

Trauma and Brain Science: Changing the Way We Work with Families

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ANDREW YOUNG SCHOOL
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

CHILD WELFARE TRAINING COLLABORATIVE

A PROFESSIONAL *Excellence* PROGRAM

In partnership with the



Georgia Division of Family
and Children Services

When an event is traumatic to children and adults, they may be negatively impacted emotionally, physically and spiritually by these adverse life events.

Institute Trauma and Trauma -Informed Care (IT TIC), 2014

2:00

Complex Trauma

Simultaneous or sequential occurrence of child maltreatment

Occurs in the context of the child's caregiver



Chronic

Disrupts child's development and formation of self



Stress Response

Noticeable Effects

Hidden Effects

Heart pumps faster

Muscles tense for action



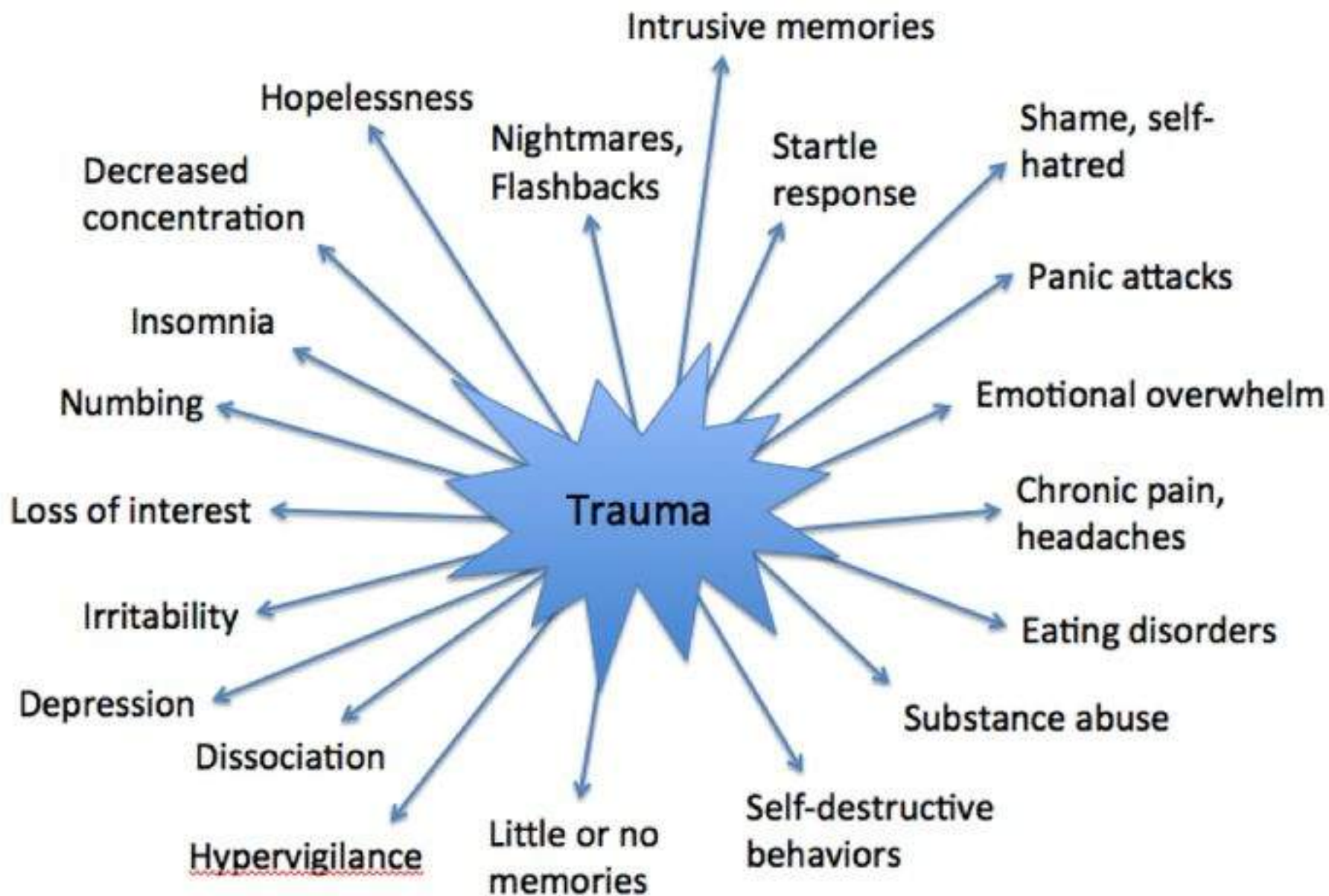
Brain gets ready for action

Adrenaline releases for Freeze/Flight/Fight

Blood pressure rises



Toxic Stress



Adapted from Janina Fisher

The Influence on Developmental Stages

Stress reactions vary by developmental stage.

Reduces capacity to explore their environment.

Untreated complex trauma can interfere with mastery of developmental tasks

Longer stress goes untreated, farther children tend to stray from appropriate developmental pathways.

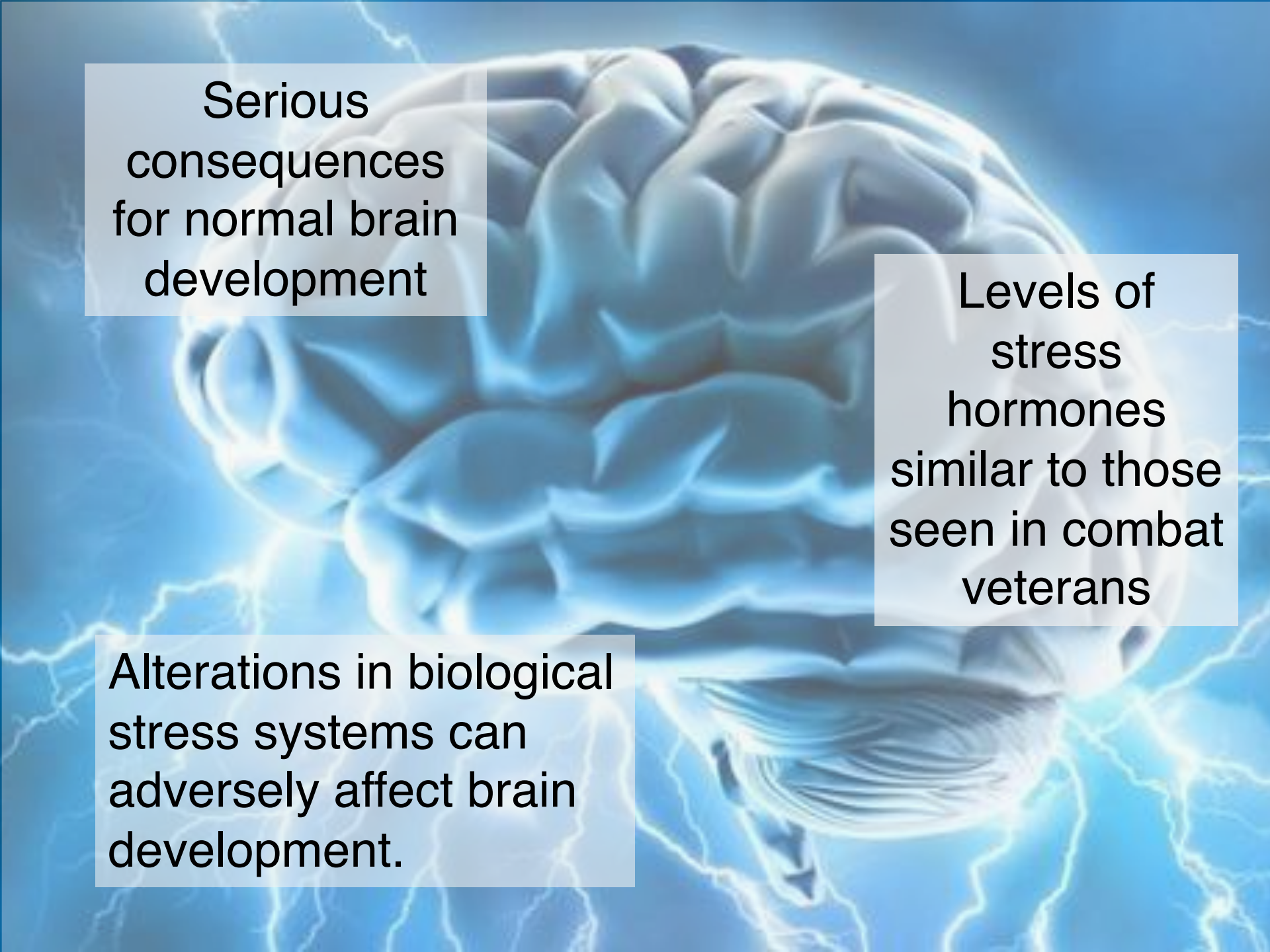


Consider that
behavior is a way of
coping with the
trauma



Chronological age may not be the same
as developmental age



A glowing blue brain is the central focus, set against a background of bright blue lightning bolts. The brain is rendered with a semi-transparent, ethereal quality, showing its complex folds and structures. The lightning bolts are jagged and bright, creating a sense of intense energy and potential danger. Three text boxes are overlaid on the image, providing information about the effects of stress on brain development.

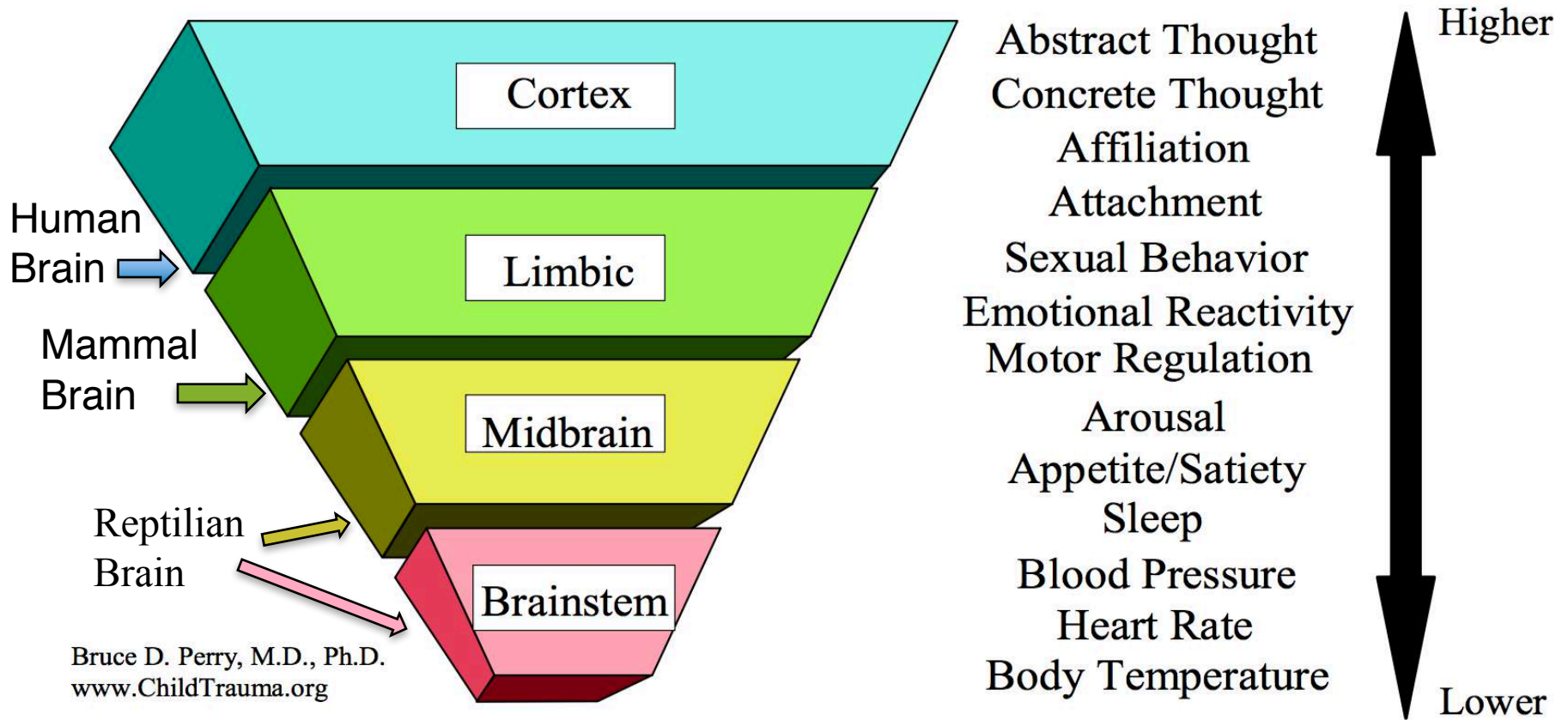
Serious
consequences
for normal brain
development

Levels of
stress
hormones
similar to those
seen in combat
veterans

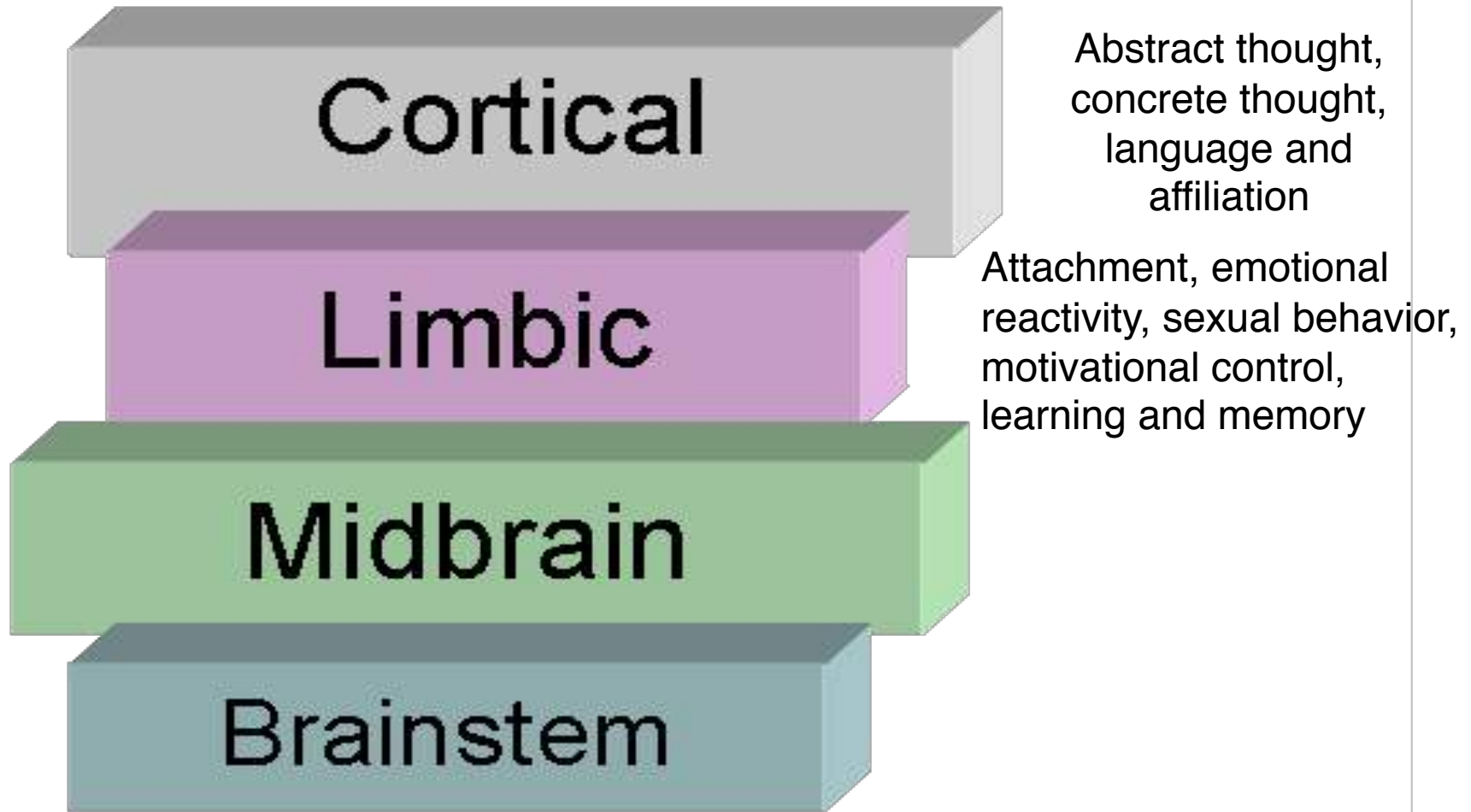
Alterations in biological
stress systems can
adversely affect brain
development.

Hierarchical Nature of Brain Development

Exhibit 1 – Functions of Brain Regions

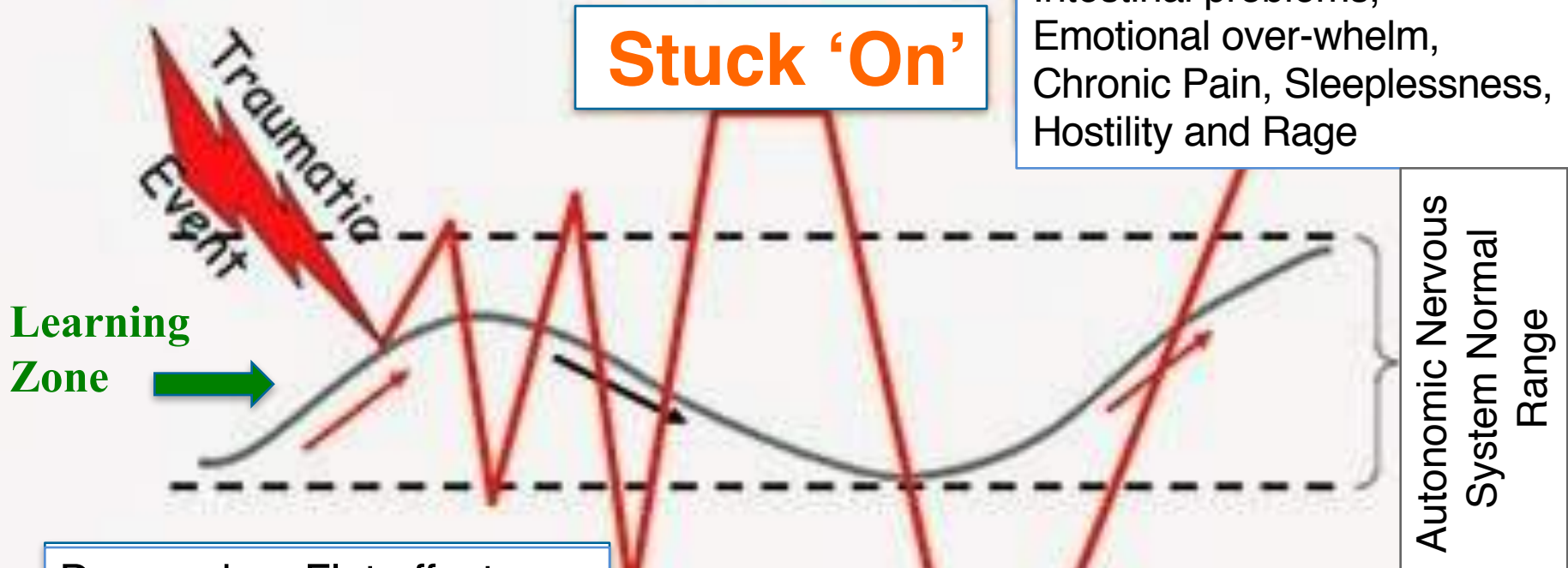


DEVELOPMENTAL NEGLECT AND TRAUMA



Symptoms of Accumulated Traumatic Stress

Anxiety, Panic, Hyperactivity, Overt Arousal, Inability to Relax, Restlessness and Hyper vigilance, Gastro-Intestinal problems, Emotional over-whelm, Chronic Pain, Sleeplessness, Hostility and Rage



Depression, Flat affect, Lethargy, Numbness, Chronic Fatigue, Disorientation, Dissociation, Special Syndromes, Pain, Low Blood Pressure, Indigestion

Cerebral Cortex

2 hemispheres:

Left-positive emotions

Right-Negative emotions

High level abilities; future planning, abstract thinking, verbal short term memory (Executive Functions)

Corpus Callosum

Increases communication between the two hemispheres; Arousal, emotion, higher cognitive abilities

Hippocampus

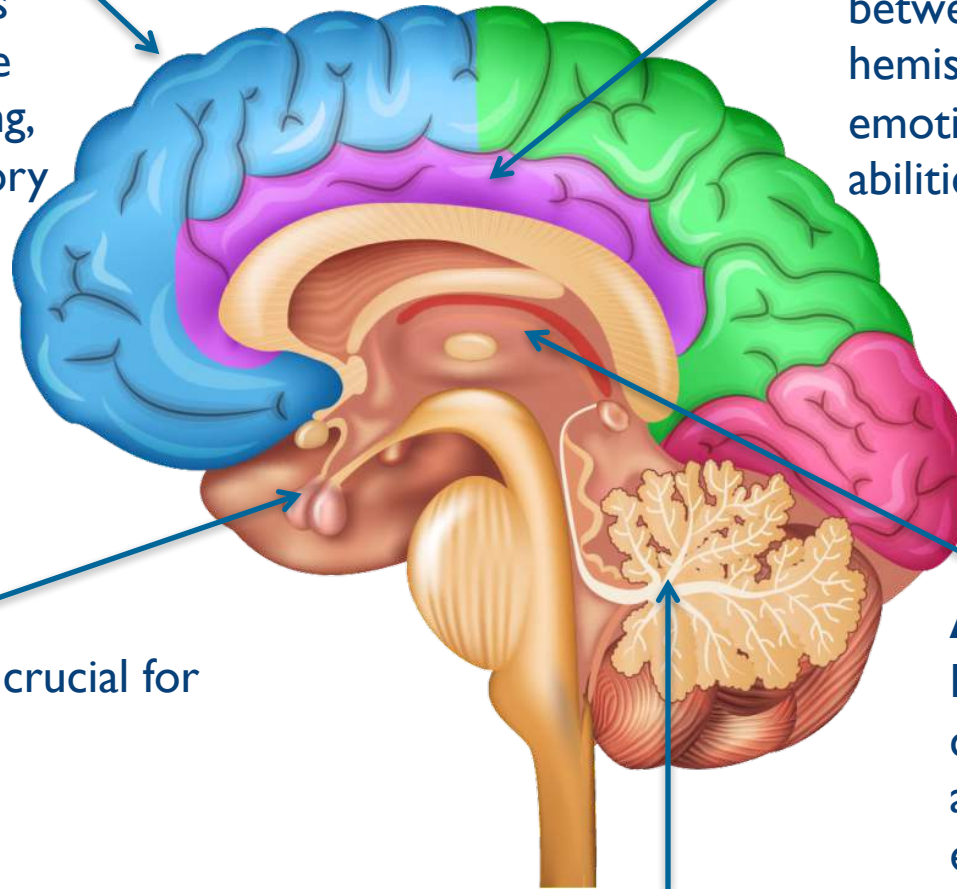
Emotional processing; crucial for memory formation

Amygdala

Registers and communicates fear and reward; emotional reactions

Cerebellum

Higher level abilities future planning, abstract thinking



TRIGGERS:
subtle/obvious

**Intrusive
Recollections:**
Memories,
nightmares,
flashes

**Physiological
Hyperarousal**

AVOIDANCE:
quest for mood shift

Distorted &
distressing
thoughts and mood



Understanding Reenactment Behaviors



These behaviors can be challenging for the adult who is attempting to help the child.

A child who has experienced complex trauma may still feel unsafe even when they are no longer in a dangerous situation.

The Good News



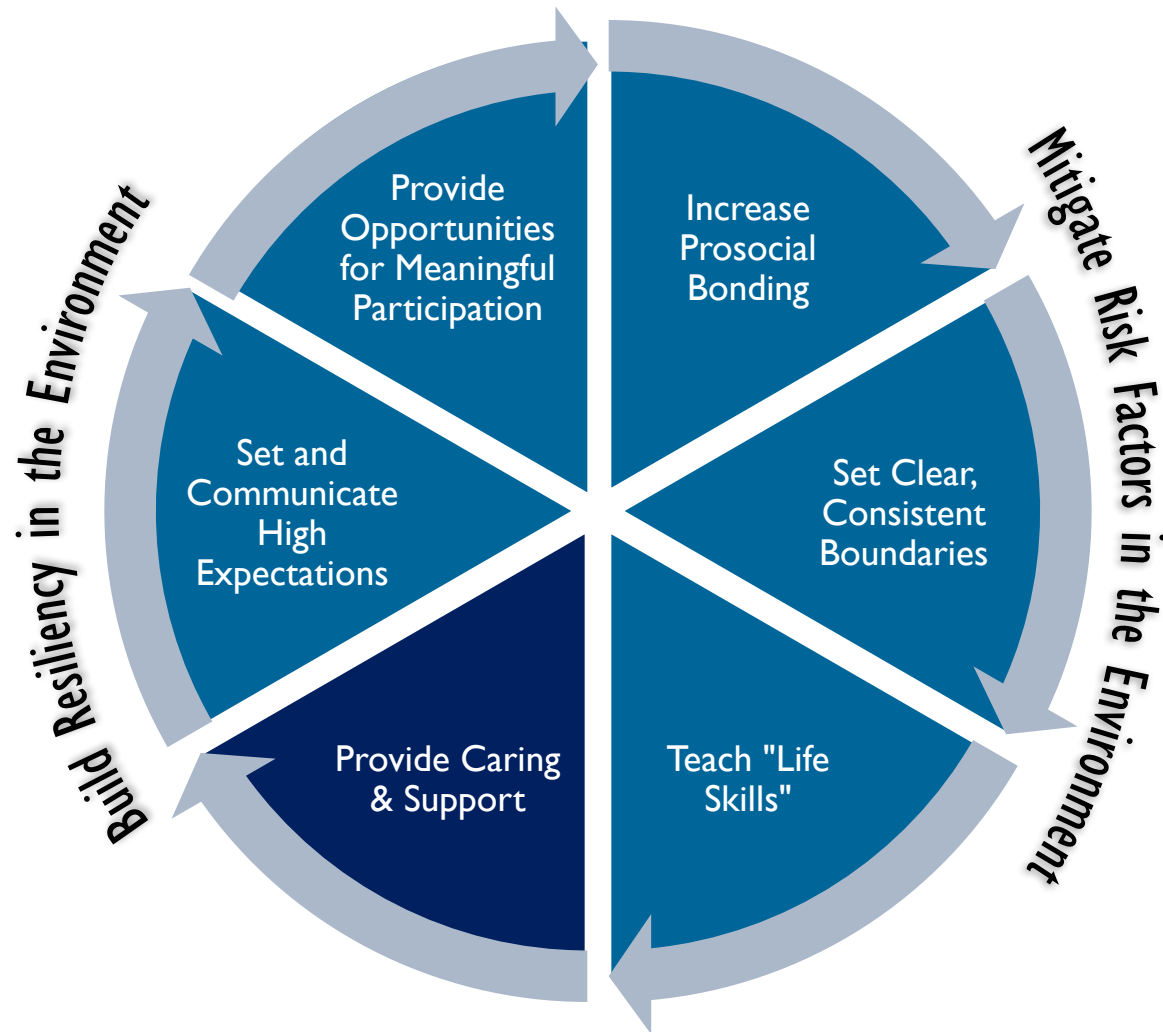
the brain continues to change
in response to repeated stimulation

Brain Plasticity



**Enhance Child Well-Being
and Resilience**

Resiliency Wheel





**KEEP
CALM
AND**

COLLABORATE

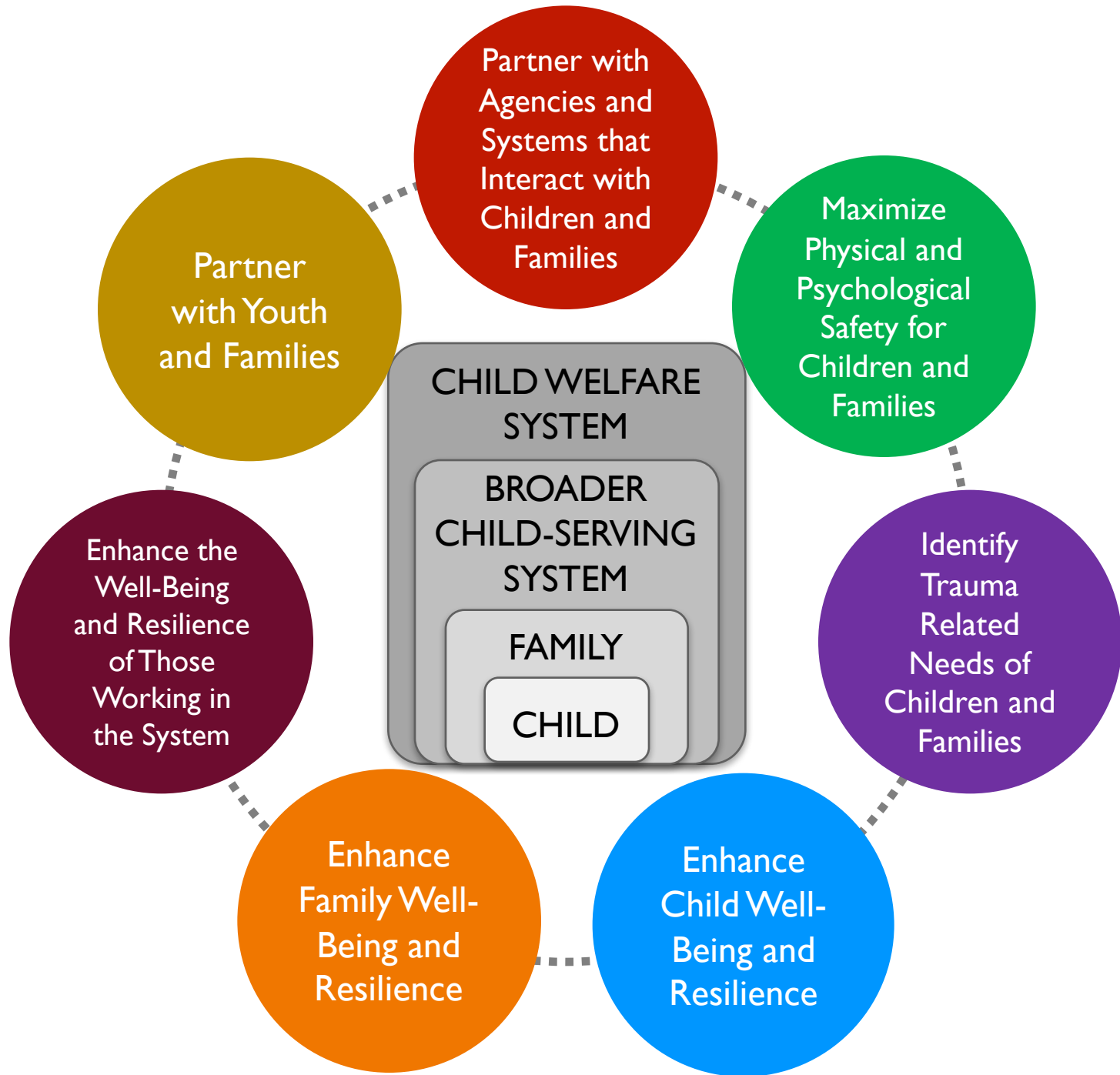


Trauma Informed System

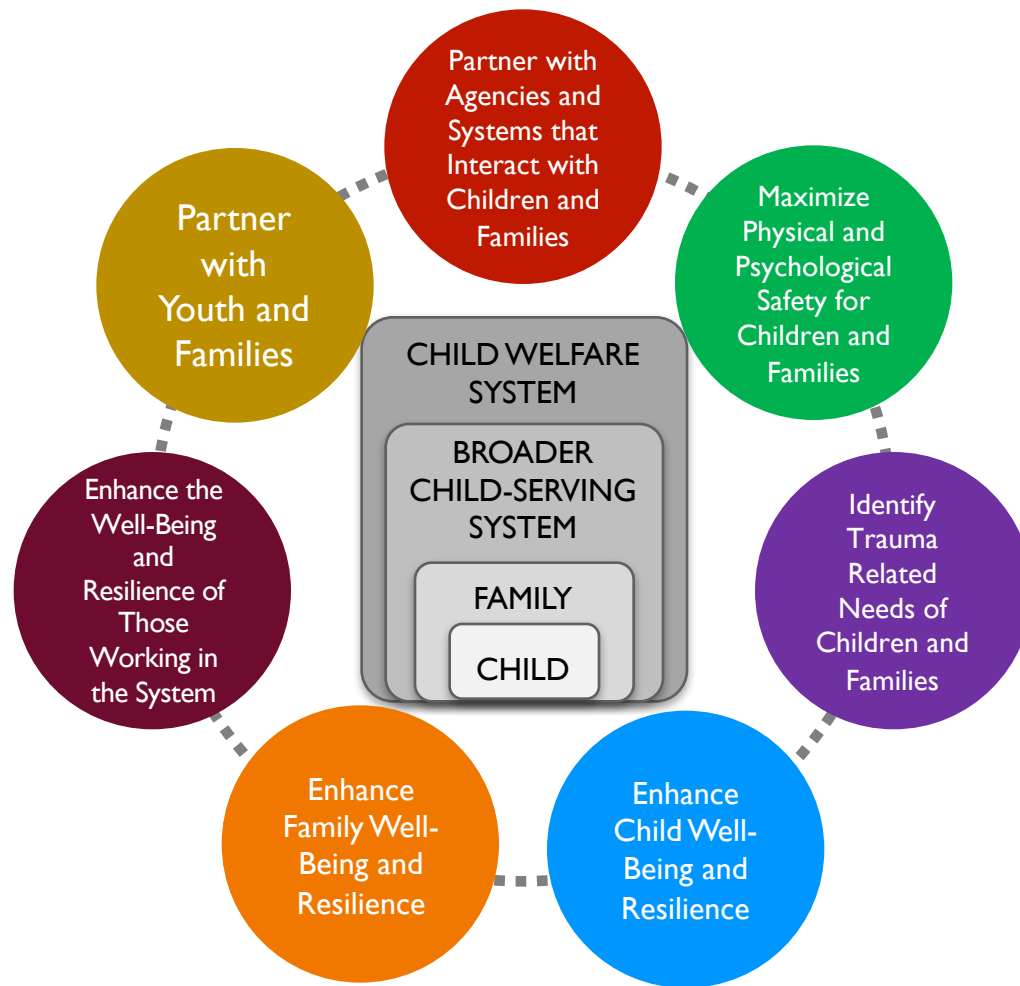
- Knowledge
- Trauma Lens
- Avoid re-traumatizing

UNDERSTANDING TRAUMA





Q1. Which of the essential elements might have the greatest impact on or make the greatest contribution to a trauma-informed system and why?



Q2. What are some of the ways you are already contributing to the essential elements in your practice or within your organization?

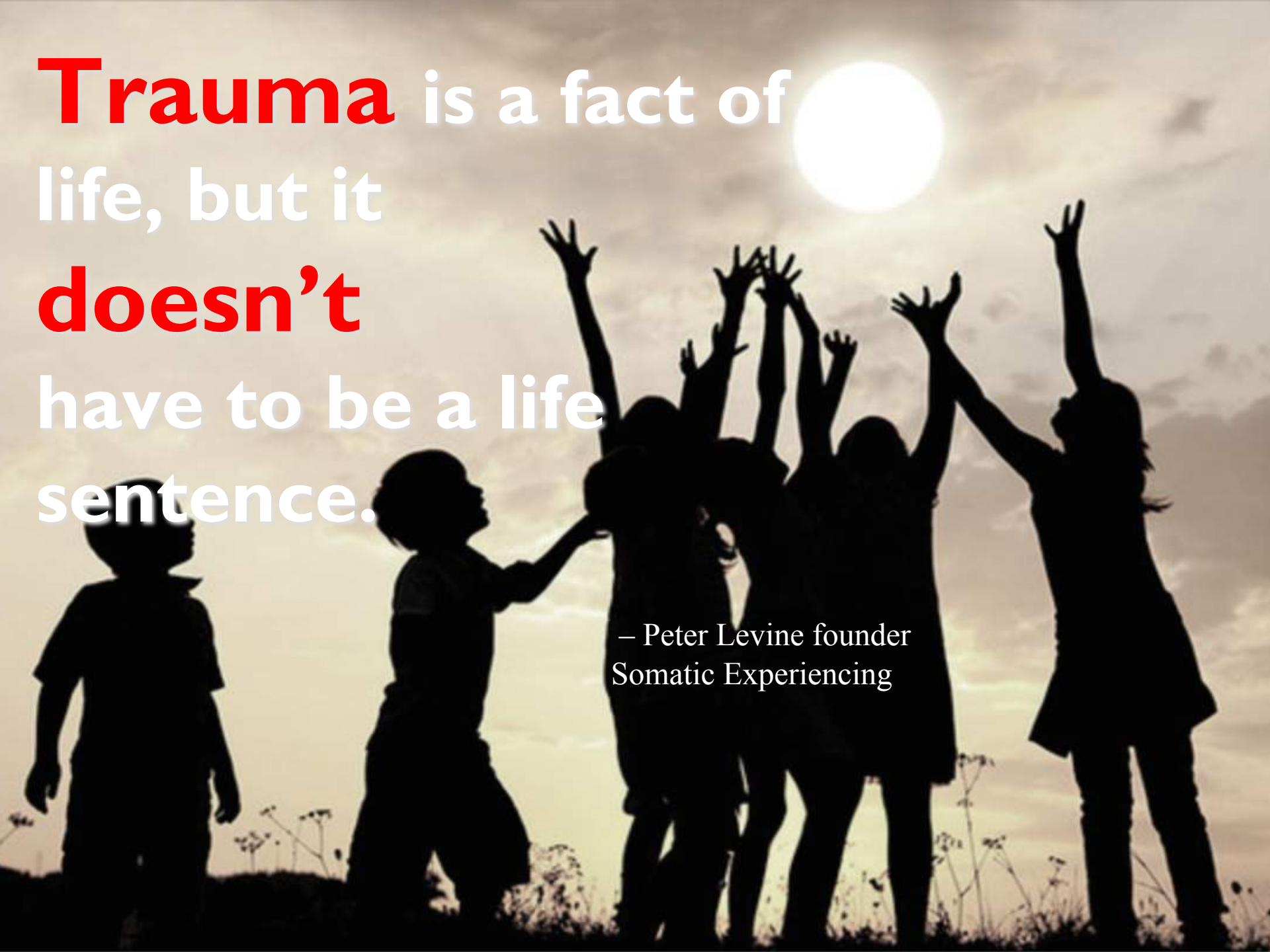


Hope

**Recovery
is
Possible**

Trauma is a fact of
life, but it
doesn't
have to be a life
sentence.

– Peter Levine founder
Somatic Experiencing



Questions





Consider everything you have learned today!

Think of **3** things you *already do* that are helpful to children/youth and adults impacted by trauma

Think of **3** things you *can start doing in the future* that would be helpful to children/youth and adults impacted by trauma



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