



AHA Team Training

Secrets of a Therapist (part 2): Modern Therapeutic Models to Move Teams from Overwhelm to Alignment

March 11, 2026

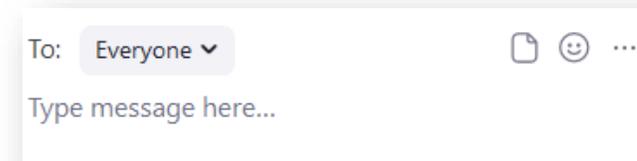


AHA CENTER FOR HEALTH

INNOVATION

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Upcoming Team Training Courses & Workshops

- **TeamSTEPPS Essentials – Virtual**
 - June 10 – June 24
- **TeamSTEPPS Master Training – In-Person**
 - April 15-16 – Chicago
 - April 20-21 – Northwell Health
 - May 12-13 – Tulane
 - July 30-31 – UCLA
- **TeamSTEPPS Sustainment – Virtual**
 - Preparing for TeamSTEPPS Essentials – April 7
 - The People of TeamSTEPPS Implementation – July 8
 - Strategies for Long-Term Sustainability – October 20

Upcoming Team Training Webinars

Webinars

- Next webinar will be on April 8 on generational intelligence, more details including registration will be available shortly!

Interested in speaking at an upcoming webinar? [Complete our speaker interest form!](#)

Contact us at teamtraining@aha.org with questions.

Advisory Services

Custom TeamSTEPPS Advisory Services at Your Organization

TeamSTEPPS Master Training Course

Using a train-the-trainer model, **we give you the foundational tools** and concepts, and train your staff through this **two-day training** program. You will gain a team of Master Trainers ready to teach others in your organization.

Comprehensive TeamSTEPPS Programs

We help you along the way. After delivery of the two-day Master Training course, we continue to work with your team for **3-6 months**, building the internal capacity to hardwire TeamSTEPPS throughout your organization.

[Learn More »](#)

“Our relationship with the TeamSTEPPS faculty and the on-site trainings were both phenomenal. **They did a great job of meeting us where we were** and customized a program that really helped us gain clarity about the problem we’re trying to solve.”

– **Melissa Riffe-Guyer**
Executive Director,
Culture Cone Health

Today's Speaker

**Sanne Henninger EdD LCSW CCTP EMDRT CAGCS
CGP**

Licensed Clinical Therapist

*Master TeamSTEPPS trainer/Former Duke PDC Director of
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Executive Suites of Lafayette Village 984-367-4061
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Brightblueswsanne@therapysecure.com - **New Clients**
Shenninger54@gmail.com - **New Consulting Inquiries**



Today's Objectives

1. Utilize Therapeutic Modalities in Healthcare

- Emotion Focused Therapy
- Polyvagal Theory
- Internal Family Systems

2. Apply Modalities for Wellbeing

- Education to staff on modalities
- Application with TeamSTEPPS tools
- Apply to individuals and Teams

3. Sustain Wellbeing Planning

TeamSTEPPS tools give individuals a structured way to:

- Notice their state (Polyvagal)
- Identify primary vs. secondary emotion (EFT)
- Communicate with parts (IFS)
- Return to Self-leadership and ventral vagal regulation

The Orchestra Model of Integration

The Orchestra Pit Nervous System



Stephen Porges
Autonomic States



Dan Siegel
Window of Tolerance

The Instruments Parts Work



Richard Schwartz
Managers | Firefighters | Exiles

The instrument sections (IFS) provide the voices of internal parts, each contributing to the whole.

The Archive Trauma Memory



Francine Shapiro
Old Scores Replaying



The conductor (Polyvagal) sets the overall safety and tempo for the orchestra.

The Melody Attachment Emotion



Sue Johnson = EFIT Therapy for Individuals

The melody & harmony (EFT) conveys the emotional story, bringing awareness and transformation.

The past may be understood as in the present if we use old music sheets. Different instruments may play from a different sheet.

Symptoms: Quality of the Music

Poll Questions – chat in your response!

Question #1. “When your team is stressed, which *unofficial* role do you most often slip into?”

- A. The Over-Functioning Octopus (doing all the things, all at once)
- B. The Invisible Turtle (pulling into your shell until the storm passes)
- C. The Fix-It Falcon (swooping in with solutions before anyone finishes their sentence)
- D. The Comic Relief Penguin (if we’re laughing, we’re not crying... right?)

Question #2. “Which emotional ‘signal’ shows up for you on a tough day?”

- A. Tight shoulders / clenched jaw
- B. Short fuse or irritability
- C. Numbness or checking out
- D. Overdrive mode: ‘I’ll just push through’

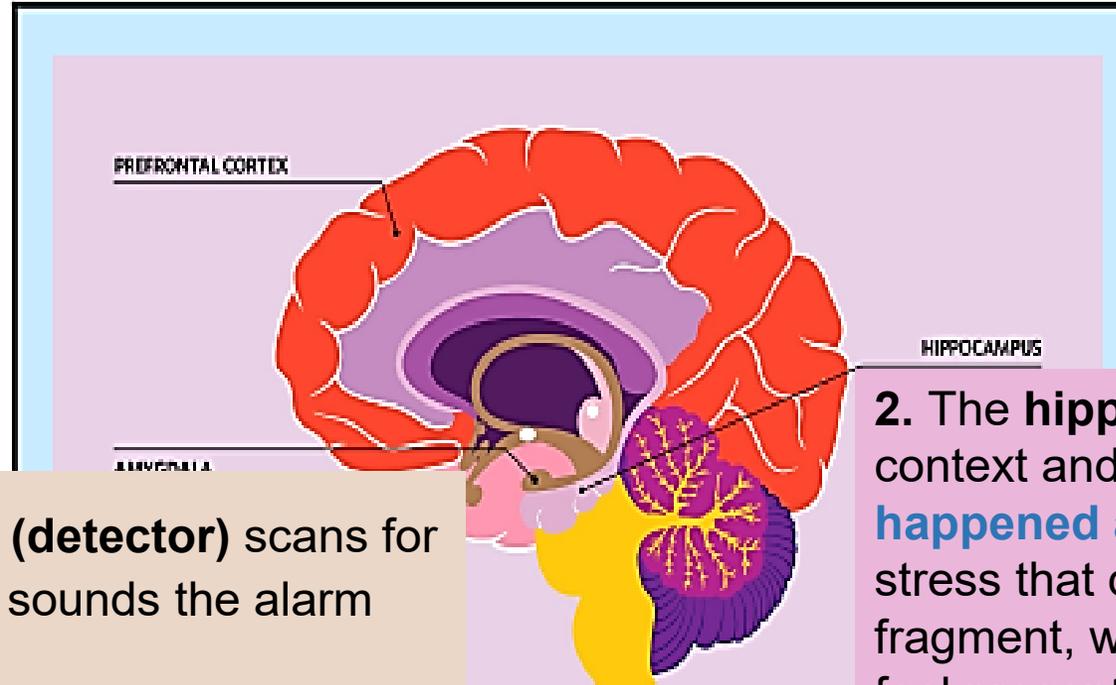
Question #3. “If your team had a collective nervous system today, which mode would it be in?”

- A. Green Zone: ‘We’ve got this’
- B. Yellow Zone: ‘Everyone back away slowly’
- C. Red Zone: ‘This is fine.’ (Everything is on fire.)
- D. Blue Zone: ‘Wake me when it’s over’



Your Brain and Stress/Trauma

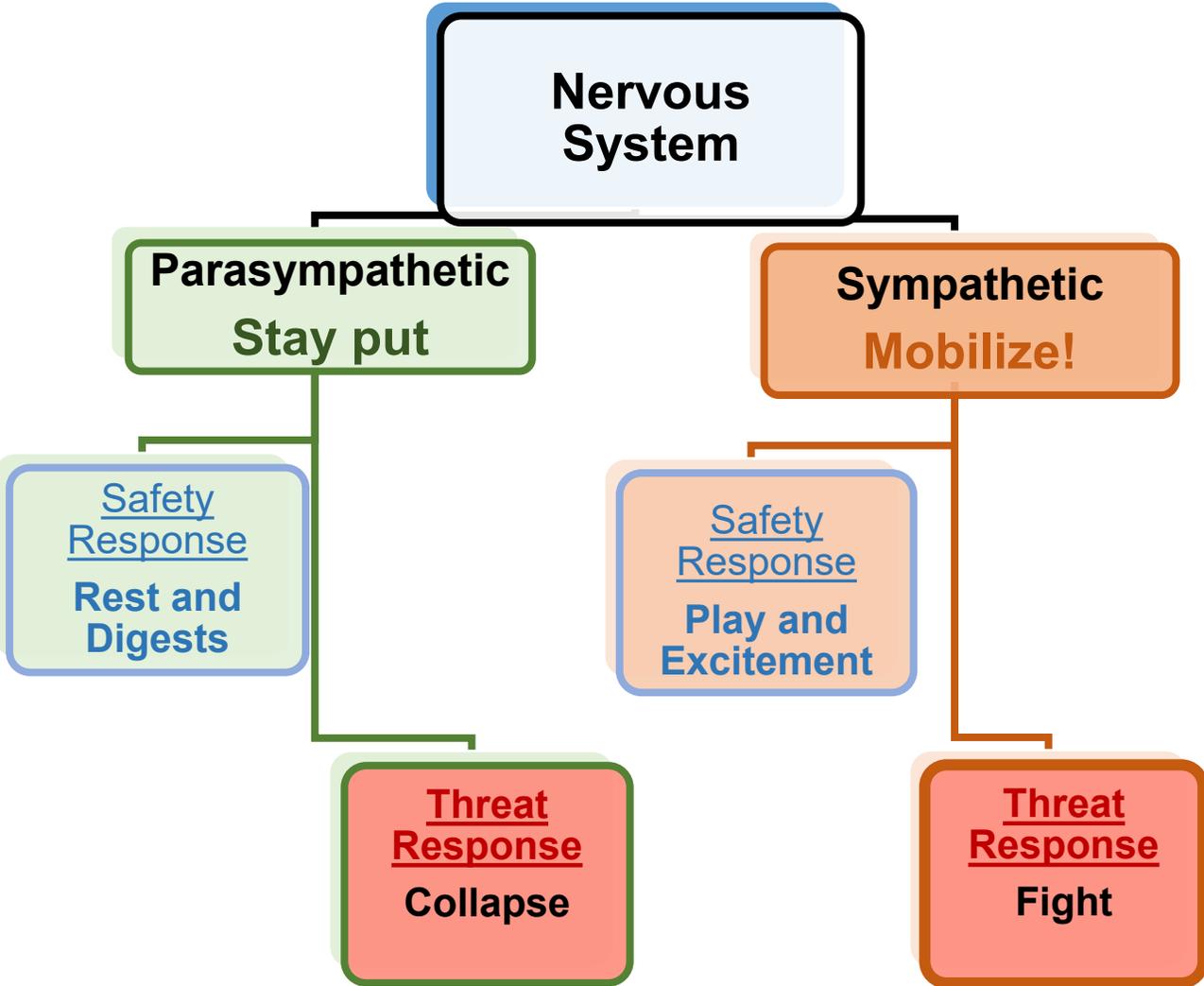
3. The **prefrontal cortex (interpreter)** evaluate, inhibits, and makes meaning “**Let’s process**” Under stress, it goes offline reducing impulse control, perspective-taking and flexibility.



1. The **amygdala (detector)** scans for danger and rapidly sounds the alarm “**Watch out**”. Under stress, it amplifies threat perception and can override slower, more rational processing.

2. The **hippocampus (memory)** encodes context and time tells us, “**This is what happened and how bad it was**”. Under high stress that didn’t get resolution, it can fragment, which is why traumatic memories feel present rather than past. They become “clusters” of alarm, emotion, belief and sensation.

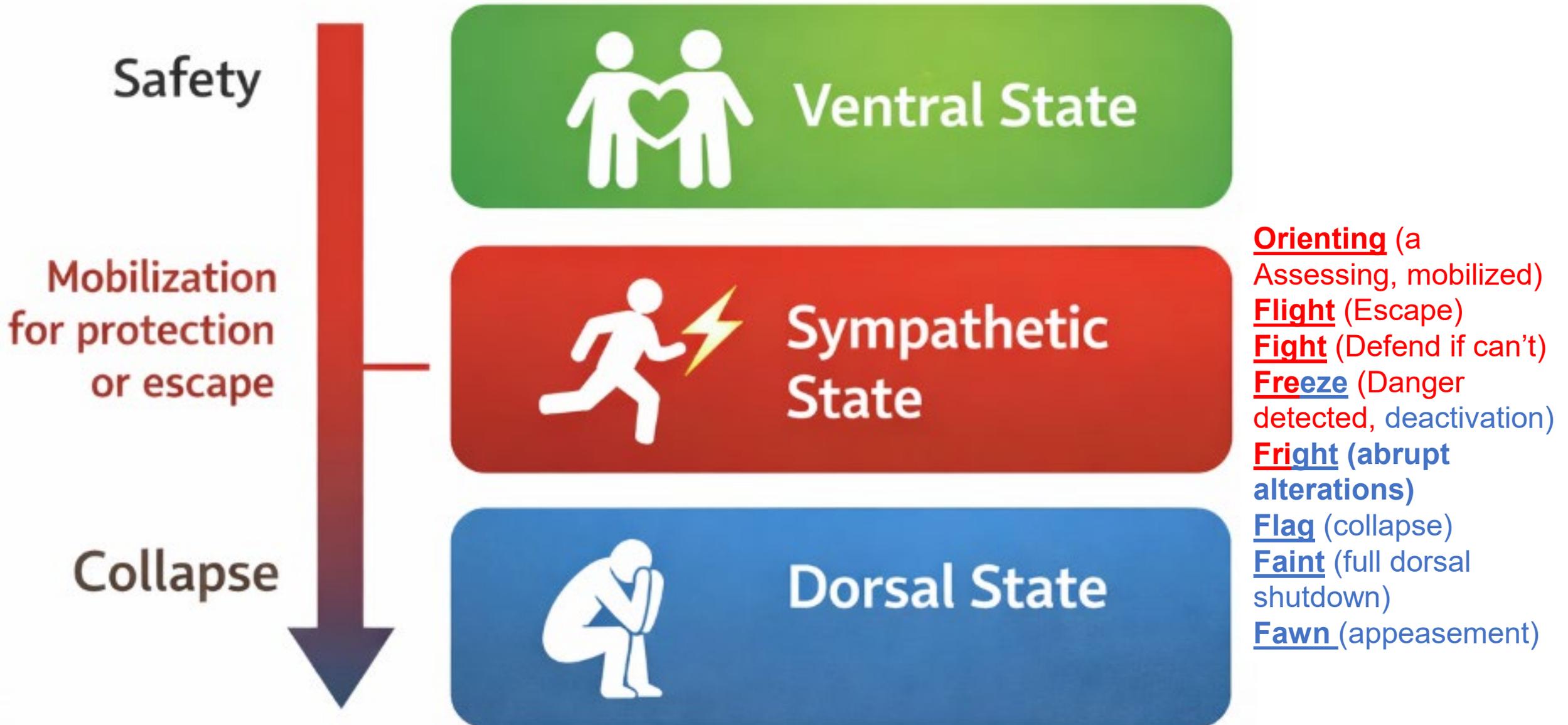
Primary Nervous System States



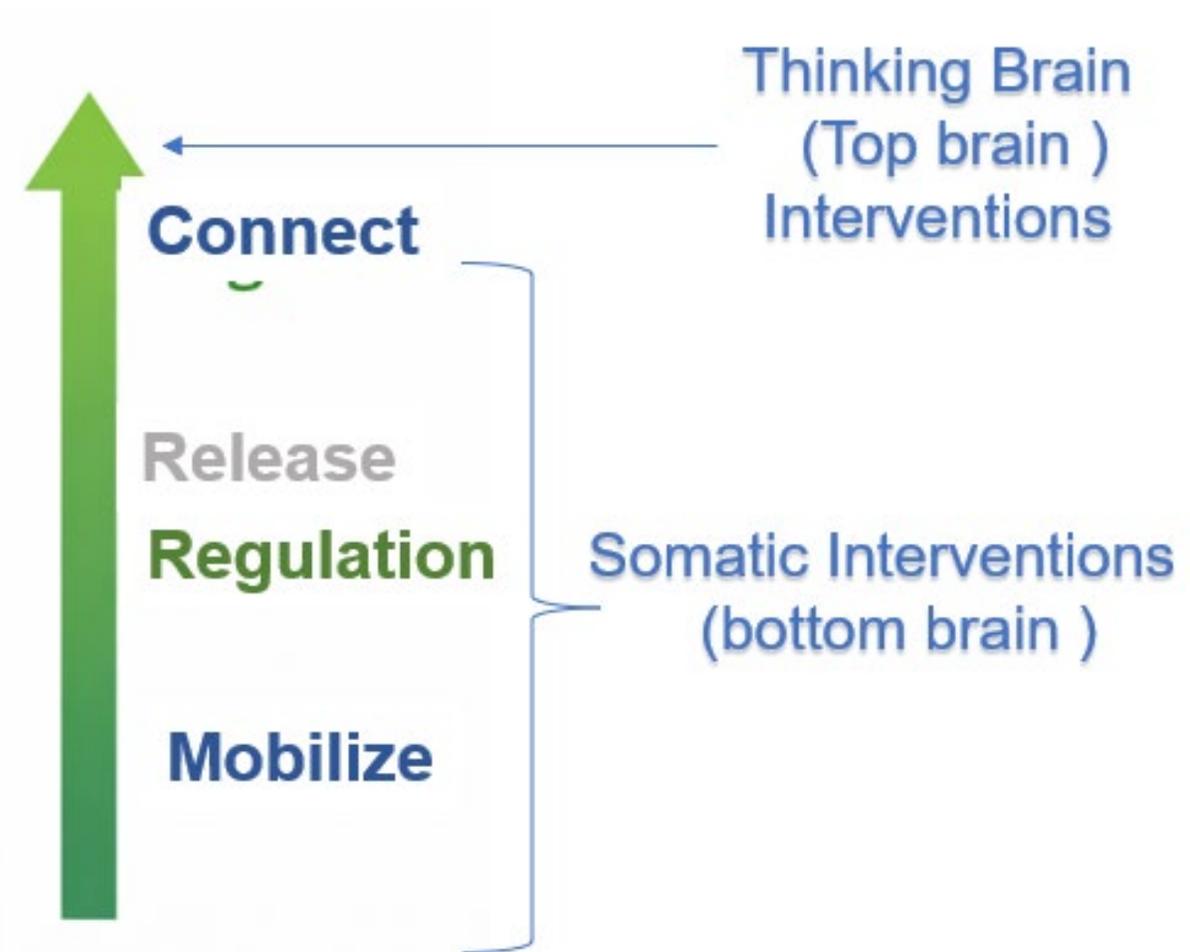
Threat Response Hierarchy



How the Nervous System Responds to Threat



How the Nervous System Recovers



With Trauma, Responses can get “Stuck” and “Fragmented”

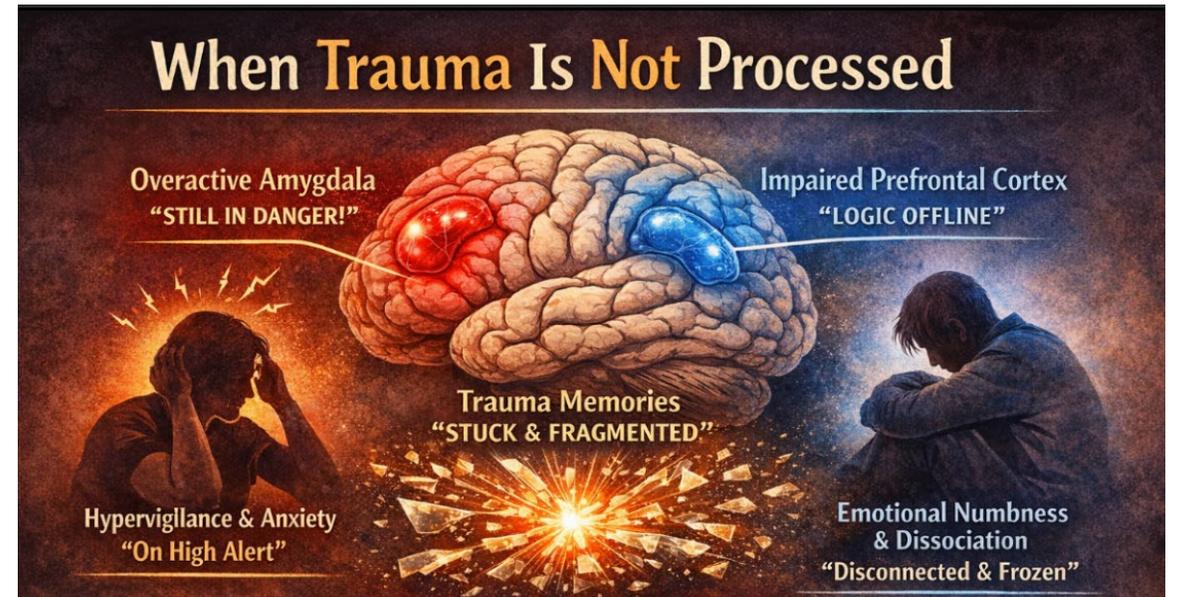
- A normal memory = a movie
- An unprocessed memory = a box of movie clips, sounds and still images with **no conclusion or timeline**

The amygdala became highly active with **no signal to stop**.

The **prefrontal cortex** became **less active** and is quick to do that with similar signals as the event

The Hippocampus **never got the message**, “This is over.”

After trauma, the **nervous system needs safety, emotional expression and connection** in order to complete the stress response and store the event as a past memory. When those processes are interrupted, the brain may be triggered by the “fragments” and keep responding as if the danger is still happening.



What you don't know CAN hurt you



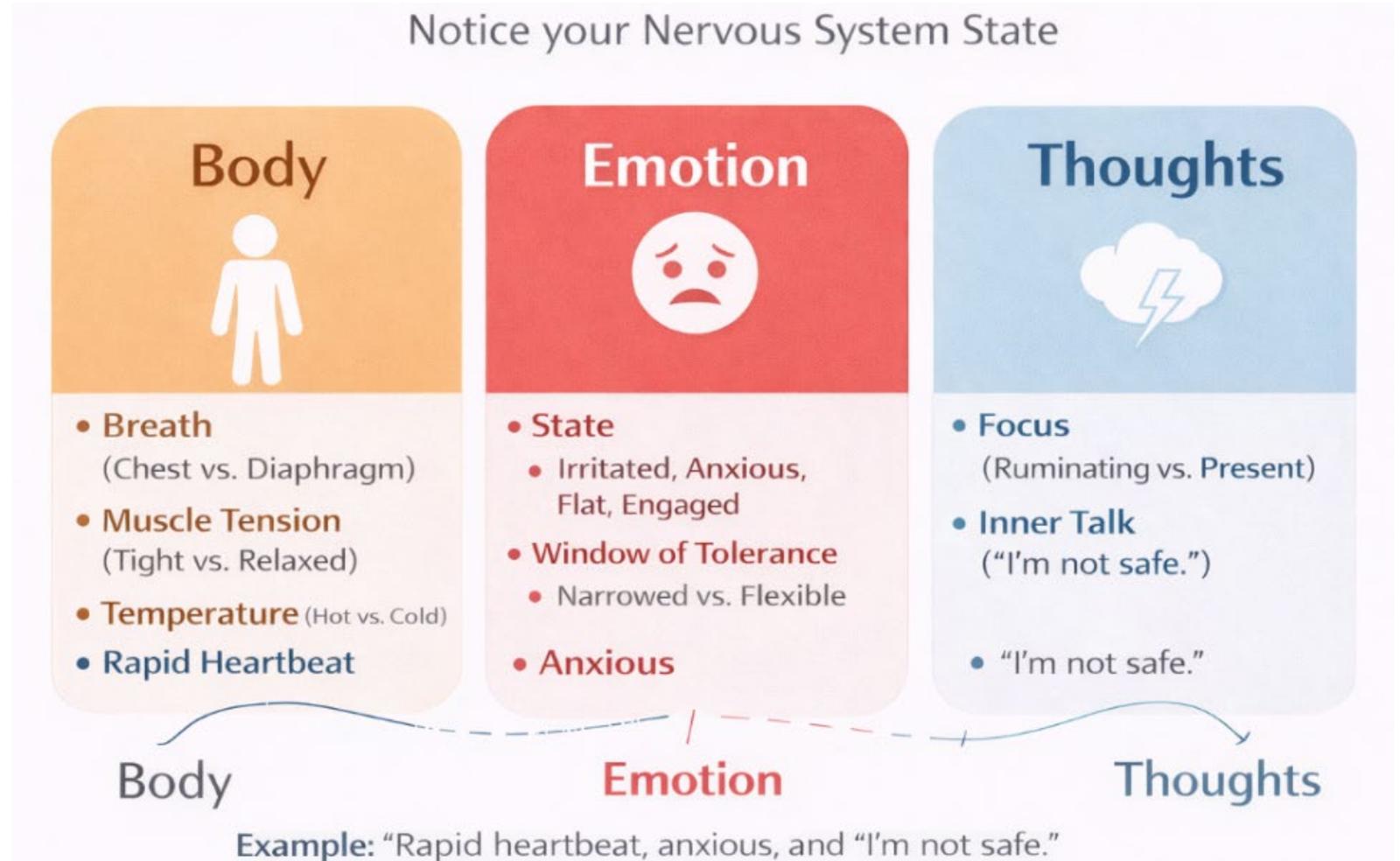
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Three Channel Self scan

1. Notice
2. Name
3. Shift

10 seconds:

- Take once slow breath out (vagal calming)
- Look around the room (orients brain that you are not in danger)
- Drop your shoulders (reduces stress signaling)



When Parasympathetic is engaged

Immobilized with collapse, detachment, flat affect, final attempt

When Dorsal is High

Collapsed & Numb State

Symptoms:



- Flat Voice / Affect
- Heavy, Slow Body
- Foggy or Detached
- Hopeless / Panicked

Goal: Energize & Engage

Interventions:

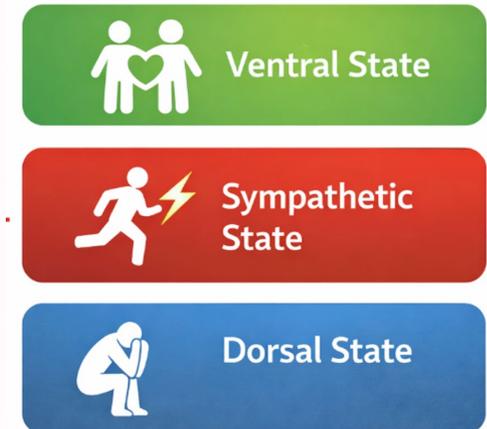
-  **Small Movements**
Wiggle fingers or toes
-  **Sensory Stimulation**
Temperature, flavor, texture
-  **Gentle Connection**
Low-demand social contact
-  **Rhythmic Movement**
Walk, tap, stretch, rock & purpose

Avoid first:

Long breathing exercises
Naps
Body Scans

Try Also:

Standing/marching
Strong exhales
Light exposure
Visualization



Don't try to rest when your body needs activation. **Mobilize (with gentle energy) then mobilize!** "Relaxation makes me depressed/fall asleep!" Easy movement-based relaxation signals that energy does not have to be exhausting or dangerous. It re-engages the Sympathetic Nervous System for balance.

When Sympathetic is highly engaged

Mobilized with Anxiety, Urgency, Adrenaline, Hyper-arousal

When Sympathetic is High

Mobilized & Anxious State

Symptoms:



- Fast Heart Rate
- Restless Agitation
- Racing Thoughts
- Irritable or Panicked

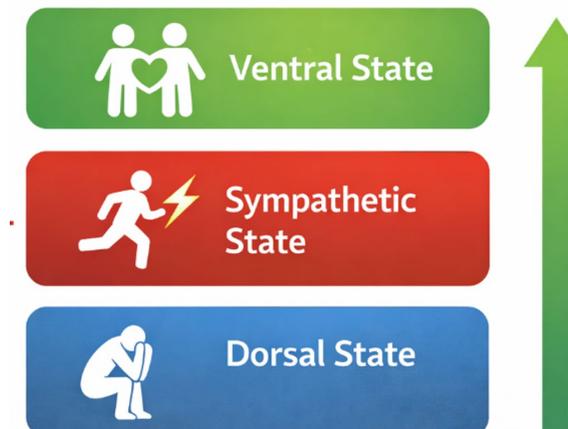
Goal: Discharge Energy

Interventions:

-  **Extended Exhales**
Breathe out longer than in
-  **Cold Splash on Face**
Splash or hold cold water on face
-  **Muscle Tense & Release**
Push against a surface, then relax
-  **Walk or Pace Quickly**
Move body with energy & purpose

Avoid first:
Long meditations
Forcing Calm

Try also:
Humming
Ear massage
Facial tapping



Don't try to calm down when your body needs movement.

Mobilize and burn off stress energy first! Then regulate “Relaxation makes me nervous!”
Movement based relaxation signals safety to the body letting it know that if it needs to get up and go, it can.

When Ventral is strongly engaged

Mobilized with safety and connection

When Ventral is Strong

Regulated & Connected State

Signs:



- Positive Engagement
- Balanced Emotion
- Clear Thinking
- Flexible & Curious

Goal: Deepen & Connect

Practices:

-  **Warm Social Engagement**
Connect with supportive people
-  **Mindful Breathing**
Slow & intentional breath
-  **Small Successes**
Complete small, manageable tasks
-  **Meaning & Purpose**
Notice what matters to you

The Safety Response of Nervous System



Ventral State



Sympathetic State



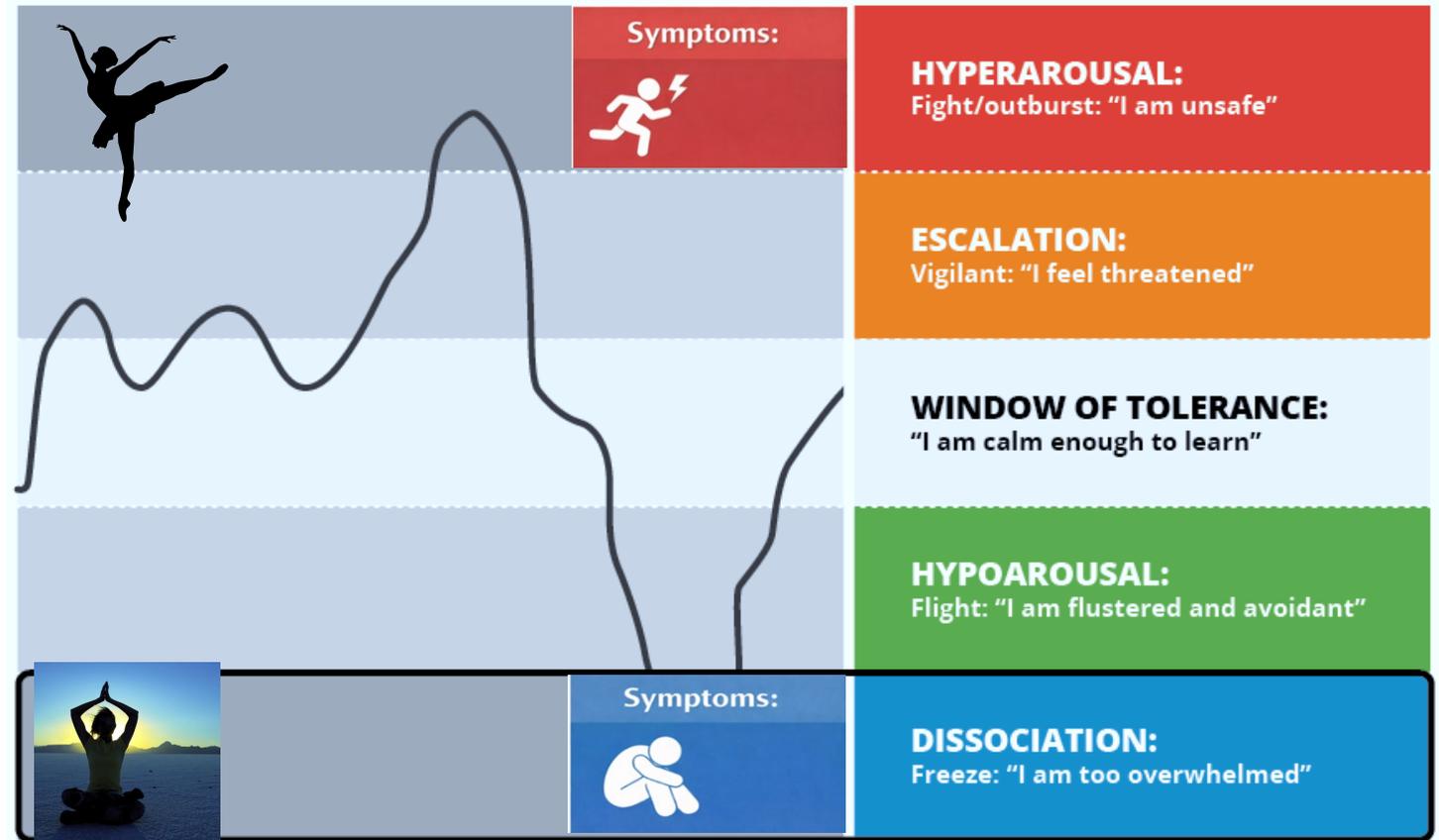
Dorsal State

BUILD the Safety side of Sympathetic (energy and excitement), the calm of Dorsal (relaxation)

Practice Titration

Regulation is not staying calm.

Regulation is having flexibility to titrate in and out of the Window of Tolerance moving between nervous states.



Fisher, J. (2021). *Transforming the Living Legacy of Trauma*.
Siegel, D. J. (2020). *The Developing Mind* (3rd ed.). Guilford Press.

Ogden, P., & Fisher, J. (2015; still current). *Sensorimotor
Psychotherapy: Interventions for Trauma and Attachment*. Norton.
van der Kolk, B. (2021). *The Body Keeps the Score* (updated edition).

Polyvagal Theory in Healthcare Teams

- Teams are collections of nervous systems
- Safety precedes communication and cognition
- Survival modes becomes conflict

Evaluate:

- Ventral: curiosity, shared problem-solving
- Sympathetic: blaming, rushing, sharp communication,
- Dorsal: silence, minimal participation, “checked out”



Culture lives in nervous systems, not mission statements
(and eats strategy for lunch).

TeamSTEPPS has the answers

- Regulate the room before the work. Use brief grounding, walking in place, orienting, or paced breathing to **help the team shift into a connected state** (Polyvagal). Incorporate discharge/relax/activate activities into your **Huddles** – 30-60 seconds
- **Create micro-moments of safety.** Slow your pace, soften tone, acknowledge impact, and validate effort.
- As a leader, your regulation sets the regulation for your team. **Leadership begins in the nervous system.**
- Allow staff movement before **Debriefs**. Offer 1 minute of deep breathing at the end of Debriefs
- Energize the team **with appreciation activities for Mutual Support** (ventral state)
- Facilitate a connection based **energetic start to the day in Briefs** – add to the daily agenda
- Evaluate each employee in Rounding (**Situation Monitoring**)
- Make a **conflict resolution skills/values** with time to talk with leader (discharge energy), take a deep breath (calms sympathetic) and then complete a set of questions of how to respond (**CUS and DESC**) (engages cortex) before meeting with employees.

The Orchestra Model of Integration

The Orchestra Pit
Nervous System

The Instruments
Parts Work

The Archive
Trauma Memory

- Recognize being in and out of your Window of Tolerance
- **BALANCING** the two nervous system states
- It's about **MATCHING** your interventions to your state
- It's about **CONNECTION** to others to gain **SAFETY**
- Learn **TITRATION** between the two states



Francine Shapiro
Old Scores Replaying



The conductor (Polyvagal) sets the overall safety and tempo for the orchestra.



The past may be understood as in the present if we use old music sheets. Different instruments may play from a different sheet.



Sue Johnson - EFT Therapy for Individuals

The melody & harmony (EFT) conveys the emotional story, bringing awareness and transformation.



“Tone is built during safety, not crisis.”

Poll Questions Part 2 – chat in your response!

Question #3: “Which emotion do you tend to meet *first* when things get stressful?”

- A. The Fast & Furious One (anger, urgency, reactivity)
- B. The Disappearing Act (numb, shut down, “I’m fine”)
- C. The Overthinker (analysis, planning, spiraling)
- D. The Soft One Hiding Underneath (hurt, fear, sadness)

Question #4: “When you’re overwhelmed, which ‘attachment move’ feels most familiar?”

- A. “I’ve got it, I’ll handle everything myself.”
- B. “Please don’t leave — stay close.”
- C. “I need space before I can talk.”
- D. “I’m not sure what I need... but something.”

Question #5: “If your emotional world had a ‘default setting,’ which one fits best?”

- A. The Volcano (big feelings fast)
- B. The Iceberg (most of it is under the surface)
- C. The Tornado (thoughts swirling everywhere)
- D. The Lighthouse (steady, but scanning for danger)



Attachment, Emotions and Nervous System Response

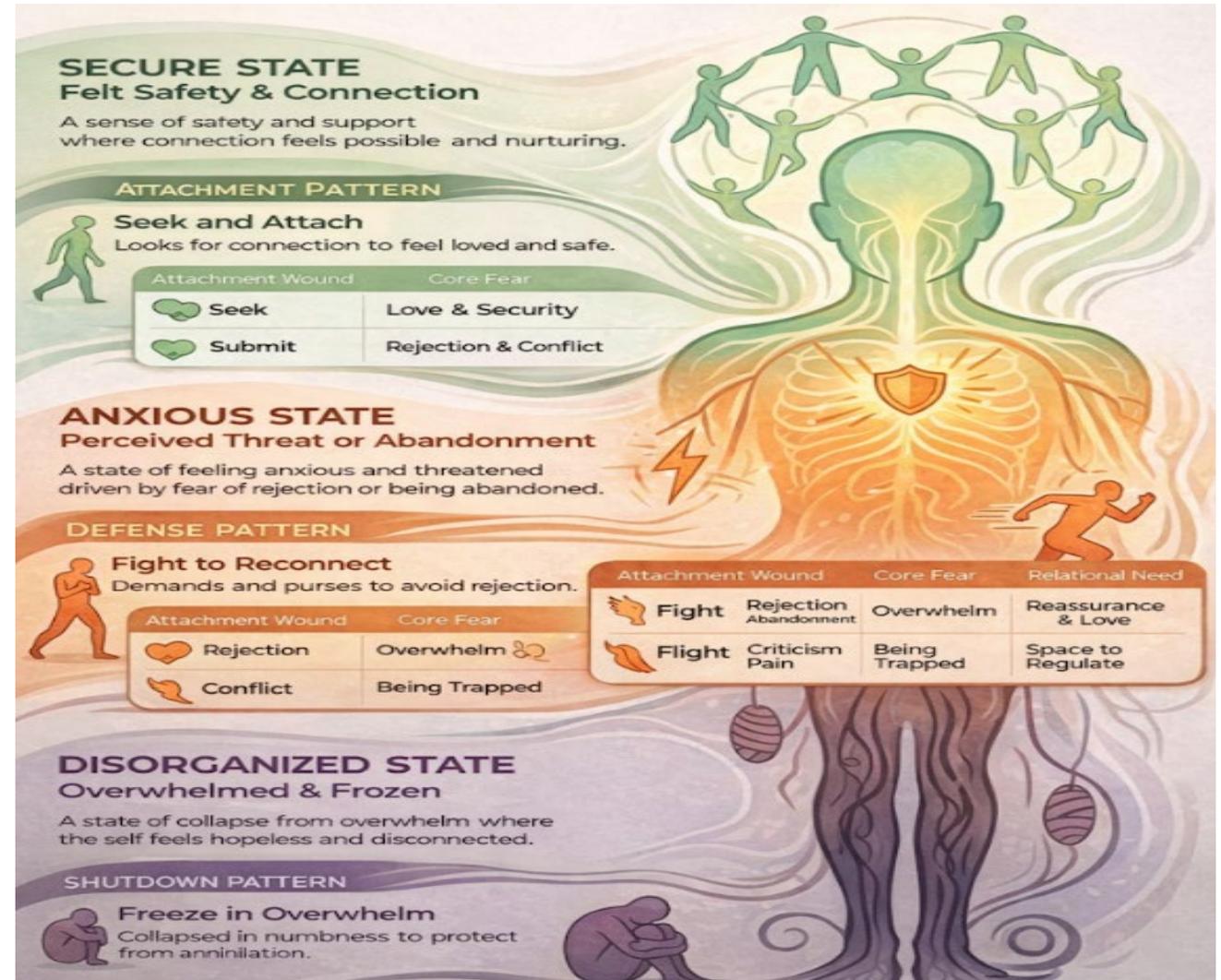
Early attachment experiences shape how our nervous system detects safety or threat.

Those autonomic shifts generate the emotions we feel and the behaviors we use to seek protection or connection.

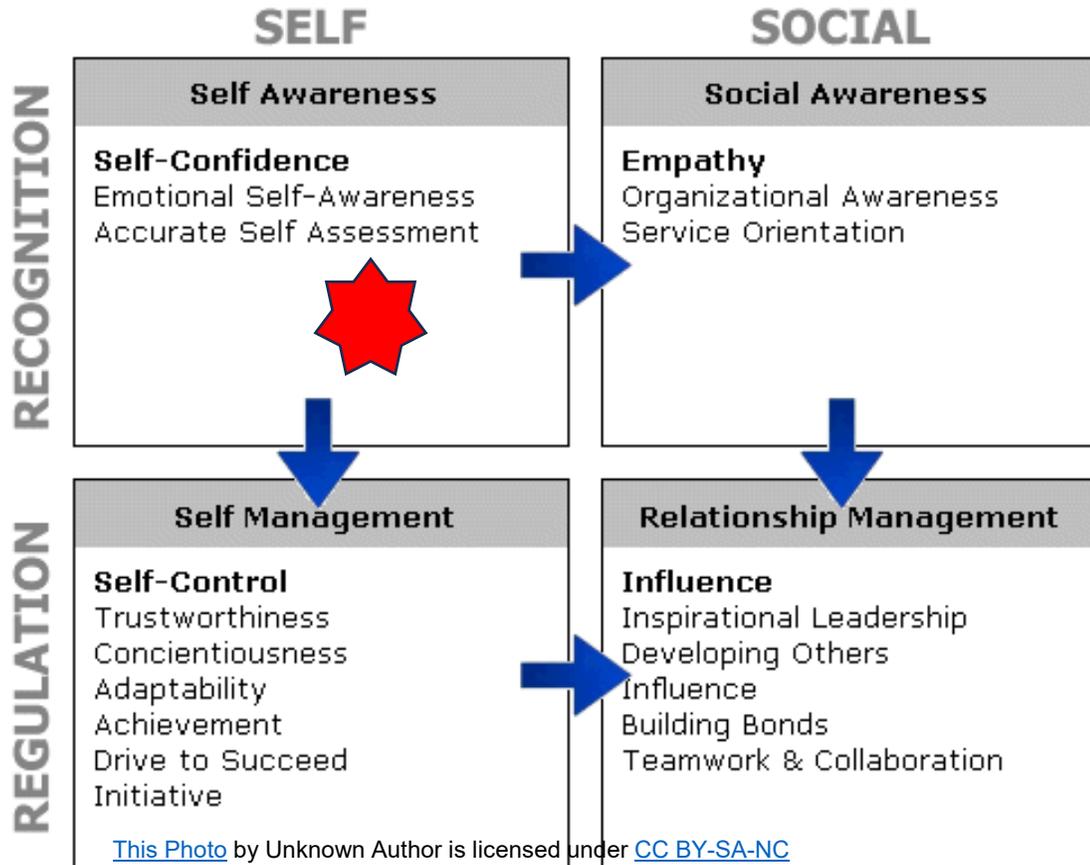
• **Attachment drives behavior** — humans are wired for connection, and distress often signals unmet attachment needs.

• **Emotions are the pathway to change** — accessing and transforming primary emotions shifts patterns at their root.

• **Negative cycles maintain disconnection** — the problem is the interaction pattern, not always the people.



Why do we care to know our emotions or our attachment history?



- Passive aggressiveness may be denial of feelings
- People pleasing may be the fear of anger
- Dorsal collapse may be thwarted anger
- Tempers may be unrecognized anger that explodes later

Because what you don't know CAN hurt you



When feelings are hidden in our relationships

- Silence increases
- Defensive communication increases
- Hierarchy becomes rigid
- Blame culture intensifies
- Anger masks fear of error
- Defensiveness masks shame

Psychological Safety

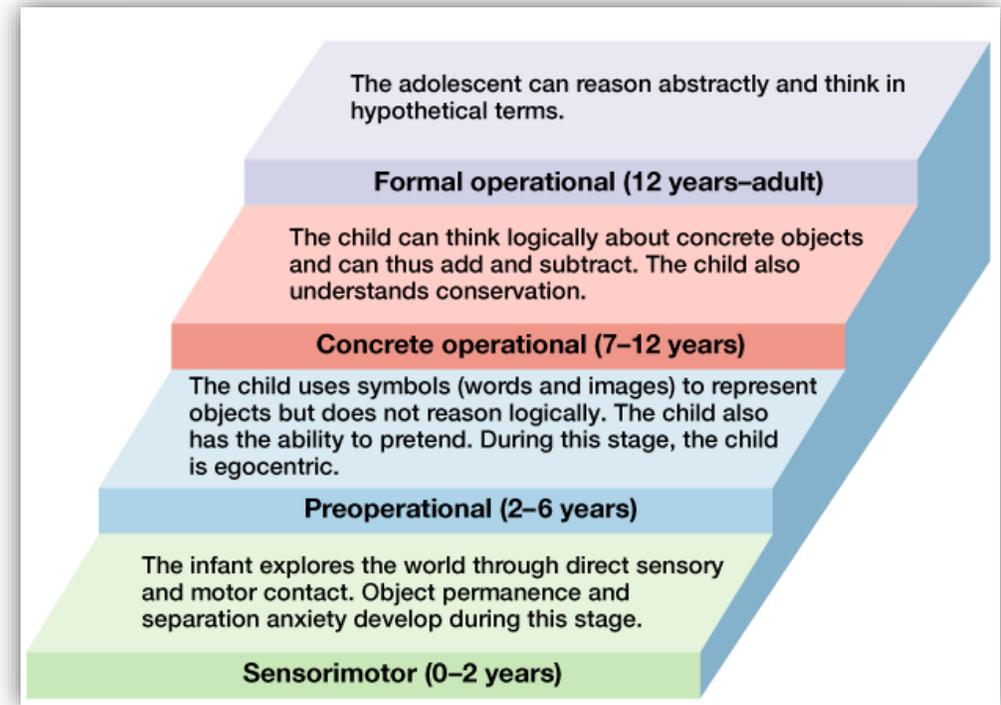
We can regress to early attachment stages and feelings when stressed.

The baby asks,

- *“Are you there for me?”*

The two-year-old, with natural frustration, asks,

- *“Do you hear me? Do I have any control?”*



Attachment Emotions and Nervous System Response

Your body learned early on what connection felt like — safe, unsafe, inconsistent, or overwhelming. When something today feels similar, your nervous system shifts into the state that once protected you. Your reactions aren't random; they're relational memories in motion.

1. Attachment wounds determine which polyvagal state activates fastest

Anxious attachment → flight + fawn

Avoidant attachment → fight + freeze

Disorganized attachment → fight/flight → freeze → faint cycling

2. The “secondary emotion” is often the attachment strategy

Anger protects against vulnerability

People-pleasing protects against abandonment

Numbness protects against overwhelm

3. The “primary emotion” is the attachment wound itself

Fear of rejection

Fear of abandonment

Fear of engulfment

Fear of being unseen or unprotected

4. The autonomic state is the body's attempt to maintain attachment safety

Even maladaptive behaviors are attachment-preserving strategies.

State	Primary Emotion (deeper)	Secondary Emotion (visible)	System	Attachment Interpretation
Freeze	Fear, overwhelm	Numb, shut down	PNS – Dorsal	“Connection is dangerous and I can't escape.” Often linked to disorganized attachment.
Flight	Fear, anxiety	Worry, urgency	SNS	“I must stay ahead of rejection.” Common in anxious-preoccupied attachment.
Fight	Anger, frustration	Irritation, defensiveness	SNS	“I must protect myself because others won't.” Often seen in avoidant or disorganized patterns.
Fright	Terror	Panic, catastrophic thinking	SNS → Dorsal	“I'm about to lose the attachment I depend on.” Deep abandonment terror.
Flag	Depletion, collapse	Hopelessness, burnout	PNS – Dorsal	“No one will come for me. There's no point trying.” Learned helplessness from chronic misattunement.
Faint	Dissociation, fear	Spacing out, detachment	PNS – Dorsal (extreme)	“I disappear so I can stay safe.” Often rooted in early neglect or trauma.
Fawn	Fear of disconnection	People-pleasing, appeasing	SNS + Ventral blend	“If I stay pleasing, I won't be abandoned.” Classic anxious-preoccupied strategy.

Attachment and Conflict Using **Connect** **Care** **Close**

Goal	Words
<p>Connect</p> <p><i>You matter</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish comfort • Set an agenda • Narrate session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge Feelings or journey • Show or say you want to help • Recognize concern • Explain with them in mind <p>Are you there for me?</p>	
<p>Care</p> <p><i>I hear you.</i></p> <p><i>I am on your side.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show empathy • Caring atmosphere • Reassurance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paraphrase • Validate • Offer affirmations • Have them “join” you in finding solutions <p>Do you hear me?</p>	
<p>Close</p> <p><i>There are options.</i></p> <p><i>Here is a plan.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show empathy • Caring atmosphere • Reassurance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reframe as options • Do an action • Create a “plan” • Reassure and share availability • Very clear explanations <p>Do I have any control?</p>	

Steps to EFIT

- **Notice your state** (mobilized, shut down, connected) and shift toward safety before responding (Polyvagal).
- **Identify your secondary vs. primary emotion.** Ask: *“What’s underneath this reaction?”* and *“What feels at risk for me right now?”* (EFIT).
- **Unblend from activated feeling parts of you.** Name the part (“My Fixer is up,” “My Critic is loud”) and step back into Self energy (IFS more to come).
- **Choose response over reaction.** Regulate → Unblend → Identify primary emotion → Communicate clearly.

EFIT Worksheet

1. Pause & Notice

- Take a deep breath.
- Observe what's happening internally.

Situation/Trigger:

2. Name the Emotion

- Allow the sensation for a few moments.
- Identify the **secondary emotion** (panic, anger, urgency) and pause.
- Track the **primary emotion** underneath (fear, hurt, overwhelm).
- Name the **attachment meaning**: *“What feels at risk for me right now?”*
- Break the experience into steps: **cue** → **body** → **emotion** → **meaning**

3. Locate It in Your Body

- Where do you feel it? What Vagal state are you in?
- What does it feel like (tightness, warmth, heaviness, tingling)?
- Breathe into that area and soften around it.

4. Thoughts or Interpretations

What thoughts or meanings arose with the emotion? **Notes:**

5. How Did You Respond?

- Expressed it Suppressed it Distracted myself Avoided the situation Other: _____

Address the Emotion

“Dear [Emotion], I feel you in my [body location]. You show up when [describe situation].”

Express Its Message

“I think you’re trying to tell me _____. You feel like _____. I notice I usually _____ when you show up.”

Respond with Compassion

“I hear you. I see you. You’re here because _____. I will make space for you by _____.”

Reflection Questions

What would be a compassionate response to yourself? What does this emotion need? What would it say if it could speak? How can you connect with someone?

Meaningful Conclusion & Next Steps

Feelings Word Guide

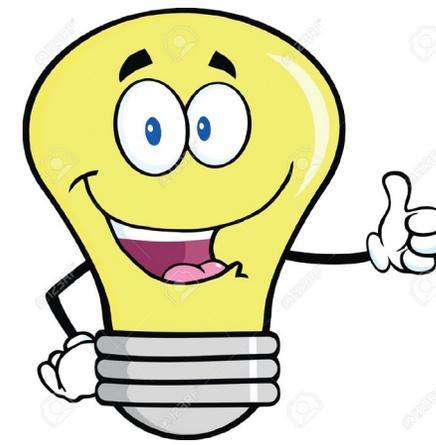
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FEELINGS WORD GUIDE

SAD	HAPPY	HURT	HELPED	INSECURE	CONFIDENT	TIRED	ENERGIZED
<i>Depressed</i>	<i>Hopeful</i>	<i>Abused</i>	<i>Cherished</i>	<i>Weak</i>	<i>Strong</i>	<i>Indifferent</i>	<i>Determined</i>
<i>Lonely</i>	<i>Supported</i>	<i>Forgotten</i>	<i>Befriended</i>	<i>Hopeless</i>	<i>Brave</i>	<i>Bored</i>	<i>Inspired</i>
<i>Disgusted</i>	<i>Charmed</i>	<i>Ignored</i>	<i>Appreciated</i>	<i>Doubtful</i>	<i>Certain</i>	<i>Drained</i>	<i>Creative</i>
<i>Angry</i>	<i>Grateful</i>	<i>Judged</i>	<i>Understood</i>	<i>Scared</i>	<i>Assured</i>	<i>Sick</i>	<i>Healthy</i>
<i>Frustrated</i>	<i>Calm</i>	<i>Offended</i>	<i>Commended</i>	<i>Anxious</i>	<i>Prepared</i>	<i>Exhausted</i>	<i>Renewed</i>
<i>Annoyed</i>	<i>Amused</i>	<i>Victimized</i>	<i>Empowered</i>	<i>Defeated</i>	<i>Successful</i>	<i>Dull</i>	<i>Vibrant</i>
<i>Discouraged</i>	<i>Optimistic</i>	<i>Rejected</i>	<i>Accepted</i>	<i>Worthless</i>	<i>Valuable</i>	<i>Weary</i>	<i>Alert</i>
<i>Upset</i>	<i>Content</i>	<i>Cursed</i>	<i>Blessed</i>	<i>Guilty</i>	<i>Forgiven</i>	<i>Paralyzed</i>	<i>Enlivened</i>
<i>Despairing</i>	<i>Joyful</i>	<i>Destroyed</i>	<i>Healed</i>	<i>Ugly</i>	<i>Beautiful</i>	<i>Powerless</i>	<i>Strengthened</i>
<i>Uninterested</i>	<i>Enthusiastic</i>	<i>Hated</i>	<i>Loved</i>	<i>Pressured</i>	<i>At ease</i>	<i>Dejected</i>	<i>Motivated</i>
<i>Disappointed</i>	<i>Thrilled</i>	<i>Despised</i>	<i>Esteemed</i>	<i>Forced</i>	<i>Encouraged</i>	<i>Listless</i>	<i>Focused</i>
<i>Hateful</i>	<i>Loving</i>	<i>Mistreated</i>	<i>Taken care of</i>	<i>Stressed</i>	<i>Peaceful</i>	<i>Burned out</i>	<i>Rejuvenated</i>
<i>Bitter</i>	<i>Kind</i>	<i>Crushed</i>	<i>Reassured</i>	<i>Nervous</i>	<i>Relaxed</i>	<i>Fatigued</i>	<i>Invigorated</i>
<i>Sorrowful</i>	<i>Celebratory</i>	<i>Injured</i>	<i>Made whole</i>	<i>Worried</i>	<i>Secure</i>	<i>Blah</i>	<i>Animated</i>
<i>Mournful</i>	<i>Overjoyed</i>	<i>Tortured</i>	<i>Saved</i>	<i>Embarrassed</i>	<i>Comforted</i>	<i>Stale</i>	<i>Refreshed</i>

TeamSTEPPS has the answers

- In **Critical Incident Debriefs**:
 - Name emotional impact
 - Normalize reactions
 - Incorporate movement, deep breathing
 - Using parts, what parts are emerging
- **Use structured communication to reduce reactivity.** **SBAR** for clarity, **CUS** for safety, **Briefs/Debriefs** for alignment.
- Normalize emotional language. Invite **one-feeling-at-a-time check-ins** and **Check-backs** to surface primary emotions and reduce escalation (EFIT).
- Model repair. Use **debriefs to reflect on emotional tone**, not just operational outcomes.
- **Team attachment questions become**:
 - Will you support me if something goes wrong?
 - Can I admit uncertainty?
 - If I make a mistake, will I be punished or helped?
 - Do I matter here?
- In **Leadership Rounding**:
 - "I notice part of you really pushes back when we talk about this change. I'm curious—what's that part worried about?"
- You don't have to solve feelings—just reduce emotional intensity enough to restore function.



Just Culture
Conflict Resolution
Team Values
Appreciation
Huddle moments
Role Clarity
Peer Support

The Orchestra Model of Integration

The Orchestra Pit Nervous System



Stephen Porges
Autonomic States



Dan Siegel

The Instruments Parts Work



Richard Schwartz
Managers | Firefighters | Exiles

The Archive Trauma Memory



Francine Shapiro
Old Scores Replaying



The melody & harmony (EFT) conveys the emotional story, bringing awareness and transformation.

- **Attachment drives behavior** — humans are wired for connection, and distress often signals unmet attachment needs.

- **Emotions are the pathway to change** — accessing and transforming primary emotions shifts patterns at their root.

- **Negative cycles maintain disconnection** — the problem is the interaction pattern, not always the people.



The past may be understood as in the present if we use old music sheets. Different instruments may play from a different sheet.

Poll Questions Part 3 – chat in your response!

Question #6: “Which ‘part’ tends to take the wheel most often?”

- A. The Fixer
- B. The Worrier
- C. The Inner Critic
- D. The Peacemaker
- E. The “I’m Fine” Numb Part.

Question #7: “When you’re stressed, which internal dynamic feels most familiar?”

- A. A loud part takes over
- B. Two parts argue
- C. A younger part shows up
- D. Everything goes quiet inside
- E. “I know there’s a lot happening... but I can’t quite access it”

Question #8: “If your Self energy had a theme song today, which vibe fits?”

- A. Calm & Curious
- B. Compassionate & Open
- C. Conflicted & Pulled in Many Directions
- D. Protective & On Guard
- E. “Self? I think they’re on lunch break.”



What Is Internal Family Systems

The mind is a system of “parts.”

Each part has its own emotions, beliefs, and protective strategies. Parts are not symptoms — they are adaptive responses shaped by experience.

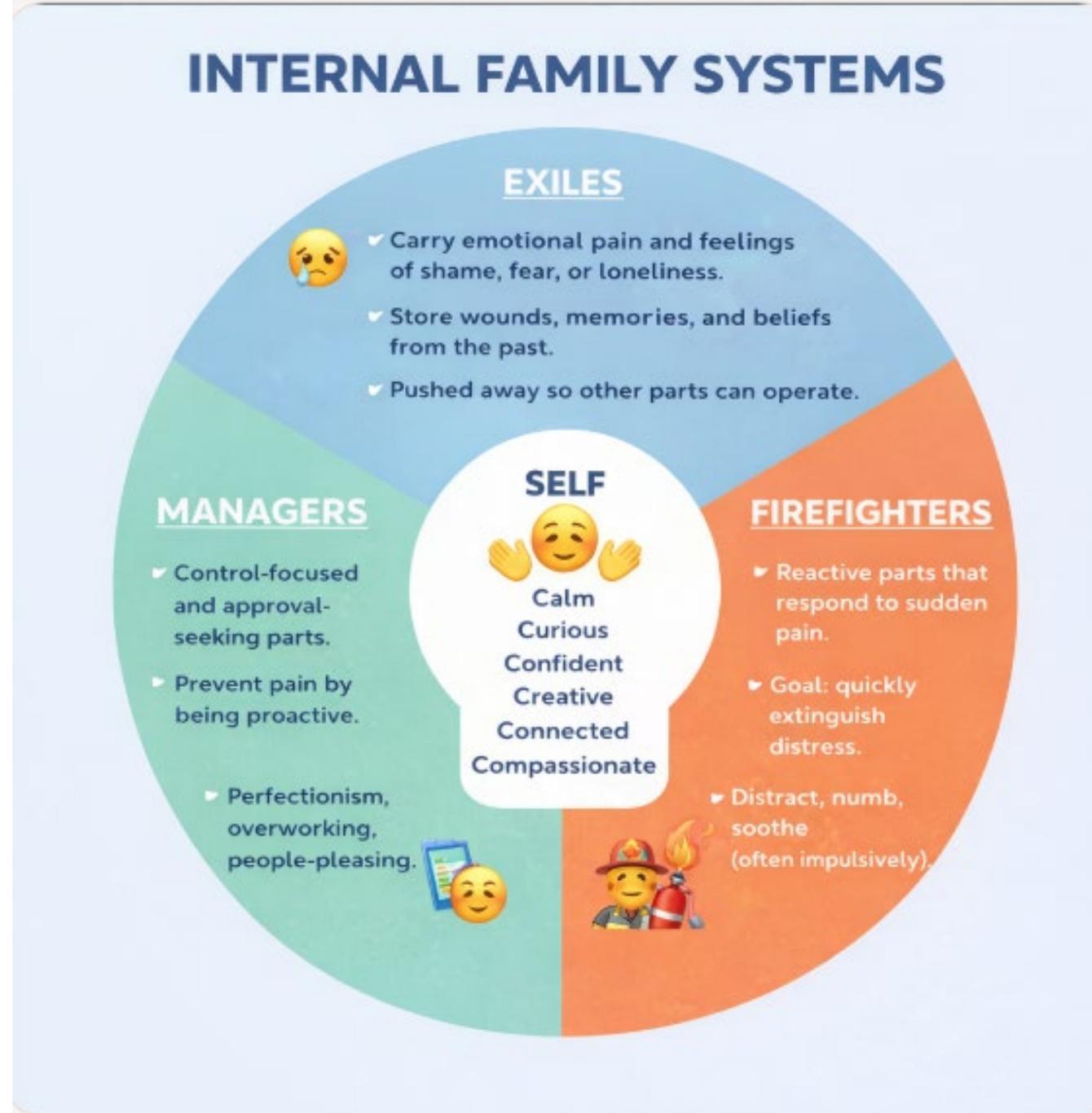
Three main types of parts:

- **Managers:** Prevent emotional pain by controlling, planning, perfecting, pleasing.
- **Firefighters:** React when pain breaks through — numbing, distracting, or escalating.
- **Exiles:** Hold vulnerable emotions and unmet needs from earlier experiences.

Self Energy is the core of the person. Calm, compassionate, curious, confident — the natural leader of the internal system.

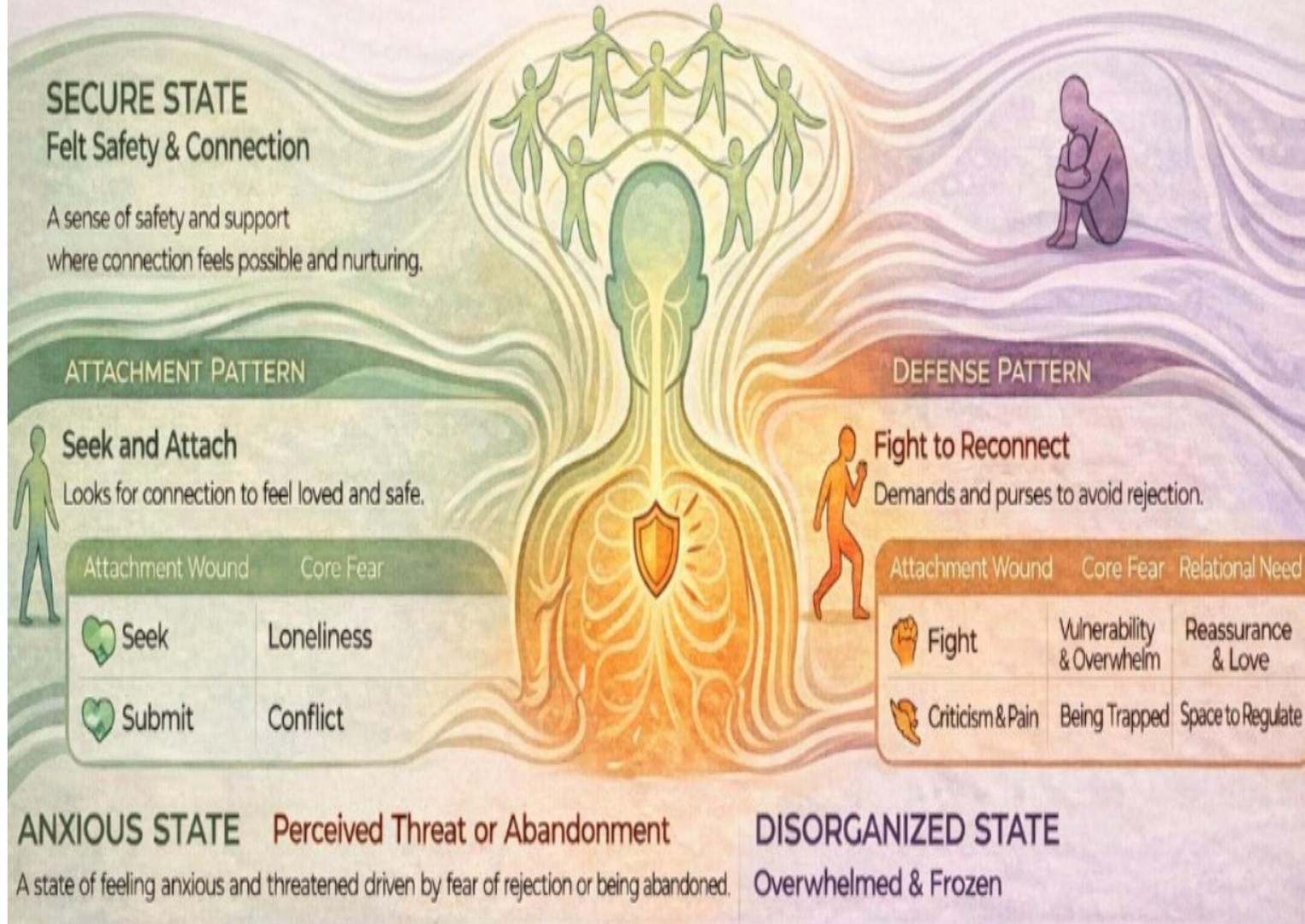
When parts trust Self, they soften, unburden, and take on healthier roles.

The goal of IFS is internal harmony, not symptom suppression. Orchestra analogy. No Bad Parts.



Parts, attachment and nervous system states

Understanding IFS Parts, Attachment Patterns & Nervous System Responses



Poorly Functioning Firefighter Parts

Overactive Firefighters	Underactive / Shut-Down Firefighters
Impulsive reactions	Little ability to interrupt overwhelm
Numbing behaviors (food, screens, substances)	Feeling exposed or unprotected
Overuse of distraction	Emotional flooding without relief
Sudden anger or outbursts	Collapse, freeze, or shutdown
Compulsive behaviors	Difficulty accessing coping strategies
Avoidance of emotions	Feeling stuck, heavy, or immobilized
"Put out the fire now" urgency	No energy to respond to distress
Overwhelm leads to quick escape	Vulnerable parts feel too close to the surface



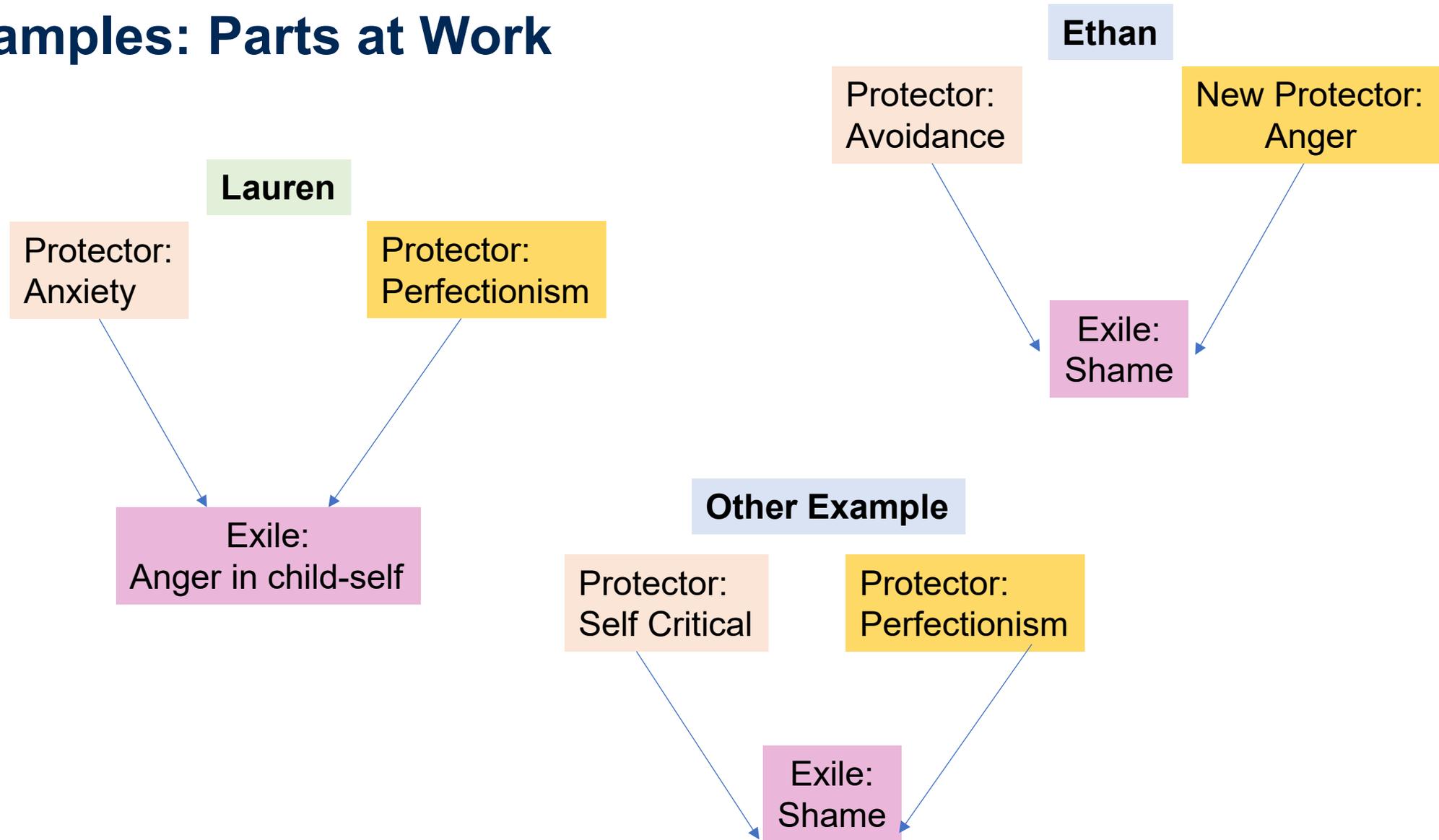
Poorly Functioning Manager Parts

Over-Functioning Managers	Under-Functioning Managers
Take excessive responsibility for everything and everyone	Avoid responsibility or shut down when demands feel overwhelming
Over-control, over-plan, over-prepare	Freeze, procrastinate, or become indecisive
Perfectionism, high standards, constant self-monitoring	Low motivation, difficulty initiating tasks, "why bother" energy
People-pleasing, rescuing, smoothing conflict	Withdrawing, disengaging, minimizing needs or emotions
Hyper-vigilant about preventing mistakes or emotional pain	Passive, checked-out, hoping problems resolve on their own
Work to keep the system "running" at all costs	Work to keep the system "quiet" by reducing demands
Driven by fear of letting others down	Driven by fear of failing or being overwhelmed

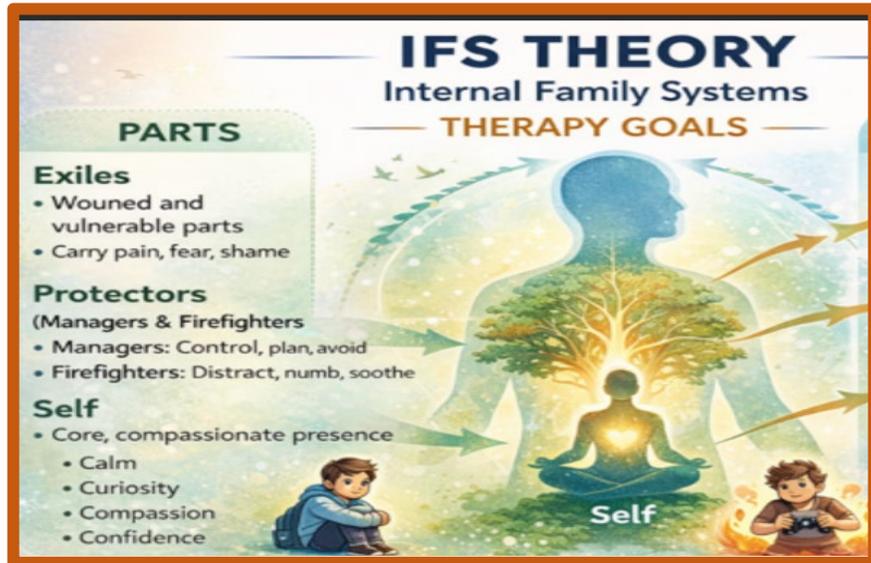


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Examples: Parts at Work



The SELF



Curiosity Approach your inner experience with openness and without judgment. Be genuinely interested in what your parts feel and need.

Compassion Meet every part of yourself with warmth and kindness. Offer understanding even to the parts that act out or struggle.

Calmness Stay grounded and centered as you explore your inner world. A regulated state helps you listen without being overwhelmed.

Courage Be willing to face difficult emotions, memories, or beliefs. This bravery allows deeper healing and integration.

Clarity See your inner system with a wide, clear perspective—understanding how parts relate, what motivates them, and what they're trying to protect.

Confidence Trust your ability to guide your inner work. Let your Self lead with steadiness and assurance.

Creativity Use imagination and flexibility to explore new possibilities and solutions. Creative thinking helps parts feel understood in fresh ways.

Connection Build a trusting, respectful relationship with your parts. Connection allows cooperation, communication, and integration.

How IFS Works

Step 1: Unblending

The person learns to notice when a part is “driving” and gently step back into Self energy

Step 2: Befriending Protectors

Instead of fighting defenses, IFS helps people understand what protectors are afraid will happen if they relax.

Step 3: Accessing Exiles Safely

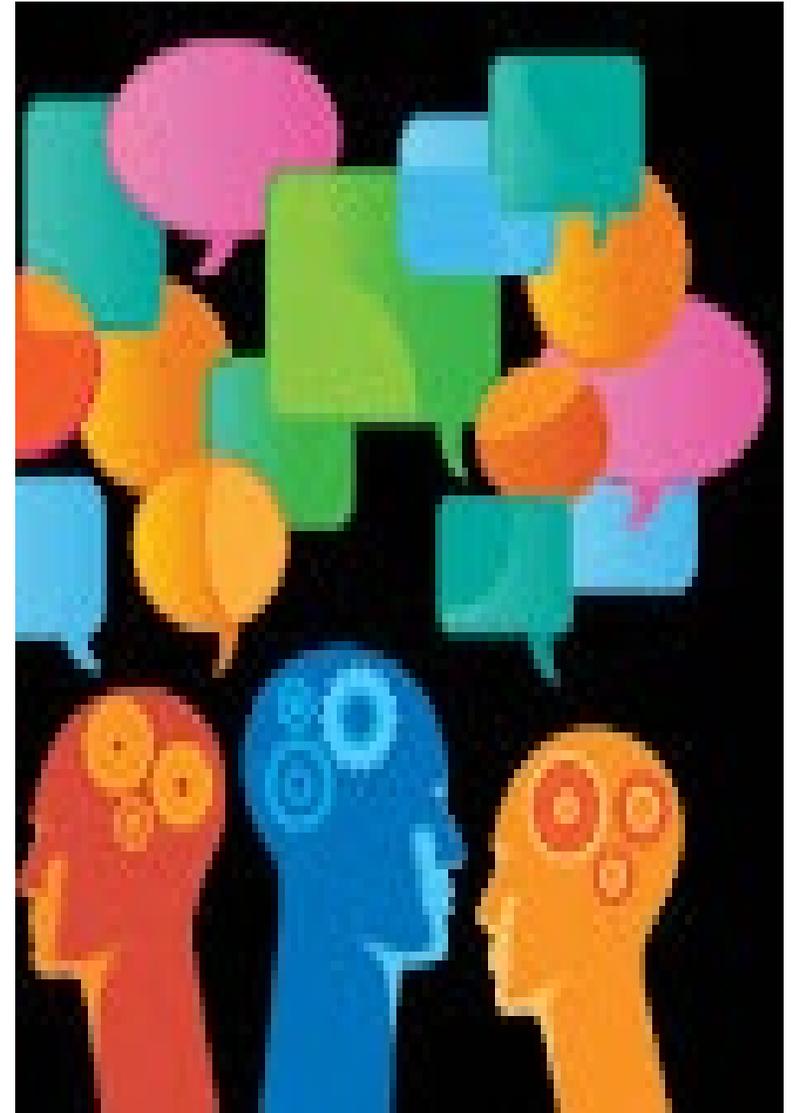
Only when protectors feel respected does the system allow access to the younger, hurt parts that carry the emotional load.

Step 4: Witnessing & Unburdening

Exiles share their story, release outdated beliefs or emotions, and take in new experiences of safety and compassion.

Step 5: Integration

Parts adopt new roles, the system reorganizes, and the person experiences more clarity, calm, and choice.



The Orchestra Model of Integration

The Orchestra Pit Nervous System



Stephen Porges
Autonomic States



Dan Siegel
Window of Tolerance



The conductor (**Polyvagal**) sets the overall safety and tempo for the orchestra.

The Instruments

The instrument sections (IFS) provide the voices of internal parts, each contributing to the whole.

The Archive Trauma Memory



Francine Shapiro
Old Scores Replaying



•IFS views the mind as a system of “parts,” each with its own emotions, beliefs, and protective strategies, all working to keep us safe in different ways.

•Protective parts (**Managers & Firefighters**) try to prevent or soothe distress, while **Exiles** carry vulnerable emotions and unmet needs from earlier experiences.

•**Self energy** is the calm, compassionate, centered core of a person — the place from which healing, curiosity, and connection naturally arise.

•**Healing happens when parts feel seen, understood, and unburdened**, allowing Self to lead with clarity, compassion, and confidence.

The Melody Attachment Emotion



Sue Johnson = EFIT Therapy for Individuals

The melody & harmony (EFT) conveys the emotional story, bringing awareness and transformation.



Key Take Aways

- **Regulate the room before the work.** Use brief grounding, orienting, or paced breathing to help the team shift into a connected state (Polyvagal).
- **Use structured communication to reduce reactivity.** SBAR for clarity, CUS for safety, Briefs/Debriefs for alignment (TeamSTEPPS).
- **Normalize emotional language.** Invite one-feeling-at-a-time check-ins to surface primary emotions and reduce escalation (EFIT).
- **Respond to parts, not behaviors** and approach with curiosity (IFS). Have them name/own parts.
Team Examples:
 - Blamer
 - The Hero
 - The Silent Sufferer
 - The Compliance Enforcer
 - The Cynic The Martyr
- **Create micro-moments of safety.** Slow your pace, soften tone, acknowledge impact, and validate effort.

- **Regulate before you communicate.** Notice your state (mobilized, shut down, connected) and shift toward safety before responding (Polyvagal).
- **Identify your secondary vs. primary emotion.** Ask: *“What’s underneath this reaction?”* and *“What feels at risk for me right now?”* (EFIT).
- **Unblend from activated parts.** Name the part (“My Fixer is up,” “My Critic is loud”) and step back into Self energy (IFS).
- **Choose response over reaction.** Regulate → Unblend → Identify primary emotion → Communicate clearly.
- **Leadership conversations to Manage team Parts**
 - **“Parts of us hope... that ... and other parts of us want...”**
 - **All of us have good intentions and are not divided**
 - **How can we reconcile? What can/can’t we control?**

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The Melody Attachment Emotion



Sue Johnson = EFIT Therapy for Individuals
Primary & Secondary Emotions

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The past may be understood as in the present if we use old music sheets. Different instruments may play from a different sheet.

Good Music

THANK YOU!

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Final Reminders

- **Evaluation**

- Please complete the evaluation form that appears on your screen once the webinar ends

- **Continuing Education**

- Create a Duke OneLink account if you have not done so
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- Text **QAPHET** to (919) 213-8033 within 24 hours



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