



## Connecting in Troubling Times

### Coping and Connecting a Trauma-Informed Practice to Ourselves, Clients, and our Community

Wednesday, May 20, 2020

1 pm – 2:30 pm

#### Agenda

1. Welcome remarks
2. Land acknowledgement
3. Introductions: About facilitator, Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic, welcome Faith-Ann
4. Zoom guidelines
5. Intentions and purpose of the series: connecting the series to trauma-informed practice
6. Participant go-around:
  - What is your name and pronouns?
  - What is your agency?
  - What drew you to the theme of the series?
  - What is resonating with you so far from this conversation?
7. Connecting to trauma-informed practice and self-care tools
8. Check Out: What is something you are leaving feeling, thinking about, questioning or something that has resonated with you from today's conversation?
9. Questions and comments
10. Resources and Resource Sharing



## Land Acknowledgement

The “Dish,” or sometimes it is called the “Bowl,” represents what is now southern Ontario, from Great Lakes to Quebec and from Lake Simcoe into the United States. We all eat out of the Dish, all of us that share this territory, with only one spoon. That means we have to share the responsibility of ensuring the Dish is never empty, which includes taking care of the land and the creatures we share it with. Importantly there are no knives at the table, representing that we must keep the peace.”

-Land Acknowledgement created by Aboriginal Education Council at Ryerson

Land acknowledgments are relational, and it is important for everybody doing a land acknowledgment to reflect on their relationship with this land and colonialism. The Clinic understands that many of the populations we serve and are a part of having a history of experiencing violence and colonialism in their own lives and communities. We see this as a basis for solidarity between settlers and Indigenous Peoples.

## Trauma

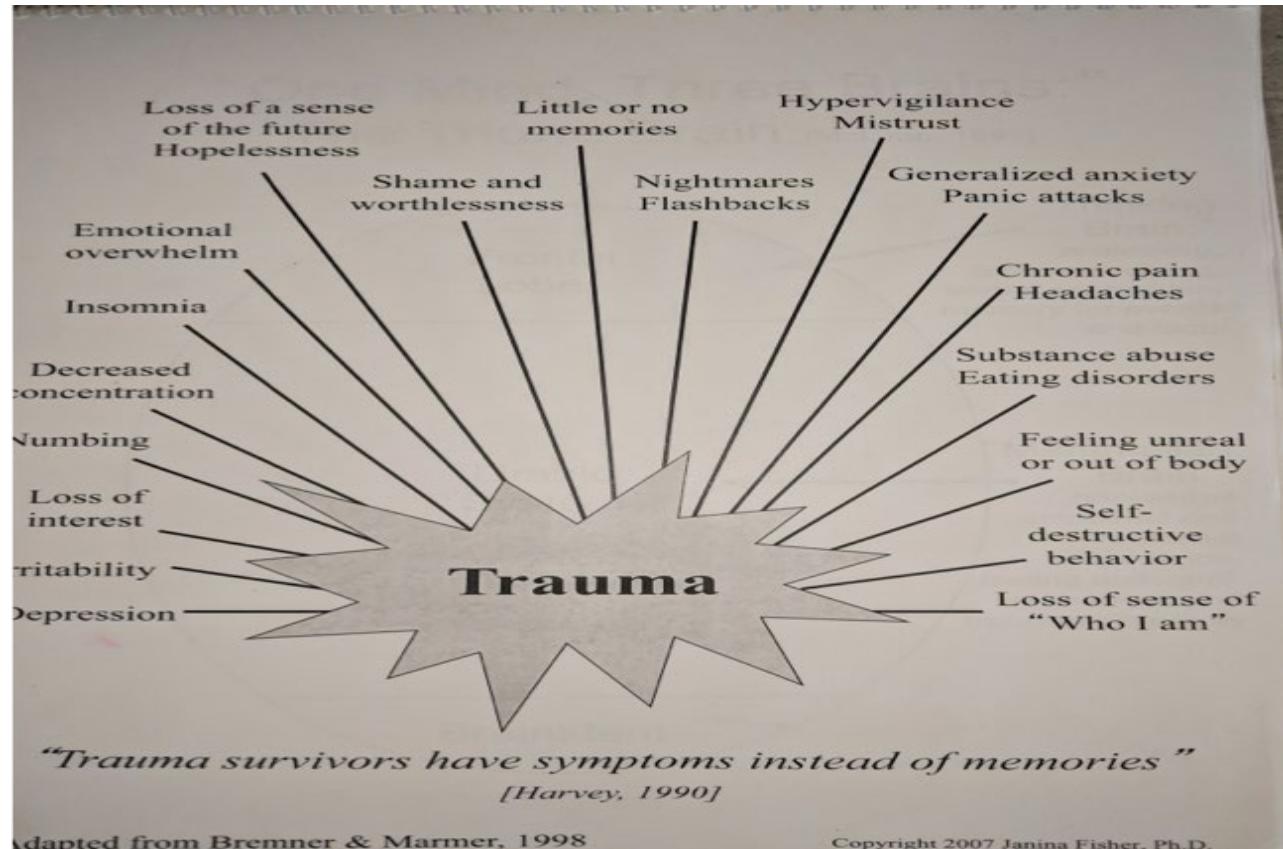
“Trauma is an internal straitjacket created when a devastating moment is frozen in time. It stifles the unfolding of being and strangles our attempts to move forward with our lives. It disconnects us from ourselves, nature and spirit. When overwhelmed by threat, we are frozen in fear, as though our instinctive survival energies were ‘all dressed up with no place to go.’”

“Trauma originates as a response in the nervous system and does not originate in an event. Trauma is in the nervous system, not in the event.” – Peter Levine

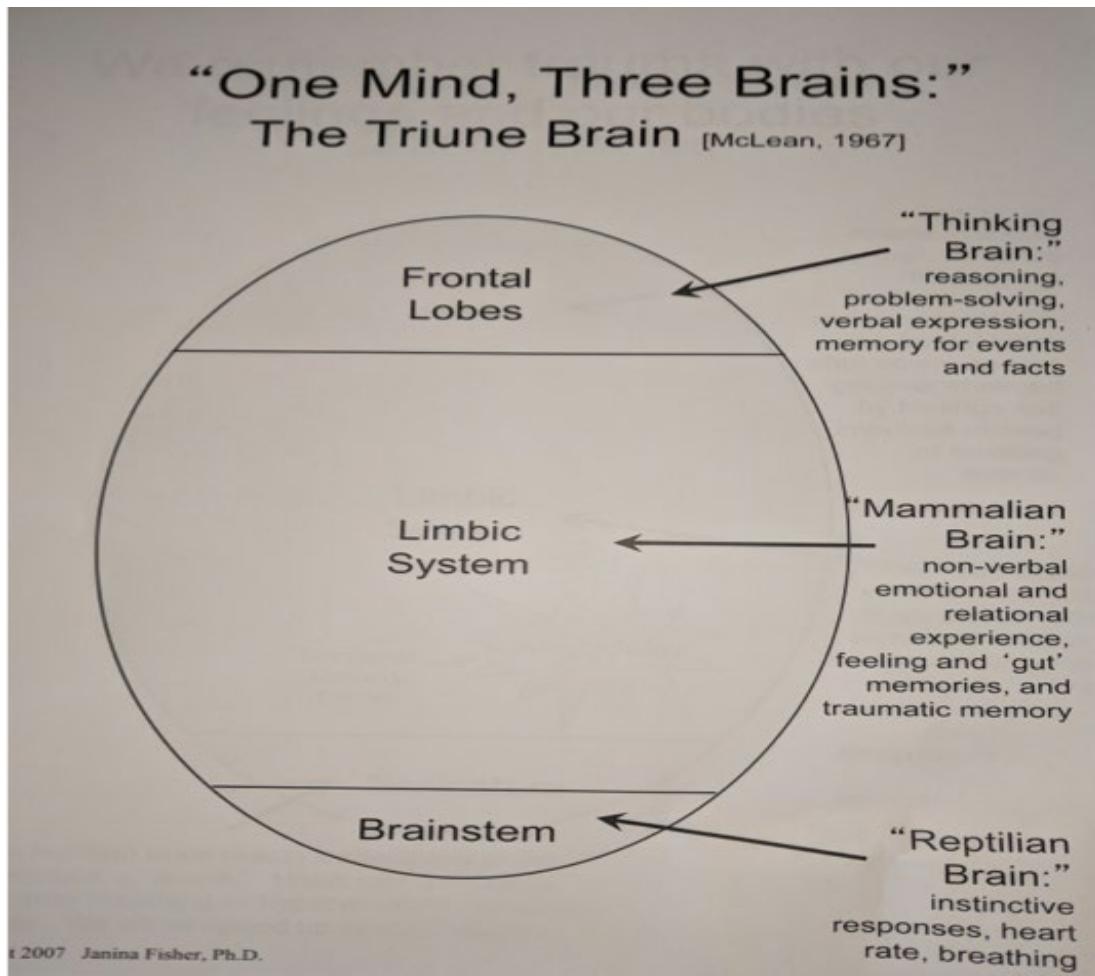
“Trauma is when we have encountered an out of control, frightening experience that has disconnected us from all sense of resourcefulness or safety or coping or love.”

(Tara Brach, 2011)

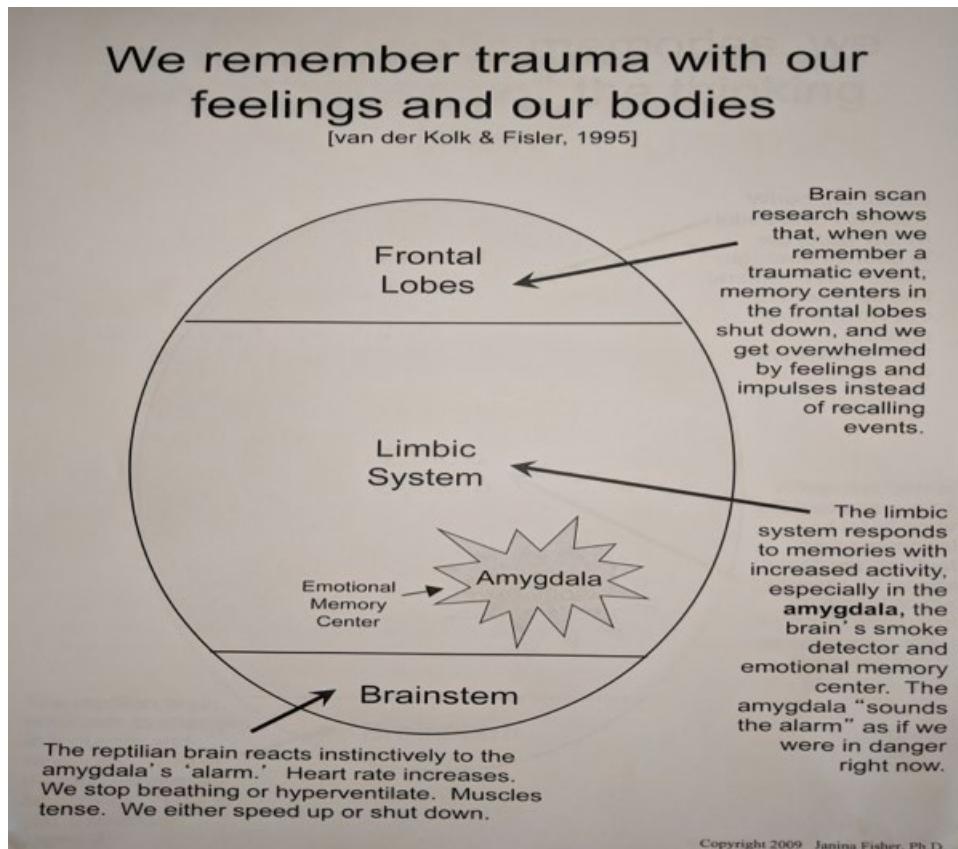
## Trauma and the Brain



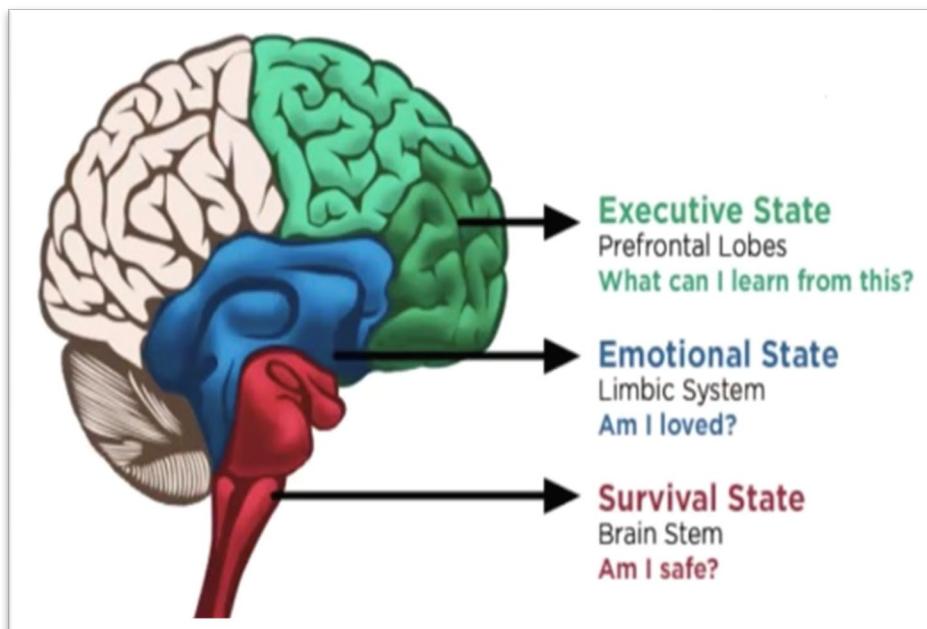
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### **Question:**

*What are some of the ways stress show up in your body?*

Embodying a positive memory as a resource:

*Pick a time when you felt loved/ connected/ happy and notice what happens in your body.*

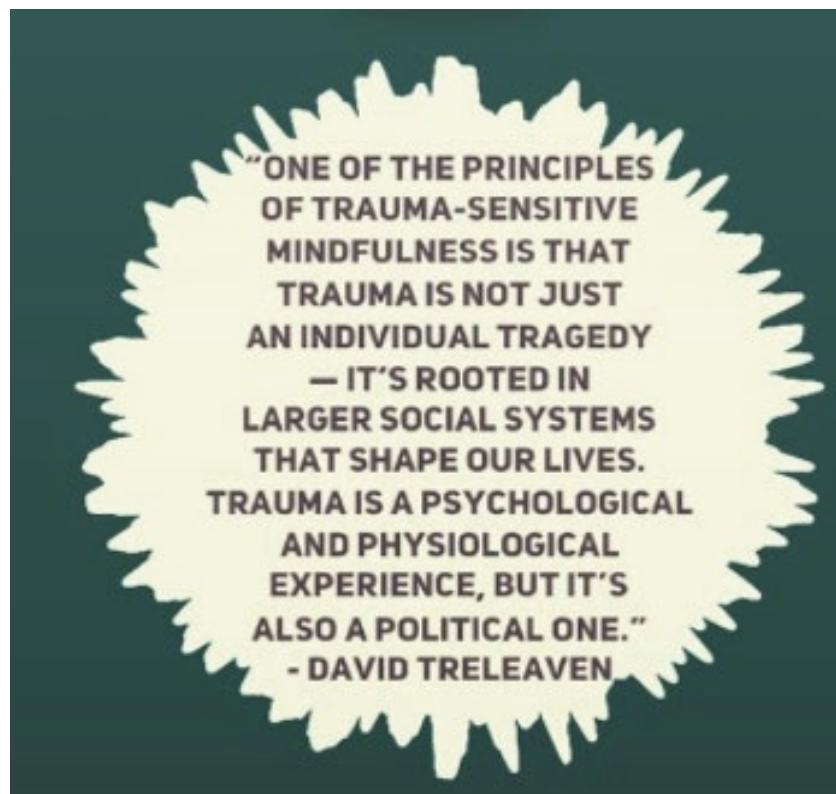
### **Safety (internal)**

The Slower You Go, The Faster You Get There

“Being able to feel safe with other people is probably the single most important aspect of mental health; safe connections are fundamental to meaningful, and satisfying lives.” - Bessel van der Kolk

“Social support is not the same as merely being in the presence in others, the critical issue is reciprocity; being truly heard and seen by the people around us, feeling that we are held in someone else’s mind and heart. For our physiology to calm down, heal, and grow we need a visceral feeling of safety.” -Bessel van der Kolk

### **Trauma and Oppression**



 \_the\_open\_space.

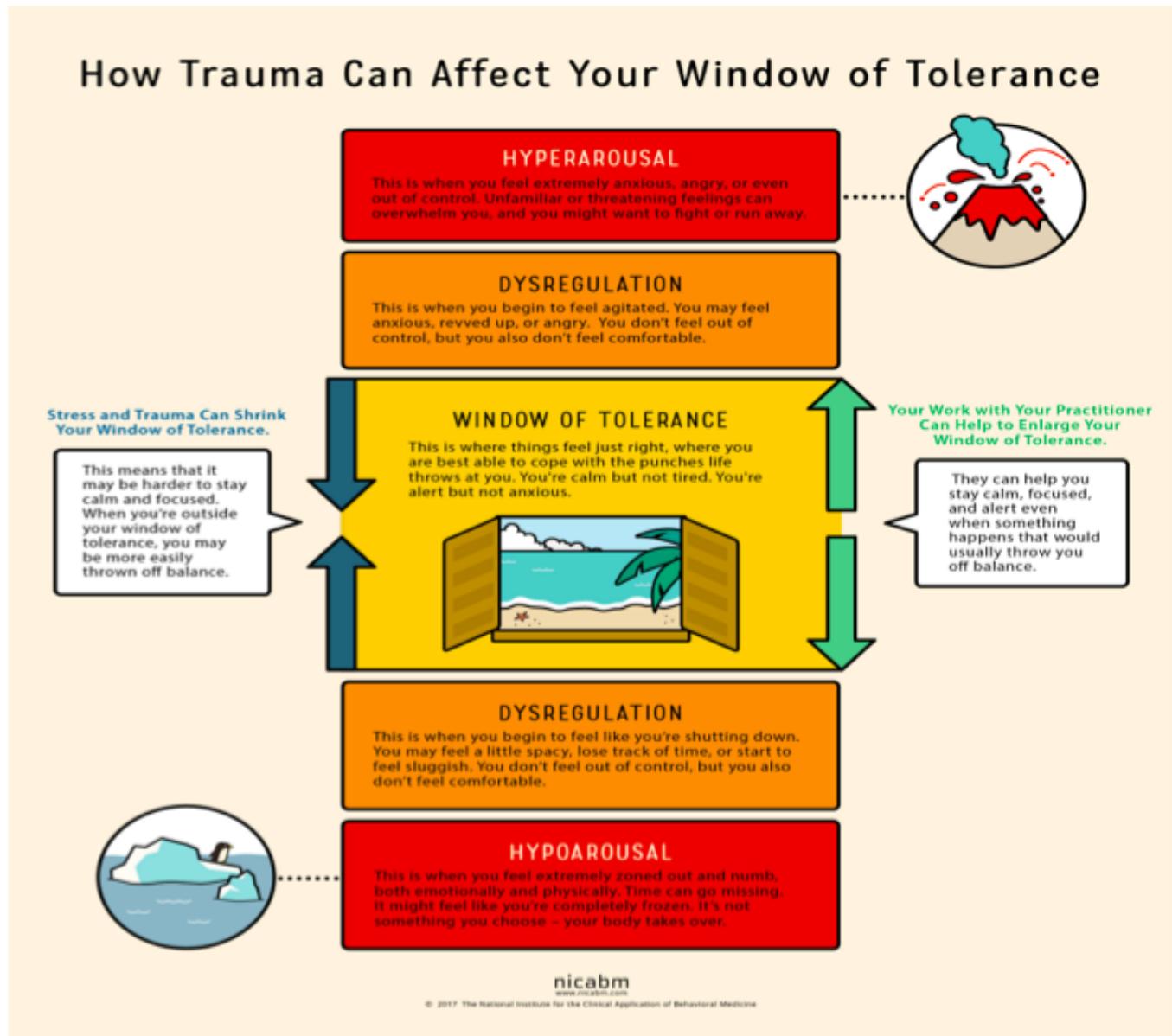
"a somatic approach without a political analysis of social institutions, unequal distribution of power and use of violence and force, leave out some of the largest forces that shape us. without a political analysis, much of the trauma that folks withstand is either left unnamed (racism, gender oppression, homophobia, class oppression) or only partially addressed.

a politicized somatics can act as a fundamental collective practice of building power, deepening presence & capacity, and developing the embodied skills we need to generate large-scale change.

without a political analysis, this doesn't get leveraged."

**GENERATIVE SOMATICS**

## Window of Tolerance



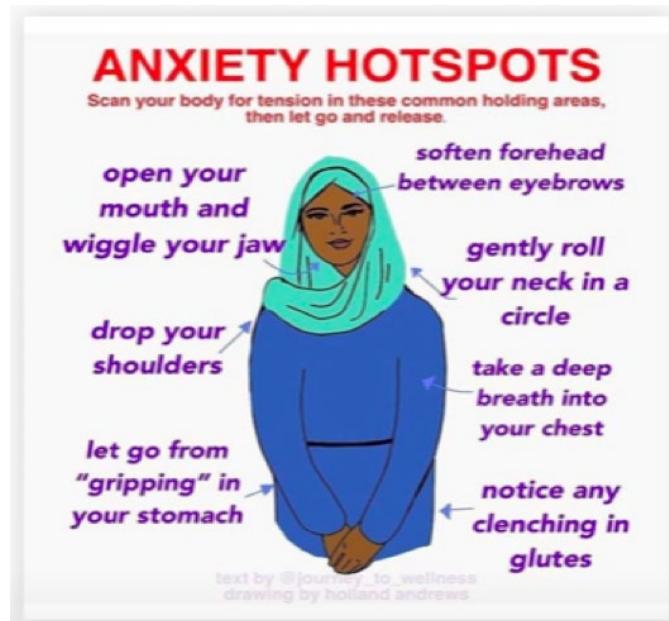
**Ask yourself:** Who do you connect with when you are feeling off-balance, or at the edge of your window? Now take a moment to jot down things that have helped you when you are out of your window of tolerance?

*Can you identify when you are out of your window?*

*How do you know?*

*What brings you back?*

## Working with Stress and Anxiety



### Grounding Techniques

Grounding is a technique that helps keep someone in the present. Grounding can help reorient a person to the here-and-now, and help manage overwhelming feelings or intense anxiety. Grounding skills help someone regain their mental focus from an often intensely emotional state.

What are some grounding techniques you already use?

### Tools for Orienting or Grounding

- Focus your attention entirely on each breath, on the way in and on the way out. Say the number of breaths to yourself as you exhale.
- Splash some water on your face. Notice how it feels. Notice how the towel feels as you dry.
- Sip a cool drink of water
- Hold a cold can or bottle of soft drink in your hands. Feel its coldness and the wetness on the outside. Note the bubbles and taste as you drink.
- Feel the clothes on your body, whether your arms and legs are covered or not, and the sensation of your clothes as you move in them. Notice how your feet feel to be encased in shoes or socks.
- If you are sitting, feel the chair under you and the weight of your body and legs pressing down onto it. Notice the pressure of the chair or floor, or table against your body and limbs.

- If you are lying down, feel the contact between your head, your body and your legs, as they touch the surface you are lying on. Starting from your head, notice how each part of your body feels, all the way down to your feet, on the soft or hard surface.
- Stop and listen. Notice and name the sounds you can hear nearby. Gradually move your awareness of sounds outward, so you are focusing on what you can hear in the distance.
- Hold a mug of tea in both hands and feel its warmth. Don't rush drinking it; take small sips, and take your time tasting each mouthful.
- Look around you, notice what is front of you and to each side. Name and notice the qualities of large objects and then smaller ones.
- Get up and walk around. Take your time to notice each step as you take one, then another.
- Stamp your feet and notice the sensation and sound as you connect with the ground.
- Clap and rub your hands together. Hear the noise and feel the sensation in your hands and arms.
- Wear an elastic band on your wrist (not tight) and flick it gently, so that you feel it spring back on your wrist.
- If you can, step outside, notice the temperature of the air and how much it is different or similar to where you have just come from.
- Notice five things you can see, five things you can hear, five things you can feel, taste, or smell.
- Run your hands over something with an interesting texture.
- Get a sultana, a nut, or some seeds, etc. Focus on how it looks, feels and smells. Put it in your mouth and notice how that feels, before chewing mindfully and noticing how it feels to swallow.
- Put on a piece of instrumental [music](#). Give it all of your attention.

## Self-Soothing Techniques

- Self-soothing activities are a source of decreased arousal, pleasurable sensations and calming feelings. They are characterized by: slow, gentle or rhythmical movements; softness in texture, tone and hues; quietness in volume. They include but are not limited to the following:
- Calming breathing
- Gentle holding and rocking
- Calming self-talk
- accessing calming sensations: e.g. warm baths and showers, warm drinks, soft textiles (blankets, soft toys, hot water bottles), calming music, soft lighting walking, or gardening.

### Body-Based Techniques

- Power poses
- Standing like a tree grounding exercise
- Hand on heart, other on the belly
- Controlled breathing (in for 4, hold for 4, out for 4)
- Meditation
- Yoga
- Running/walking
- Stretching and noticing different parts of the body
- Squeezing large muscle groups
- Self-touch holds



## Glimmers and Triggers

By: Andrea Glik

Glimmers are essentially the opposite of triggers!

If a trigger brings us into a survival state, and is also known as a cue of danger, glimmers are what bring us back into our window of tolerance and safety (cue of safety).

To fully understand where glimmers take us in our nervous system, it's important to outline the branches of it. The nervous system has the sympathetic branch and the parasympathetic branch.

The sympathetic is our fight or flight response; it's our nervous system's call to action. It calls us to fight back, or run away, depending on what feels like it is going to be more successful, or what has worked for us in the past. This is also known as a hyper-aroused state, a state of the body with more stress hormones like adrenaline and cortisol, increasing our heart rate and suspending our appetite so we are more ready for the fight to run. This can also show up as anxiety, anger, not being able to sleep, loss of appetite, and so on when we get stuck in this state.

The parasympathetic branch has two separate parts, the dorsal vagal and the ventral vagal.

The dorsal is our submit/freeze response. It is where our nervous system goes when we have perceived that fight or flight isn't safe. It is the "giving up," hopelessness, "if I am so still maybe no one will see me response." It's like the hurt animal we try and help on the side of the road who is listless, and we can't even tell if they are alive. It's playing dead.

The ventral vagal is where we go when we feel safe and connected. Our glimmers take us here. It is the feeling of being known and understood, seen and validated. It is to feel cozy and safe and secure, in a space or with a person.

As Deb Dana talks about, our goal is not to be here all the time. We are meant to fluctuate between states, with flexibility. It's when we get stuck in a survival state and can't access the safe & connected place that we need help coming home to the ventral vagal state.

So back to triggers & glimmers, Certain smells, places and people and so on activate us into a sympathetic response (our fight or flight response) or the parasympathetic response connected to the dorsal vagal (our freeze or collapse response).

Certain smells, places and people and so on can activate us into our ventral vagal, the safe and connected zone of our parasympathetic nervous system.

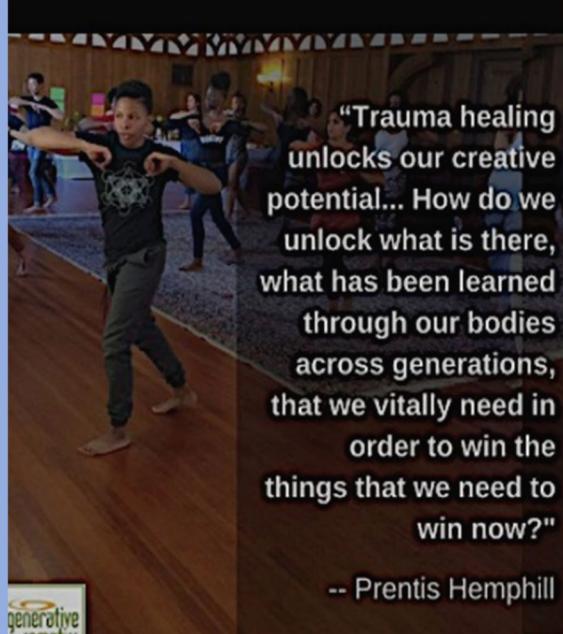
Those are our glimmers!



Things are not getting worse,  
 they are getting uncovered.  
 We must hold each other tight  
 and continue to pull back the veil.

harrypotterhousequoteatstart[1]

-Adrienne Maree Brown

"Trauma healing unlocks our creative potential... How do we unlock what is there, what has been learned through our bodies across generations, that we vitally need in order to win the things that we need to win now?"

-- Prentis Hemphill

**3-QUESTION SELF CHECK-IN**

**If you feel like you “hit the quarantine wall” this week...**

- 1** Where are you being hard on yourself right now? What impact is that having?
- 2** What would you tell your best friend if they were feeling like this?
- 3** What's one way you can redefine success to feel more achievable right now?

**COLLECTIVE  
STRENGTH**

**May you advanced**

you do not have to be a fire  
 for  
 every mountain blocking you.  
 you could be a water  
 and  
 soft river your way to freedom  
 too.

— options

## Trauma-informed Tools your agency can incorporate for connection

- Formal and informal debriefs
- Morning check-ins
- Flexing work time to accommodate working parents and caregivers
- Incorporating and embodying trauma tools in supervision and check-ins
- Incorporating high-risk protocols, so workers do not feel alone
- Honouring vulnerability as a strength
- Psycho-education about how our brain, body and nervous systems are impacted by the work (not just in harmful ways)
- Having buddy systems
- Encourage breaks
- Encourage intentional transitions between work and home life especially given the nature of the work
- Have conversations with teams: what is helpful, what is stressful, what are your signs of stress, how will I know you need help, what are you grateful for, what brings you joy? These are not conversations that you have just once. They are ongoing and help you stay in contact with the level of stress people are experiencing.

## Resources

**Mad Queer Organizing Strategies:**

***Surviving the Apocalypse Together! A Mutual Aid Safety and Wellness Planning Template for COVID-19***

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/18jineTQqwCaTjUYoLiO3I-Z60vSER0O/view?fbclid=IwAR2gSOzmtHvRmh8kmnCF\\_XqQfTEweGNepbYkbW7PuZQKVdIfaQuGVwBIWFE](https://drive.google.com/file/d/18jineTQqwCaTjUYoLiO3I-Z60vSER0O/view?fbclid=IwAR2gSOzmtHvRmh8kmnCF_XqQfTEweGNepbYkbW7PuZQKVdIfaQuGVwBIWFE)

**Living with Worry and Anxiety Amidst Global Uncertainty**

<https://4648dcw4pye15w61x1rektps-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/assets/covid-19/guide-to-living-with-worry-and-anxiety-amidst-global-uncertainty-en-us.pdf?fbclid=IwAR2JnAlkAo6q91QxTBwtjPfeqsxDMF5x02eRtaRNFBJSbtK0IS51onU9jM>

**RAIN: Recognize, Allow, Investigate, Nurture**

<https://www.tarabrach.com/rain/>

**Surviving a Pandemic: Tools for Addressing Isolation, Anxiety, and Grief**

<https://crimethinc.com/2020/05/07/surviving-a-pandemic-tools-for-addressing-isolation-anxiety-and-grief?fbclid=IwAR2RvNhtyvak0KlpBOv1Z3qUVoMRF Rage1RePbUYfZPxHMIKkjxUsrZJU>

**Accessible & Inclusive Mental Health Resources for Coping Through COVID-19**

<https://takecare19.com/?fbclid=IwAR1yyLDHxarw3JT9jQJShAlcgnDmflfzGwPhI1BbEe94tFlCJp5UGUy5UU>

**Tolerance for Uncertainty: A COVID-19 Workbook**

**A guide to accept your feelings, tolerate distress and thrive**

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1wVkJHai96zxHP55b4S70FnL7YjnPOYfd/view?fbclid=IwAR1Roz0ErrEOPFxv0kDbJ\\_nxSZN9JlkuMPBvfDqWFKV2cD79LsqCvDYaZJU](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1wVkJHai96zxHP55b4S70FnL7YjnPOYfd/view?fbclid=IwAR1Roz0ErrEOPFxv0kDbJ_nxSZN9JlkuMPBvfDqWFKV2cD79LsqCvDYaZJU)

**angel Kyodo williams**

<https://angelkyodowilliams.com/>

**Resources for Trauma-Informed Practice**



## **Books:**

Unfuck Your Brain: Getting Over Anxiety, Depression, Anger, Freak-Outs, and Triggers with Science.  
Faith Harper

Treating The Trauma Survivor. Carrie Clark

My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies.  
Book by Resmaa Menakem

Trauma Stewardship: An Everyday Guide to Caring for Self While Caring for Others. Laura van Dernoot Lipsky.

The Compassion Fatigue Workbook: Creative Tools for Transforming Compassion Fatigue and Vicarious Trauma. Francoise Mathieu.

Daring Greatly: How the Courage to be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent and Lead. Brene Brown.

The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind and Body in the Healing of Trauma. Bessel van der Kolk.

Trauma is really strange . Steve Haines

## **Websites:**

Tara Brach - [tarabrach.com](http://tarabrach.com)

Palouse Mindfulness - [palousemindfulness.com](http://palousemindfulness.com)

The Trauma Toolkit : [https://trauma-informed.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Trauma-informed\\_Toolkit.pdf](https://trauma-informed.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Trauma-informed_Toolkit.pdf)

Ruth King  
<https://ruthking.net/>

CTRI (Crisis and Trauma Resource Institute)  
<https://ca.ctrinstitute.com/>

You do not have to be good.  
You do not have to walk on your knees  
for a hundred miles through the desert repenting.  
You only have to let the soft animal of your body  
love what it loves.  
Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.  
Meanwhile the world goes on.  
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain  
are moving across the landscapes,  
over the prairies and the deep trees,  
the mountains and the rivers.  
Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,  
are heading home again.  
Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,  
the world offers itself to your imagination,  
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting -  
over and over announcing your place  
in the family of things.

Mary Oliver  
Wild Geese