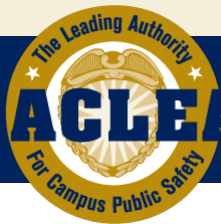
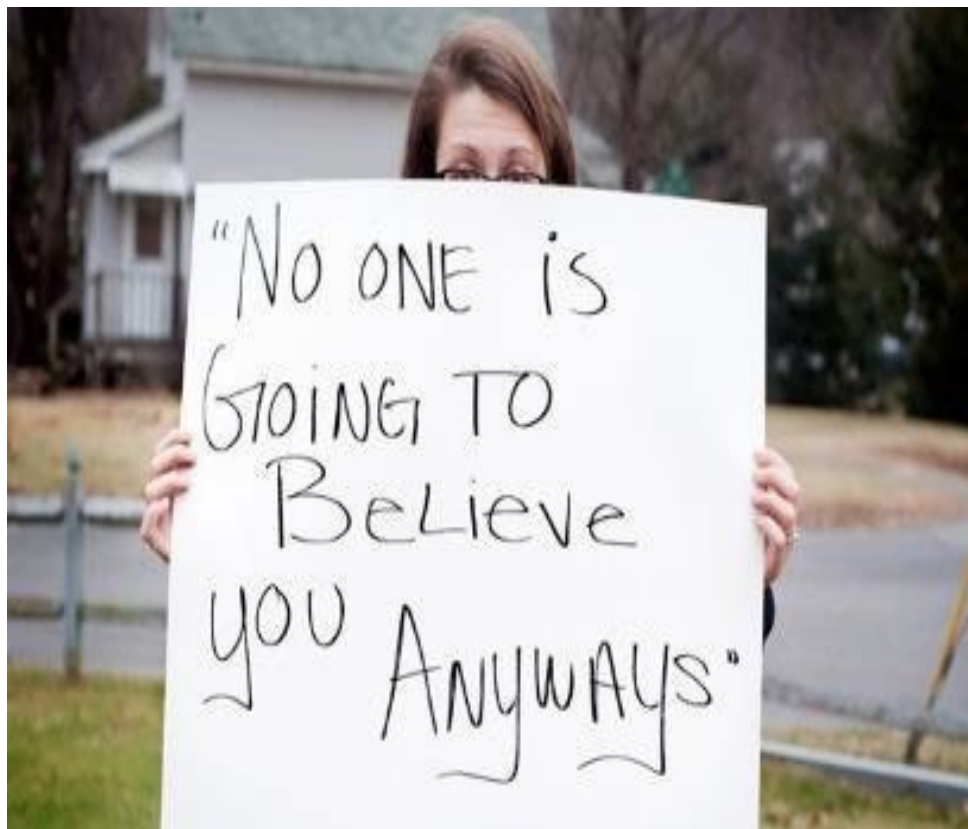


The Impacts of Trauma





Why Start with Trauma?



"ALLEGED..."

"ALLEGED..."

"ALLEGED..."

"It all sounds suspicious..."

"She can't get her story straight..."

"It sounds like he is making it up..."

"She didn't scream, fight, or run away..."

"They aren't acting the way I would expect..."



Conceptualizing Trauma





What Is Trauma?

Experiencing **too much, too fast, too soon** in such a way that one's ability to **cope** is **overwhelmed**.

Leaves one feeling **powerless, out of control** and/or **severely disconnected** from one's self, family, community, and/or beliefs.

Trauma is about experiencing an overwhelming **loss** of:

POWER
CONTROL
CONNECTEDNESS



Defining Trauma

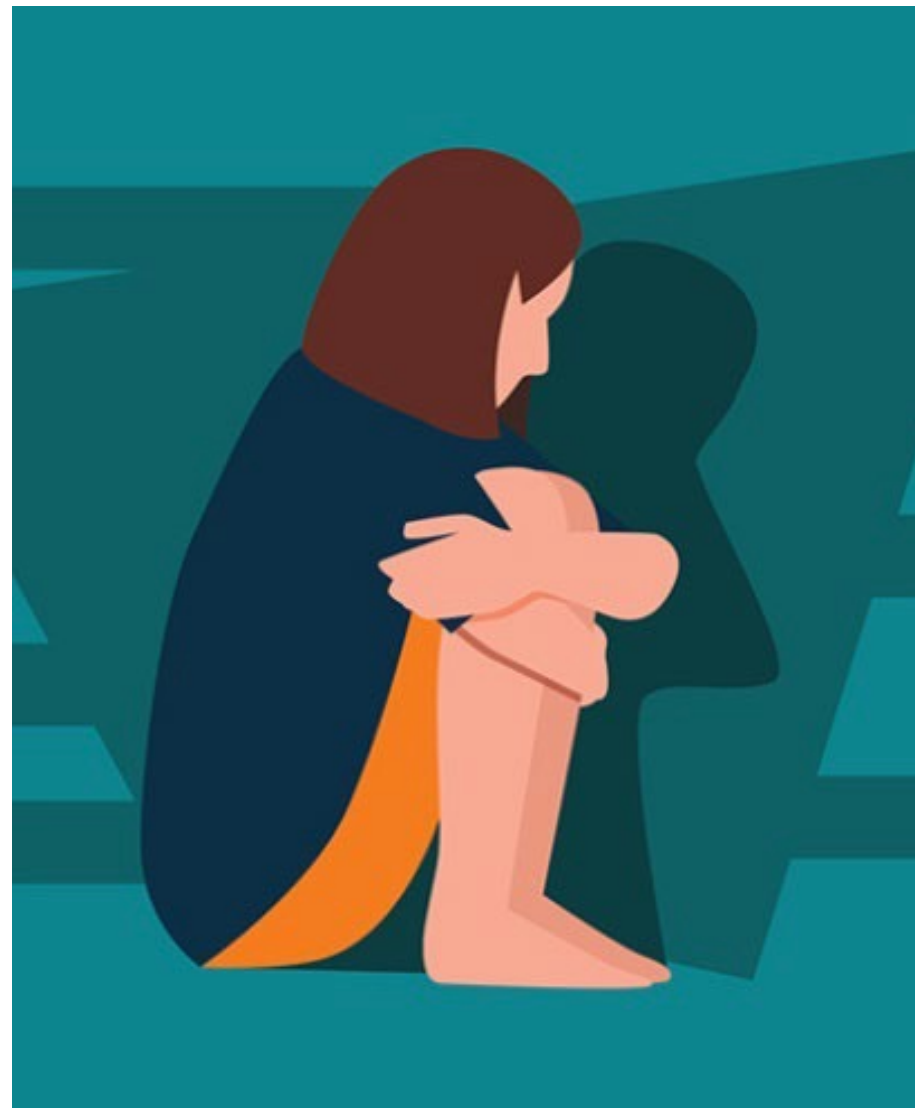
- A traumatic event either witnessed or experienced, representing a fundamental threat to one's physical integrity or survival
- Responses involve intense fear, helplessness or horror
- The meaning of the event may be as important as the actual physical act/experience

Lisa Ferentz, 2017



TRAUMA CAN LOOK LIKE...

- Personalizing the experience (feeling “targeted” or “singled out”)
- Feeling responsible for event (“it’s because of me/it’s my fault”)
- Feeling the trauma has made you “weird” or “different”
- Using it as “evidence” that bad things will keep happening to you/others





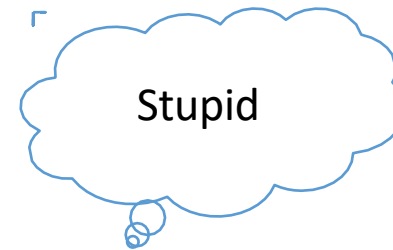
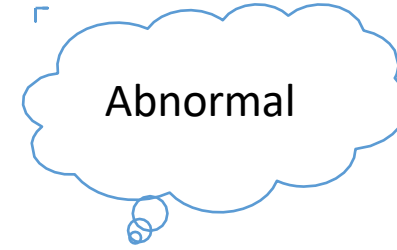
The Impact of Trauma

PEOPLE WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED TRAUMA ARE:



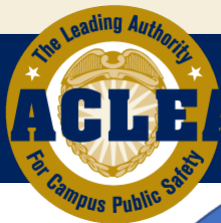


The Trauma Survivor's Glossary



This is how survivors make sense of their behaviors.
This glossary evokes shame, a set-up for not feeling worthy of self-love, to stay in bad relationships, etc.

(Lisa Ferentz, 2017)



"Can't you control yourself?"

"You're so weak!"

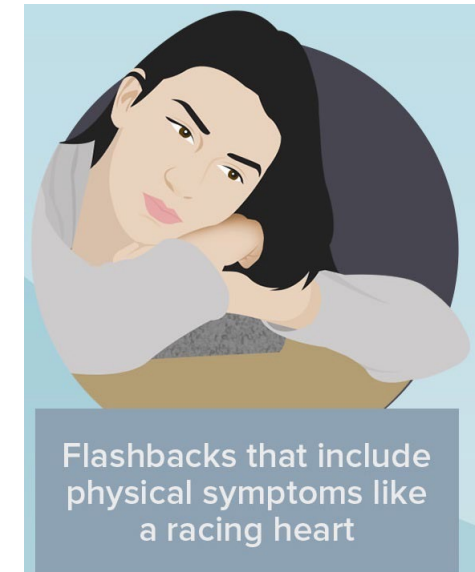
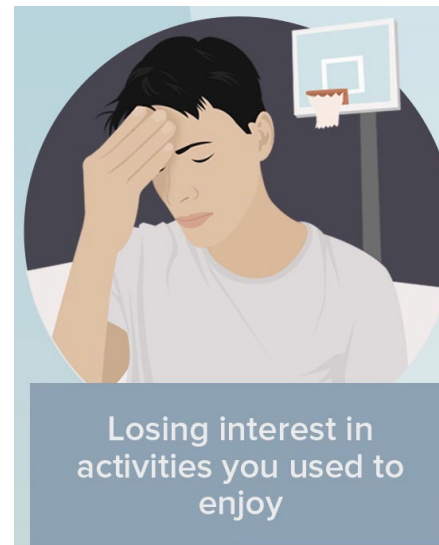
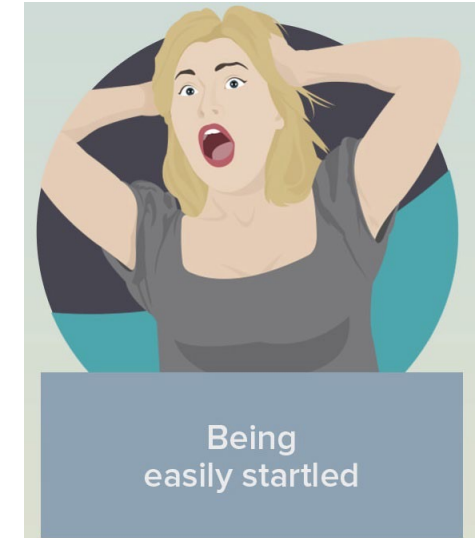
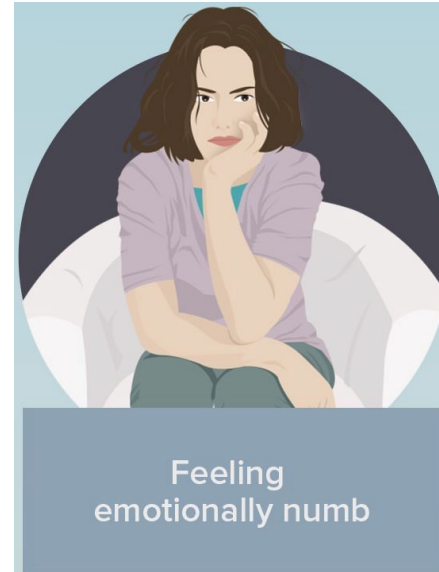


"Stop crying!"

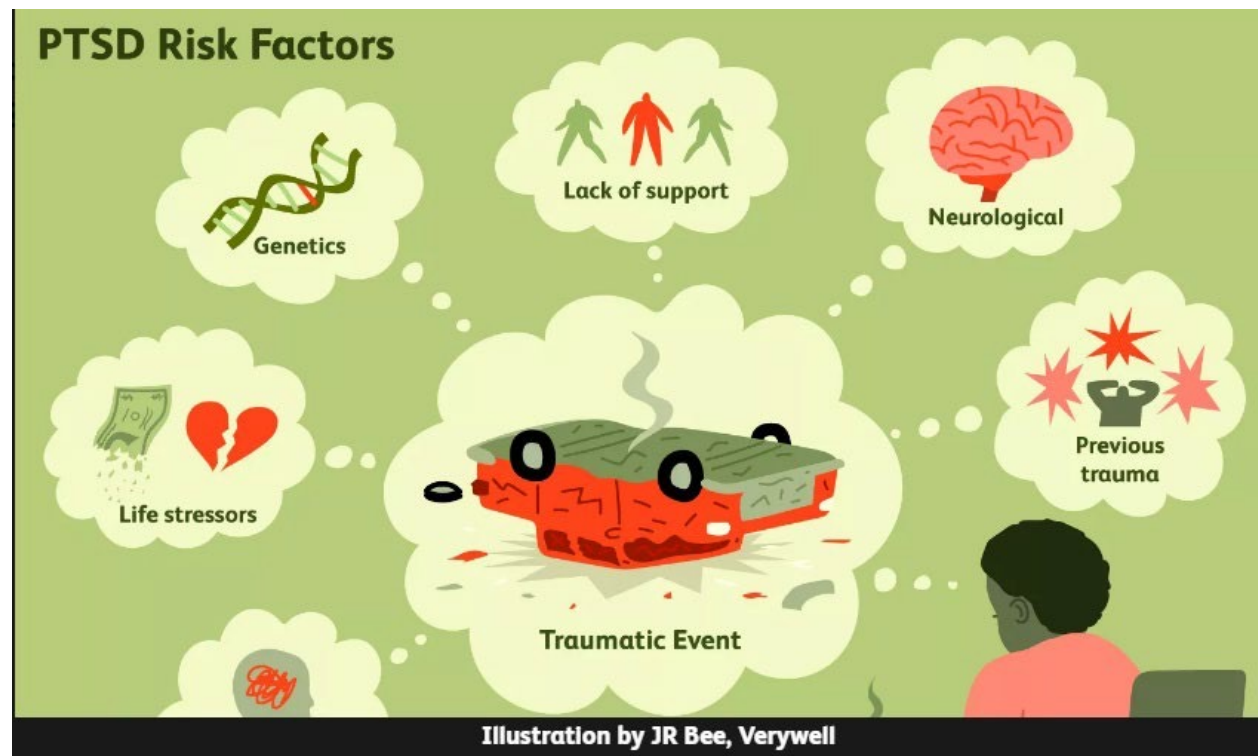
"I bet if I was cutting onions I wouldn't tear up like that!"

Byproducts of Trauma

- Numbness
- Detachment
- Absence of emotional responsiveness
- Reduced awareness of surroundings
- Dissociation
- Increased anxiety/arousal
- Triggers



How do some people deem an experience “traumatic” while others do not?





What is PTSD?

Symptoms

Re-experiencing

- flashbacks
- intrusive thoughts or images
- nightmares
- distress at reminders of the trauma
- physical memories such as pain, sweating, nausea or trembling

Hyperarousal

- constantly aware of threats
- easily startled
- irritable
- easily upset or angry
- difficulty sleeping (insomnia)
- difficulty concentrating

Avoidance

- memory problems
- keeping busy
- avoiding reminders of the trauma
- disassociation
- isolation and withdrawal
- feeling emotionally numb
- using alcohol or drugs

Other Problems

- being unable to trust anyone
- overwhelming feelings of anger, sadness, guilt or shame
- depression or anxiety
- physical symptoms such as headaches, dizziness, stomach aches or a nervous twitch

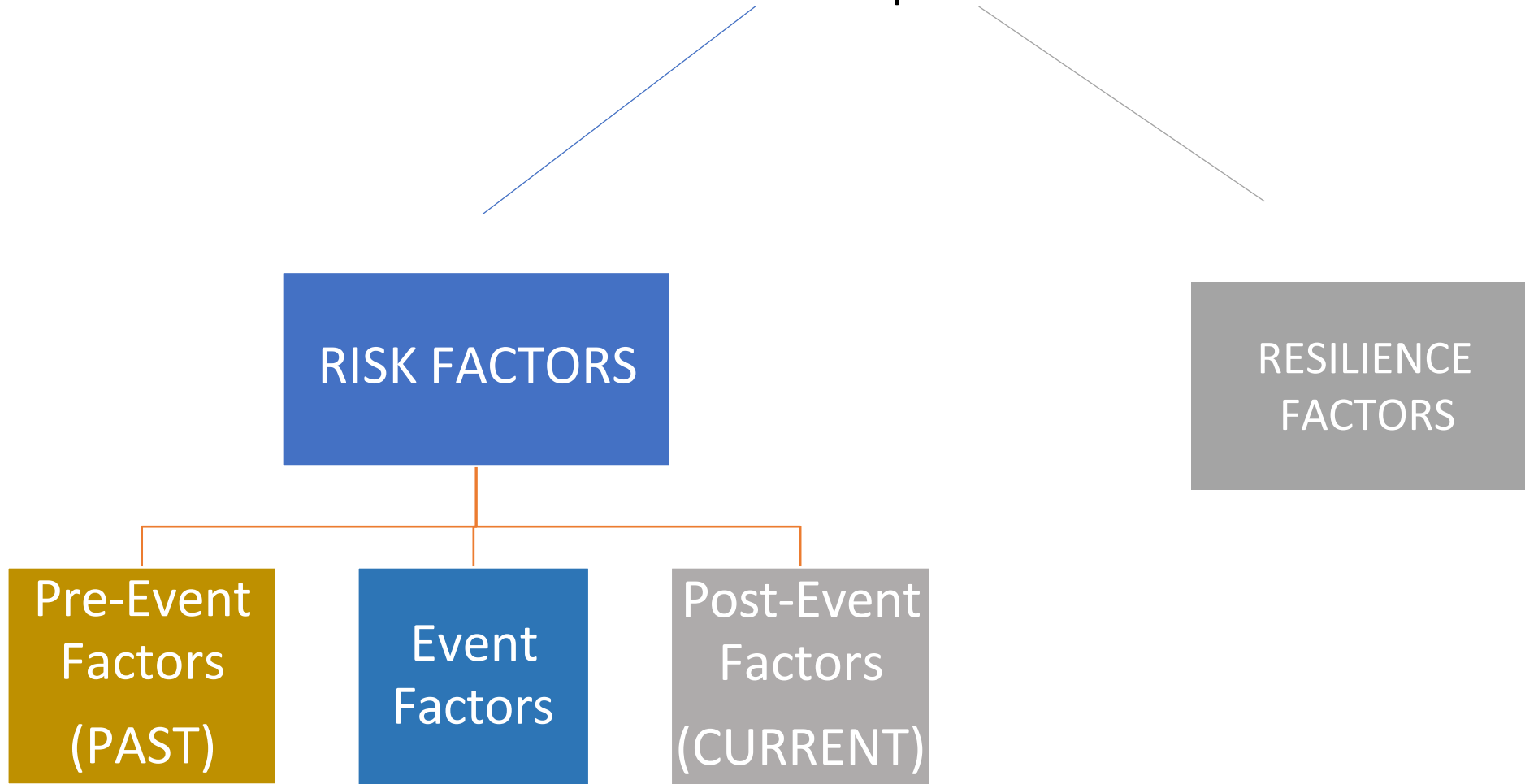


Not everyone who experiences trauma will develop symptoms of PTSD.

WHY?



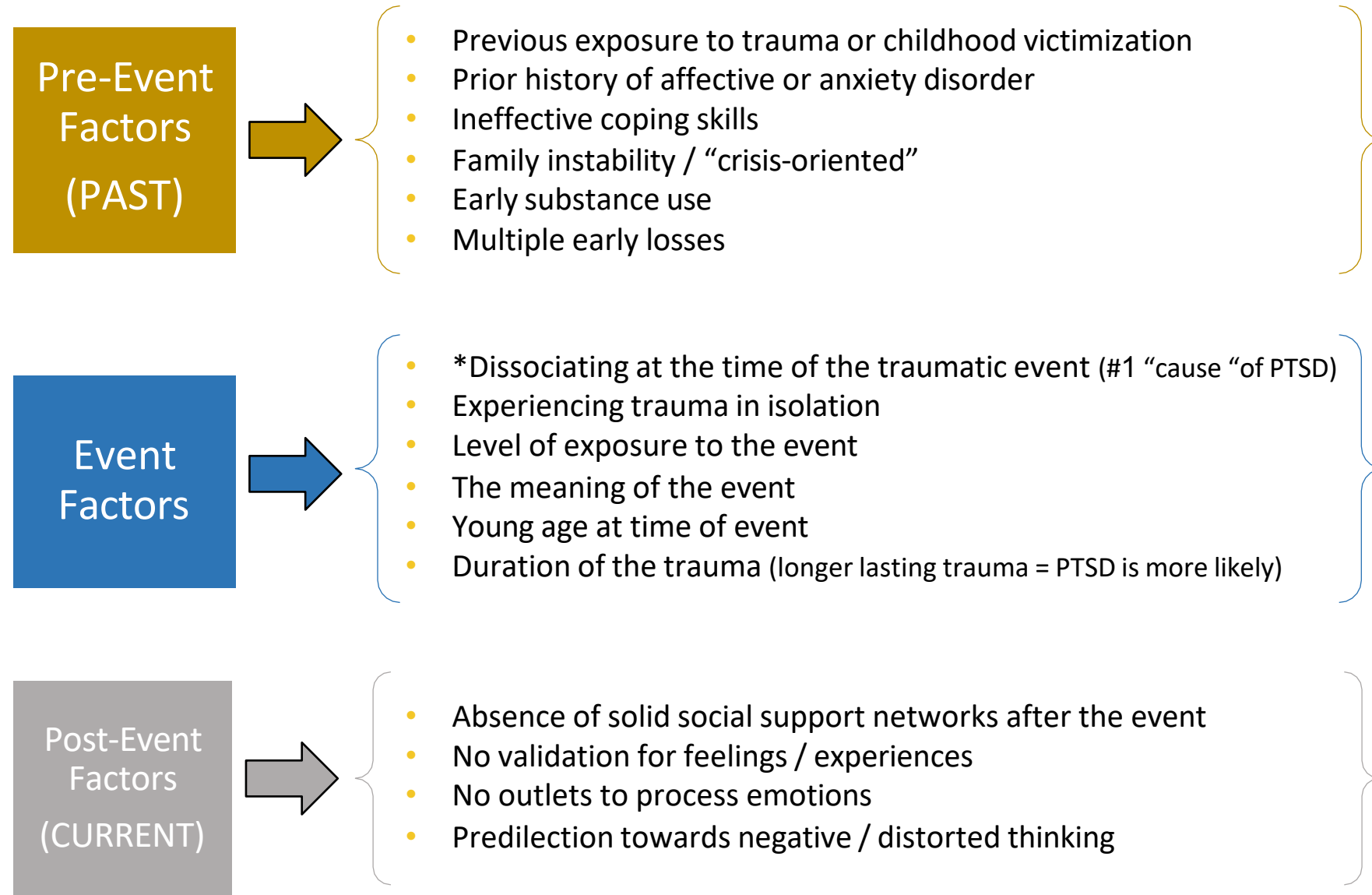
How A Person Responds To Trauma



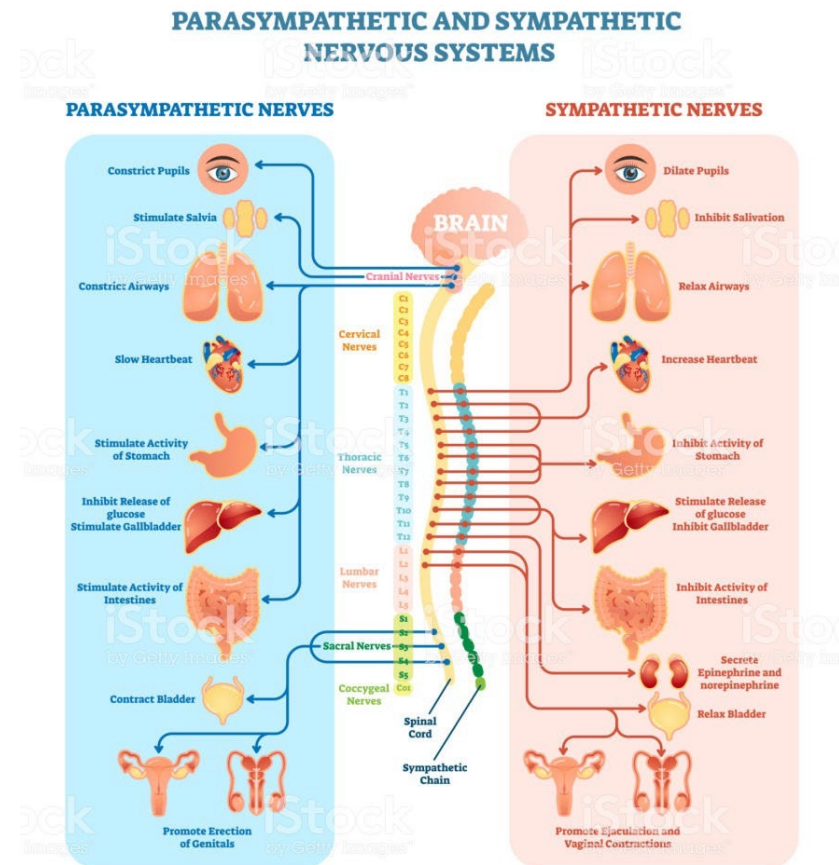
Updated: 10/3/2021

Source: National Institute of Mental Health;
<https://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/PTSD-overview/basics/how-common-is-ptsd.asp>

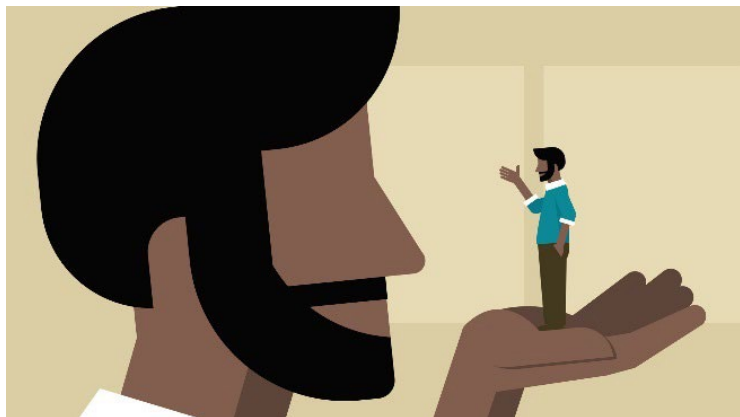
How A Person Responds To Trauma, cont.



Neurobiology of the Trauma Response



The Trauma Response



- What are you feeling right now?
- What do you notice about your body?
- How are you making sense of the way you're feeling?





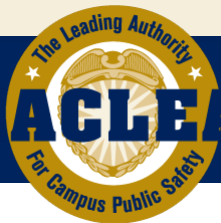
Automatic Traumatic Response

- Each person's response to being victimized is unique to them
- Most victims do not physically resist
- Trauma responses are an automatic survival response – the person has no conscious control over their response, and responses include:

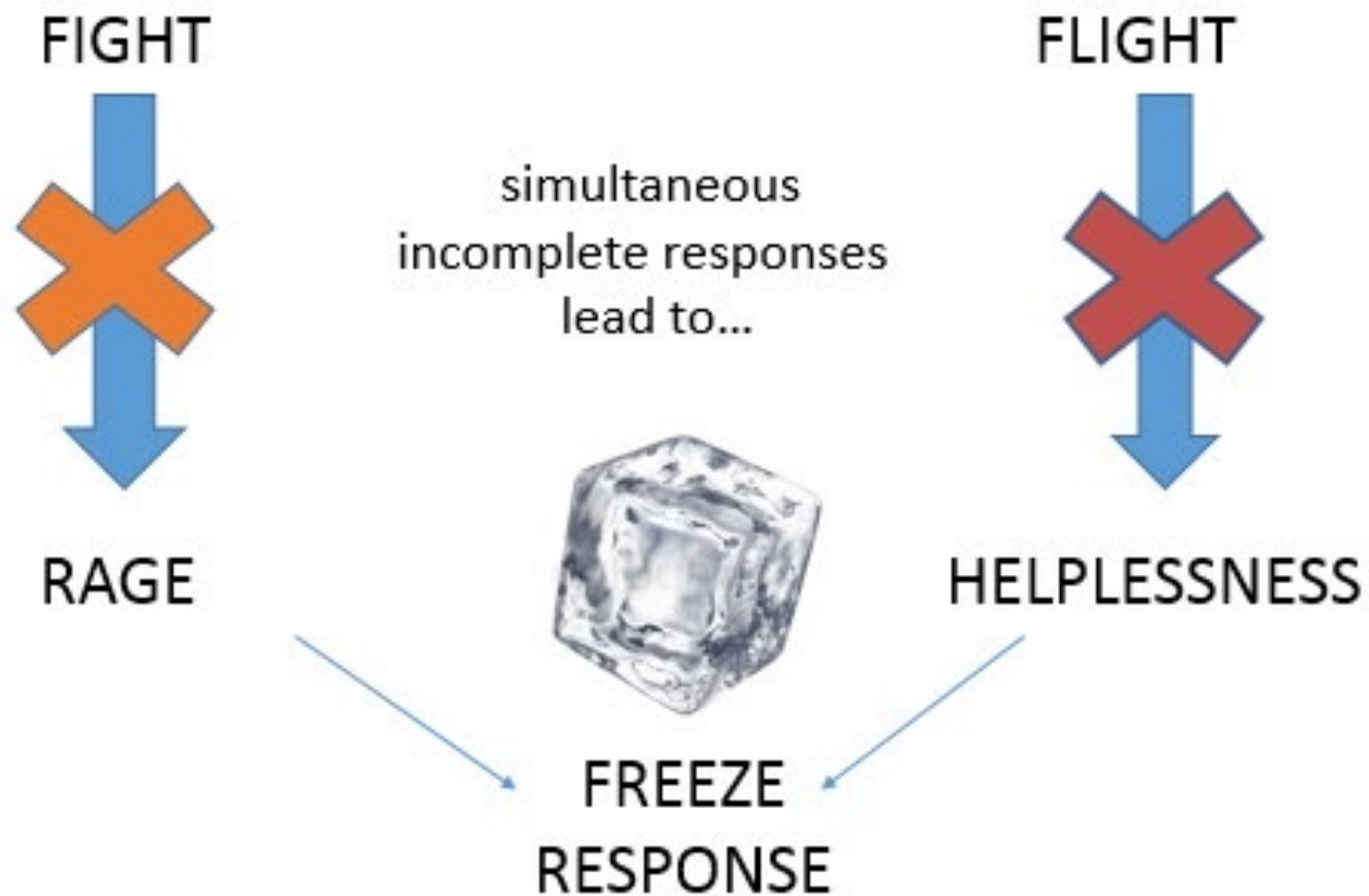
FIGHT

FLIGHT

FREEZE



Freeze Response



(Schore, 2006)

(Peter Levine, 1997)



FREEZE

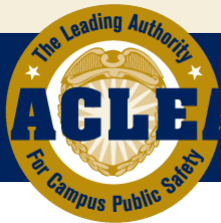
In FREEZE response, the energy should have been DISCHARGED. Instead, it's BOUND UP and may be UNDISCOVERED, which typically results in trauma and PTSD symptomology.

(Peter Levine, 1997)

An INABILITY TO COMPLETE fight/flight, and the subsequent IMMOBOLIZATION, creates a conditioned hormonal response that does NOT allow for physical movement, and RENDERS THE BODY INEFFECTIVE IN FUTURE THREATENING SCENARIOS.

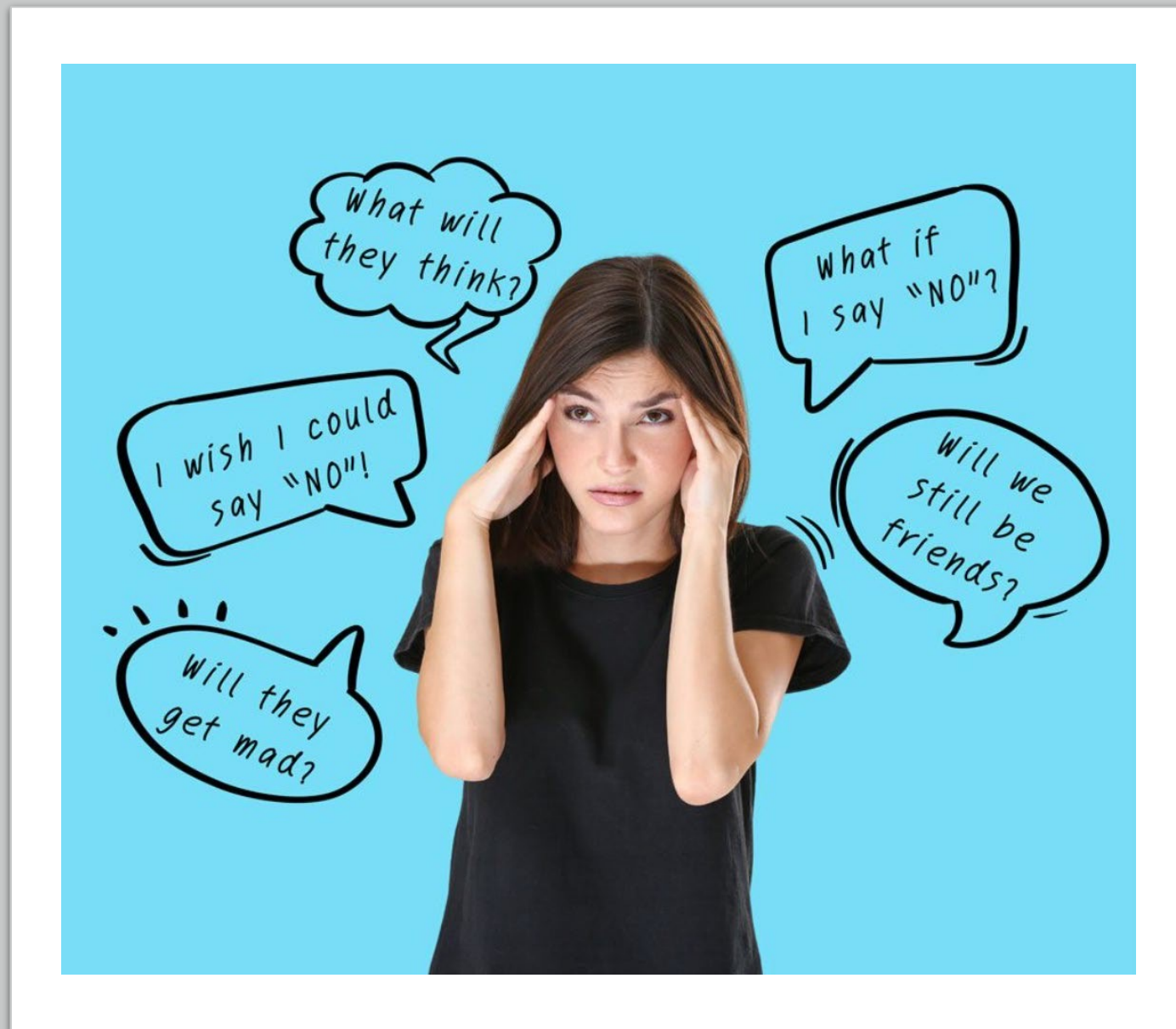
(Lisa Ferentz, 2017)

What happens after the freeze response?

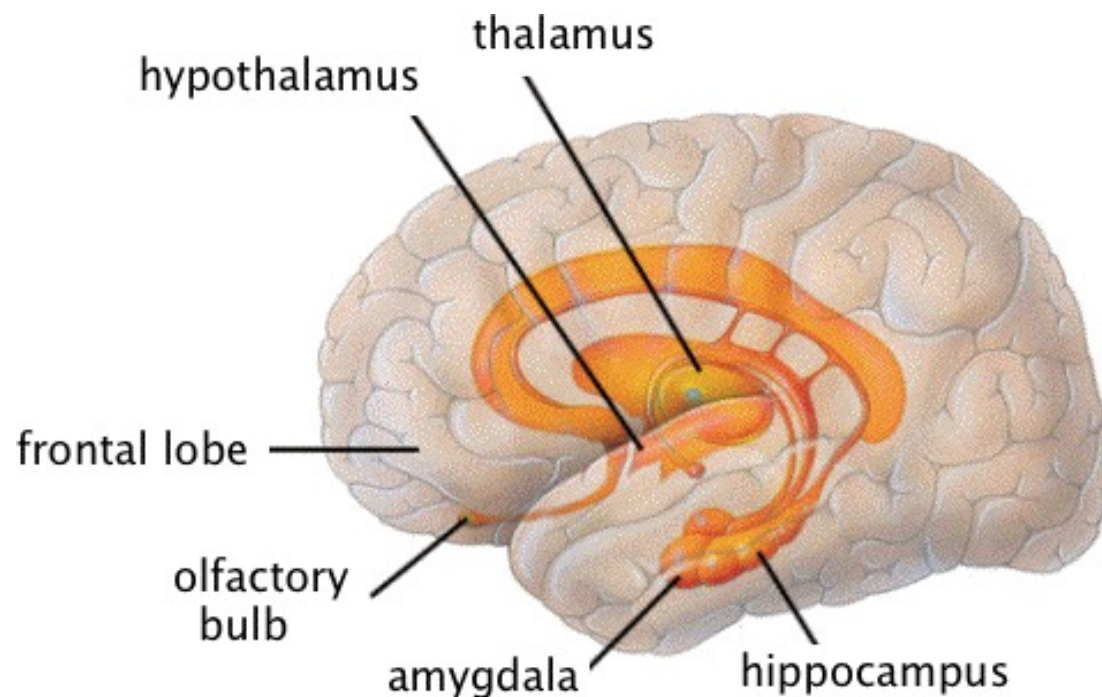


Fawn Response

- The nervous system response in which an individual may overly accommodate others in order to manage their fear.
- May look like:
 - Difficulty setting no
 - Difficulty setting boundaries
 - Anticipating the needs of others
 - Lack of self-identity



The Limbic System



(Babette Rothschild, 2004, Van der Kolk, 2004)

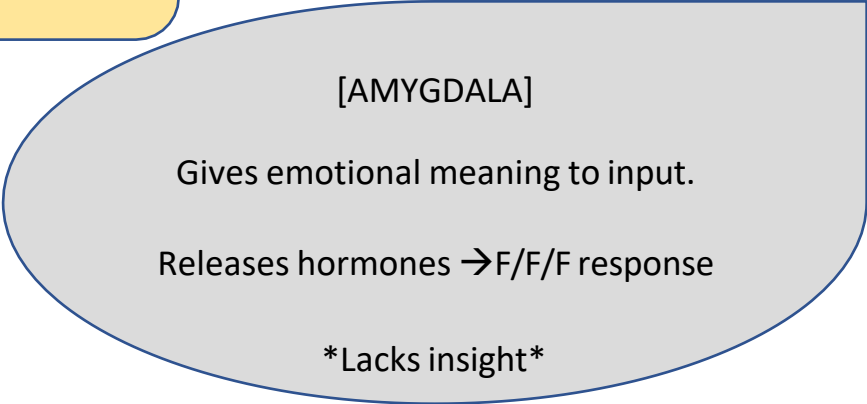
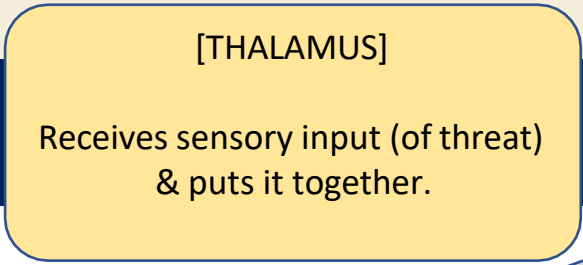
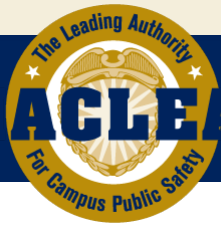
- Limbic System:
 - “survival center”
 - involuntary
 - acts with brainstem to initiate F/F/F in response to threats
- Limbic System contains:
 - Thalamus – receives sensory info
 - Amygdala – “early warning system,” lacks insight
 - Hippocampus – attaches time and context to memories
 - Hypothalamus – links nervous system to endocrine system (hormone release)



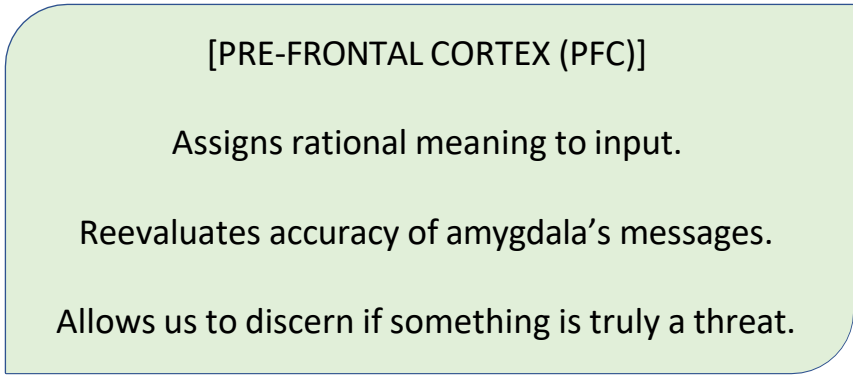
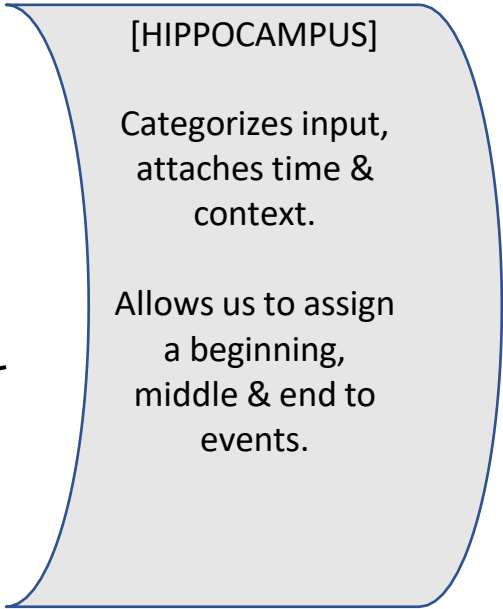
What happens when we sense

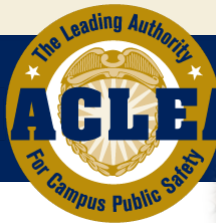


(real or perceived)



HOW THE BRAIN RESPONDS TO THREATS






[THALAMUS]
Receives sensory info and groups it together as "potential threat – needs investigation"

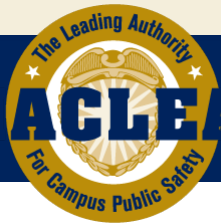
[AMYGDALA]
"GASP!
It looks like a snake!"
(can't distinguish why, survival-oriented)

[HIPPOCAMPUS]
Bridges response to trigger (snake?!) and rational thought (could it be a stick?)
Allows us to assign a beginning (fun hike w/o snake!), middle (OMG SNAKE?) & end (either I escaped or I discovered it was a stick)

HOW THE BRAIN RESPONDS TO THREATS – EXAMPLE

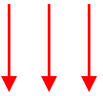
[PRE-FRONTAL CORTEX (PFC)]
Discerning stick vs. snake
"Oh, that's a STICK, not a snake!!"





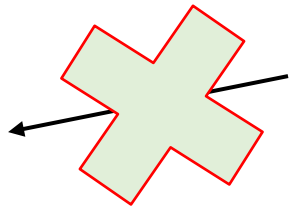
[THALAMUS]
Receives sensory input (of threat) & puts it together.

[AMYGDALA]
OVERACTIVE – alarm continues to sound, releases TOO MANY HORMONES that DAMAGE HIPPOCAMPUS



[HIPPOCAMPUS]
DAMAGED from overstimulation of amygdala
Cannot ascribe a beginning, middle, and most importantly, and end to traumatic event.

[PRE-FRONTAL CORTEX (PFC)]
(Info that should reach PFC – for rational evaluation – DOESN'T GET TRANSFERRED BY HIPPOCAMPUS, so alarm continues to sound, and rational thought cannot prevail.



HOW THE BRAIN RESPONDS TO THREATS – PTSD

Dissociation

DISSOCIATION

ENGAGING
DISSOCIATION
will ask us to
TRAVEL
through
DIMENSIONS
& TIME to
give care to
what was cut
off

CLINICAL
DISSOCIATION
involves

- losing time
- losing sensation
- losing awareness of space.

DISSOCIATIVE SPECTRUM

% of population

VISUALLY TRANSLATED BY @LINDSAYBRAMAN FROM A LECTURE BY ABBY WONG-HEFTNER
IN THE TRAUMA-FOCUSED COUNSELOR TRAINING PROGRAM @ THESEATTLESCHOOL.EDU



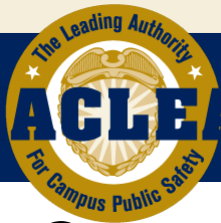
Dissociation is often described as seeing yourself from a “bird’s eye view”



Traumatic Memory

- What elements of a traumatic experience are often remembered?

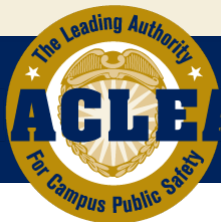




Smells Ring Bells

- Memories triggered by an odor (like the scent of a rose) were accompanied by greater activity in the limbic system, than memories triggered by the verbal label of that odor (like the word “rose”).
- Memories evoked by these odors were linked to more brain activity in areas associated with visual vividness





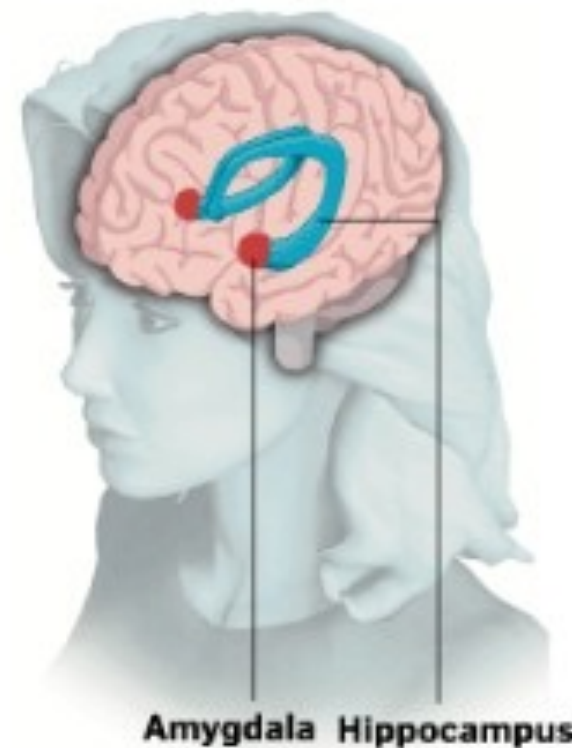
Trauma and “Credibility”

Victims may experience certain responses during and after the assault:

- Traumatic Memory is fragmented, can't provide narrative – misinterpreted as lying
- Demeanor: Lack of emotion, or odd or inappropriate affect –misinterpreted as lying or “not being upset”
- Sensory memories may be more detailed

Traumatic Memories

Stress hormones activate a structure on each side of the brain called the amygdala, Each amygdala plays a crucial role in storing memories of emotional events, primarily by influencing another brain structure called the hippocampus.





How Does Trauma Manifest?

- “Not exactly sure what happened”
- “I don’t really know how long it lasted”
- “I kinda just blanked out/I just went somewhere else”



Questions?

Thank you!