

TRIGGER AND COPING SKILLS

TRIGGER

COPING SKILL

1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.
6.	6.

TRAUMA TRIGGERS



THE PROBLEM

What is the problem that my triggers are causing or contributing to?

TRIGGER EXPOSURE

When I am exposed to my trigger/s, what is the worst thing that could happen?



UNDERSTANDING TRIGGERS

Triggers can be different for each person, but many triggers are common. Below are common triggers, think about your anxious thoughts related to each category. You can even add your own triggers.



SITUATIONS



PEOPLE



PLACES



HEALTH



THOUGHTS



EMOTIONAL STATES

REALITY ACCEPTANCE WORKSHEET

Realities that I am refusing to accept are.

What does my behavior look like when refusing to accept my reality? (tantrums, manipulation, meltdown, withdrawal, anxiety)

What suffering do I endure when I refuse to accept my reality?

COPING AHEAD OF TIME

1. Describe a situation that is likely to create negative emotions for you.

2. What coping skill or problem solving skill would work best for you in this situation?

Close your eyes and imagine that you are in that situation right now.

Role play or rehearse in your mind that you are coping effectively in the situation with your chosen coping skill.

What will you do, say and act?

TRIGGER THERMOMETER

Rank your trigger distress level.



**Highest level of
distress possible.
Feel out of control.**



**Quite distressed
and anxious,
interfering with
functioning.**



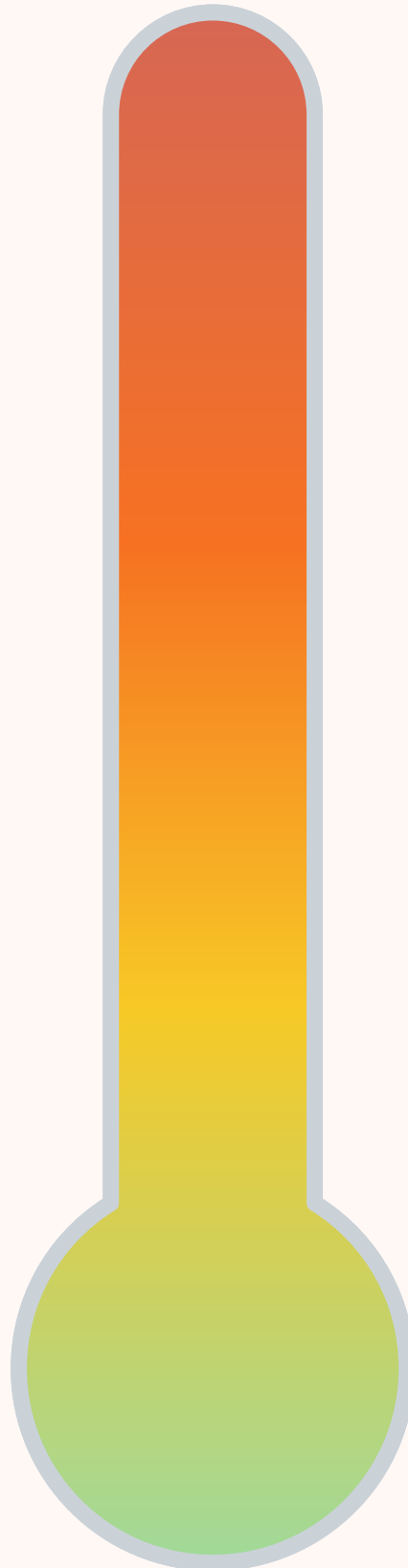
**Moderate distress,
feeling
uncomfortable.**



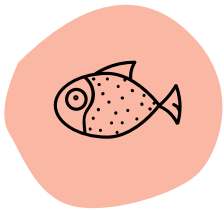
**Minimal distress
and anxiety.**



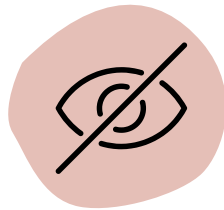
**No distress,
feeling
at peace.**



ANXIETY SYMPTOMS



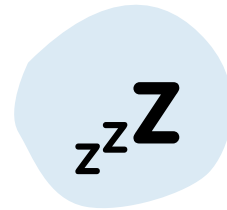
Memory issues



Avoidance



Headaches



Insomnia



Needing reassurance



Procrastination



Rapid heartbeat



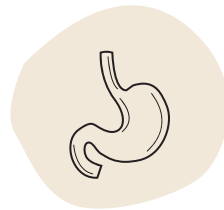
Lack of patience



Overthinking



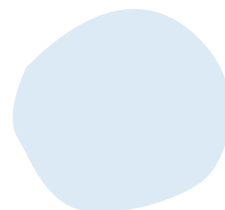
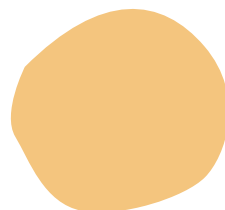
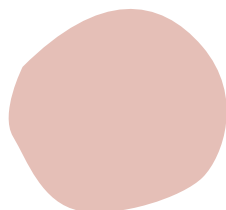
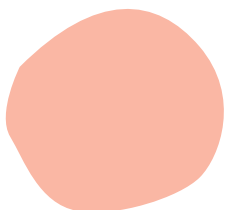
Sweating



Stomach issues



Constant worrying



TRAUMA NARRATIVE



WHAT HAPPENED. USE FACTS TO DESCRIBE THE TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCE.



WHO DID IT HAPPEN TO?



WHEN DID IT HAPPEN?



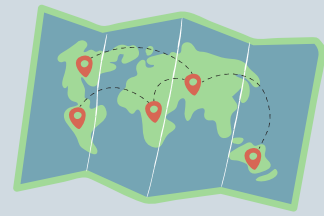
WHERE DID IT HAPPEN?



WHAT ARE YOUR FEELINGS ABOUT THIS SITUATION?



TRIGGER MAP



WHEN THIS HAPPENS



THIS IS WHAT I THINK

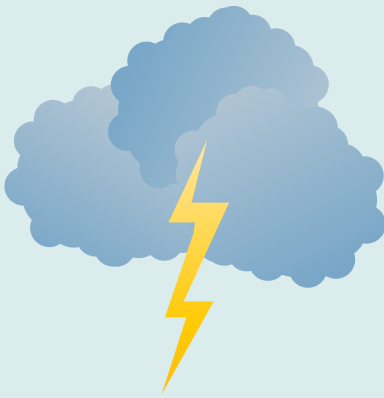
THIS IS WHAT I FEEL



THIS IS WHAT I CAN DO TO REDUCE MY ANXIETY

THE TREE OF LIFE

The Trauma Tree



STORMS

(CHALLENGES)

- Stressful events
- Losses
- Lack of resources

BRANCHES

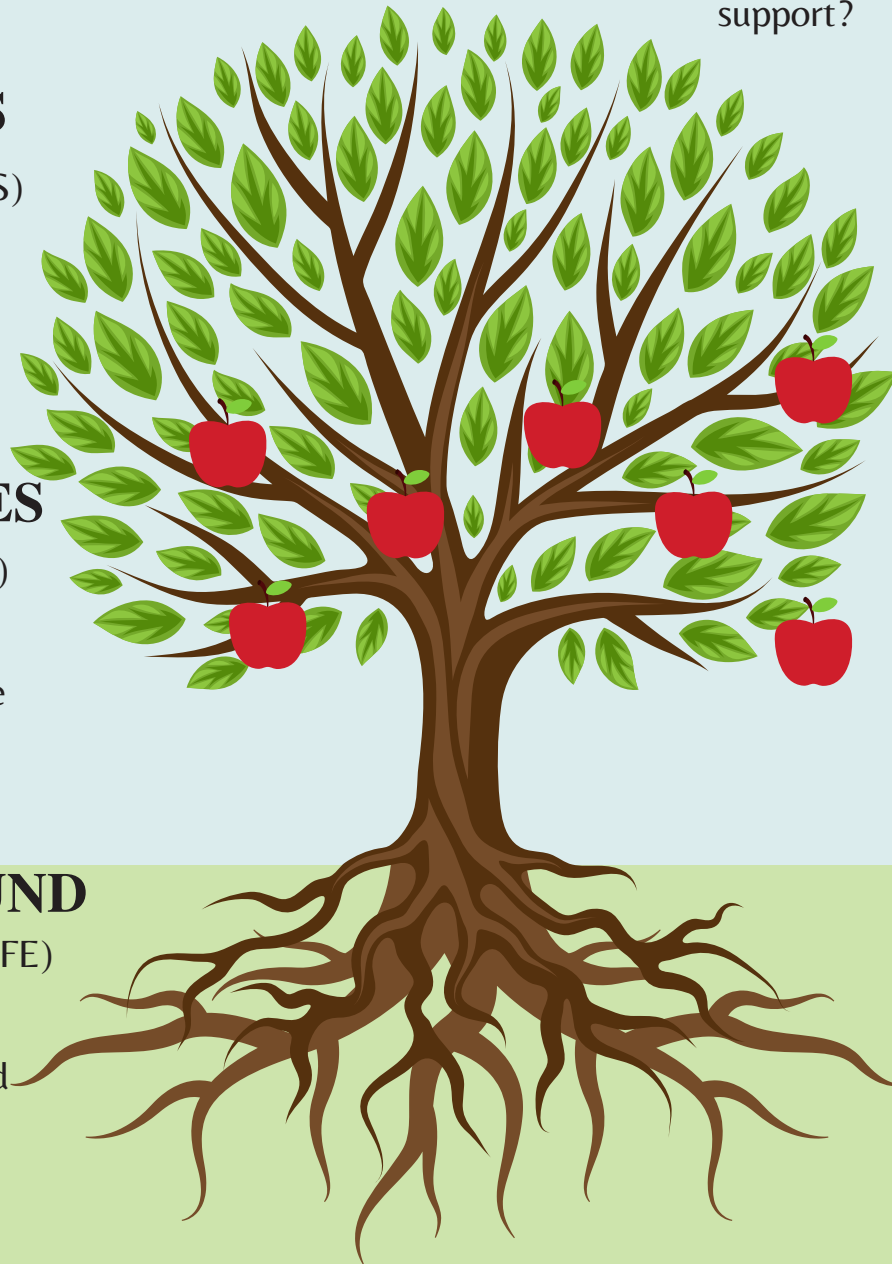
(DREAMS)

- What do I want my future to look like?

GROUND

(PRESENT LIFE)

- Where I live and how I spend my days.



LEAVES

(SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE)

- Who are the people that I trust and I can turn to for support?

FRUIT

(GIFTS)

- My Strengths, kindness, love, giving.

TRUNK

(SKILLS)

- What am I good at?
- Skills I have acquired.

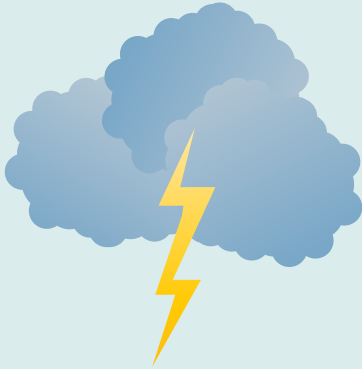
ROOTS

(WHERE I CAME FROM)

- Family and upbringing.

THE TREE OF LIFE

The Trauma Tree



STORMS (CHALLENGES)

- What obstacles do I need to overcome?

LEAVES (SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE)

- Who are the people that I trust and I can turn to for support?

FRUIT (GIFTS)

- What are my strengths?

TRUNK (SKILLS)

- What are my skills?

ROOTS (WHERE I CAME FROM)

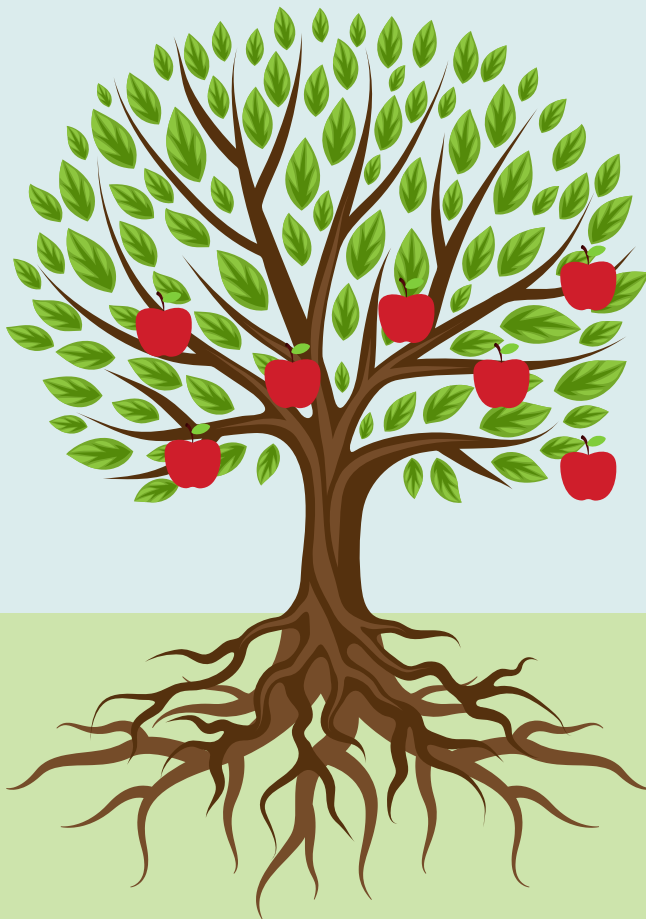
- What was my upbringing like?

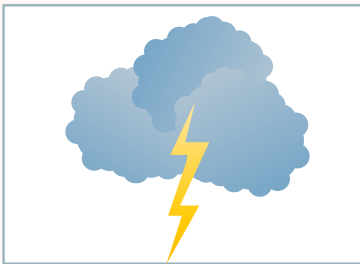
GROUND (PRESENT LIFE)

- What are my interests and hobbies? How do I spend my time?

BRANCHES (DREAMS)

- What are my hopes and dreams for the future?





STORMS - CHALLENGES

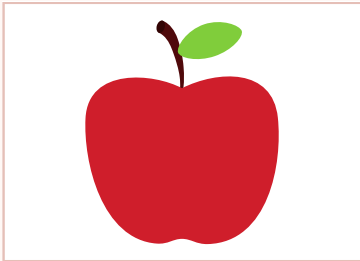
Storms might include - mental health problems, friends or family conflict, and lack of resources and support.

- What storms have you experienced in the past?
- What obstacles do you need to overcome?
- What storms might you experience in the future?



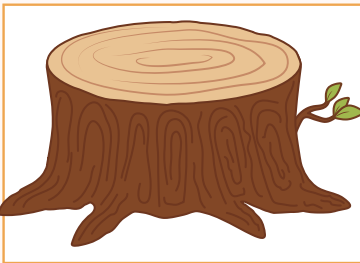
LEAVES - SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE

- Who plays a vital role in your life?
- Who are the people that your trust and turn to for support?
 - What makes you trust them?
- How have they influenced your life so far?
- Do they know they are important to you?



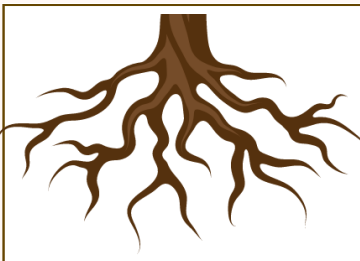
FRUIT - GIFTS

- What compliments have you received?
- What are some of your strengths?
- Have the significant people in your life helped shape your strengths?
- Have you ever received any materialistic gifts that have helped you?
 - What strength are you working on at the moment?



TRUNK - SKILLS

- What are your top 3 skills?
- How did you develop your coping skills and abilities?
 - Did anything impact your coping skills?
- Do you focus more on your faults rather than your skills?



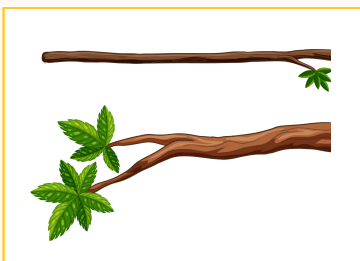
ROOTS - WHERE DID I COME FROM?

- Where were you born?
- What are your favorite memories?
 - Who helped shape your life?
- Do you think your past has influenced your present life?



GROUND - PRESENT LIFE

- What is the best thing about your present life?
- How do you like to spend your spare time?
- What do you wish you had more time for?
 - What do you value the most?



BRANCHES - DREAMS

- If you had three wishes, what would they be?
- Would you use your wishes to better yourself?
- Would you give any of your wishes to other people? If so, who and why?

**STORMS -
CHALLENGES**



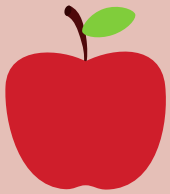
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**LEAVES
SIGNIFICANT
PEOPLE**



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FRUIT - GIFTS



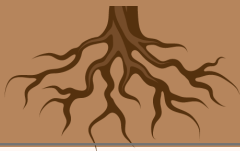
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TRUNK - SKILLS



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**ROOTS - WHERE DID I
COME FROM?**



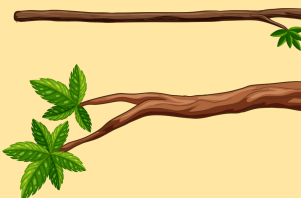
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**GROUND
PRESENT LIFE**



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BRANCHES - DREAMS



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HOW TRAUMA AFFECTS THE BRAIN



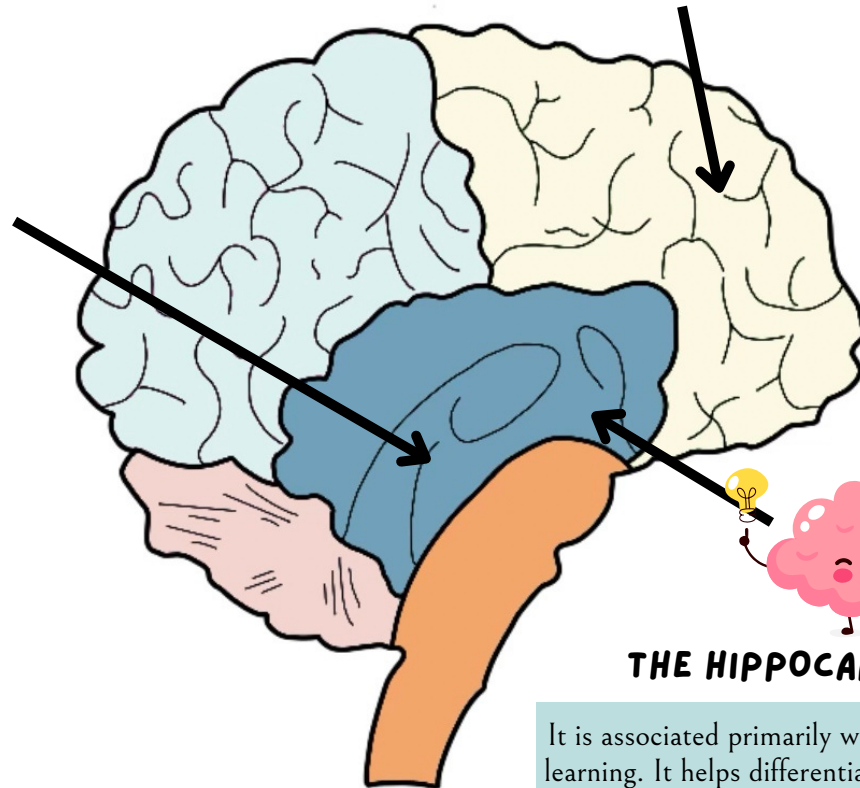
THE PREFRONTAL CORTEX

Responsible for 'Rational Thinking,' executive functioning, higher-level thinking, and reasoning. Trauma can decrease the prefrontal cortex function.



THE AMYGDALA

The 'emotional response' center of the brain. Helps perceive and control emotions. Trauma increases the Amygdala activation causing greater fear responses.



THE HIPPOCAMPUS

It is associated primarily with memory and learning. It helps differentiate between the past and the present. Trauma causes a decrease in the Hippocampus functioning.

SAFETY PLAN



Name: _____

D.O.B _____

Date: _____

TRIGGERS

Situation or feeling that has made me feel uncomfortable.

WARNING SIGNS

What feelings do I have in my body?

COPING SKILLS

What can I do to make myself feel better?

SAFE PLACES

Places that makes me feel safe and comfortable are.

FRIENDS I CAN CALL

Friends that I can rely on for support.

FAMILY MEMBERS

Family members that I can rely on for support.

REASONS FOR LIVING

I have so many reasons to keep on living.

PROFESSIONAL AGENCIES I CAN CALL

Crisis support numbers.

TRAUMA

TRIGGERS

Sounds

Hearing certain music or sounds that remind you of past trauma.

People

Being around people that are linked to or have similarities related to your trauma.

Thoughts

Certain memories or thoughts can bring back old trauma.

Situations

Being in a situation that makes you feel unsafe.

Feelings

Just feeling pain unrelated to your trauma can be enough to re-trigger your trauma.

Smells

Certain smells are strongly linked to our memories.

Places

Places that have similarities to where the trauma took place.

Death

The death of anyone involved in the trauma can re-trigger pain.

Media

Seeing something on social media, movie scenes or news reports that are similar to your trauma.

PAUSE FOR PANIC

A MINDFULNESS TECHNIQUE TO CALM YOUR ANXIETY

P

PAUSE

When you recognize your anxiety symptoms, immediately **STOP** everything you are doing.

A

ACTIVITY

Engage in some physical activity until you feel out of breath.
For example, do some star jumps, squats, or stomping.

U

UNDERSTAND

Understand that you are safe and that what you are experiencing is a false alarm. There is no immediate danger.

S

SOOTHE

Soothe your body.
Rub both hands together quickly, and feel the friction between your hands. Can you feel the heat? What else can you feel?

E

EXHALE

Trace your finger around each finger on the other hand slowly.
While tracing, breathe in through your nose and out your mouth.



MY Past
TRAUMA

does not
need

**TO BE A DEATH
SENTENCE**



WINDOW OF TOLERANCE

The Window of Tolerance, is referred to as the 'optimal zone' of arousal in which a person is able to function most effectively and emotions can be processed in a healthy way.

HYPERAROUSAL

- Feelings of extreme anxiousness with possible panic attacks.
- Feel overwhelmed and out of control.
- Want to fight or run away.



DYSREGULATION



- Feelings of frustration and agitation increase.
- Uncomfortable feelings start to increase but still in control.

WINDOW OF TOLERANCE

- Feel present, calm and safe.
- In total control.



Stress
Trauma
triggers
Anxiety
Rejection
Abandonment

↓
THINGS
THAT
SHRINK
YOUR
WINDOW
↑

↑
THINGS
THAT
CAN
EXPAND
YOUR
WINDOW
↓

Mindfulness
Grounding
exercises
Gratitude
Positive self-
talk
Deep
breathing

DYSREGULATION

- Getting close to the stage of shutting down.
- Uncomfortable feelings start to increase but still in control.



HYPONAROUSAL

- Feel physically numb and frozen.
- Feel disconnected and zoned out.
- Lethargic and no energy



IDENTIFYING PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS

Everybody's body will physically respond to anxiety in many different ways. But some common physical symptoms are shown below.

Close your eyes. Take a deep breath through your nose and out through your mouth. Starting with the top of your head, become aware of how your body feels. Slowly move down your body, noticing how each body part feels, down to your toes. Could you note any areas of discomfort on the body below?

Sweating

Wide eyes

Heart beats fast

Trembling

Pins and needles

Butterflies in tummy

Dizziness

Nauseous

Tense muscles

Weak knees

Fast breathing

Urinating

Headache

Goosebumps

WHAT IS PTSD?

PTSD is also known as Posttraumatic stress disorder. This psychiatric disorder may occur in people who have experienced or witnessed a traumatic event that threatened their life or safety or that of others around them. Examples of things that can bring on PTSD include sexual or physical assault, the unexpected death of a loved one, an accident, war, or natural disaster. PTSD can have lasting consequences from traumatic ordeals and cause intense fear, helplessness, or horror.

Symptoms may include flashbacks, nightmares, severe anxiety, and uncontrollable thoughts about the event. The feelings last longer and interfere with how people cope with everyday life.

PTSD is estimated to affect about one in every three people who have a traumatic experience. But it's unclear exactly why some people develop the condition and others don't.

HAVING PTSD IS

NOT

A SIGN OF WEAKNESS

PTSD SYMPTOMS

Generalized

- Re-experiencing the trauma
- Repetitive memories (or flashbacks) that are hard to control and intrude into everyday life
- Nightmares
- Extreme distress caused by reminders of the trauma
- Memories or disturbing thoughts that can be prompted by smells, sounds, words, or other triggers

Avoidance

- Staying away from places, people, or objects that may trigger memories of the traumatic event
- Changing a regular routine to avoid triggering memories
- Not wanting to talk about or think about the event
- Feeling numb

Negative thoughts and mood

- Feeling a sense of hopelessness about the future
- Negative beliefs about yourself or the world
- Blaming yourself or others unreasonably
- Intense worry, depression, anger, or guilt
- No longer enjoying favorite activities
- Becoming emotionally detached from others
- Not being able to experience positive emotions

Increased arousal

- Constant, excessive alertness
- Scanning the environment for signs of danger
- Being easily startled
- Irritable or aggressive behavior
- Difficulty sleeping
- Poor concentration

FIGHT, FLIGHT OR FREEZE

Your nervous system has three automatic or reflexive ways of responding to highly stressful events.

The fight or flight response is a natural response designed to help keep us safe from danger. However, if your response remains switched on when there is no real danger, or if it gets switched on too quickly and makes you feel nervous all the time again when there is no danger, then the response will turn into panic or PTSD. It will start to interrupt your daily functioning.

FIGHT

Fight occurs when you need to defend yourself.
-Heart pounds faster, blood pressure rises, and muscles tighten, increasing your strength and reaction speed.

FLIGHT

Flight occurs when you escape the danger of a traumatic event by fleeing. - Anxiety, fear, escape, run away or avoid.

FREEZE

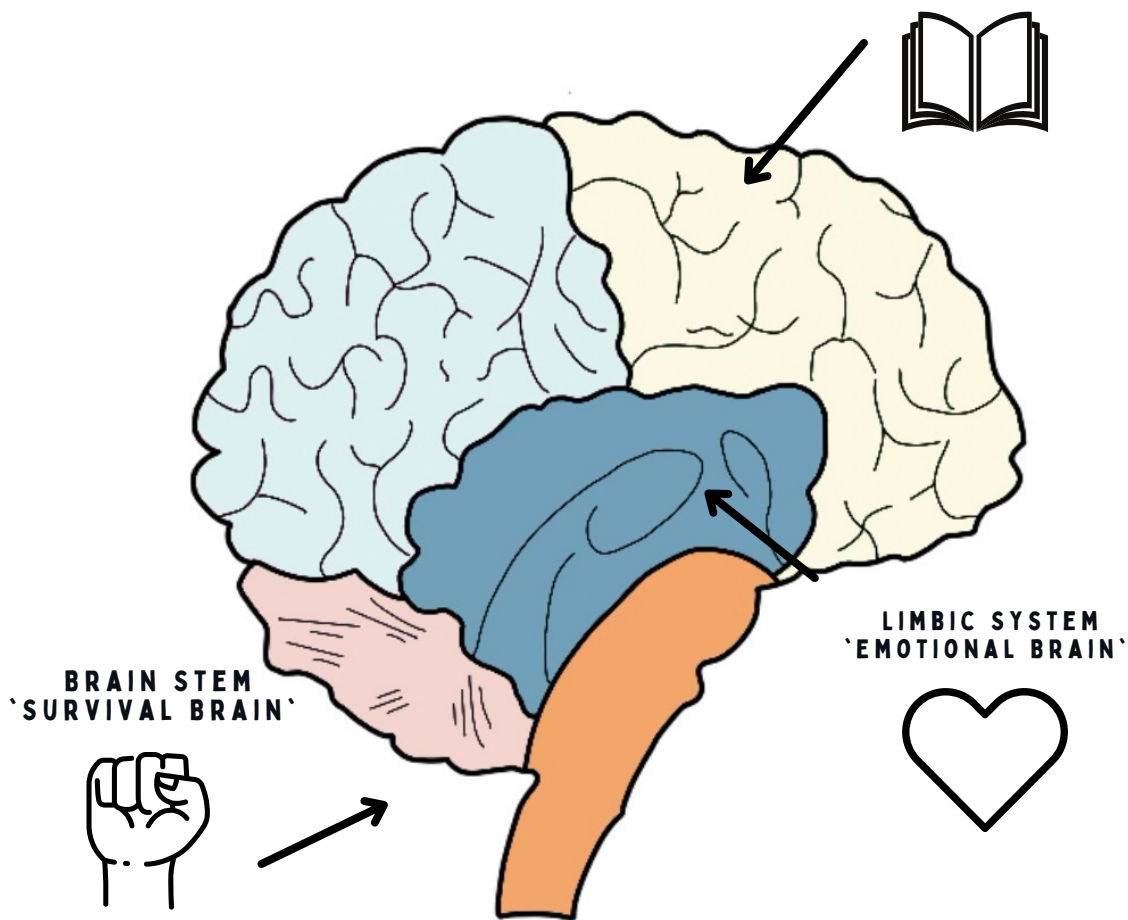
A person may freeze briefly to orient to the situation to decide what to do, or they may be associated with tonic immobility and dissociation.

FAWN

A person develops people-pleasing behaviors to avoid conflict and to establish a sense of safety - Avoid conflict, give in easily, difficulty saying 'no'.

WHY DOES PTSD OCCUR?

Everybody has a basic biological system - the limbic system or the "fight or flight." This system has one goal: to ensure your survival at all times; our brains are wired to respond to threats. Unfortunately, our brains can over-generalize to ensure it catches all possible threats, meaning that they will react to a perceived threat (our brains need help distinguishing between an actual physical threat and a threat caused by worry or fear). Activation of our limbic system may include: an increased heart rate and breathing, muscle tension, and adrenaline surge, thus, getting ready to fight or flight.



'SURVIVAL BRAIN' - Prioritizes your survival functions, such as your heart beats faster so that you can breathe in more oxygen, which is important if you need to fight or run away.

- More energy makes it's way to your limbs so you can run faster and be stronger.

'EMOTIONAL BRAIN' - Your emotions become extremely intense and act as a warning sign to help us quickly respond to danger and threats.

'THINKING BRAIN' - Temporarily goes 'offline' - so that the energy your brain would normally use is now prioritised to other body systems to help keep you safe.

COMMON REACTION TO TRAUMA

Everybody has a basic biological system - also known as the limbic system, or the "fight or flight". This system has one goal and that is to insure your survival at all times, our brains are literally wired to respond to threats.

Unfortunately though, our brains can over-generalize to make sure it catches all possible threats, meaning that it will respond to a perceived threat (our brains have a hard time distinguishing between a real physical threat or a threat that is caused by worry or fear). Activation of our limbic system may include: an increased heart rate and breathing, muscles tension, adrenaline surge, thus, getting ready to fight or flight.

FEAR AND ANXIETY

When a person's view of the world and sense of safety changes and become harmful as a result of their traumatic experience.

RE-EXPERIENCING THE TRAUMA

Replaying traumatic memories may be an attempt to integrate the experience and make more sense of what happened.

INCREASED AROUSAL

Feeling jumpy, jittery, and shaky; being easily startled; and having trouble concentrating or sleeping. They may see the world as dangerous, so their bodies are constantly alert, ready to respond immediately to any attack.

AVOIDANCE

The most common way is to avoid situations that serve as a reminder of the trauma. Another way to reduce distress is to try to push away painful thoughts and feelings, as are pleasant and loving feelings.

COMMON REACTION TO TRAUMA

ANGER

Feelings of anger, irritability, and annoyance. Sometimes people feel angry at the people they love the most, which can be very confusing for everybody.

GUILT AND SHAME

Many blame themselves for things they did or did not do to survive. You may feel ashamed because you acted in ways you would not otherwise have done during the trauma.

DEPRESSION & GUILT

You may lose interest in people and activities you used to enjoy. You may feel that your plans for the future don't seem to matter anymore or that life isn't worth living.

SELF IMAGE

Many people become self-critical and pessimistic after the trauma ("I am a terrible person and deserved this.") It is common to see others more negatively and feel that you can't trust anyone.

RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships can be challenging and tense, and it may be difficult to become intimate with people as your trust decreases.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Substance abuse can become a dangerous and addictive coping mechanism.

TRAUMA TRIGGERS

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EMOTIONAL REGULATION



S

STOP

Interrupt your negative thinking with the command STOP! and pause what you are doing.



T

TAKE A BREATH

Practice some deep breathing techniques to slow your heart rate down.



O

OBSERVE

What thoughts are going through your mind right now? Where is the focus of your attention? What are you reacting to? What sensations do you notice in your body?



P

PULL BACK

Put in some perspective. What is another way of looking at this situation? Is this a thought or an opinion? What would a trusted friend say to me right now?



P

PROCEED

Purposefully and mindfully proceed with your next activity, one step at a time.

COPING SKILLS

UNHEALTHY

SUBSTANCE
ABUSE



SELF INJURY



OVER EATING



AVOIDANCE



AGGRESSION



GAMBLING



EXCESSIVE USE OF
ELECTRONICS



HEALTHY

EXERCISE

JOURNALLING

MEDITATION

SEEKING
PROFESSIONAL
SUPPORT

LISTENING TO
MUSIC

GROUNDING
EXERCISES

GETTING ENOUGH
SLEEP

EMOTIONAL NUMBING

Emotional numbness is when you are not feeling or expressing emotions.

The symptoms of emotional numbness include:

- Experiencing an inability to participate in life fully
- Failing to access your feelings
- Feeling distant or detached from others
- Feeling flat, both physically and emotionally
- Having difficulty with experiencing positive emotions such as happiness
- Losing interest in activities you used to enjoy
- Preferring isolation rather than being with others

You can help increase your positive emotions by:

Practising gratitude:

Expressing gratitude is an instant mood lifter. The science is simple. When we focus on the good things in our life, especially at a deep level, and appreciate even the most minor things we often take for granted, our brain releases serotonin and dopamine, the two feel-good neurotransmitters within the emotional part of our brain.

Savour the good stuff:

Savoring means fully feeling, enjoying, and extending our positive experiences. Savoring is a great way to develop a stable stream of positive thoughts and emotions.

Smile more - even if you don't feel like it

Smiling can trick your brain into happiness — and boost your health. Science has shown that the mere act of smiling can lift your mood, lower stress, boost your immune system and possibly even prolong your life.

Remember positive memories

Recalling happy memories elicits positive feelings and enhances one's well-being, suggesting a potential adaptive function in using this strategy for coping with stress. Retrieving positive memories induced greater emotional intensity and more positive feelings than neutral memories

Physical activity

When you're feeling emotionally numb, the last thing you may want to do is get up and move, but it's one of the best things you can do. Running, swimming, yoga, and kickboxing classes are great for stress relief, but even walking around the neighborhood can help flood your brain with endorphins.

COPING SKILLS FOR TRAUMATIC STRESS

01

BREATHING

Becoming aware of your breath allows you to slow down, quiet your mind, and calm your body.

02

GROUNDING

Bringing yourself back to the present moment with sensory and cognitive techniques.

03

BODY AWARENESS

Listening and connecting to our bodies by identifying where we are, the sensations in our body, and how our body reacts to stress.

04

VISUALIZATION

Calling on mental images in our imagination to improve the way we feel.

05

SELF COMPASSION

Extending ourselves kindness in how we talk and think about ourselves.

01

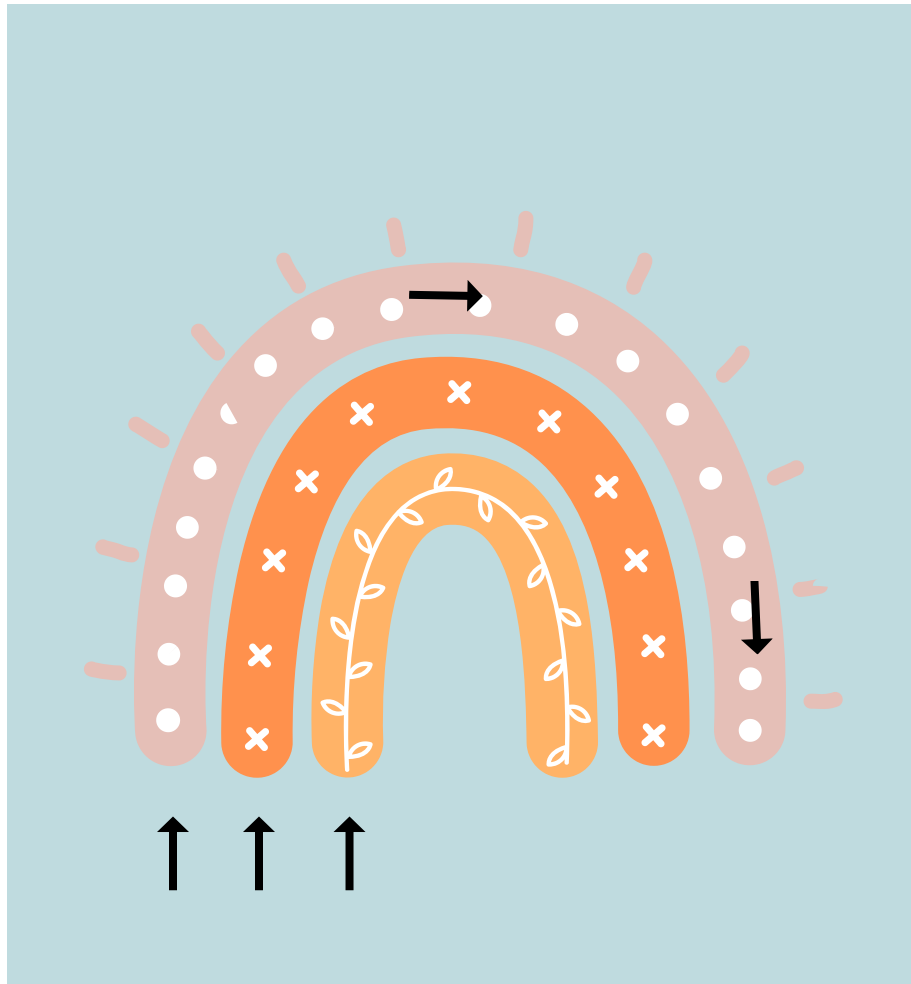
BREATHING

Sit upright Support your arms. Slow breath through the nose (4 secs). Hold your breath (1-2 secs). Slow exhale through the mouth (4 secs). Please wait a few seconds before doing it again.

**START
HERE**

INHALE FOR 5 SECONDS

INHALE FOR 5 SECONDS



EXHALE FOR 5 SECONDS

HOLD FOR 5 SECONDS

02

GROUNDING

MENTAL GROUNDING

- Remind yourself of who you are and where you are
- Describe the current environment in detail
- Describe a favorite place in detail
- Think in categories (i.e., Ice cream flavors)
- Count backward (i.e., 100, 97, 94, 91....)

PHYSICAL GROUNDING: 54321

- Name five things that you can see
- Name four things you can feel
- Name three things you can hear
- Name two things you can smell
- Name one thing you can taste

MINDFUL WALKING

- Concentrate on your footsteps
- What do you see around you?
- What sounds do you hear?
- What does the climate feel like?

03

BODY AWARENESS

Goal= get to know sensations. You are gradually paying attention to different parts from top to bottom. Scanning brings awareness to every detail and feeling. You can identify the points of your body causing you tension.

Sit comfortably and breathe in and out slowly. This exercise aims to notice how each part of your body feels.

Start at the top of your head. Can you feel your hair? What does it feel like? Is it rubbing on your face? have you got a hat on? Can you feel your hair tie?

Start to make your way down to your shoulders, can you feel any tension in your shoulder area? Do you feel tight? Take a deep breath and try to loosen your shoulders and neck. Next, do a few neck stretches, turn your head to the left and slowly to the right.

Breathe in and out, and repeat until you feel calm again.

04

VISUALIZATION

GUIDED IMAGERY

- Get comfortable and imagine a peaceful place or experience, such as your favorite place in nature.
- Concentrate on a specific object, sound, or experience in your mind, such as how it feels, what it sounds like, and what it looks like
- Tip: guided imagery videos can also be found on Youtube

THE CONTAINER EXERCISE

- Imagine a container in your mind's eye.
- You can bring things into the container that are distressing.
- Picture those distressing images or ideas and send them into the container, and shut the door.
- Next time that troubling thought arrives, I would like you to imagine sending it here.

05

SELF COMPASSION

CHANGE CRITICAL SELF-TALK

- Notice the inner critic...what does it say?
- Change your negative thinking into positive thinking.
- Soften the inner critic with compassion, not self-judgment.
- Try some supportive self-talk
- Say three things that you like about yourself
- Write down your strengths

THE SELF COMPASSION BREAK

- Breathe. Tell yourself... "This is a moment of suffering."
Tell yourself... "Others suffer like this, and I'm not alone."
- Hands over heart, tell yourself... "May I be kind to myself? May I live with ease?"
- "I have survived hard times before and will survive this too."
- "I am strong enough to get through anything."
- "I am safe and stronger now."