



Secondary Trauma Exposure: Addressing Self-Care

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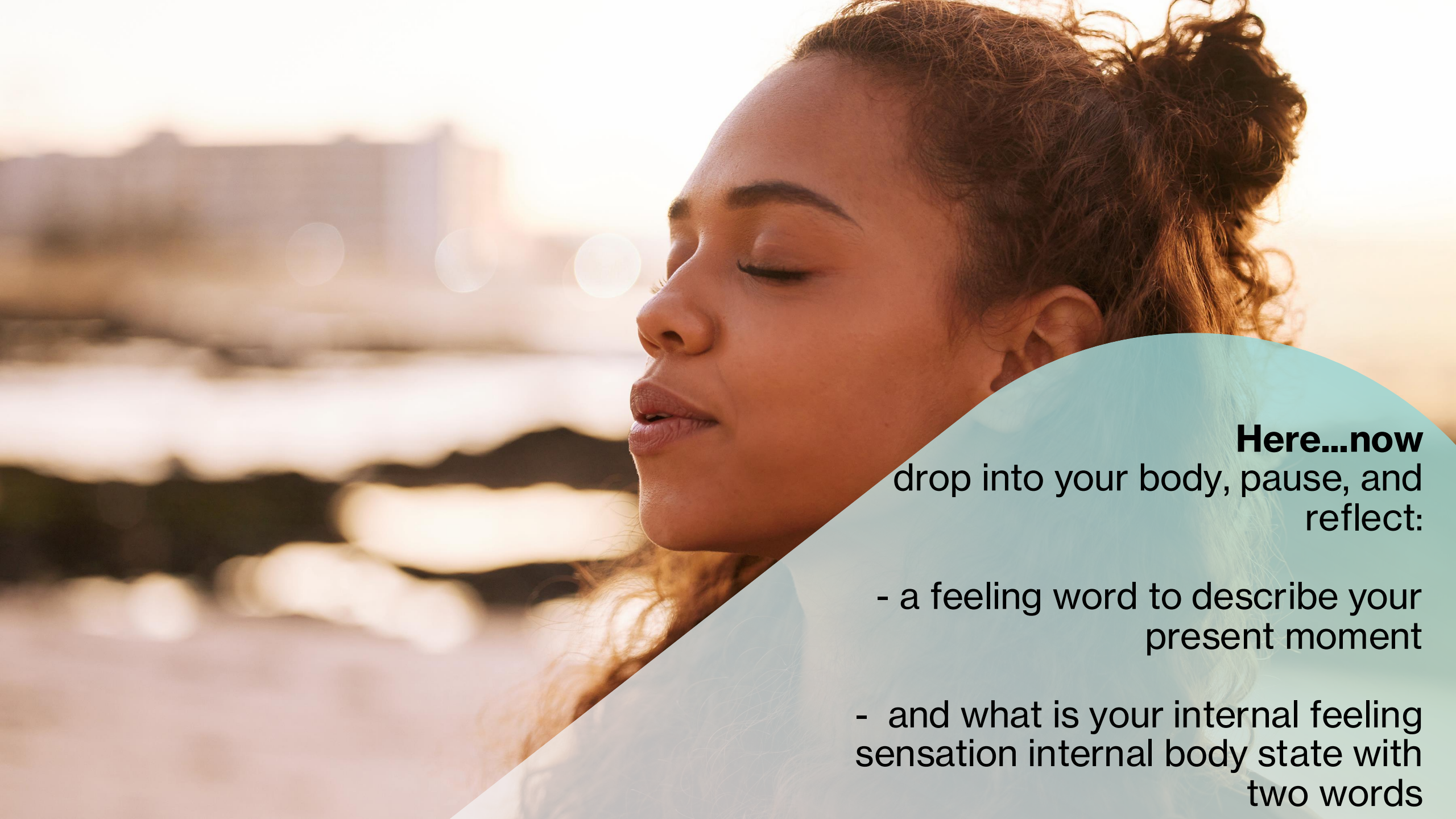
soniaf@odvn.org



Welcome in & thank you

It's good to be here with you!

Journey through concepts and impact
along with invitations for reflection,
sharing, and trying some practices out...



Here...now

drop into your body, pause, and reflect:

- a feeling word to describe your present moment
- and what is your internal feeling sensation internal body state with two words

Here is my why.

The reason I am passionate about understanding the impact of helping and healing.

What's yours?



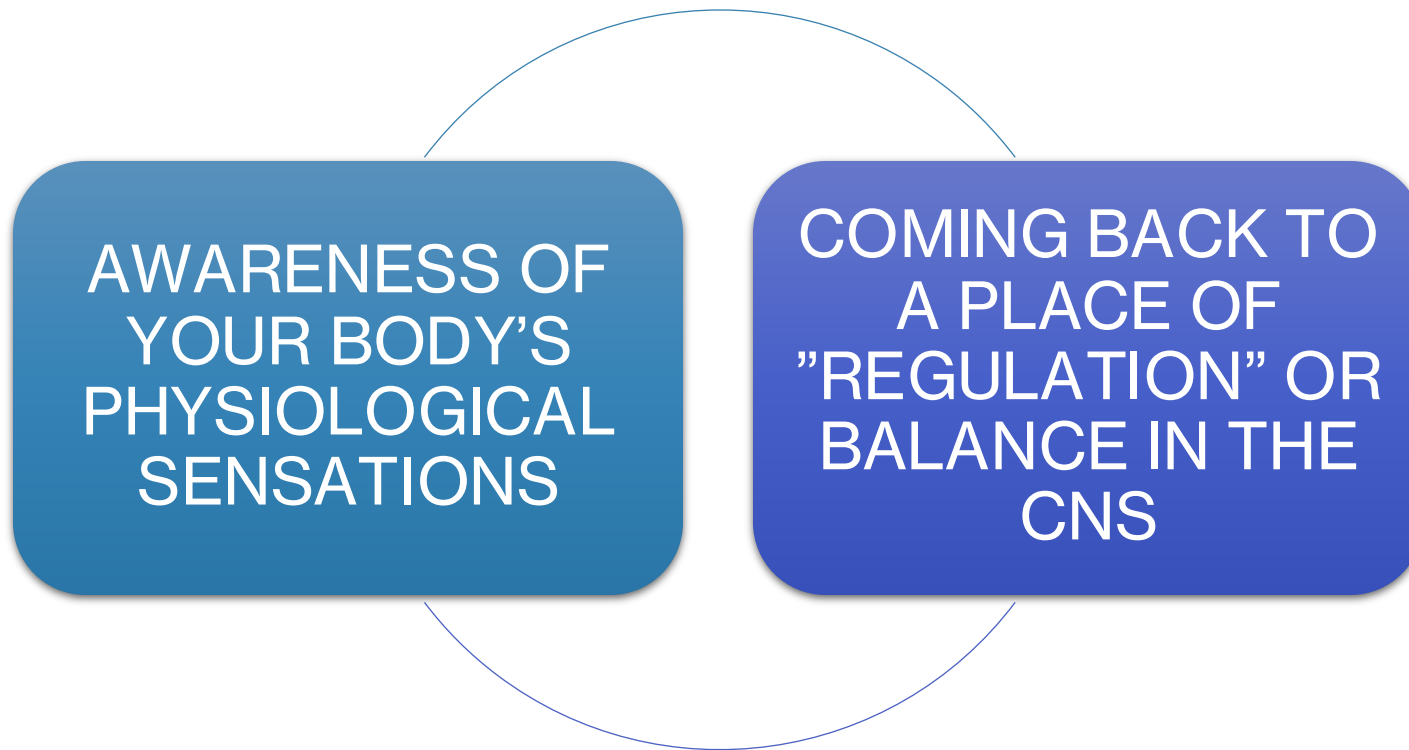
opening question:

Do you see signs of burnout in yourself? What are they?

Burnout symptoms:

- Exhaustion
- Alienation from activities
- Irritability
- Loss of enthusiasm
- Insomnia
- Insomnia
- Becoming cynical
- Headaches, body aches, stomach problems
- Drinks/ drugs to escape
- Difficulty focusing
- Loss of pleasure/joy

Your keys to wellness

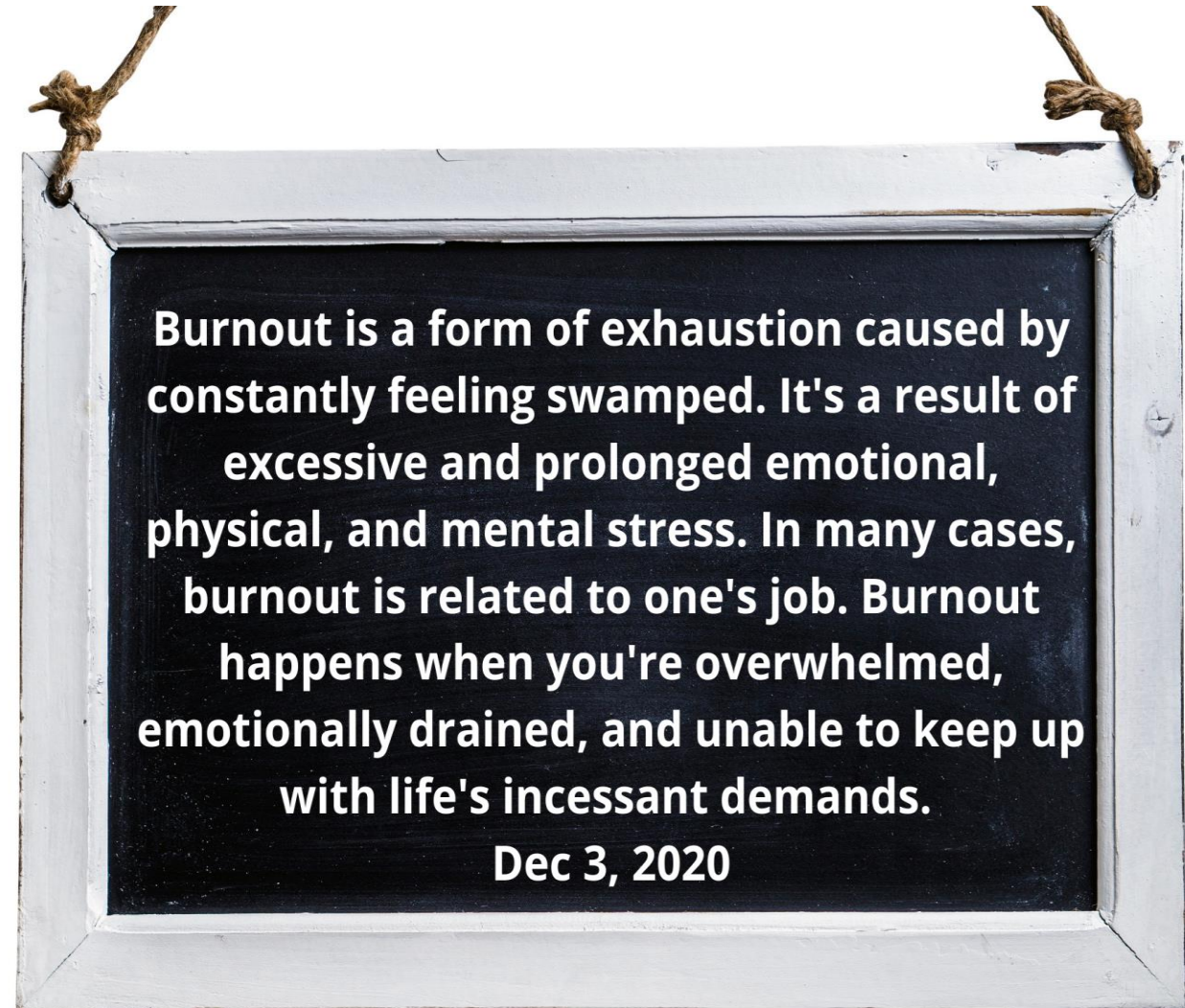


- Deeper breathing & exhaling out longer
- Sleep
- Water
- Nutrition
- Movement
- Nature
- Gratitude Practices
- 5 Senses

**Incomplete stress
cycles &
completing stress
cycles...**



Exhaustion

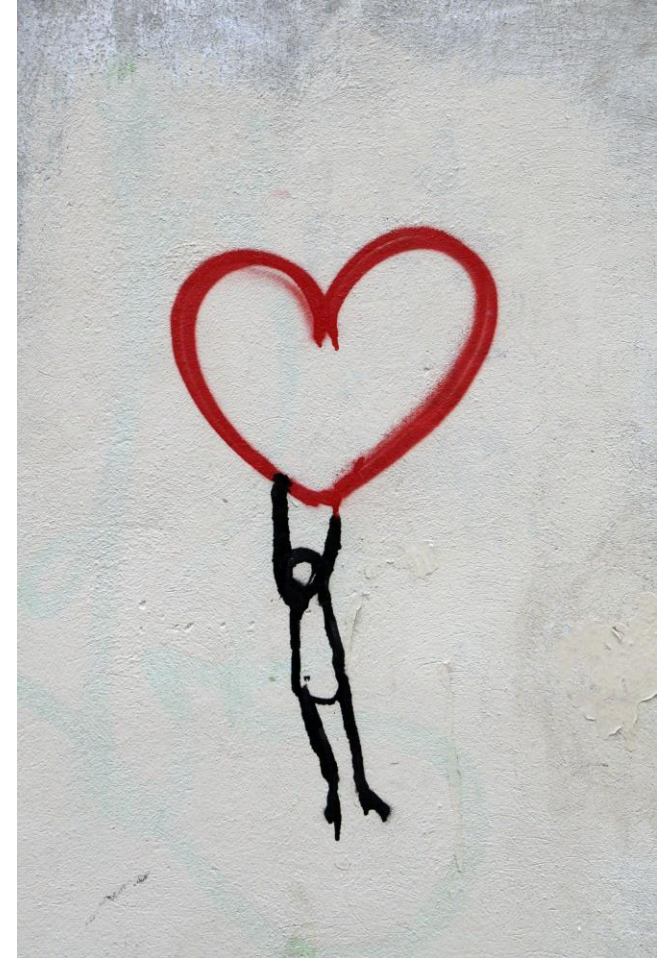


Burnout is a form of exhaustion caused by constantly feeling swamped. It's a result of excessive and prolonged emotional, physical, and mental stress. In many cases, burnout is related to one's job. Burnout happens when you're overwhelmed, emotionally drained, and unable to keep up with life's incessant demands.

Dec 3, 2020


Vicarious Trauma

Vicarious trauma **is defined as a transformation in the helper's inner sense of identity & existence** that results from utilizing controlled empathy when listening to a survivor's trauma-content narrative.



Secondary Trauma Exposure -

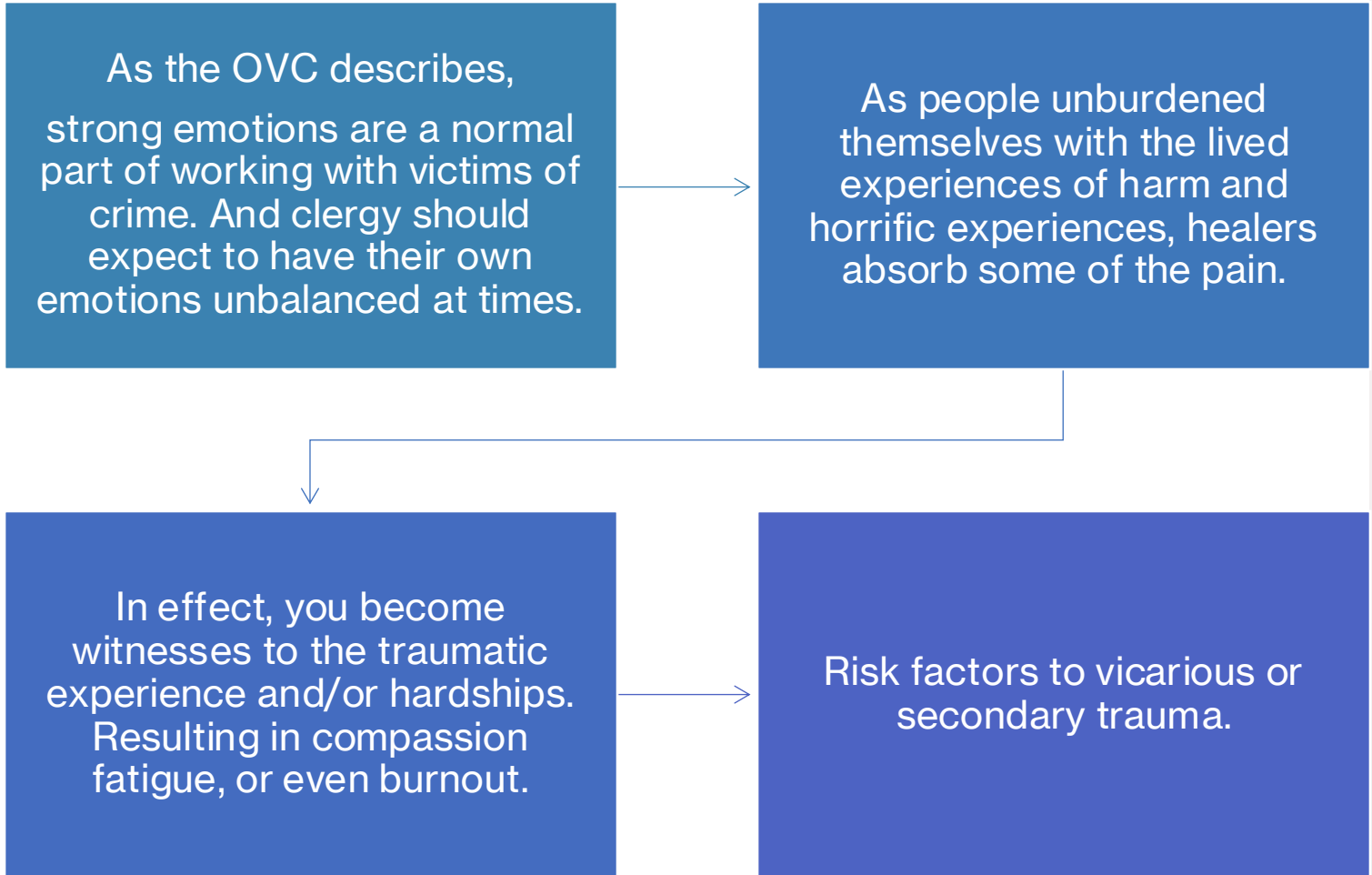
**Laura van Dernoot
Lipsky 2010**



**A trauma exposure
response may be defined
as the transformation that
takes place within us as a
result of exposure to the
suffering of others living
beings or the planet.**

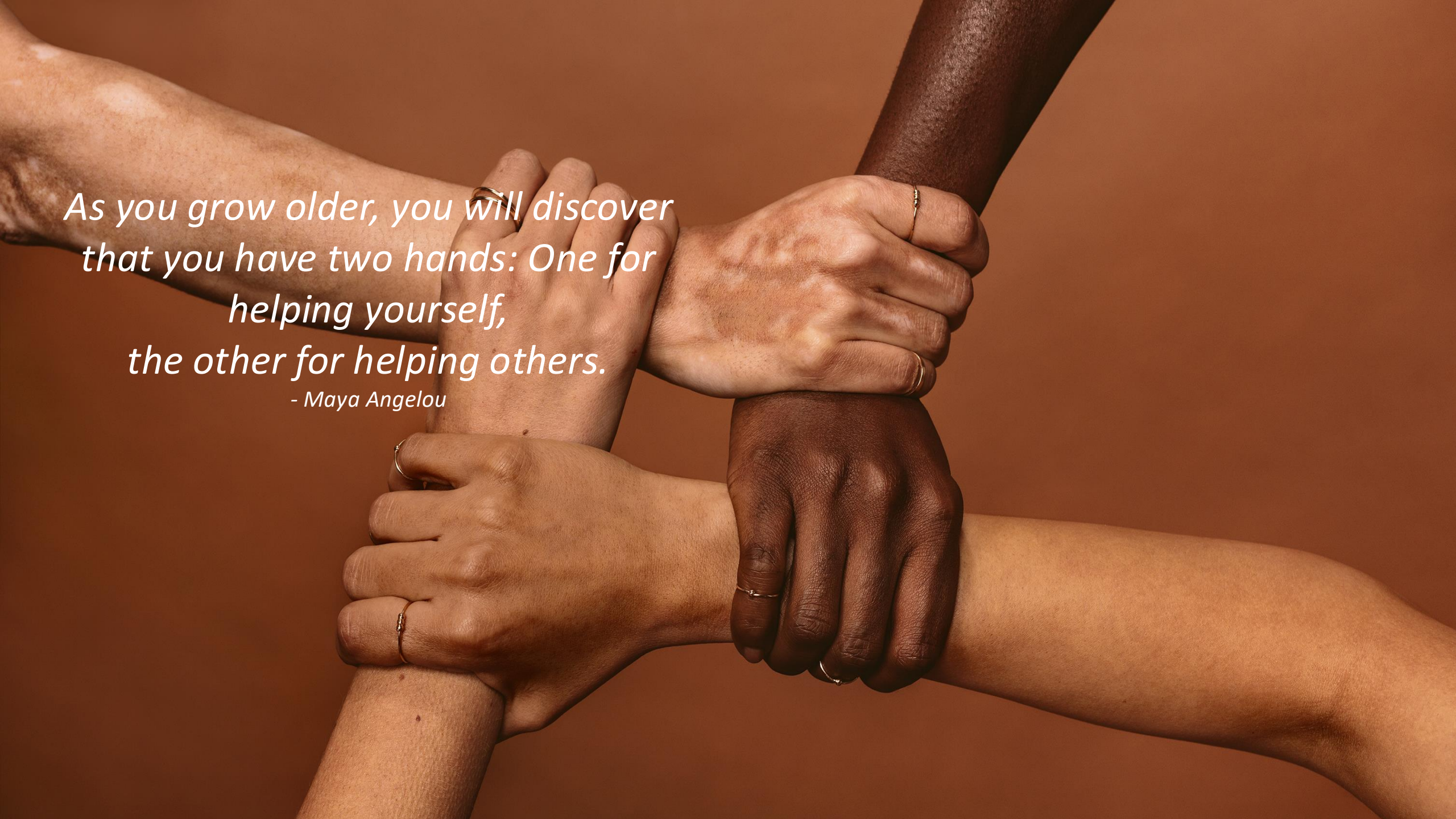
Vicarious Trauma is a stress reaction that may be experienced by clergy, other helpers & including victim assistance professionals

Office for Victims of Crime...



Vicarious trauma can impact people in faith-based organizations in several ways, including:

- **Changes in beliefs:** People may experience shifts in their beliefs about safety and humanity.
- **Emotional state:** People may experience changes in their emotional state, such as feeling helpless.
- **Difficulty connecting with others:** People may have difficulty feeling connected to others that love them.
- **Difficulty self-regulating:** People may have difficulty feeling grounded or that the world is tolerable and safe.
- **Intrusive symptoms:** People may experience flashbacks or nightmares.
- **Hyperarousal:** People may experience physical symptoms such as hypervigilance, sleeplessness, or increased startle response.
- **Avoidance:** People may try to reduce exposure to the people or situations that might bring on their intrusive symptoms.
- **Impaired ability to provide support:** The cumulative effect of vicarious trauma can impair a person's ability to provide effective support and care for those directly affected by violence.



*As you grow older, you will discover
that you have two hands: One for
helping yourself,
the other for helping others.*

- Maya Angelou

Bearing witness – holding space – using active listening and controlled empathy



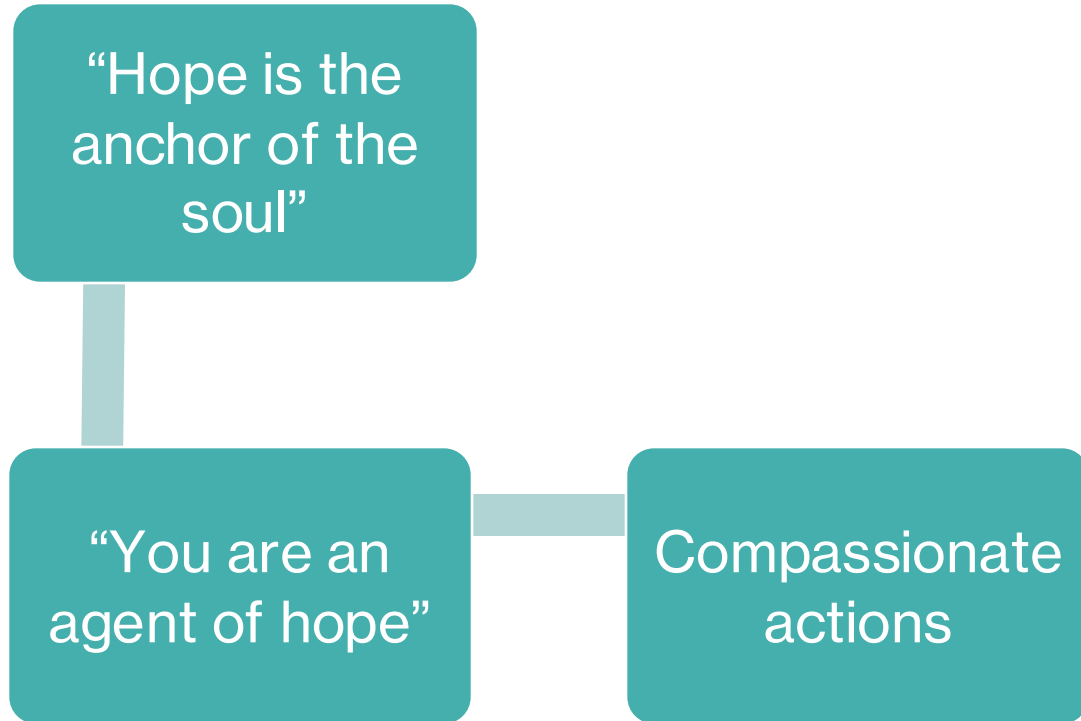
Let me ask you if I
may:

What hardships do you hear about within your faith-based communities?

What are the limits to your confidentiality?

Within the scope of your work with God and church, what might be hardest to “carry?”

A pastor from Uganda shared in a recent sermon



- *“God wants you rested, not burned out.”*
- *Consider the cost to you, your family, & the church.*
- *There is too much walking away – when it feels unbearable.”*

First responders and helpers such as yourselves as clergy and staff - these roles can take a toll on our brains, bodies, and general well-being.

For helping professionals, a tremendous occupational burden comes with bearing witness to the violence, trauma, and oppression experienced by others.



**Cumulative toll over
time taking in and
actively working in
spaces where we
listen to the harm that
adults and children
endure.**

**We also work
within systems
where survivors
don't experience
protection,
justice, and
safety.**

**We are bearing
witness.**

Living our lives and working our jobs are a “whole-body experience.”



TOUCH FIVE SENSES HEARING TASTE
SMELL
EIGHT

In other words,



Vicarious trauma is what happens to your neurological or cognitive self,



your physical, psychological, emotional, & spiritual health



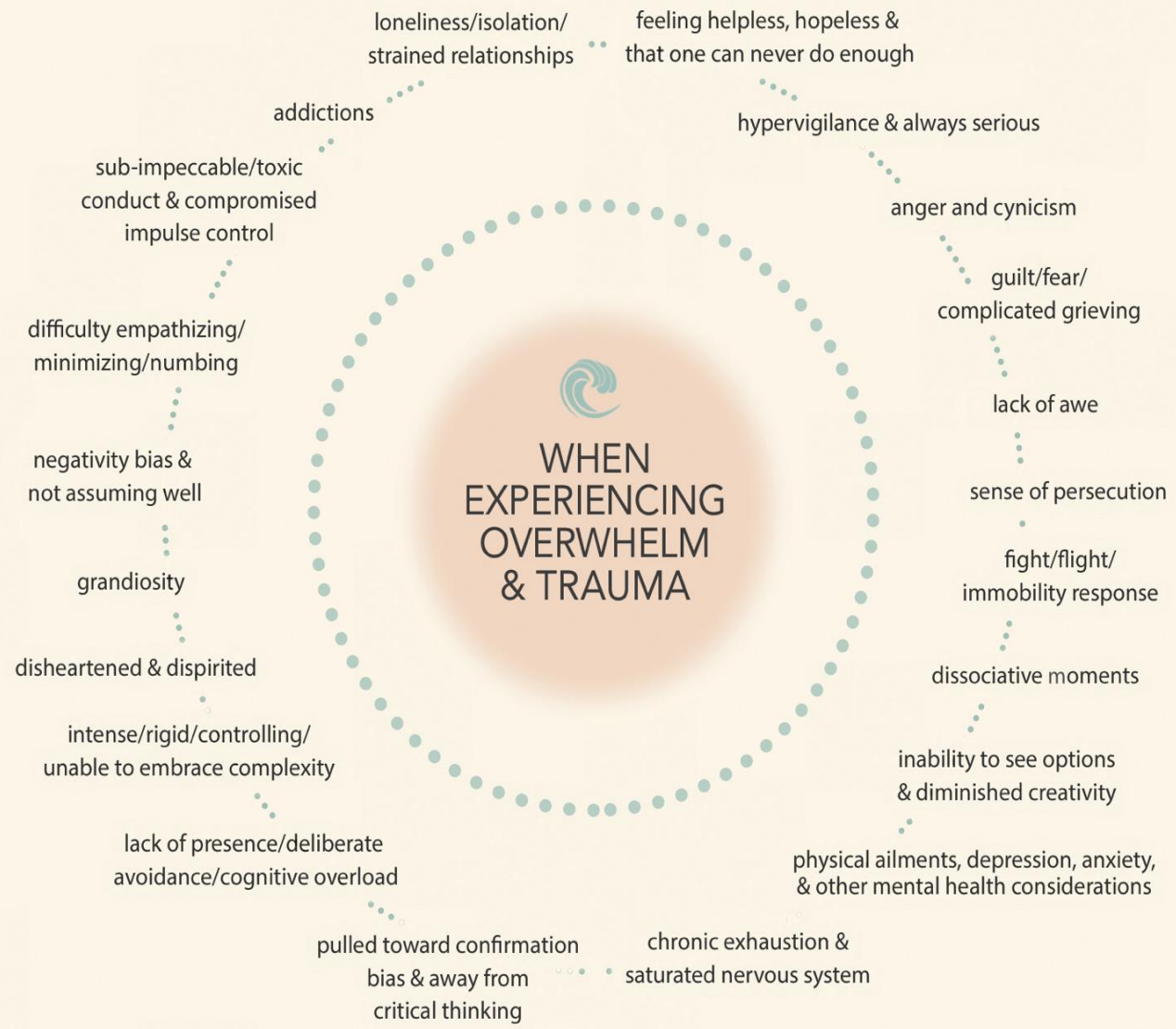
when you listen to traumatic stories day after day



or respond to traumatic situations



while having to control your reactions.

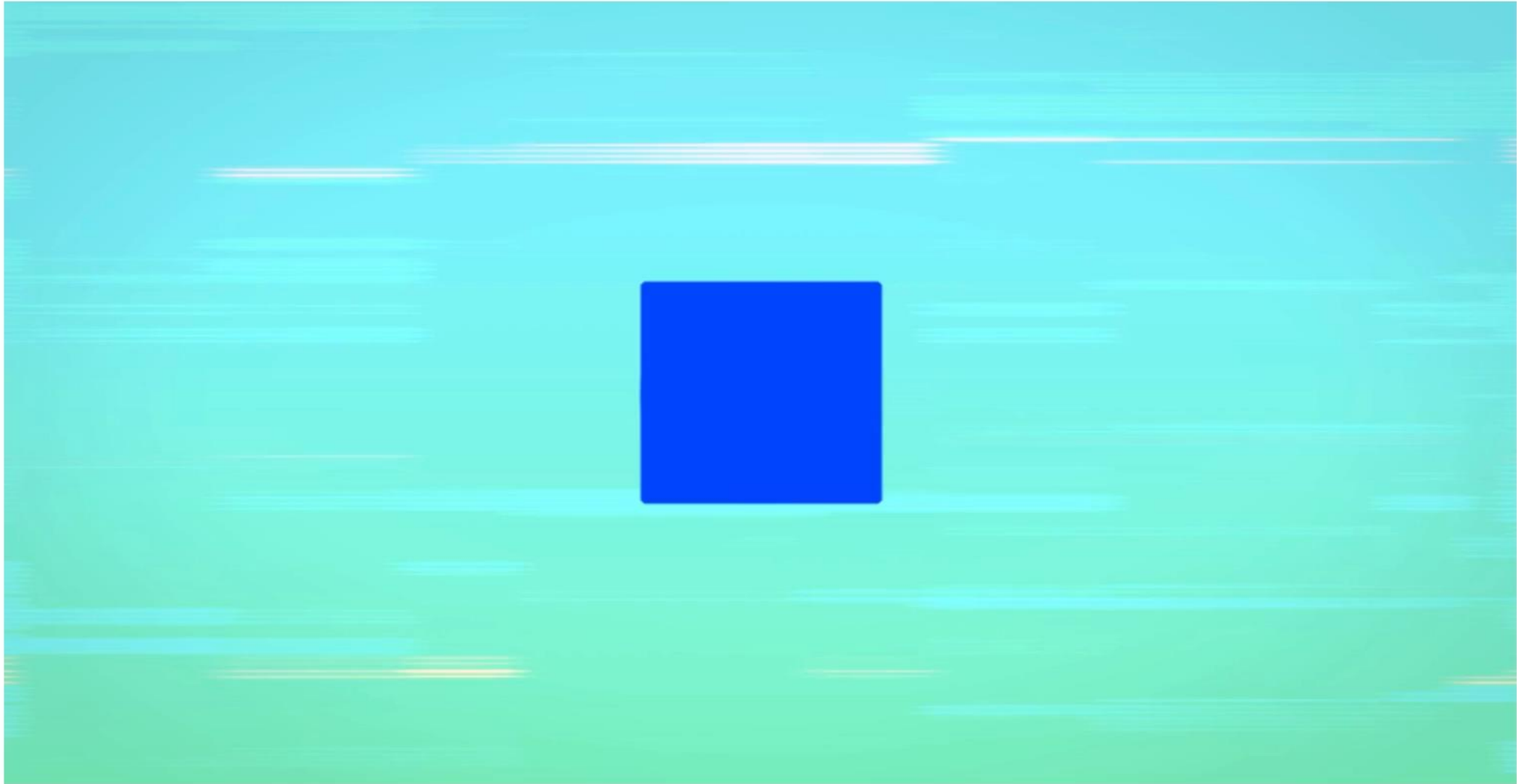


Secondary trauma exposure or indirect trauma refers to changes in a helping professional's thoughts, behaviors, or general well-being as a result of working with those who have experienced trauma and listening to their experiences.

Can be a cumulative toll over time

Unless you reduce arousal & activate regulation, CNS

- by seeking connections, taking in nature, having relationships & connections
- finding joy in the “not so little things”
- and by letting go of “things” outside our control



Staying fully present

van Dernoot Lipsky states, *“The most important technique in trauma stewardship is learning to stay fully present in our experience, no matter how difficult.”*

- Do helpers struggle with staying present (also referred to as “mindful”), or is this an area of strength in helpers?
 - How so?
- In what ways does the nature of this work/serving others make it difficult to stay fully present in the moment?
 - How so?



“Feelings come and go like

clouds in a windy sky.

Conscious breathing is my

anchor.”

– Thích Nhất Hạnh

Addressing secondary trauma exposure

Laura van Dernoot Lipsky

- ... is a structural process and is not about self-care
- “Our systems & structures have a moral mandate & and ethical obligations to create sustainable environment within which we work, learn, and engage. When they do, let us pause, notice and give thanks. When that’s not the case, we can decide if/when/how to engage. While these choices may be fraught and complex,
- I hope refuge can be found in Howard Thurman’s offering,: *“Don’t ask yourself what work needs. Ask yourself what makes you come alive and then go do that, because what the work need, is people who have come alive.”*
- The Trauma Stewardship Institute 2021

The Trauma Stewardship Institute’s MAP FOR MANAGING ONE’S LIFE

DAY

When I wake up, I will protect my morning. I won’t reach for: News, social media, work/school updates, anyone who needs me for anything. This helps me avoid being flooded by cortisol first thing.

Pema Chödrön says, “Death is certain, your time of death is uncertain. How do you want to spend your time?” Ask myself once a day, am I spending my time – in life – how I want to be? If so, how can I further support myself? If not, what concrete changes can I make?

BLOOD PRESSURE + SYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM ACTIVITY ↓
IMMUNE SYSTEM + ELEVATED MOOD ↑

Decision fatigue & cognitive overload can be debilitating. Simplify my surroundings & my routines. Be mindful of hydration + glucose levels. Track when my mental acuity is high and maximize those times.

For optimal coping, I must tend to my nervous system. Given it’s continuously anticipating & reacting to my surroundings, I need conditions in place that prevent me from becoming saturated and, ultimately, rupturing.

Tactic #1 – Limit exposure to anything unnecessary that adversely affects my nervous system.

Tactic #2 – Metabolize, efficiently, anything that starts to accumulate in my nervous system.

Note to self: While I have my own nervous system, it may be helpful to consider the nervous system of my home, of where my loved ones spend time, of my community, etc. and how those nervous systems, too, can become saturated, and rupture, over time.

6 days a week (unless medically advised against it), I’m getting my heart rate up and breaking a sweat. Thinking to myself: “Anything that has accumulated in my nervous system over the past 24 hours, may it be completely released so I can show up for this next 24 hours...”

Look outside, be outside. When I’m in a meeting, during a class, to work, to play, when I have a few mins for a break. If even for a moment or two, feel the unassailable power nature has on my health – on all levels.

Too much going on!

My brain feels broken!

What’s going well? What am I grateful for? What am I psyched about? Who can I thank? Repeat a-l-l day.

How’s my consumption? Need help with any of my addictions? Substances/screen time/caffeine/constantly criticizing/adrenaline/being over scheduled/shopping, etc.?

distance ← self → feelings

Be mindful of my attempt to distance myself from my feelings.

With news and social media, be deliberate and mindful if/when, both what I’m taking in and what I’m putting out.

Reminder: the degree to which I’m dedicated to social and environmental justice does not equal time spent digitally dialed in.

REACTIVITY • INTENTIONALITY

In the spirit of striving to Do No Harm, I will pause and think before I speak/post/tweet/reply/engage. Despite the negativity bias headwinds throughout society today, I will practice extending grace and humility, over & over + remember the merit of approaching life with a beginner’s mind.

Sleep = critical. What is my bedtime tonight? How can I sequence my evening so I can shut it down by then & not get into sleep-deficit. Set a reminder to: Give all my electronics and screens their own bed time, an hour before mine.

Understand that every day I may be influenced by moments small & large, mundane and significant, that continuously arise, like waves. These waves, and how I experience them, may have deep undercurrents from what has come before me via intergenerational oppression, intergenerational trauma, and epigenetics. Sometimes it may make sense, or not, but [even if it’s not my strong suit], acting with self-respect and compassion, towards myself, is essential. Historical forces beyond what meet the eye can impact me in ways I may not understand or be conscious of and I will remember Jack Kornfield saying, “If your compassion does not include yourself, it is incomplete.”

When navigating a pandemic and systematic oppression and structural supremacy and the climate crisis and democracies in peril and my job/school and caretaking and my life in general...

When and where possible, be around animals and take a moment to notice the reduction in stress hormones and how regenerating even a moment or two can be.

Engage in mindfulness to assist my nervous system in staying regulated and countless other health and mental health benefits. Tai chi, qi gong, yoga, meditation. All portable and accessible and even a few minutes here or there can provide the right scaffolding.

Have I done anything edifying for myself today? Actually connected with someone I care about? Taken a moment to laugh or find levity in a nourishing way? Be transported by art?

My day begins

And if it’s been one of those days, I’ll remember Jeff Li’s mantra: “Forgive yourself every night, recommit every morning.”

Our systems & structures have a moral mandate & an ethical obligation to create sustainable environments within which we work, learn, and engage. When they do, let us pause, notice + give thanks. When that’s not the case, we can decide if/when/how to engage. While these choices may be fraught and complex, I hope refuge can be found in Howard Thurman’s offering: “Don’t ask yourself what the world needs. Ask yourself what makes you come alive and then go do that, because what the world needs, is people who have come alive.”

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break



Suffering & Beauty Co-Exist

- You are accountable for your self-care!
- Your church, community, and supervisors, may or may not
- Peer support naturally
- Buffer toxic stress
- Movement, breath, singing, prayer,...



Advocate Be Well

I know I am who I am and that I am not what I do.

I know I need to lead a balanced life while at work and at home.

I know suffering and beauty co-exist in this world.

I know I need to nourish my body and soul with nutrition, love, inspiration, and being present in my whole life.

I know survivors, child, teen and adult, deserve my best in being present while supporting their choices.

I drink eight glasses of water daily.

I am practicing breathing and centering, knowing I can access my inner place of calm before responding.

I know it is okay to begin each day at work with an awareness of being enough and leaving at the end of the day with intention while honoring the babies, children, teens, and adults whom I serve and support.

I know having healthy boundaries is not selfish in order to come back to this work every day.

I know it is critical and necessary to have laughter, joy, tears, and people in my life.

I can close my eyes amidst the business of this work, center myself with three deep breaths in and out, and then respond.

I know I may write, journal, sing loudly, laugh hard, dance, and experience gratitude.

I know survivors, child, teen, and adult, deserve my best in being present while supporting each of them in their lives.

I hear what my body is telling me. I know to pay attention to these messages. I will act with loving kindness toward myself, making healthy choices even when I might not want to, noticing my resistance.

I know suffering and beauty co-exist in our world.

I know I am accountable for my choices, my words, my actions, and the care of my own life.

I know I have only to breathe in and out deeply to come back to my inner place of calm and peace, grounding me.

S. Ferencik, 2019

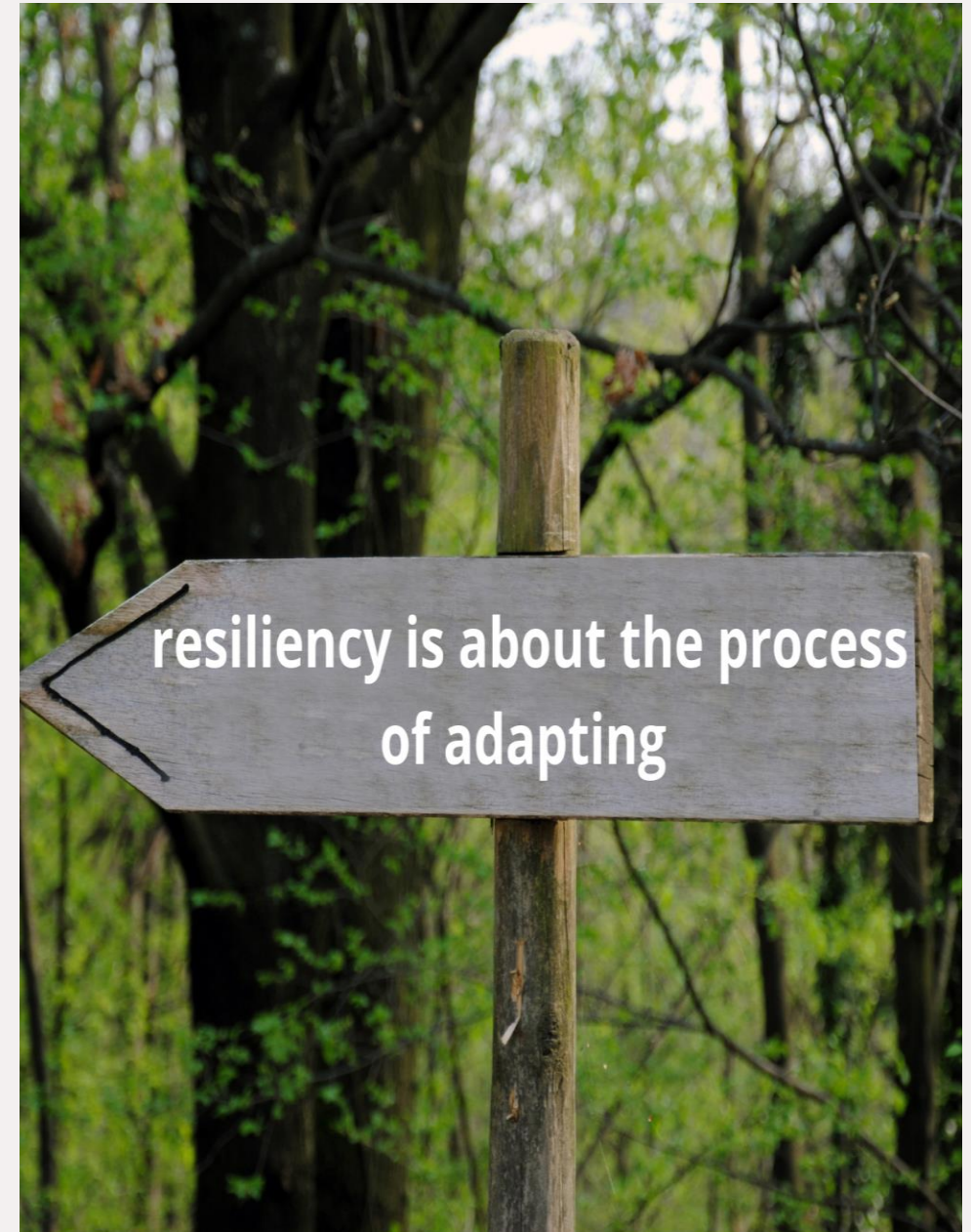


Identifying our Resiliency

We humans have the skill of adapting when we serve others.

Let's examine approaches to individual resilience by weaving the science & bio-chemical truths into your wellness approaches:

- vagus nerve, PSN system,
- rest and digest hormones,
- breath & movement
- Sleep – water intake – nutrition
- practice of gratitude and letting it flow through



***“When we give ourselves the chance
to let go of all our tension,
the body’s natural capacity to heal
itself can begin to work.”***

Thich Nhat Hanh



Many Studies Show

Movement helps with mental clarity, as well as concentration and memory.

- Improves circulation
- Improves metabolism
- Improves clarity
- Improves mood
- Improves resilience



Movement = Health and Well-being

Movement triggers the neurotransmitters **serotonin and endorphins**, as well as a specific protein called BDNF (brain-derived neurotrophic factor)

protecting existing brain cells, promoting new, healthier brain cells, and improving brain function.



Studies show being mindful and breathing

Breathing and mindfulness promote well-being and produce the neurotransmitters **serotonin and endorphins**, as well as a specific protein called BDNF (brain-derived neurotrophic factor)

protecting existing brain cells, promoting new, healthier brain cells, and improving brain function.



Studies show **sleep** is the most important improvement we can make

The state of sleep is **highly functioning and productive:**

- cycle through five stages of sleep
- our brain remains active during these for processing and both rest and restoration
- many essential processes and functions to establish strength for the coming day



“Neuroscience research shows that the only way we can change the way we feel is by becoming aware of our inner experience and learning to befriend what is going inside ourselves.”

Bessel A. van der Kolk,

The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma.



“Befriending the body”

*The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body
in the Healing of Trauma.*

Bessel A. van der Kolk,



A note about past experiences in present moments

- Cues – sensory memory triggers/
- Based on present moment or perhaps past experiences have an impact in the **moments the person is in** (traumatic or other)
- The messages tell our brain and body to make changes to the way they are working.
- Key is understanding sensations on the inside (physiologically) and how it shows up in our words, behaviors, and body.

When a human experiences "something"

it is felt in different ways in split seconds. Our body and brain send messages to each other.



AN OVERVIEW

**INTERNAL BODY
SENSATIONS**
WHAT AND
WHERE DO I
FEEL THIS IN MY
BODY

**FEELINGS
AND EMOTIONS
ELICITED**
WHAT ARE THE
FEELINGS I AM
HAVING?

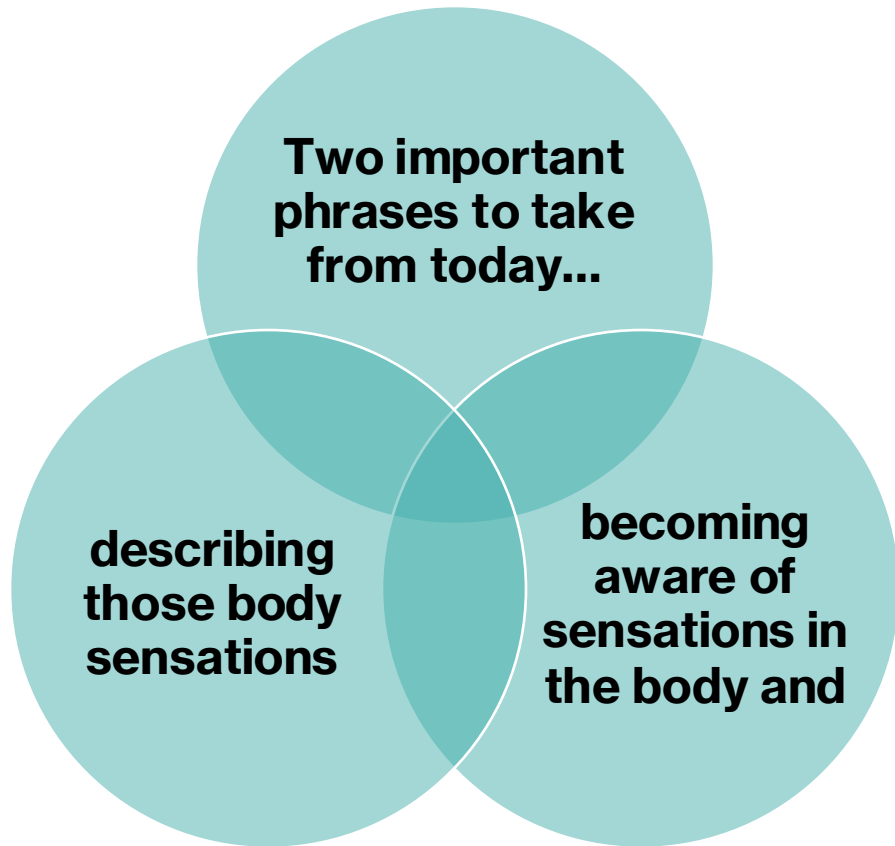
**BEHAVIORAL
RESPONSE**
HOW AM I
ACTING OR
BEHAVING?

**COGNITIVE
RESPONSE**
WHAT I AM
THINKING
ABOUT THIS?

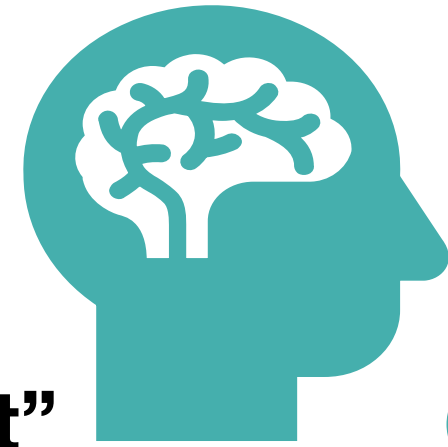


Human Experience

- In moments of living –
- What might be your body sensations?
- How do you act or behave?
- What are you thinking?
- What past experiences might be showing up presently?

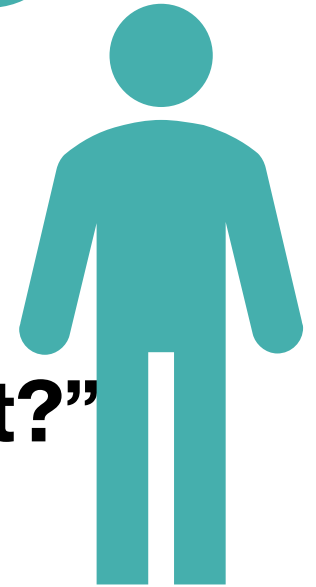


“Notice that”



&

“What happens next?”



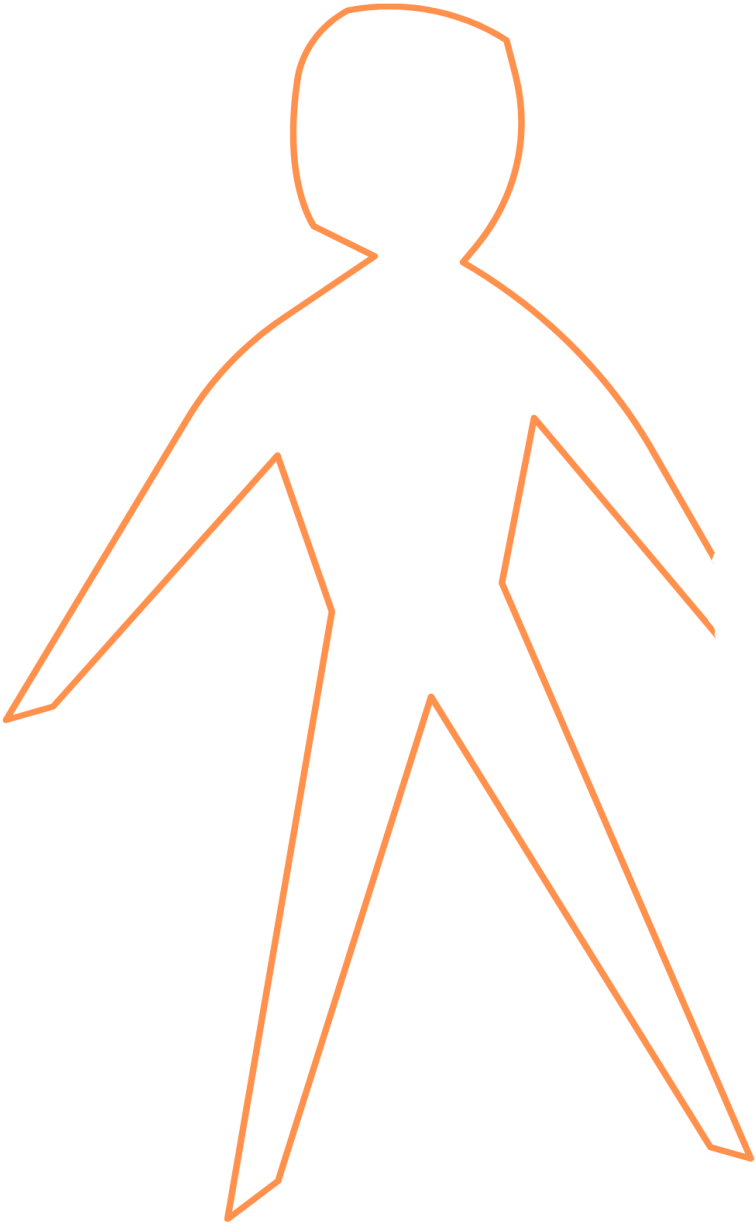
What are my actions to reduce, regulate, and find balance?

What is your body telling you?

What have you noticed?

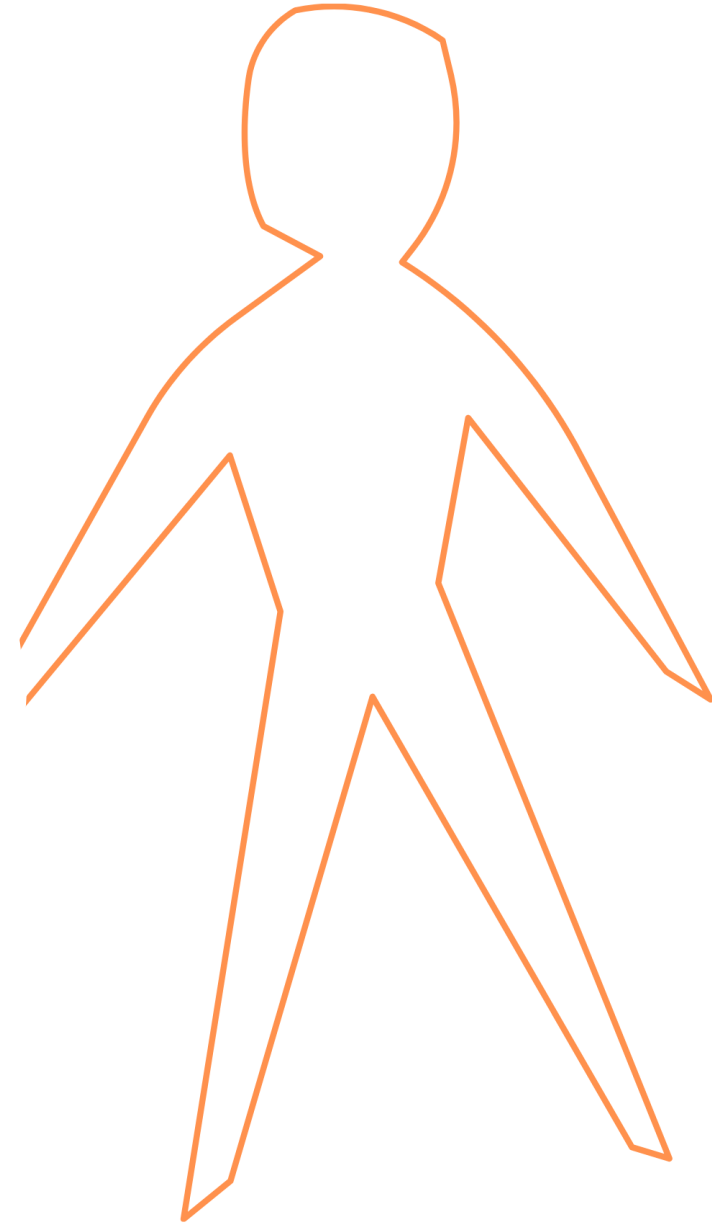
How can you release this?

What do you need?



Where might you feel hurt, aches, tension...

- Where does this show up in your body?
- What is your body telling you?





Where do I feel this...

Gentle Invitation

Larger Group Share

What are our bodies collectively telling us?



Somatic practices

use the mind-body connection to help you survey your internal self and listen to signals from your body on pain, discomfort, or imbalance.

- While somatic practices have become increasingly popular in the Western world over the last 50 years, **many of them draw from ancient Eastern philosophy and healing practices, including [tai chi](#) and [qi gong](#).**

- <https://www.healthline.com/health/somatics>

Allows for access to information

- Somatic practices allow you to access more information about the ways you hold on to your experiences in your body. Somatic experts believe this knowledge, combined with natural movement and touch, can help you work toward healing and wellness.

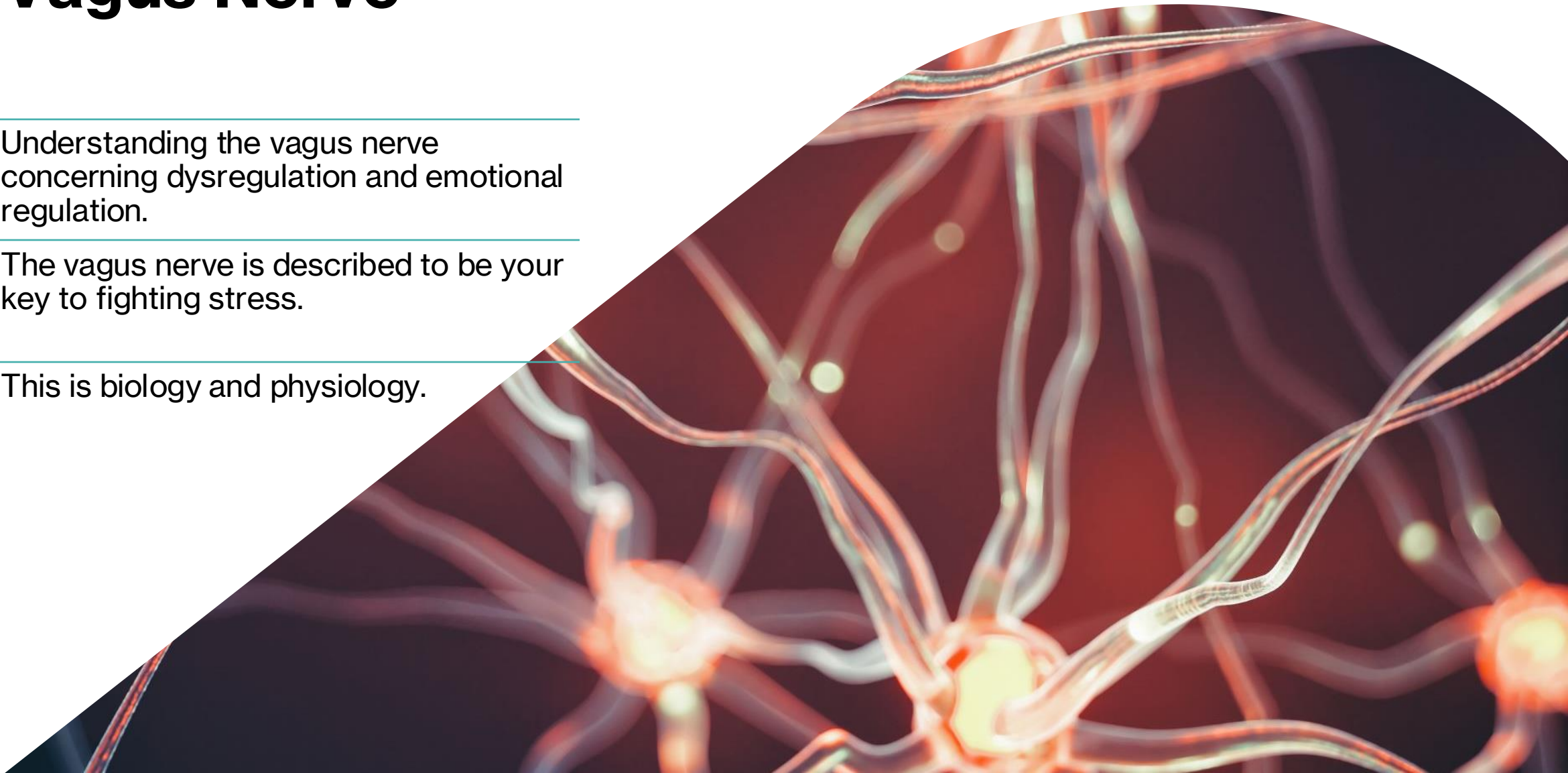


Vagus Nerve

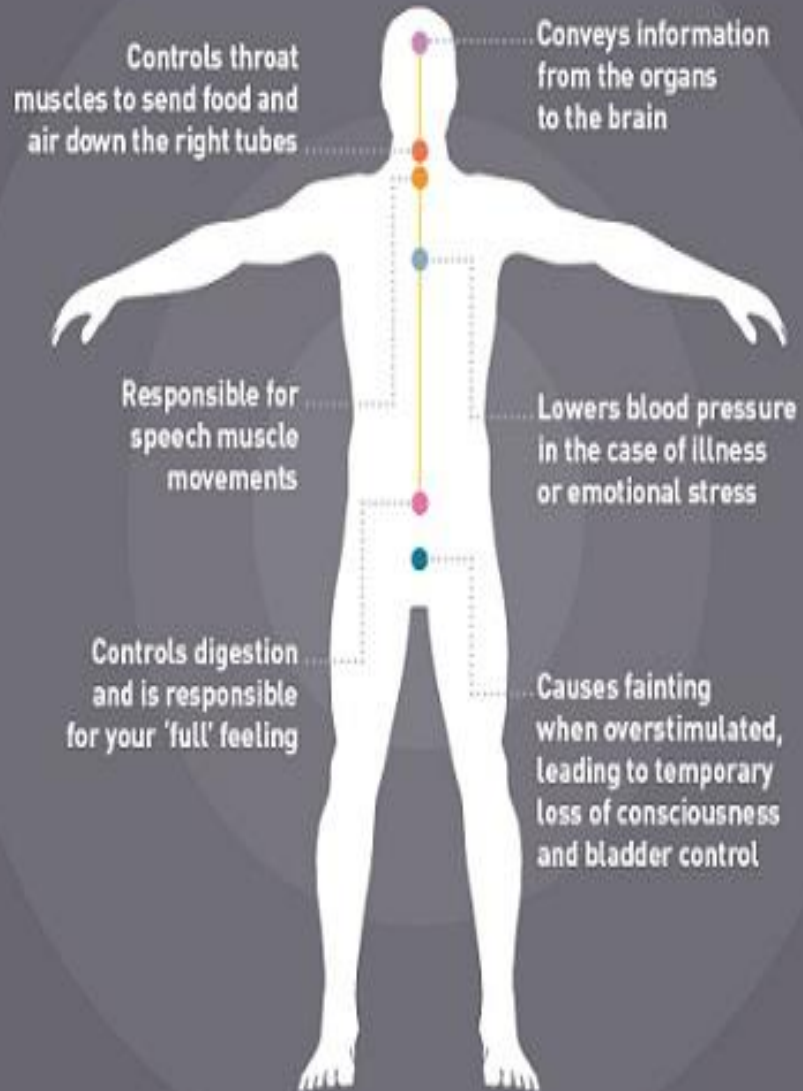
Understanding the vagus nerve concerning dysregulation and emotional regulation.

The vagus nerve is described to be your key to fighting stress.

This is biology and physiology.



WHAT THE VAGUS NERVE DOES

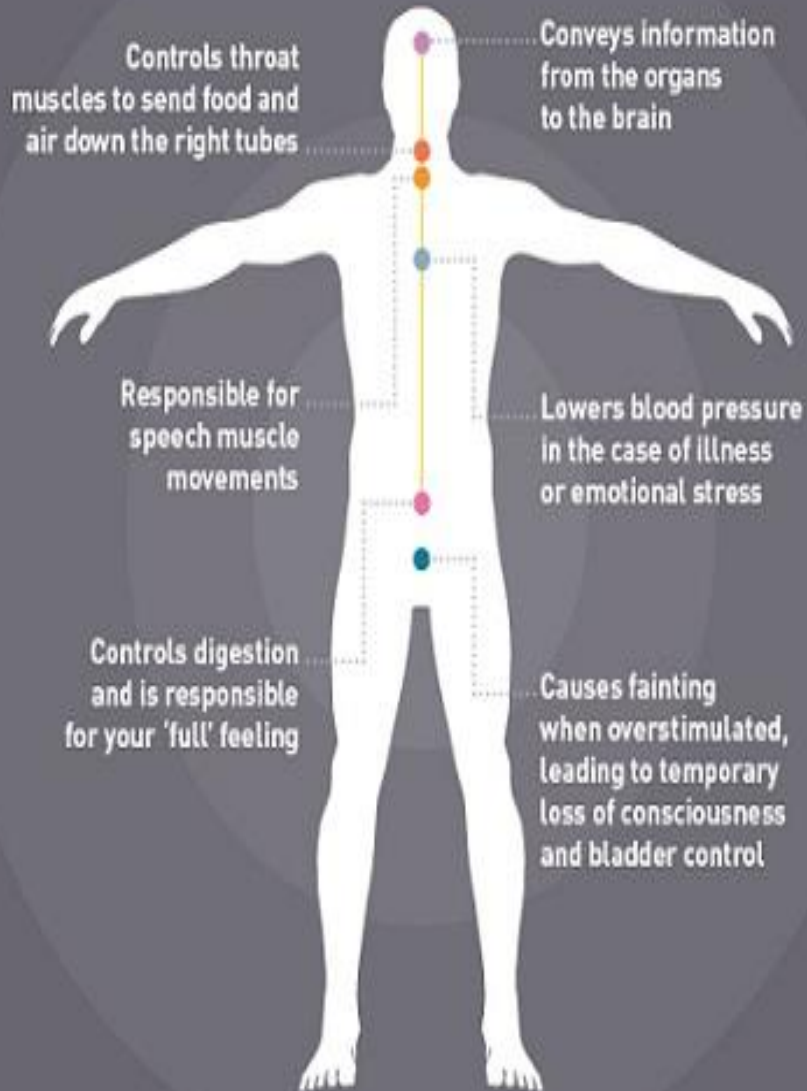


These two nervous systems **are key to the physical function of our bodies and our mental well-being.**

An individual who is feeling the **pressure of chronic stress is often locked in a “flight or fight” pattern,** which is controlled by the sympathetic nervous system (stress hormones).

Parasympathetic Nervous System acts in opposition to this, enabling the much more pleasant “rest and digest” pattern.

WHAT THE VAGUS NERVE DOES



“Stimulating the vagus nerve,” per a recent Harvard Health blog post, **“activates your relaxation response, reducing your heart rate and blood pressure.”**

Calming hormones released provide mental calmness.

“Breathing deeply” immediately relaxes the body because it stimulates the vagus nerve.

Katie Brindle *Yang Sheng: The Art of Chinese Self-Healing*

Vagus Nerve Queen of Parasympathetic Nervous System

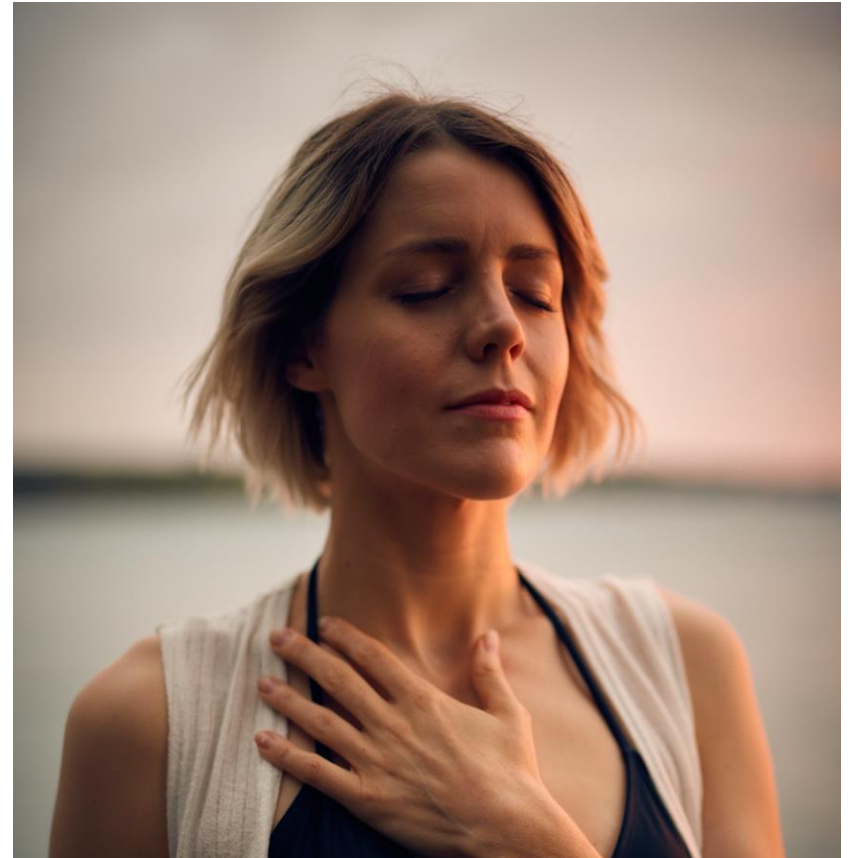
- The more we banish the effects of the sympathetic nervous system
 - – a.k.a. the “**fight or flight,**” or the “**do something**” **stress-releasing adrenaline/cortisol one.**
- The more we bring regulation and balance to our bodies (PSN)



“So, what can you do to increase vagal tone & modulation?”

- First, you can start right now by focusing on your breath.
- During an exhalation, vagal tone increases as the heart rate decreases, enabling higher influence from the PNS and contributing to a much calmer state.”
- Other ways: humming, singing, cold water showers, water to the face, chanting sounds like um

• Reference from:
<https://www.organic4greenlivings.com/unlock-the-power-of-the-vagus-nerve-to-reduce-chronic-stress>



Your key to calm

“Breathing deeply, immediately:

- relaxes the body because it stimulates the vagus nerve,
- which runs from the neck to the abdomen and
- oversees turning off the ‘fight or flight reflex.

- In other words, it acts like a **“brake”** that turns off the stress response”.

3/14/24



Ohio Domestic Violence Network sonia@odvn.org

WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

Mindfulness is a practice of gently focusing your awareness on the present moment and being fully engaged with whatever you're doing at the moment — free from distraction or judgment.

BEING MINDFUL...

- improves brain activity and creativity
- boosts mood and self-esteem
- reduces stress, worries, and regrets
- helps develop stronger relationships
- improves quality of sleep
- encourages positive behavior
- improves decision making ability

**MINDFULNESS IS A
SUPERPOWER.**





Releasing rather than holding

**Invitation to release and
let go...**



Let's Discover: Daily Practices to Complete the Stress Cycles



Lower-Brain Based Interventions

- 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Technique
- My body is a container – Left hand under right arm, and right hand hugging left shoulder – 5 minutes
- Dancing, movements
- Brushing away
- Tapping – Emotional Freedom Technique & Breakout Session
- Hand Tracing Breathing Technique

The Tapping Foundation

- “The practice consists of tapping with your fingertips on specific meridian points while talking through traumatic memories and a wide range of emotions.”
- “All negative emotions are felt through a disruption of the body’s energy. The body, like everything in the universe, is composed of energy.”
- “According to Dr. Dawson Church, “*Acupoint tapping sends signals directly to the stress centers of the mid-brain, not mediated by the frontal lobes (the thinking part, active in talk therapy).*”



Karate Chop Point



Eyebrow Point



Side of Eye Point



Under Eye Point



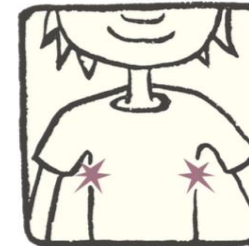
Under Nose Point



Chin Point



Collarbone Point



Underarm Point



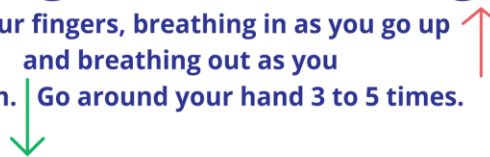
Top of Head Point

ODVN Youth Resource – Youth Journal



Tracing Hand Breathing

Trace your fingers, breathing in as you go up
and breathing out as you
go down. Go around your hand 3 to 5 times.



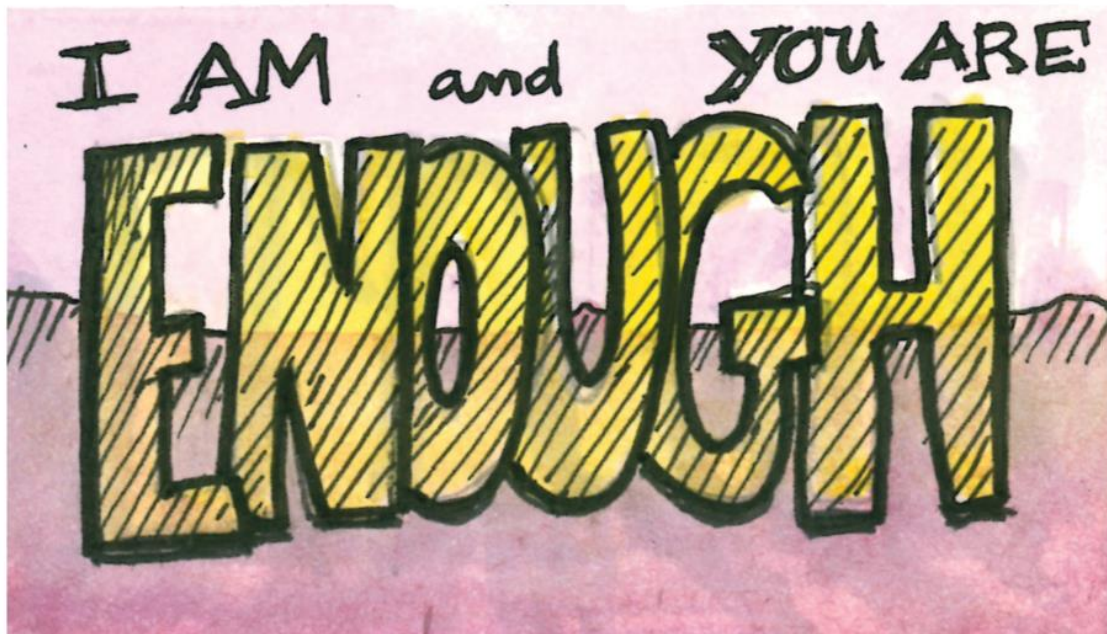
What drains me? What sustains me?

- **Describe 2 “things” that drain you.**
 - What depletes your energy?
 - What makes you feel weary or tired?
 - What adds up or takes a toll on your reserves?
- **Describe 2 “things” that sustain you.**
 - Where do you find contentment?
 - What do you go to?
 - What lifts your spirits?
 - Where are your people? Do you make it a practice to seek them out?
 - Where do you find your solace?
 - What makes you laugh?

Equitable Sharing

MINDFUL LISTENING





Mind, Body, Spirit: Care of Your Whole Self –

- Simple acts of expressing your gratitude
- Centering and grounding-sinking into your chair – feet flat on the floor
- Brushing away after...
- Rhythm, rocking, dancing, running,
- Singing, humming,
- Writing, reflecting
- Forest Bathing – Japanese Tradition
- Plants, pets,

Legs Over the Chair or Legs Up Wall Pose

This pose is one that children, adults, and advocates alike can practice to help regulate and calm their nervous systems.

Legs Up the Wall is a rejuvenating inverted pose that brings relief to the legs, feet, spine, and nervous system.

It is a gentle way to bring the body into a state of deep relaxation and renewal.

Note: in either pose roll to your right side and stay for a moment or more before coming to a seated position


Practice 10 minutes or more

Helps aid sleep, people can close doors in the office and practice this



Ritual of coming and leaving



A hand holding a compass over a desert landscape with a winding road. The background shows a vast, arid landscape with a dirt road curving through the terrain. The foreground shows a hand holding a compass, with the needle pointing towards the top of the frame. The text is overlaid on a semi-transparent teal shape in the lower right corner.

Today, one theme has been utilizing somatic practices to “put the brakes on your stress response system” through your awareness and actions.

Complete this sentence:

When distress or overwhelm comes to visit...



Collective Invitation

Loving Kindness Meditation

Resource

In ODVN's Trauma-Informed Approaches Manual
4th edition (2019)

odvn.org under downloadable resources

Advocate's Self-Care Wheel and Coping Activity

The following handout is a tool developed by ODVN's Vicarious Trauma, Hope and Resilience Project for Advocates in 2019. This Self-Care Wheel offers you a visual worksheet to use individually or in supervision.

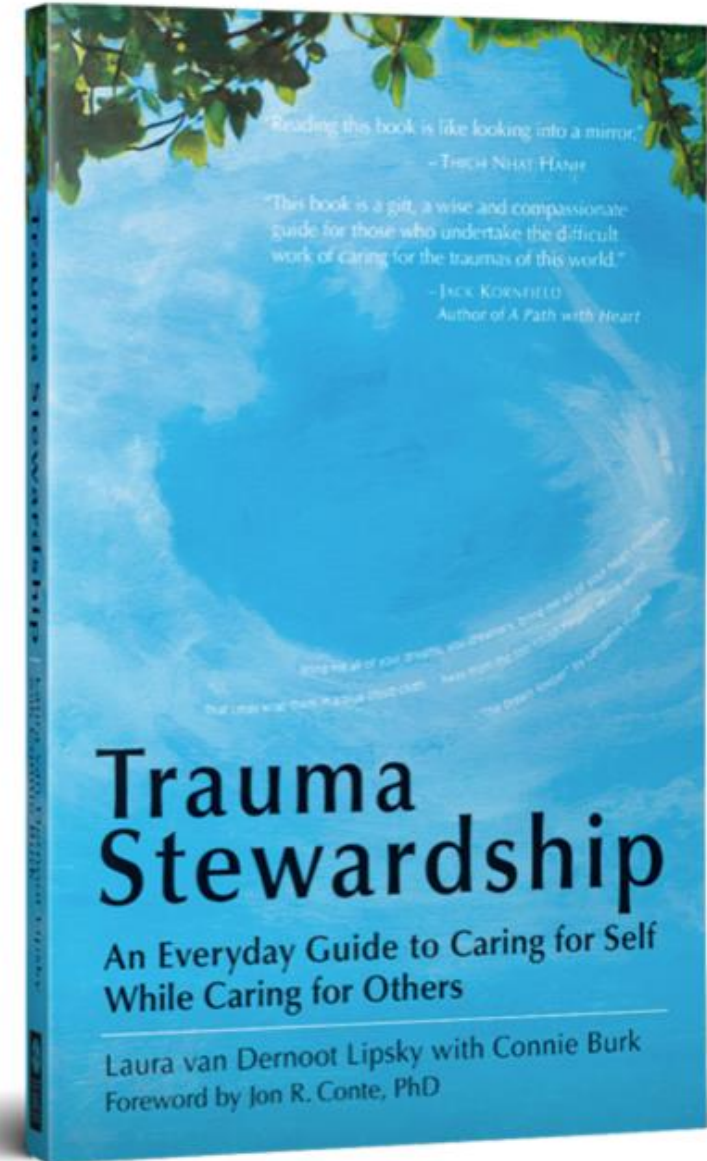
The wheel provides you a tool to determine deliberate choices to create your self-care action plan. The four sections anchored in choices, resilience, replenishing, and action parallel with movement, inspiration, grounding and air: Each allows space to write your personal choices in designing a balanced life throughout the day. Several pages follow that will describe ways to utilize your plan.



About the Ohio Heals Organizational Toolkit

Addressing Secondary Trauma Exposure for Helping Professionals

- Based on chapter-by-chapter readings, and discussions centered on *Trauma Stewardship*
- 13 series of guided discussion modules and activities designed to promote fulfillment in one's professional calling, foster a supportive organizational community, and offer tools for the prevention and mitigation of STS.



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