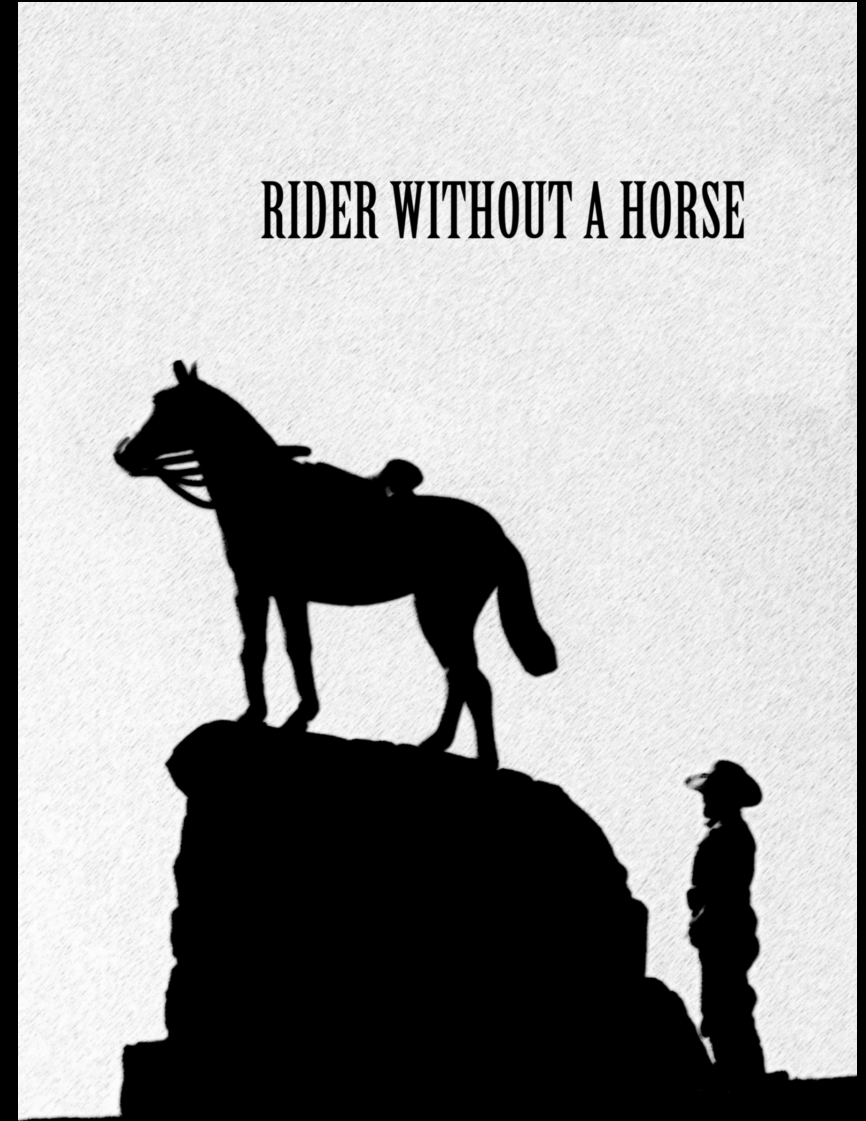
Deb Dana, *Anchored*, 2021

Reflect and
Discuss:
How do you
know when you
are?

- ◆ Ventrally regulated (Socially engaged)?
- ◆ Sympathetically activated (mobilized, agitated, ready to fight or flee)?
- ◆ Dorsally activated (shut down, numb, ready to give up)?

Thinking Brain and Survival Brain

- **When stress is pervasive and unavoidable, it is adaptive for the horse to disregard the rider altogether!**



Why Is This Important?

- ◆ For us to function we must be able to accurately assess risk, and inhibit defensive reflexes to fight, flee, freeze when appropriate
- ◆ We want to make sure we can inhibit these defense systems in safe environments, or be able to activate them in dangerous ones
- ◆ If we can't, the work is to help the nervous system register the difference between past and present/safe and dangerous ~ essentially re-interpreting signals outside of trauma cues

Trauma-Informed System: Core Guiding Principle

Safety and Stability

Trauma unpredictably violates our physical, social, and emotional safety resulting in a sense of threat and need to manage risks.

Increasing stability in our daily lives and having these core safety needs met can minimize our stress reactions and allow us to focus our resources on wellness.



Physical Safety: Is my body safe?



Social Safety: Can I trust and connect with the people around me?

Emotional Safety: Will I be able to share my feelings?

Cultural Safety: Will my identity and experiences be recognized and respected?

Spiritual Safety: Will my beliefs, practices, and traditions be accepted?



Behavioral Problems

Physical Illness

Emotional Dysregulation

Trauma & Loss

Chronic Hyperarousal &
Chronic Inflammation

Adverse Childhood
Experiences

Ellen Langer

- ◆ “. . . health and illness are much more rooted in our minds and in our hearts and how we experience ourselves in the world than our models even begin to understand.”



Counterclockwise

In one week
they found. . .

- ◆ Dramatic improvements in their hearing, memory, dexterity, appetite, and general well-being
- ◆ Ongoing good health lies in being aware of the ways we mindlessly react to social and cultural cues
- ◆ What do you tell yourself about yourself?

Chamber Maids

- ◇ 84 hotel chamber maids who reported not getting enough exercise
- ◇ Lost weight, improved body mass index, hip-to-waist ratio, BP
- ◇ The only difference was the change in mind-set



Diabetes

- ◇ Could glucose levels in people with Type 2 diabetes be manipulated by a subject's perception of time?
- ◇ Blood-glucose levels followed perceived time rather than actual time, spiking and dipping when the subjects expected them to

“If we treat ourselves as we are,
we’re going to remain that way.
If we treat ourselves as we can be,
then we’ll become as we can be.”

Ellen Langer

Find the
coping
strategy that
works for
you

- ◊ Keep your neurobiology in mind when you think about taking care of yourself
- ◊ Don't cope alone
- ◊ Organize support at work and cultivate a sense of community in your areas



