



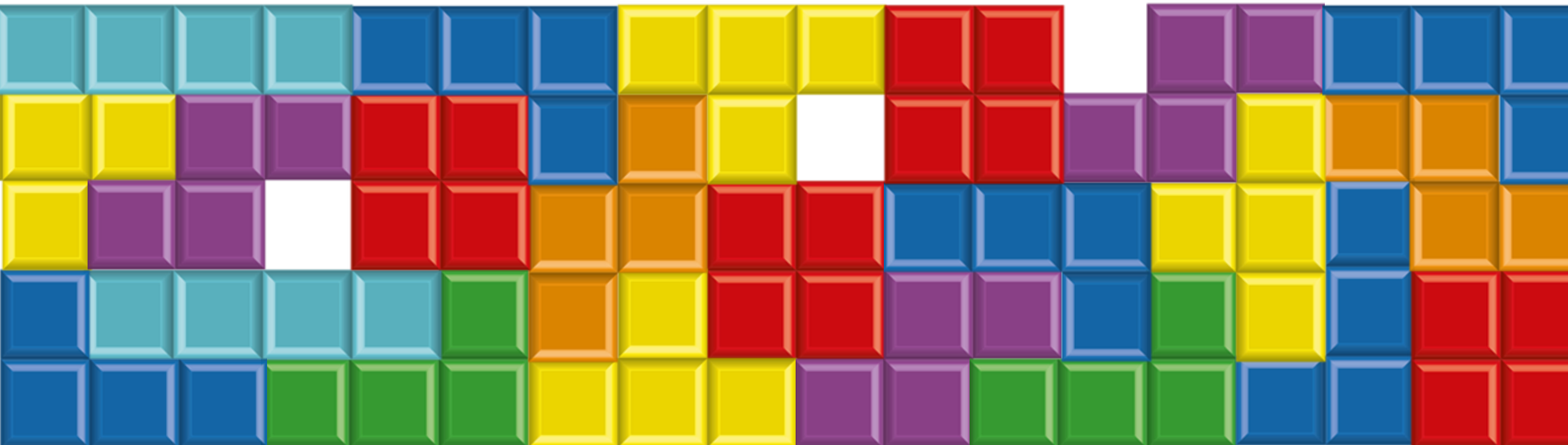
*Understanding the Role of Stress and Self-Regulation in Supporting Families Impacted by Child Welfare.*

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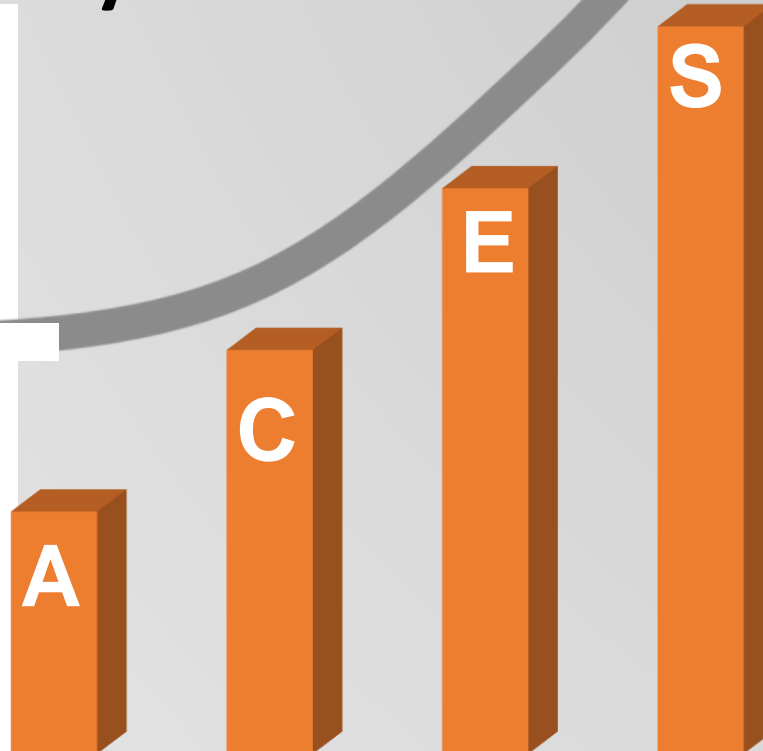
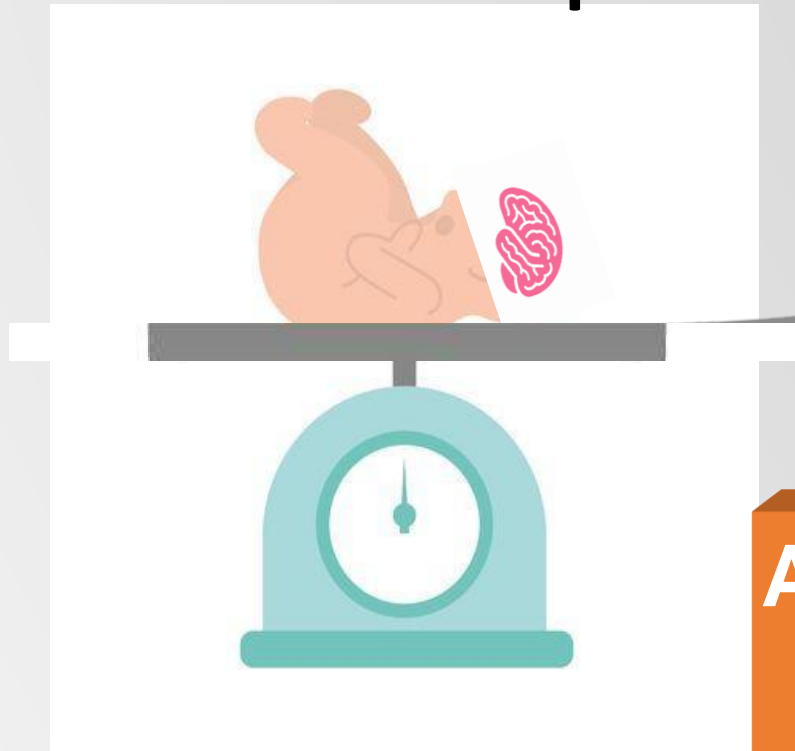


# Learning Objectives

1. How past trauma could be impacting current ability to successfully navigate the world
2. How past trauma can impact present parenting and overall family well-being
3. Why self-regulation should be the “starting point” in most cases
4. How can we create trauma-responsive experiences for families
5. How we can improve our own self-regulation capabilities

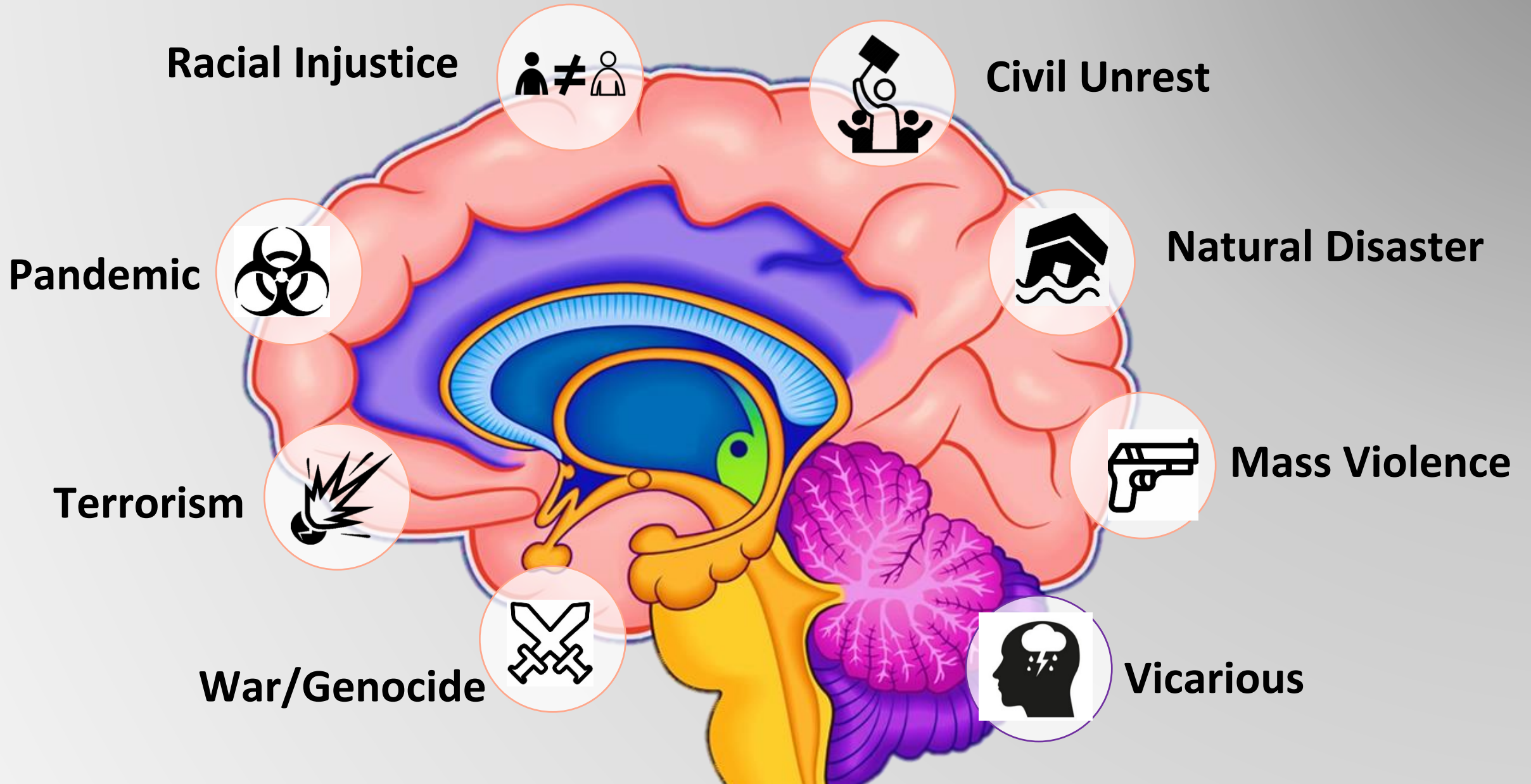
# Trauma

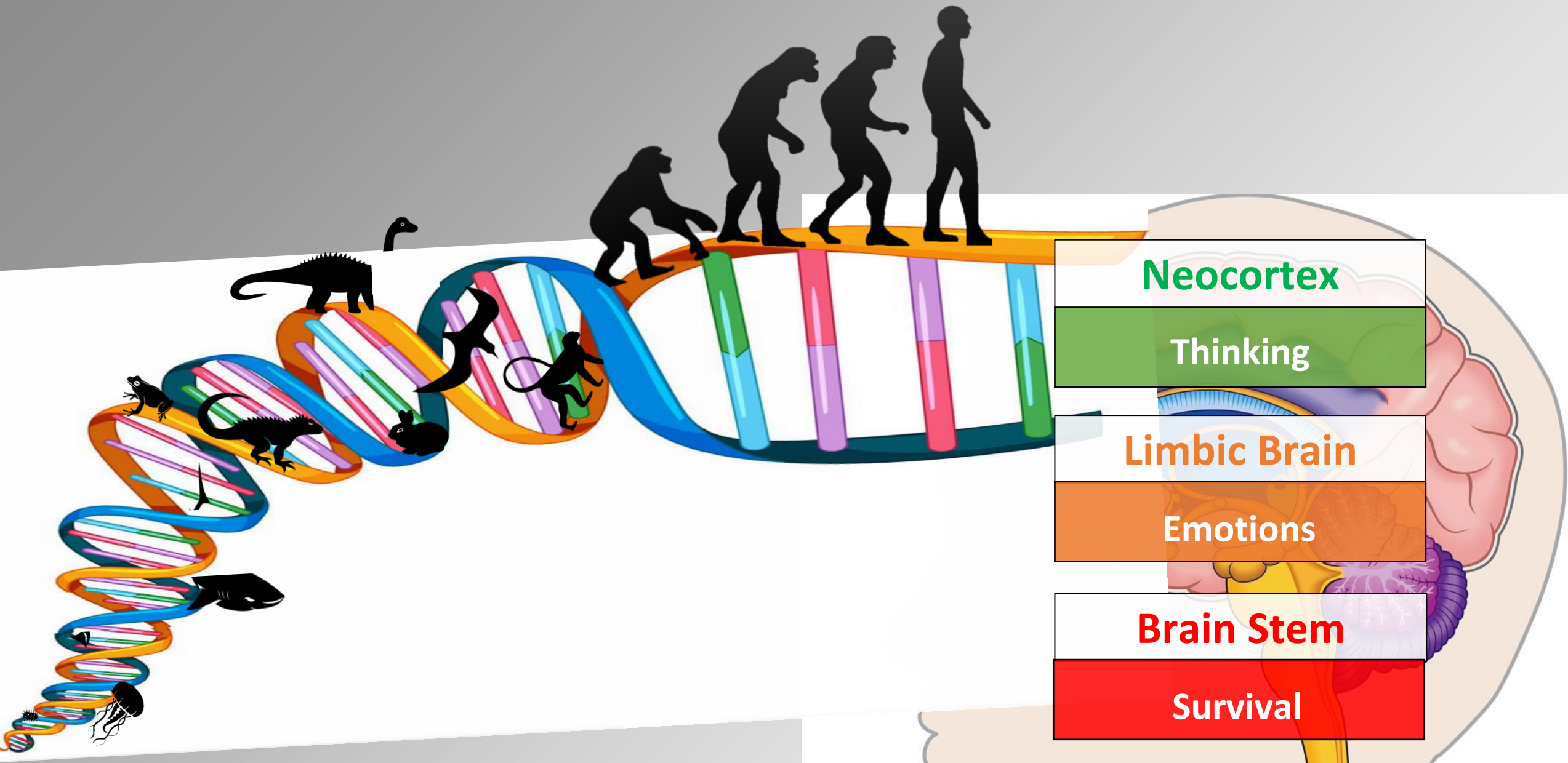
**The cumulative physiological impact of the repeated or continuous activation of the stress response system**





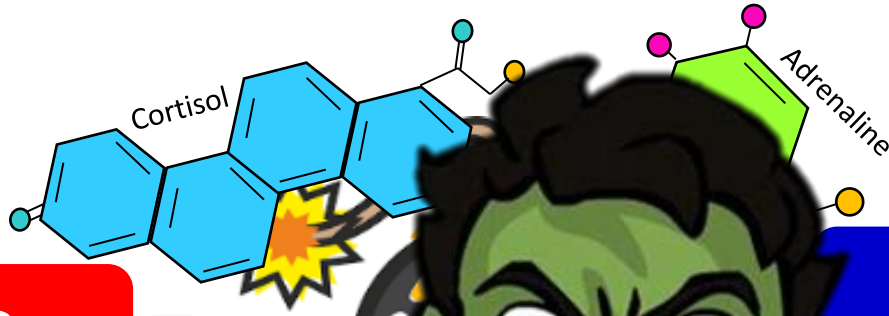
# COLLECTIVE TRAUMA



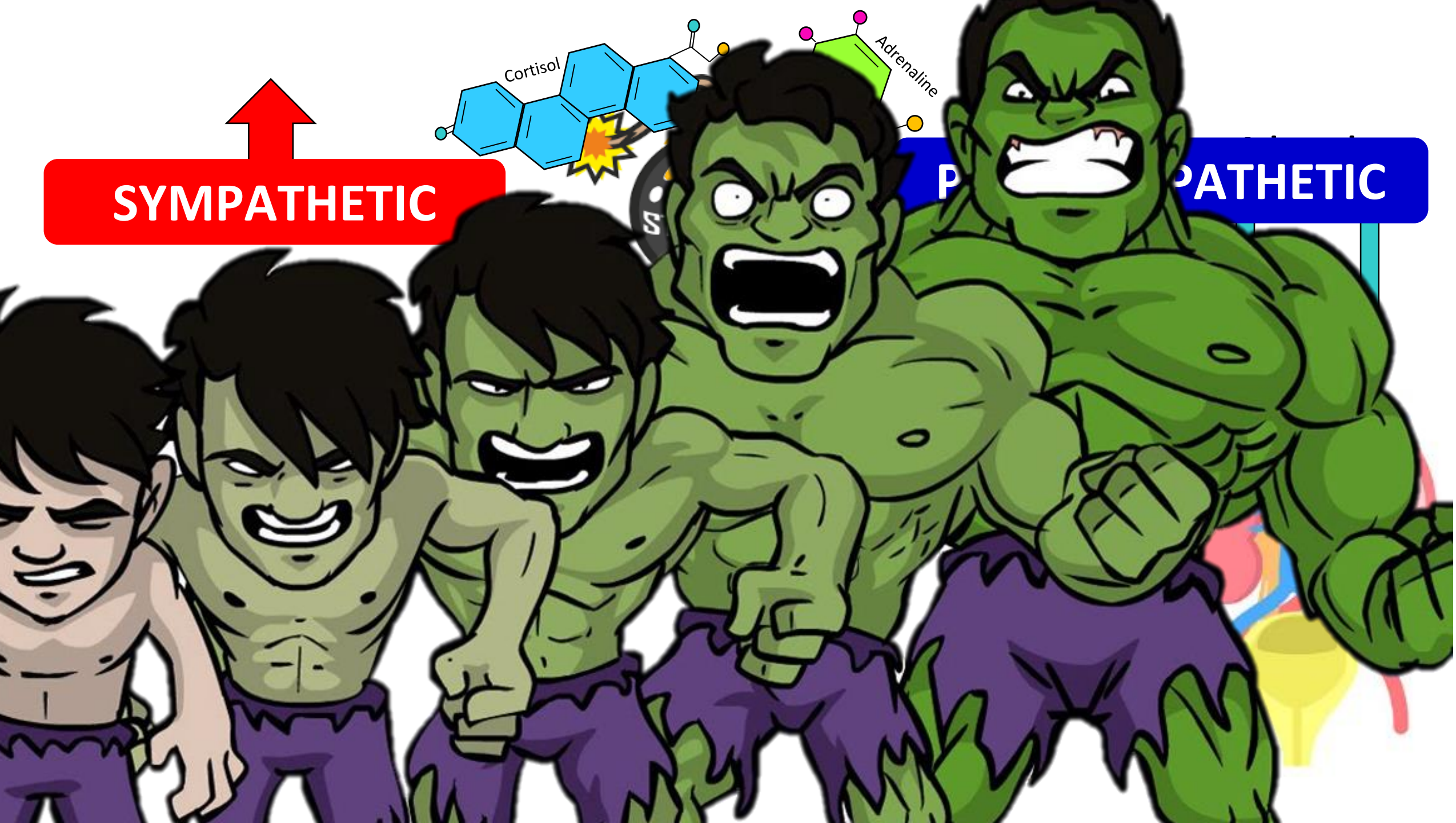




**↑**  
**SYMPATHETIC**



**PARASYMPATHETIC**



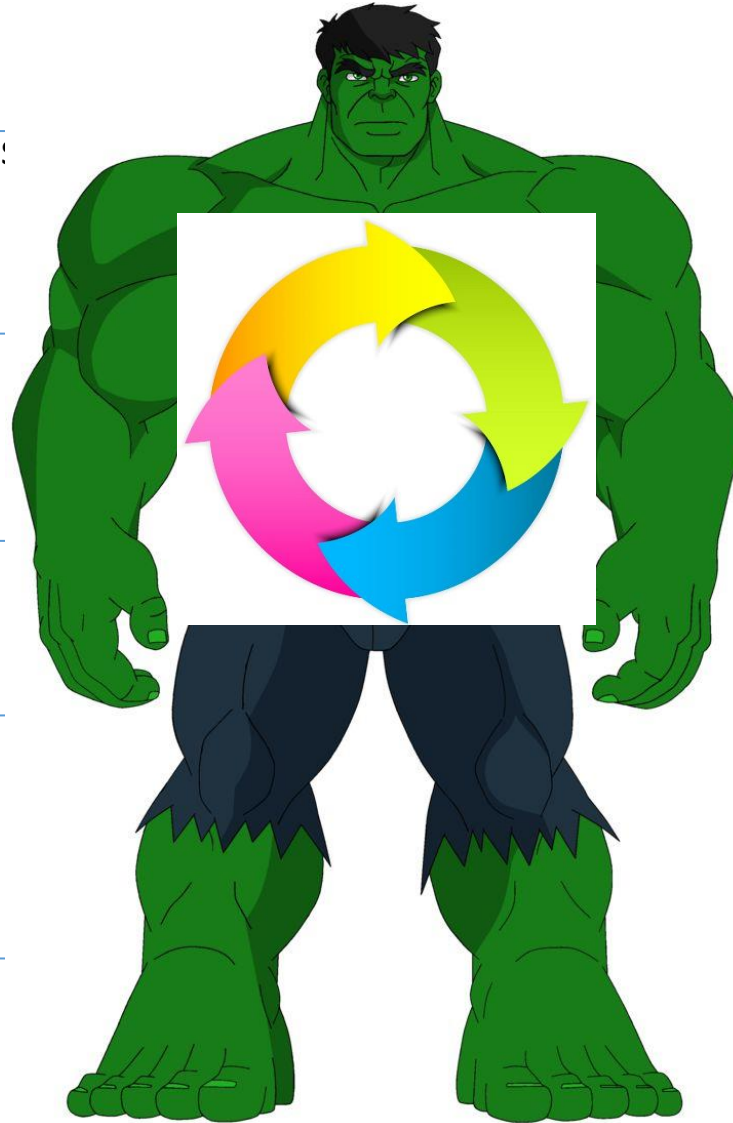
**EYES**  
tunnel vision

**HEART**  
tachycardia

**STOMACH**  
slow digestion

**SKIN**  
sweating

**CIRCULATION**  
increased



**EARS**  
exclusion

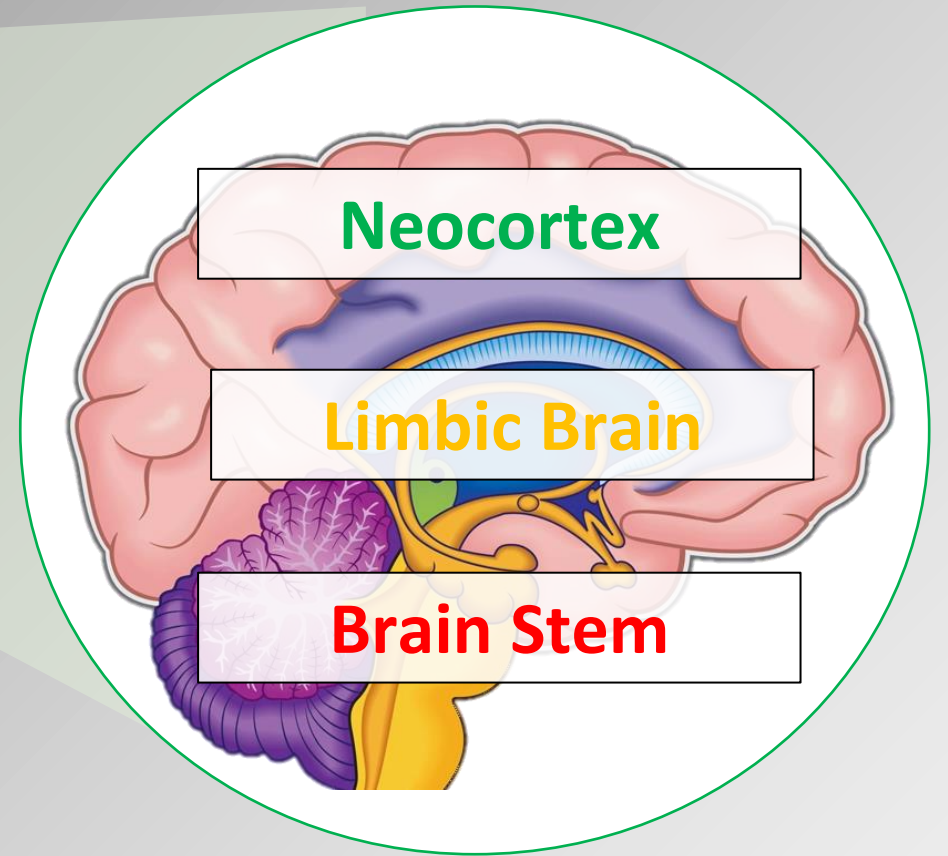
**MOUTH**  
decreased salivation

**LUNGS**  
fast shallow breathing

**BLADDER**  
relaxed

**MUSCLES**  
tense



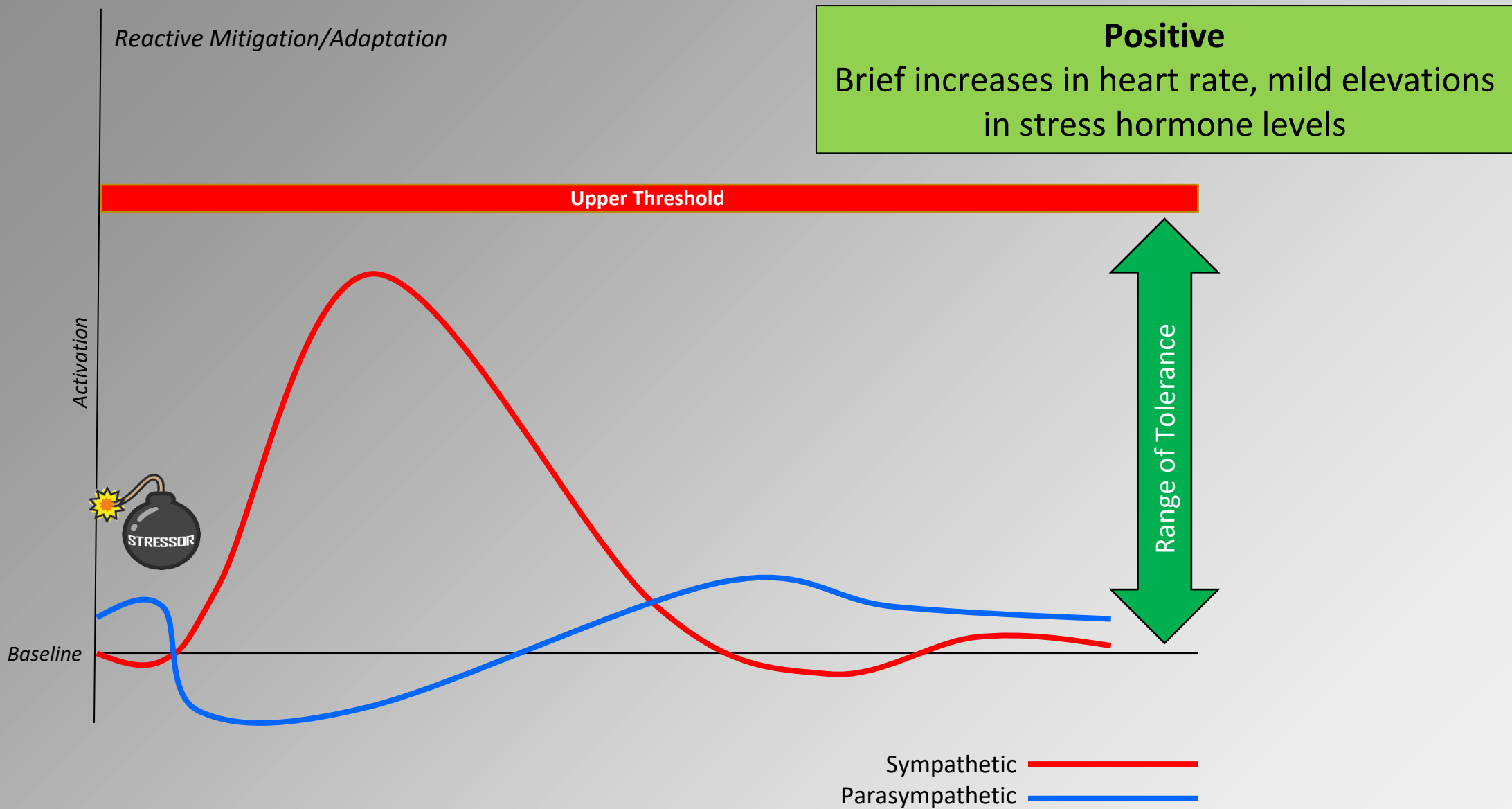


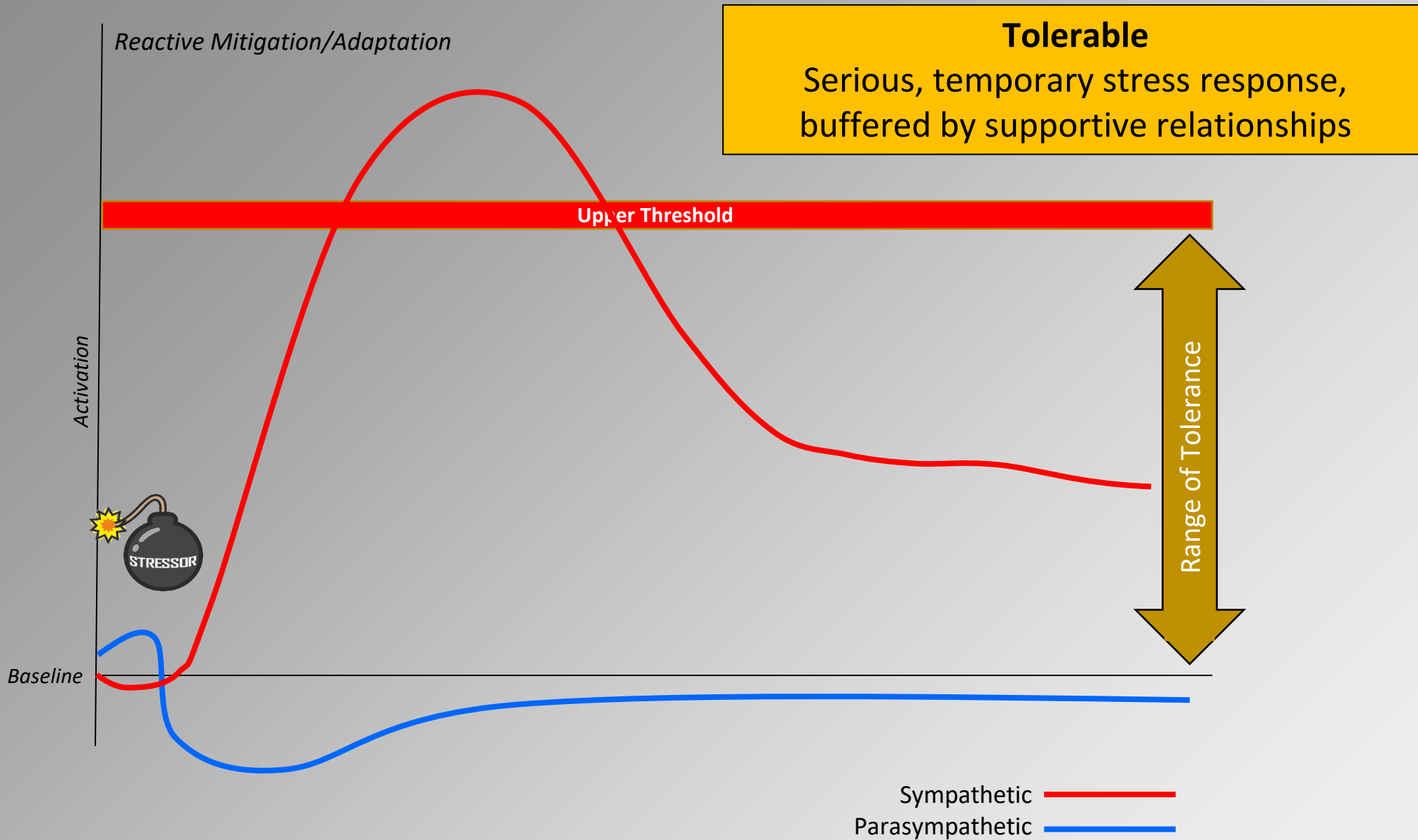
Fight

Freeze

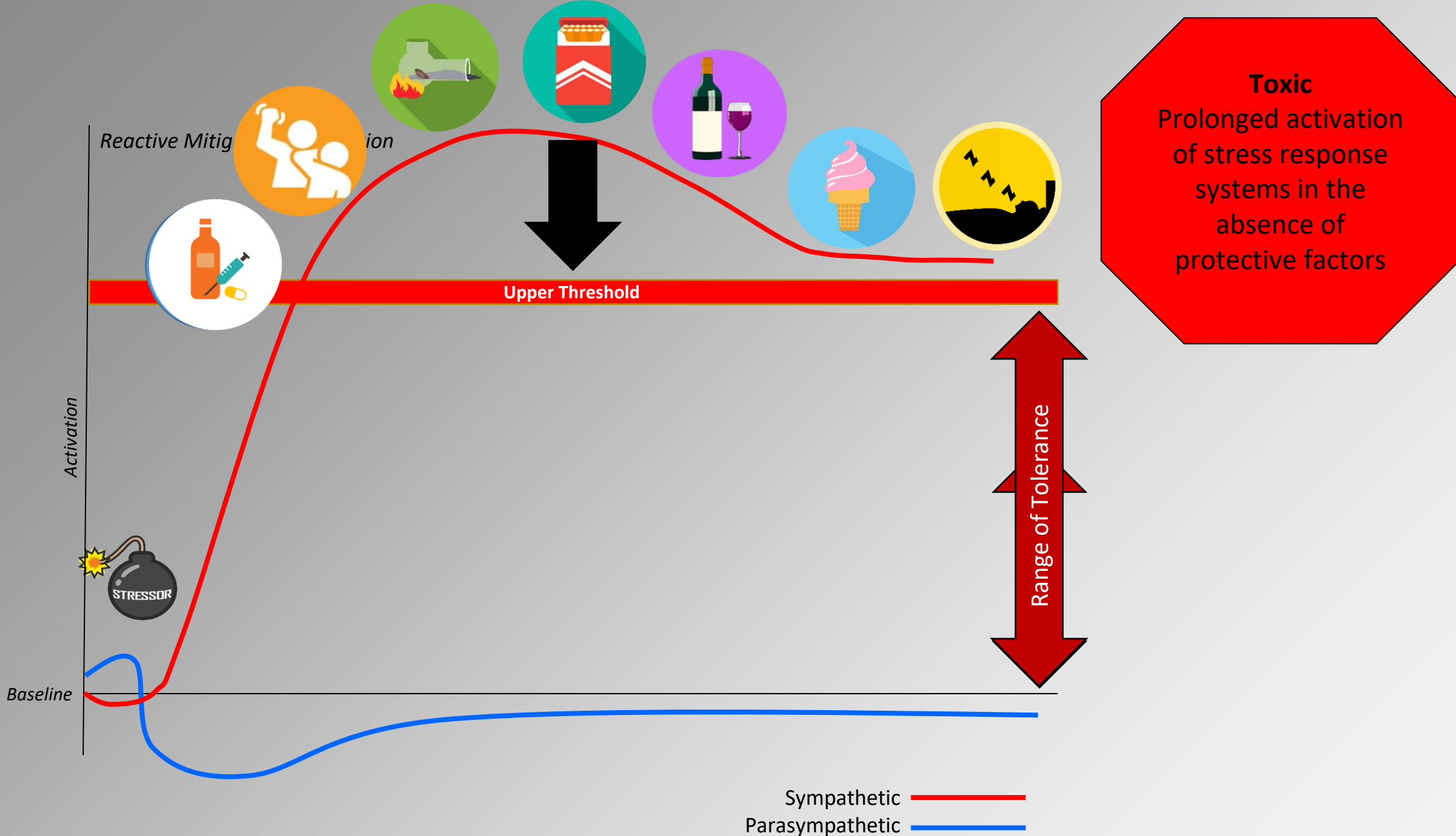
Flight

Fawn

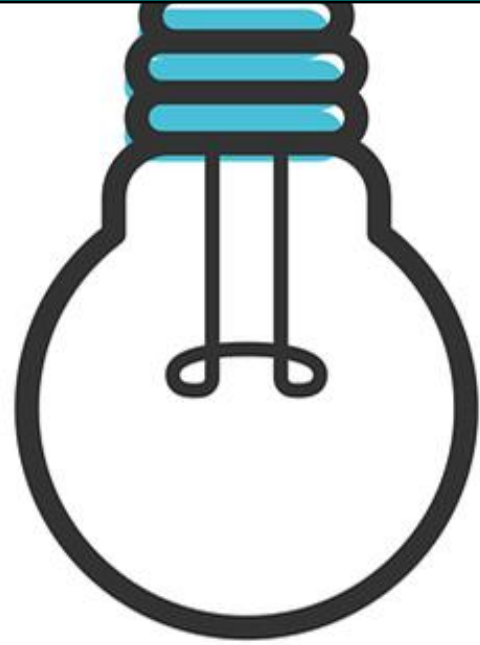








Physiological congruent  
and predictable  
behaviors



**Irrational**

**Defensive**

**Combative**

**Inattentive**

**Dissociated**

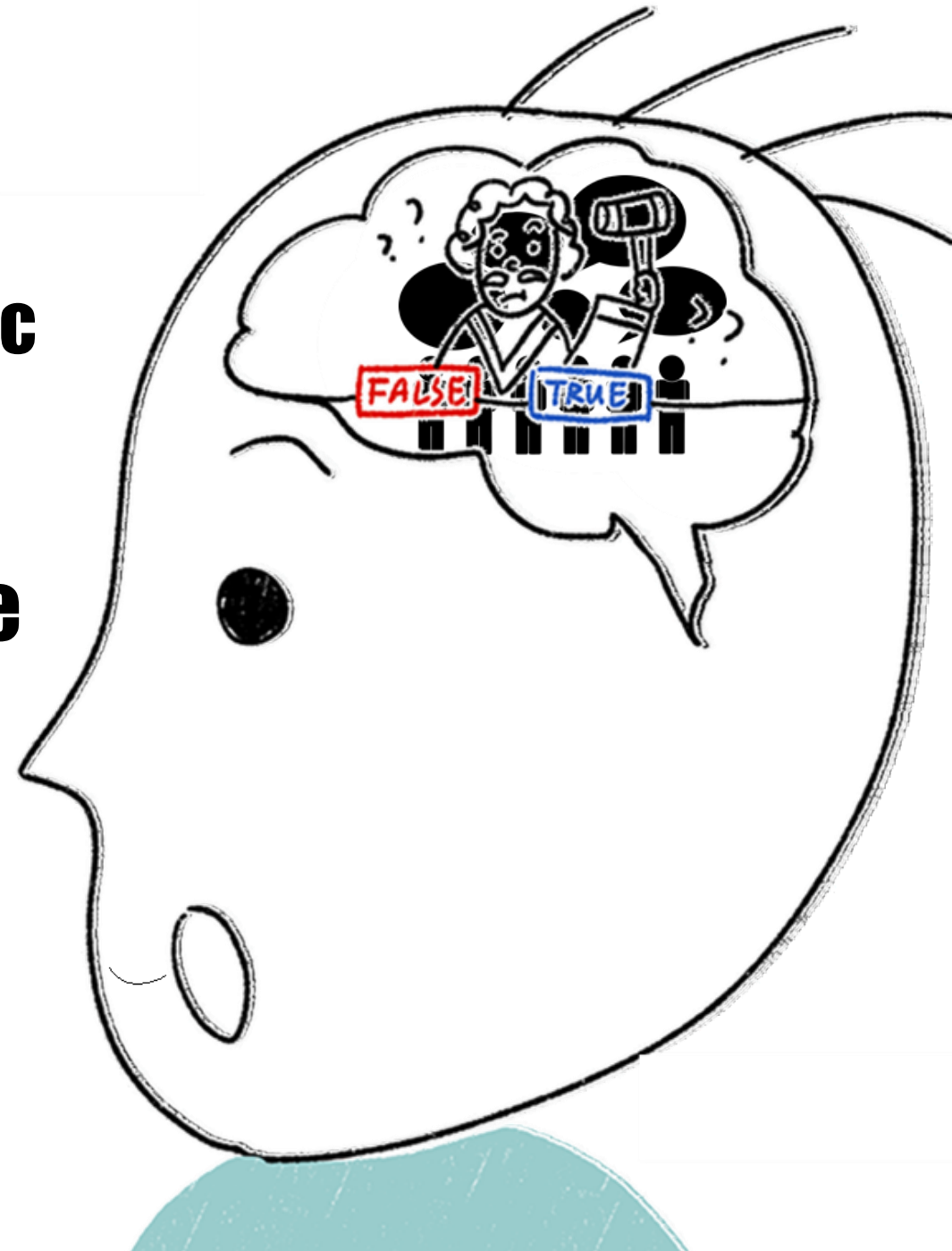
**Apathetic**

**Impulsive**

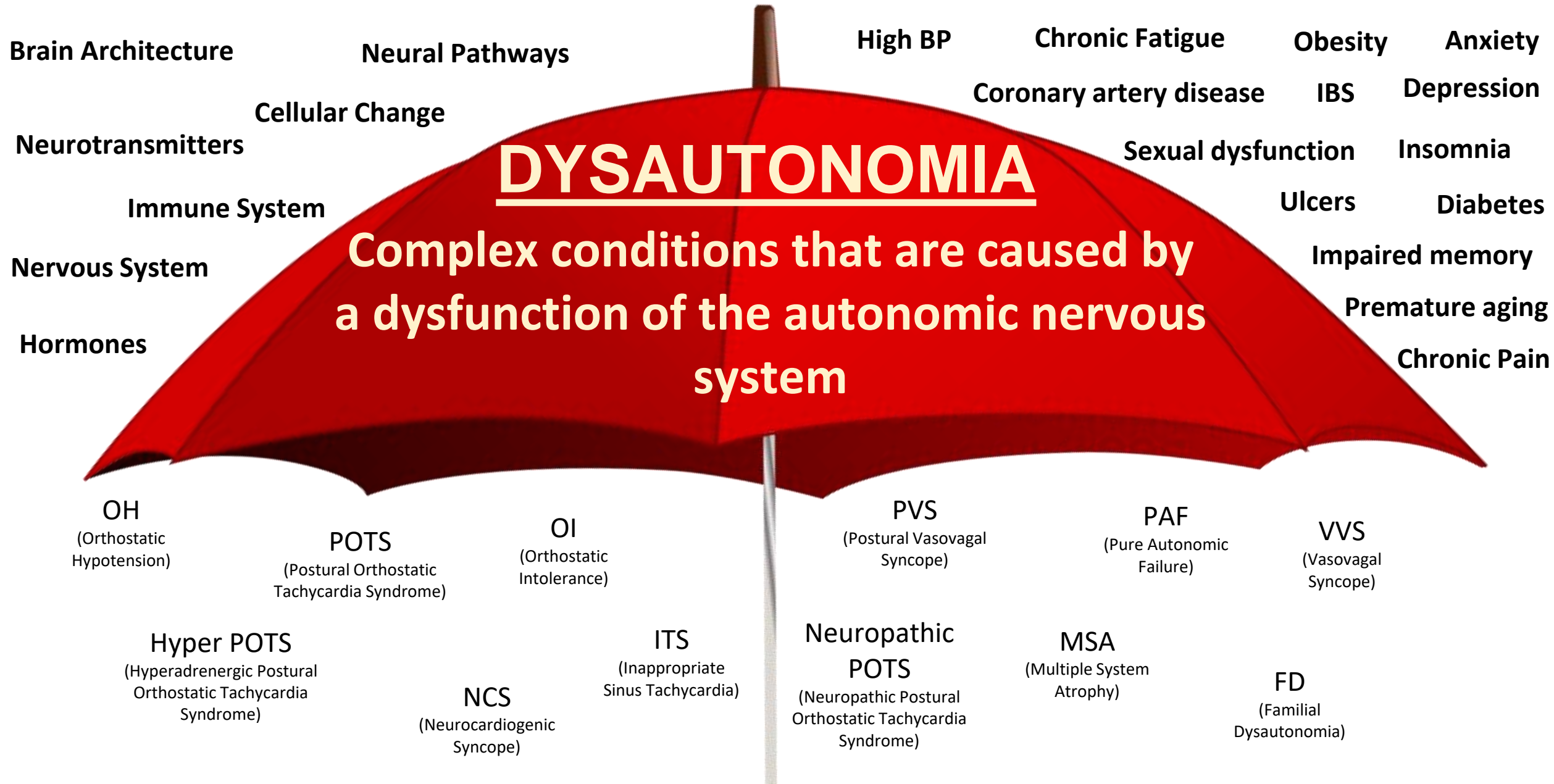
**Fidgety**

**Reactive**

**Hostile**



# UNRESOLVED TRAUMA: IMPACTS ON BODY





# Trauma connection to shame and PTSD

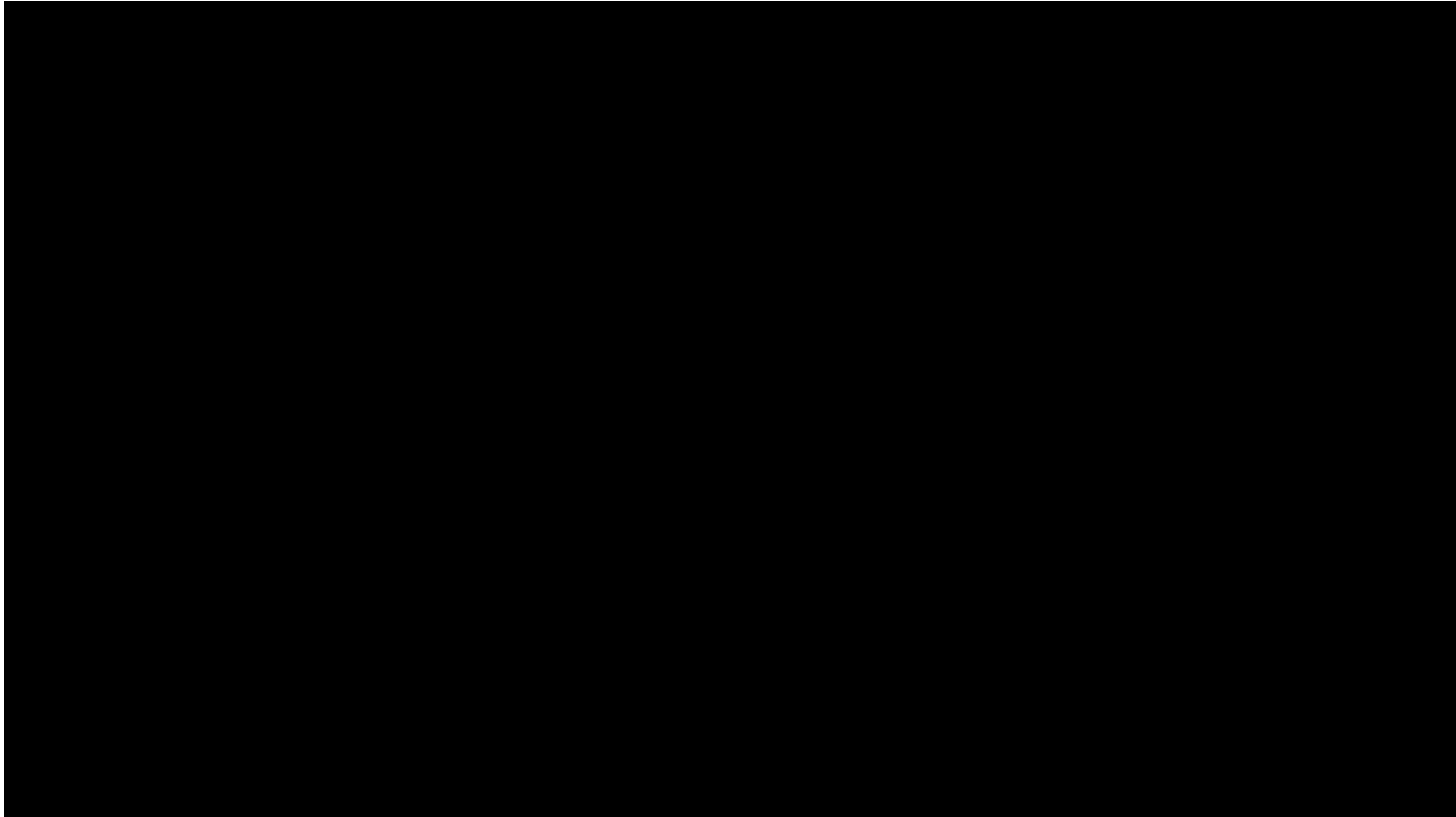


# Self-Regulation

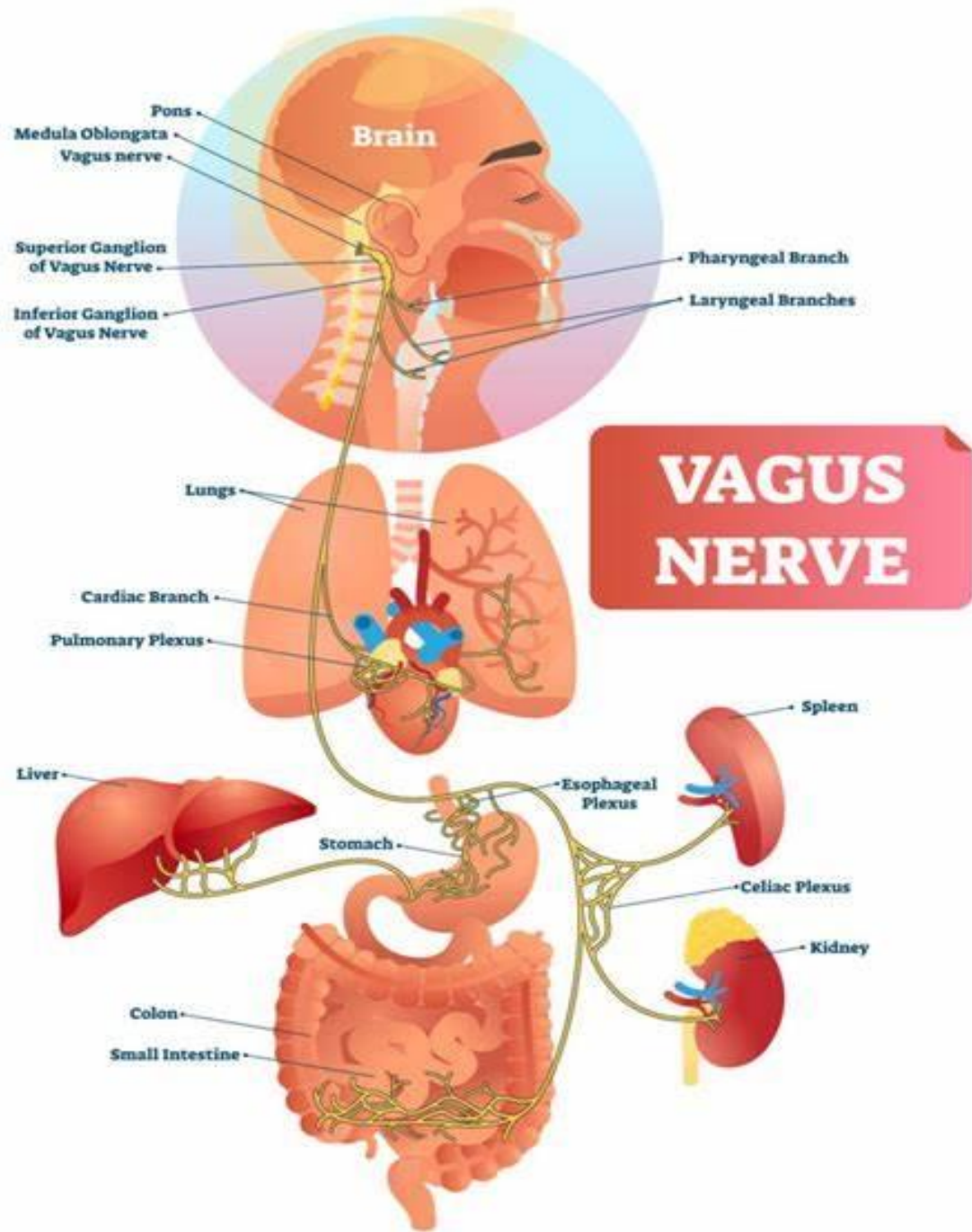
The ability to strategically modulate one's emotional reactions or states in order to be more effective in coping and engaging in a situation



# CO-REGULATION







# POLYVAGAL THEORY

# POLYVAGAL THEORY: NEUROCEPTION

*"It is not enough to simply avoid causing harm. In order to downregulate the threat and survival response, we must work to actively cue signals of felt-safety for others" Dr. Stephen Porges*

## EXTEROCEPTION

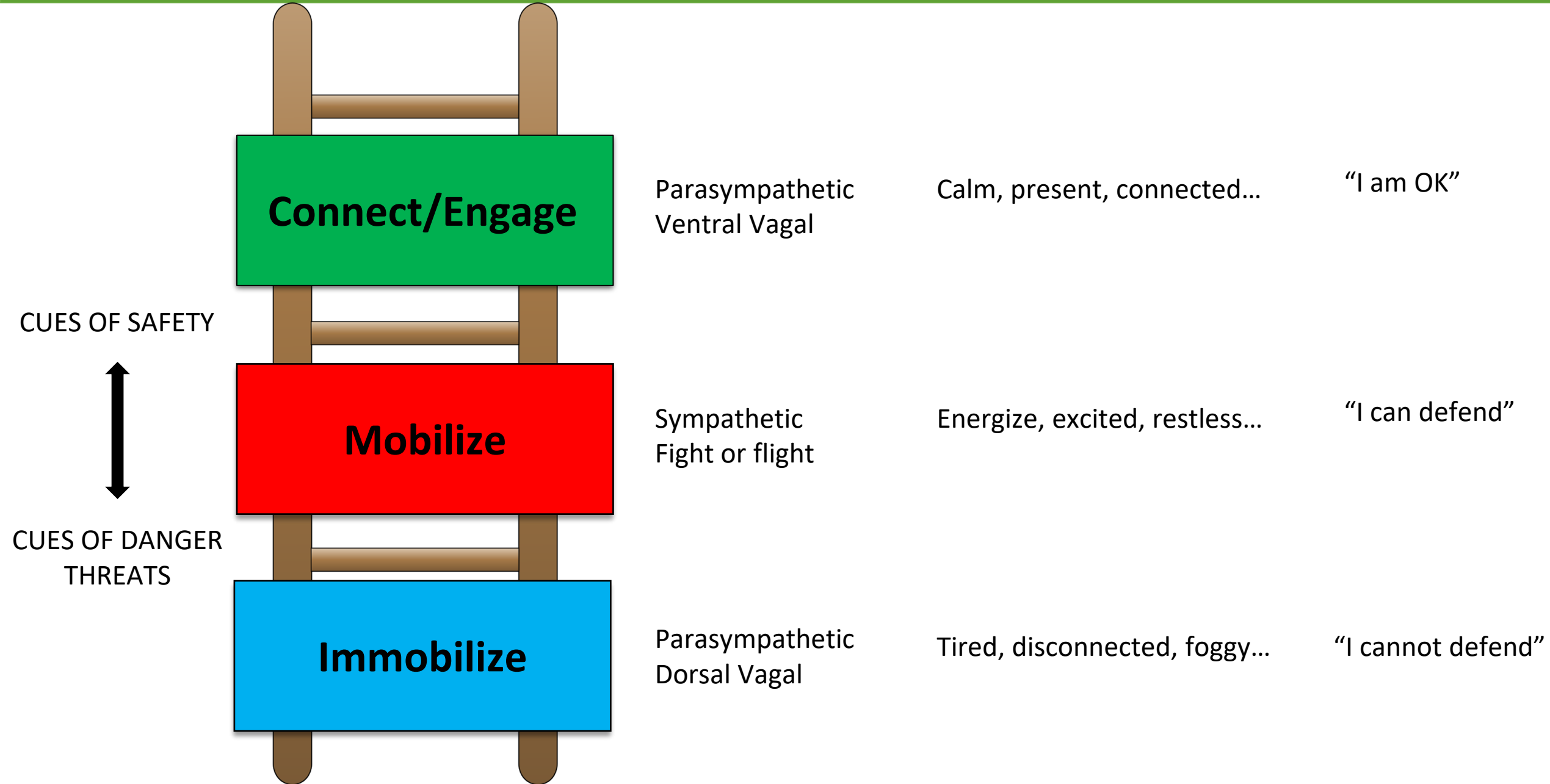
How you perceive the **external environment**

## INTEROCEPTION

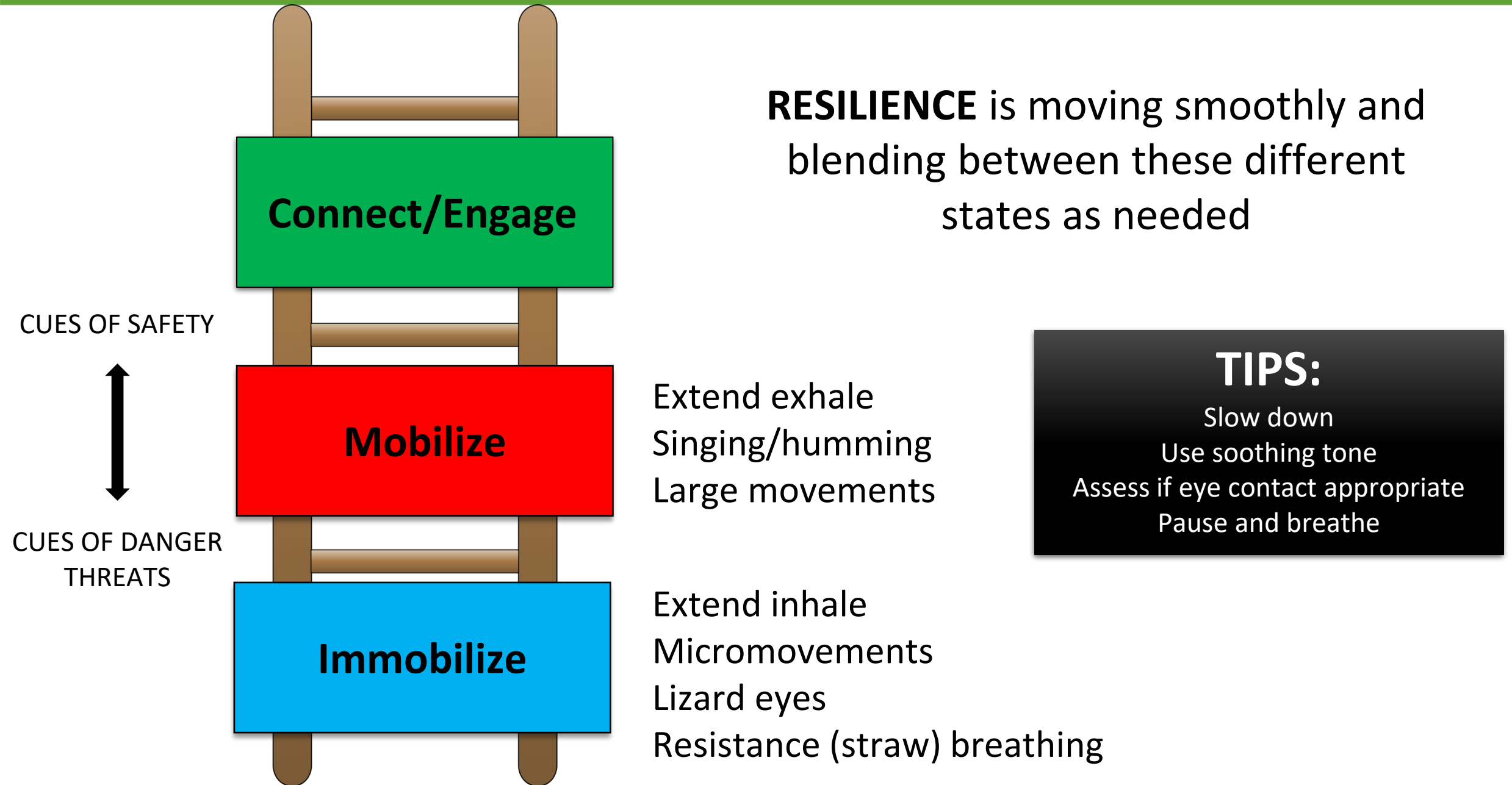
How we perceive our **internal body states** and emotions



# POLYVAGAL THEORY: AUTONOMIC STATES



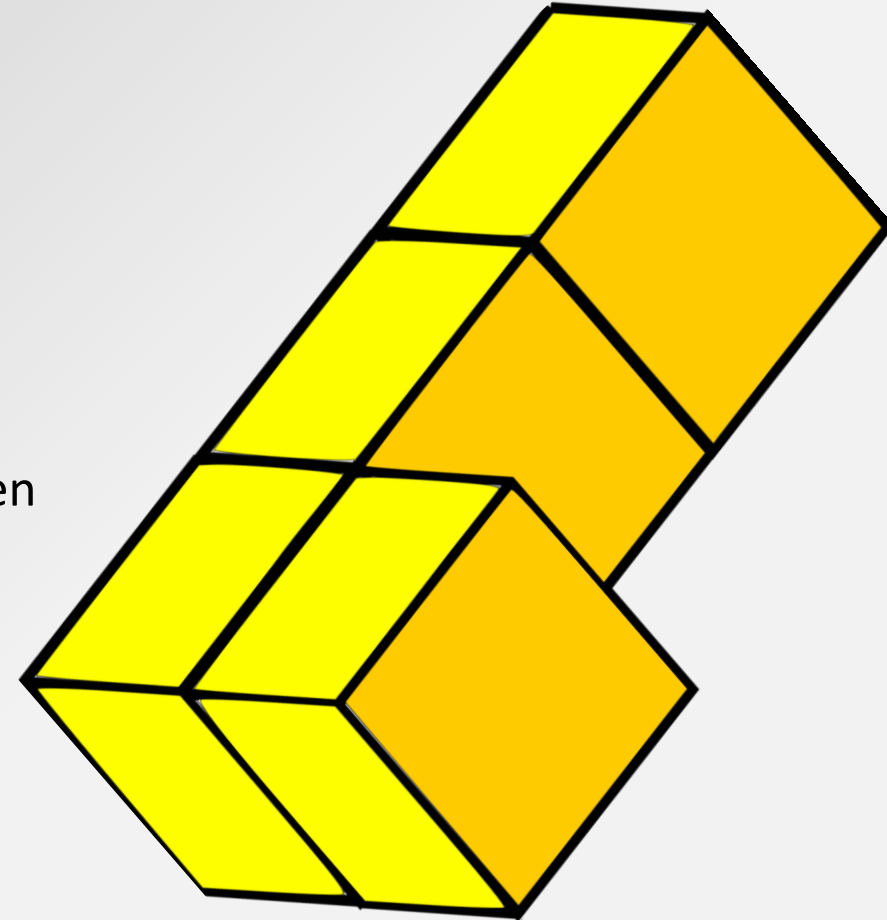
# POLYVAGAL THEORY: AUTONOMIC STATES





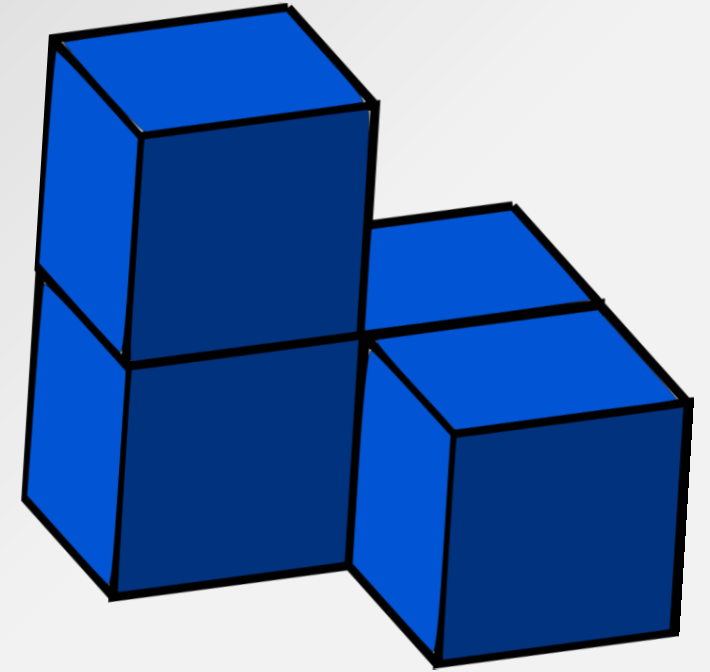
# Healing-Centered Systems: PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- Layout of major spaces (court security; courtroom; meeting rooms)
  - What is the experience of entering the courthouse?
  - Avoid florescent lighting (consider light-blocking screens)
  - Limit unnecessarily sensory stimuli (scents, sounds)
- Fidgets and sensory items for adults & kids
- Safe spaces for parents (moms and dads) to attend to needs of children
  - Diaper changing stations; breastfeeding areas; hygiene products; tissues
- Developmentally appropriate activities for children (toys, books)
  - Consider capacity to keep orderly, clean
- Provide information on community resources and services
  - Consider language and accessibility issues



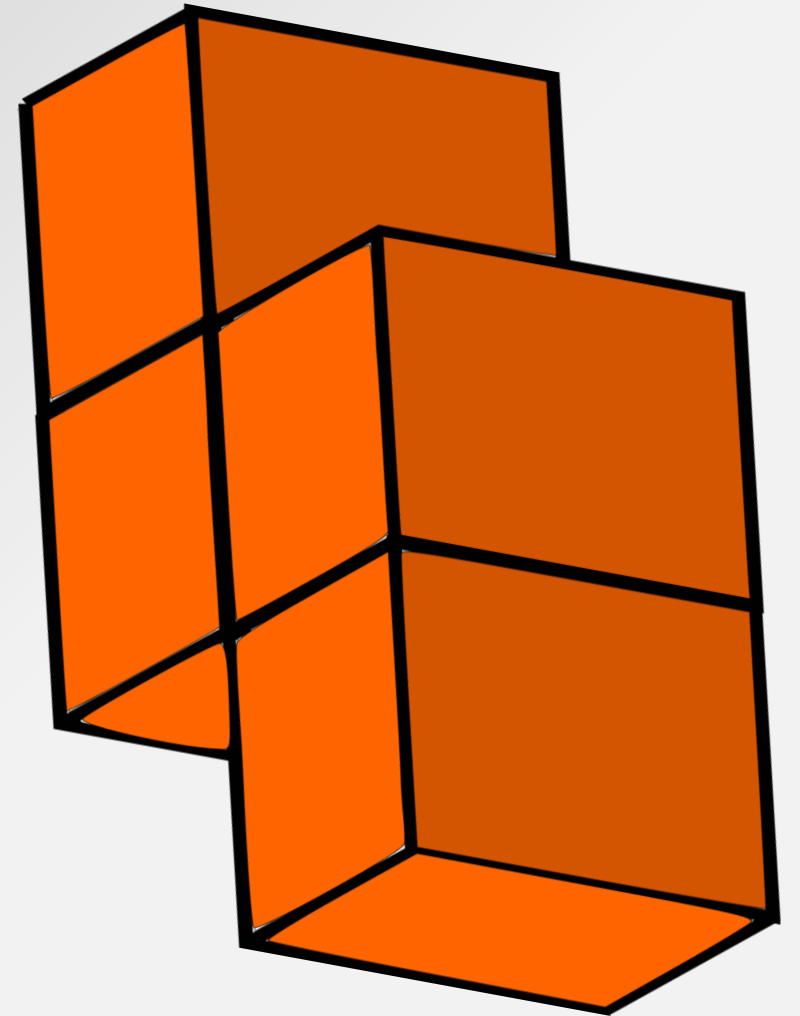
# Healing-Centered Systems: TIMING OF SERVICES

- Confidential, safe spaces
- Provide a choice in provider/services whenever possible
- Maximize use of natural and peer supports
- Providers with knowledge of trauma and brain science
- **Aligning service delivery with brain science to make engagement meaningful**
- Focus on building self-regulation skills to support engagement in trauma treatment services (e.g., EMDR)



# Healing-Centered Systems: FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

- Connection first, correction second
- Clear, simple language (Walk-Away Information Forms)
- Peer Support
- Body-based breaks
- Have high-protein snack foods available (Protein for All)
- Coping Skills Toolbox
- How do families feel when they leave?



# Helping Others Self-Regulate: COPING SKILLS TOOLBOX



## Let's make a Coping Skills Toolbox!

## What is it?

A Coping Skills Toolbox is a place for you to keep things that calm you down in periods of distress. If you have everything gathered in one place, it's easier to remember to use your coping skills, rather than using negative behaviors.

## Self-Soothing

(Comforting yourself through your five senses)

1. Something to touch (ex: stuffed animal, stress ball)
2. Something to hear (ex: music, meditation guides)
3. Something to see (ex: snowglobe, happy pictures)
4. Something to taste (ex: mints, tea, sour candy)
5. Something to smell (ex: lotion, candles, perfume)

## Distraction

(Taking your mind off the problem for a while)

### Examples:

Puzzles, books, artwork, crafts, knitting, crocheting, sewing, crossword puzzles, sudoku, positive websites, music, movies, etc.

## Opposite Action

(Doing something the opposite of your impulse that's consistent with a more positive emotion)

1. Affirmations and Inspiration (ex: looking at or drawing motivational statements or images)
2. Something funny or cheering (ex: funny movies / TV / books)

## Emotional Awareness

(Tools for identifying and expressing your feelings)

### Examples:

A list or chart of emotions, a journal, writing supplies, drawing / art supplies

## Mindfulness

(Tools for centering and grounding yourself in the present moment)

### Examples:

Meditation or relaxation recordings, grounding objects (like a rock or paperweight), yoga mat, breathing exercises.

## Crisis Plan

(Contact info of supports and resources, for when coping skills aren't enough.)

Family / Friends  
Therapist  
Psychiatrist  
Hotline  
Crisis Team / ER  
911

## Put it all together!

Once you've gathered all of your items, put them together in a box or other container, decorate it to your heart's content, and put it in a place where you'll remember it. Then USE IT!



# Helping Others Self-Regulate: POSITIVE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES (PCES)

Positive childhood experiences (PCEs) promote optimal health and mitigate the effects of adverse childhood experiences

Sege R, Swedo EA, Burstein D, et al. (2024) Prevalence of Positive Childhood Experiences Among Adults — Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, Four States, 2015–2021. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep, 73:399–404.



**Relationships:** Safe and supportive relationships that can be peer-to-peer, child-to-parent, or with other positive adults in a child's life that regularly connect..



**Environment:** Safe spaces—whether at home, school, or in the community— that allow children to grow freely.



**Engagement:** Civic and social engagement helps children feel valued and connected.

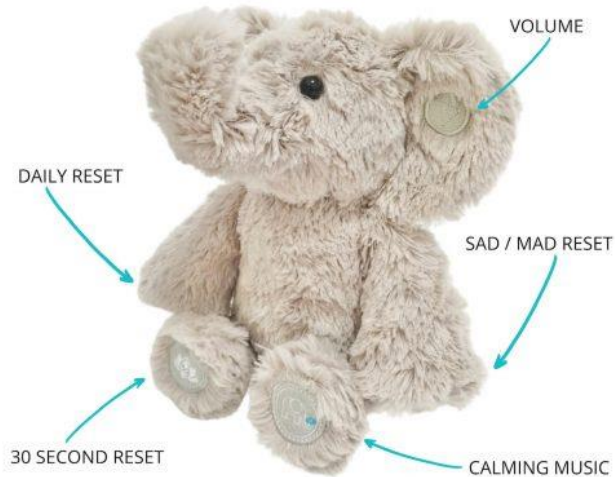


**Emotional Growth:** Cultivating positive self-image, self-worth, and coping skills equips children to handle stress healthily.

# Self-Regulation Skill Building TOYS & TOOLS



MEET OMI: A fully interactive stuffed animal with four settings to help teach children about mindfulness and improved self regulation.



# The Cost of Kindne ss





# Skill Building BREATHING

**Goal:** Key to gaining control over the mind-body connection - conscious control over the automatic response of the nervous system to a perceived threat



## Belly Breathing



## Paced Breathing

- 4-7-8
- Box Breathing





# Skill Building GROUNDING

**Goal:** Quick, easy, body-based, sensory strategies that immediately bring the brain into the present moment and calm distress.

- **5-4-3-2-1**
- **Cross-lateral movement/stretching**
- **Rhythm**
- **Tapping (EFT)**
- **Affirmations/mantras**



# Skill Building AWARENESS

**Goal:** Increase ability to accurately perceive and identify our internal body state (interoception). Foundational for self-regulation.

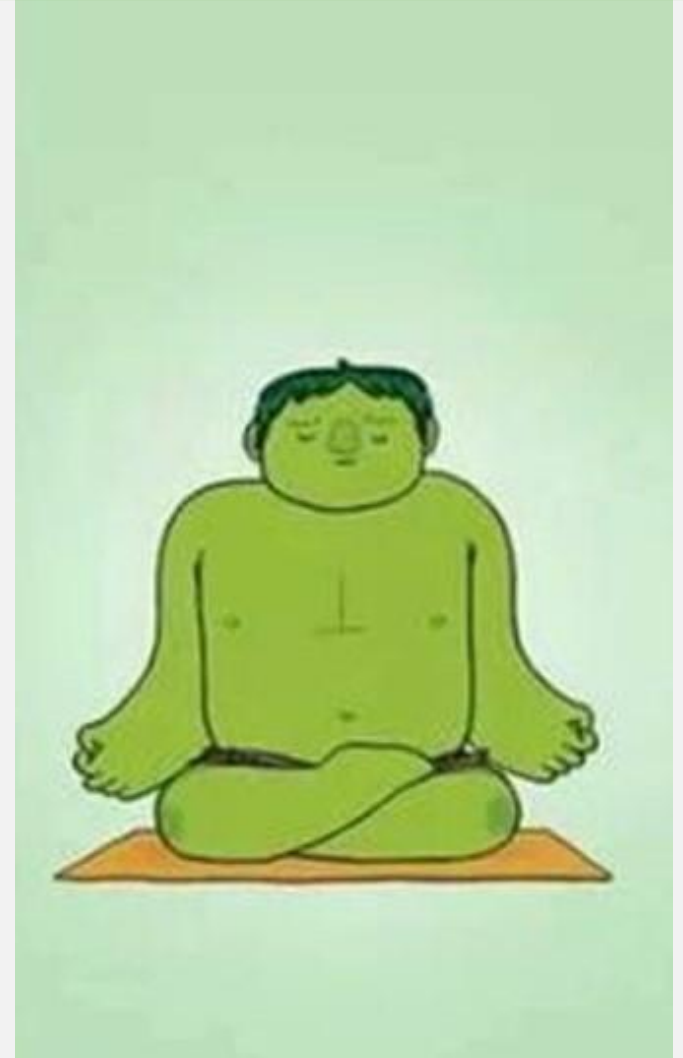
- **Body Scan**
- **Progressive muscle relaxation**
- **“Heavy Work”**
- **Draw Your Breath**



# Skill Building VISUALIZATION

**Goal:** Programs brain to more readily perceive and recognize pathways to achieve goals; strengthens creative thinking.

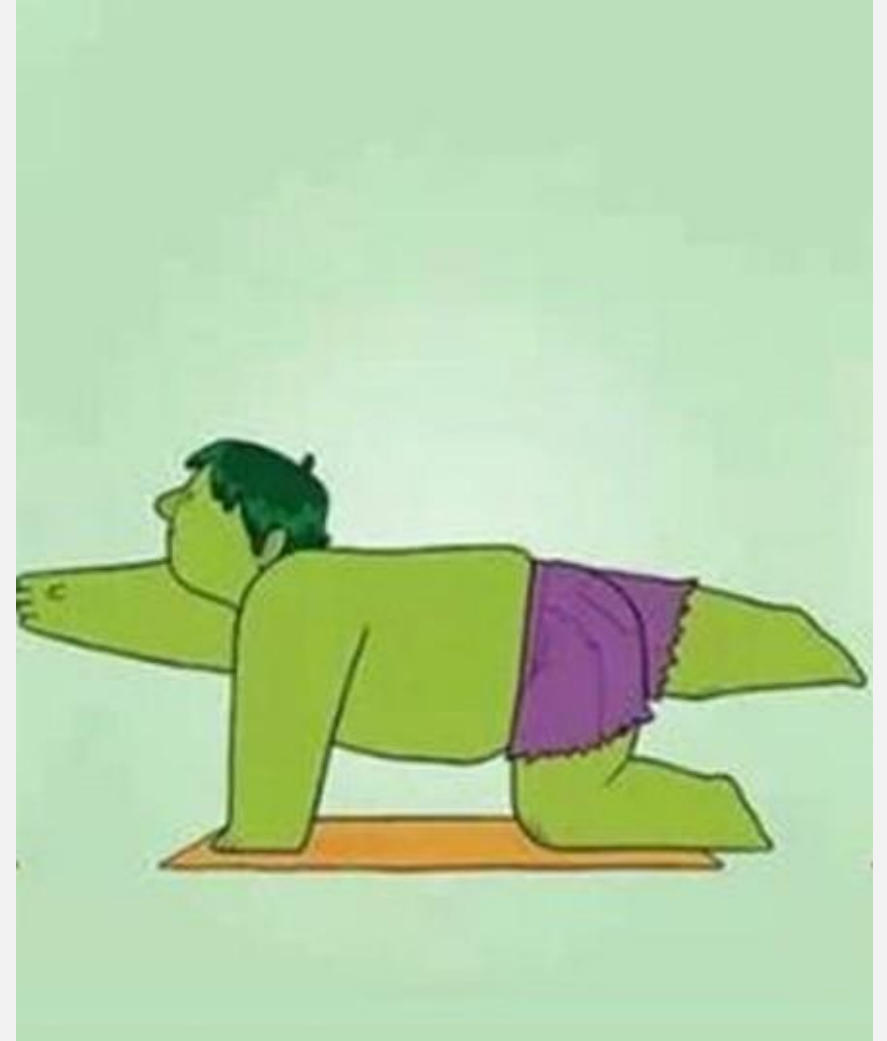
- **Color breathing**
- **Guided imagery**
- **Mental rehearsal**



# Skill Building MOVEMENT

**Goal:** Notice the sensations of the body in motion –  
exercise is a secondary benefit

- **Yoga**
- **Tai Chi; Gi Gong; Asahi**
- **Walking Meditation**
- **Meditative/Interpretive dance**





# Skill Building BREATHING

**Goal:** Access feeling of “flow” - is the mental state in which a person performing some activity is fully immersed in a feeling of energized focus, full involvement, and enjoyment in the process of the activity

- **Art/crafts**
- **Poetry; Haiku**
- **Storytelling**
- **Cooking**



# Continue Learning!

## Books for Adults

- [Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers](#) by Robert M. Sapolsky
- [The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma](#) by Bessel van der Kolk, MD
- [Fuel Your Brain, Not Your Anxiety](#) by Kristen Allott & Natasha Duarte

## Books for Kids

- [Goodnight Moonlight](#): *Science of Hope*
- [The way I feel!](#): *Emotional awareness*
- [Gorilla Thumps and Bear Hugs](#): *EFT Tapping*

## Videos

- Heal (Netflix)
- Unwind Your Mind (Netflix)
- Unrest (Netflix)

## Apps

- Paced Breathing: *Breathe Easy; Tactile Breathing; Spacer Pacer; Breathwrk*
- Biofeedback: *BellyBio; Biofeedback Breath Meditation*
- Mindfulness: *Calm; HeadSpace; Insight Timer; Mindfulness Coach*
- Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT): *The Tapping Solution; Tappy*

## Technology

- HeartMath™
- Muse™
- Purrrble™
- Omi the Elephant™
- Pawz™

## Online Learning/Certifications

- [www.heartmath.com](http://www.heartmath.com)
- [www.traumainstituteinternational.com](http://www.traumainstituteinternational.com)
- [www.dysautonomiainternational.org](http://www.dysautonomiainternational.org)

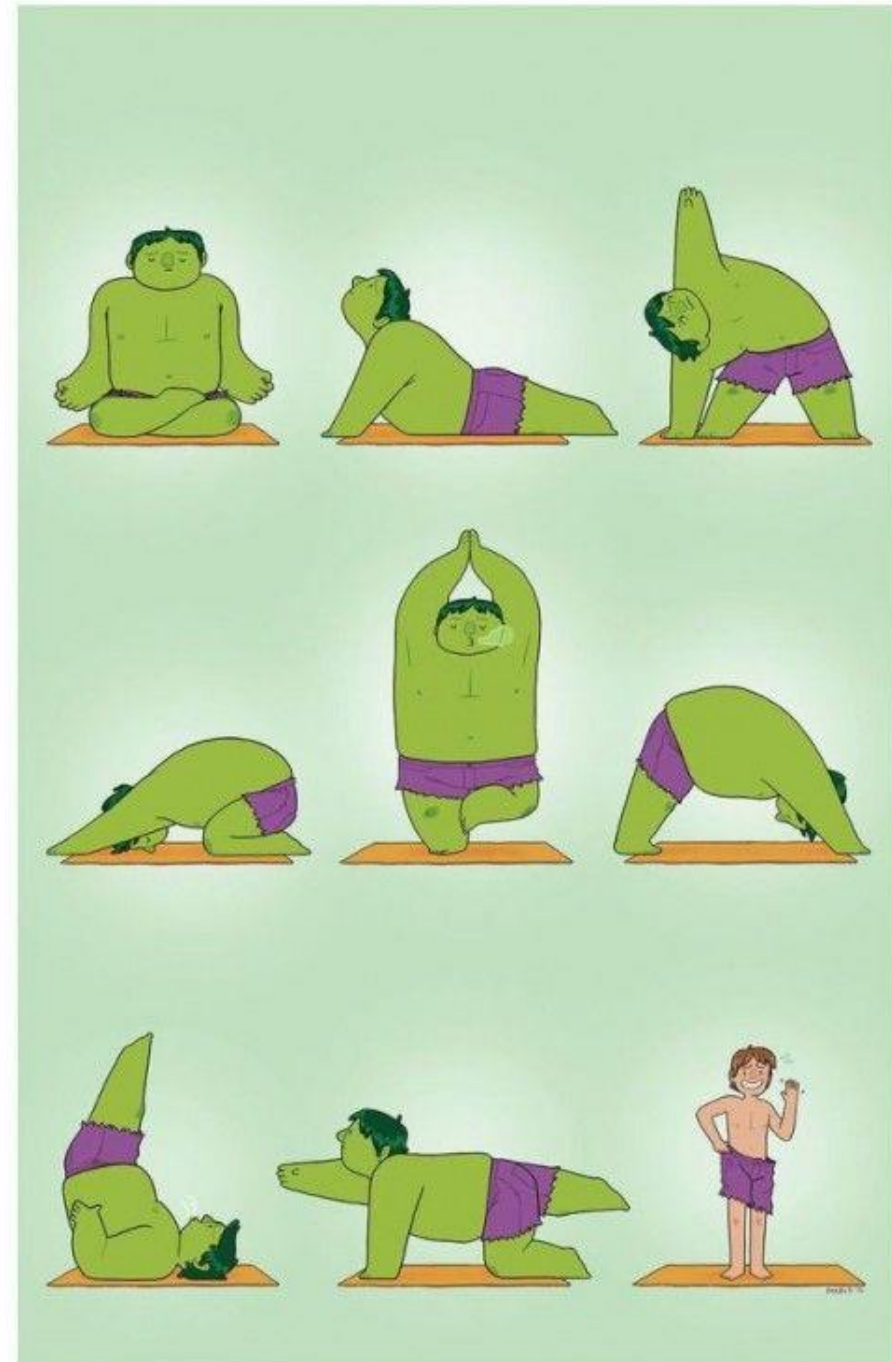
# Thank You!

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