

Trauma-Informed Transitional Ministry

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Trauma-Informed Transitional Ministry

Agenda

- ✿ Trauma-Informed Spiritual Practice: Resources in the Moment
- ✿ Content (now)
 - ✿ A Trauma-Informed Perspective of (Transitional) Ministry
 - ✿ The Soma (The Body): The Neurobiology of People and Communities
 - ✿ What is Trauma?
 - ✿ Regulation, Dysregulation, & Co-Regulation
 - ✿ Window of Tolerance
- ✿ Reflection Questions (in Live Q & A)
 - ✿ Live Q & A: Tuesday, 2 November @ 11:20am (Eastern)

What is Trauma-Informed (Transitional) Ministry?

A Trauma-Informed Perspective

Mine as One Among Many

- ✿ An integrated model grounded in trauma studies & neuroscience and the Wisdom Traditions.
It utilizes trauma-informed spiritual practices.
As an adjective, it indicates a dedication to (re)establish **safety, connection, and social engagement.**
- ✿ Considers connection as a biological imperative (Polyvagal Theory).
No safety, no connection. No connection, no social engagement.
- ✿ It sees and seeks a Sacred Core in individuals and communities.
A sacred essence that can be concealed, but never destroyed or exiled.
Communicated in the names "Beloved" & "Dear Heart," in "Shalom," in the "Beloved Community."

A Trauma-Informed Perspective

Mine as One Among Many

- ✿ Shifts the question: from “What’s wrong with you?” to **“What happened to you?”**
- ✿ My main sources:
 - ✿ Polyvagal Theory (Stephen Porges, Deb Dana)
 - ✿ Neuroplasticity (Rick Hanson)
 - ✿ Attachment Theory
 - ✿ Internal Family Systems (Richard Schwartz) & Somatic Internal Family Systems (Susan McConnell)
 - ✿ Many Wisdom Traditions, including yoga & Ayurveda.

www.noticethejourney.com/clergy-and-communities

A Trauma-Informed Perspective

Safety, Connection, and Social Engagement

- * These compass points are required for **restoration** in communities that have experienced a breach of trust. But not “just” “those” communities ...
- * The skillful use of the perspective in communities in transition can support **adaptive change** and **growth**.
- * These are **grounding** touchstones for communities “in the days that are ours.” (Politics and pandemic)
- * These are **foundational** to any community.
(No safety, no connection. No connection, no social engagement.)

The Soma (The Body): The Neurobiology of People & Communities

Yat pinde tat brahmande.

“As it is in the body, so it is in the Universe.”

Vedic saying

How does your soma define “safety”?

The “actual” and the “perceived”

A Polyvagal-Informed Perspective

My Body, Your Body, & Safe Connections in Social Engagement

Polyvagal Theory (Stephen Porges, 1994)

- ✿ “the science of safety and connection”
- ✿ “the science of feeling safe enough to fall in love with life and take the risks of living” (Deb Dana)
- ✿ Safety, connection & social engagement: a biological imperative of social mammals
This is true for everyone. You, me —everyone. It is true, even when “behavior” seems counterproductive.
- ✿ Autonomic Nervous System: sympathetic & parasympathetic
Vagus nerve: 80% afferent 20% efferent

How safe have you felt recently?

How connected have you felt recently?

To your Self, others, Spirit, & the planet.

**How safe has your community
felt recently?**

What is Trauma?

“Trauma is a chronic disruption of connectedness.”

Stephen Porges

**“Trauma is not what happens to us.
But what we hold inside
in the absence of an empathetic witness.”**

Peter Levine

“Trauma is too much or too little.”

Esther Perel

What sensations are you having now?

What is activated in your body?

Regulation, Dysregulation & Co-Regulation

Regulation

Being with Ourselves and Each Other

- ✿ Calm, but active; alive. Responsive and reflective, not reactive. It's an adaptive state. The prefrontal cortex is online (think critically, imaginative, creative, time and memory, contemplative).
- ✿ *Not* rigid. Flexible and spontaneous; flow. Good stress (eustress).
- ✿ *Not* the same as “the comfort zone.” It might actually be uncomfortable. Self-soothing in distress.
- ✿ Agency: choice is available to you — including the ability to choose not to choose.

When have you felt regulated recently?

What are your self-soothing resources?

Dysregulation

Being with Ourselves and Each Other

- ✿ Dysregulation is not a moral state. It is part of the package of “being human.”
Dysregulation CAN BE adaptively appropriate for the situation.
- ✿ A state of activation moving toward overwhelm: a response to sensing fear, danger, or life threat.
The autonomic nervous system takes over. (Consider the soma of the community.)
- ✿ It happens on a continuum. It’s not an “on/off switch.”
- ✿ Hyper responses and hypo responses.

When have you been dysregulated recently?

Can you sort the elements of the story?
Are there commitments you need to make to you?
Is there repair or restoration work to attend?

In congregations, hyper-arousal often presents as activity without contemplation or reflection.

e.g. rushing to “fix something” or “stay relevant” without connection to clear core values or a mission statement.

In congregations, hypo-arousal often presents as conservation of the status quo.

Common expressions: lack of energy, no creativity, conflict avoidant, hopeless, resistant to outreach.

Co-Regulation

Being with Ourselves and Each Other

- ✿ Co-regulation is what happens when two nervous systems feel safe with each other.
- ✿ We need each other in order to self-regulate. Appropriate use of "the triangle."
- ✿ Co-regulation requires stability and predictability, transparency and authenticity. Randomness, chaos, inconsistency, vagueness, meaninglessness, distress, etc. will be dysregulating.
- ✿ The Me, Thee, We space negotiations. Reciprocity.
- ✿ **Spiritual Communities: relationships are our most powerful spiritual medicine we have on offer.**

How has your community been co-regulating?

What feels safe?
What feels balanced and negotiated? What feels attuned?
What feels unsafe, out of balance, or misaligned?
How can co-regulation be restored?

The Window of Tolerance

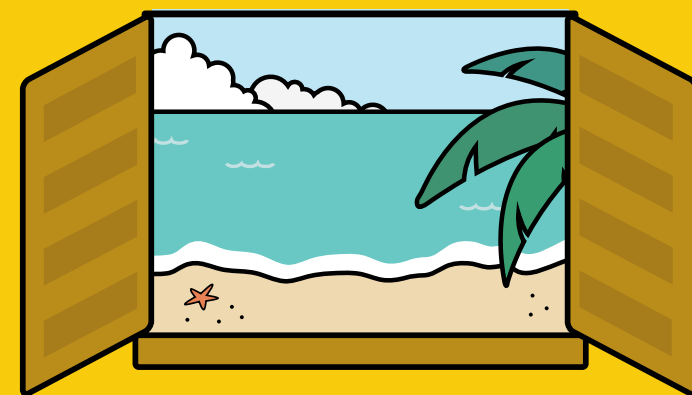
How Trauma Can Affect Your Window of Tolerance

HYPERAROUSAL
This is when you feel extremely anxious, angry, or even out of control. Unfamiliar or threatening feelings can overwhelm you, and you might want to fight or run away.



DYSREGULATION
This is when you begin to feel agitated. You may feel anxious, revved up, or angry. You don't feel out of control, but you also don't feel comfortable.

WINDOW OF TOLERANCE
This is where things feel just right, where you are best able to cope with the punches life throws at you. You're calm but not tired. You're alert but not anxious.



DYSREGULATION
This is when you begin to feel like you're shutting down. You may feel a little spacy, lose track of time, or start to feel sluggish. You don't feel out of control, but you also don't feel comfortable.

HYPOAROUSAL
This is when you feel extremely zoned out and numb, both emotionally and physically. Time can go missing. It might feel like you're completely frozen. It's not something you choose – your body takes over.

Stress and Trauma Can Shrink Your Window of Tolerance.

This means that it may be harder to stay calm and focused. When you're outside your window of tolerance, you may be more easily thrown off balance.

Your Work with Your Practitioner Can Help to Enlarge Your Window of Tolerance.

They can help you stay calm, focused, and alert even when something happens that would usually throw you off balance.



The Window of Tolerance*

Our Ministry Has to Stay Inside the Window

- ✿ The middle area is the space of adaptive self-regulation.
- ✿ The Window changes with circumstances.
- ✿ The Window sills can be rigid or flexible.
- ✿ Hyper-arousal and Hypo-arousal.
- ✿ Once we are outside the WOT, adaptive change stops.

*Daniel J. Siegel

Leaders with the contemplative awareness of their own somatic responses,
the fluctuations of their Window of Tolerance,
and the skillful means of self-regulation and self-soothing
are better equipped to attune to their communities and foster
the safety, connection, and social engagement
necessary for adaptive change, growth, and restoration.

Resources

www.noticethejourney.com

Dedicated Section: www.noticethejourney.com/clergy-and-communities

Spiritual direction, coaching & consultation, or practice support

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