

## Trauma and the Three Pillars of Transforming Care— What the Interpersonal Neuroscience Tells Us

Howard Bath, PhD, Senior Consultant, Allambi Care, New South Wales, Australia In this presentation, Howard will look at the three central needs of children who have experienced developmental trauma—the need to feel safe, the need for healthy connections, and the need for adaptive coping strategies to deal with the pervasive impacts. He will look at these needs through the lens of the recent neuroscience literature, in particular, emerging insights relating to the central role and functions of interpersonal connection

The Reclaiming Youth Seminars, Augustana University  
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***Trauma and the  
Three Pillars of  
Transforming Care:***

What the interpersonal  
neuroscience tells us



Dr Howard Bath



# The Three Core *Trauma-Related* Needs

1. The need for healthy connections
2. The need to **feel safe**
3. The need for **adaptive coping** strategies to manage turbulent thoughts and emotions

# Universal Developmental Needs



Adapted from the *Circle of Courage* framework  
Brendtro, Brokenleg & van Bockern, 2002, 2019



# Parallel Developmental Frameworks

*Circle of Courage*

*Maslow's Hierarchy*

*Self-Esteem*

**Generosity**

**Self-transcendence**

**Virtue**

**Independence**

**Self-actualization**

**Power**

**Mastery**

**Esteem**

**Competence**

**Belonging**

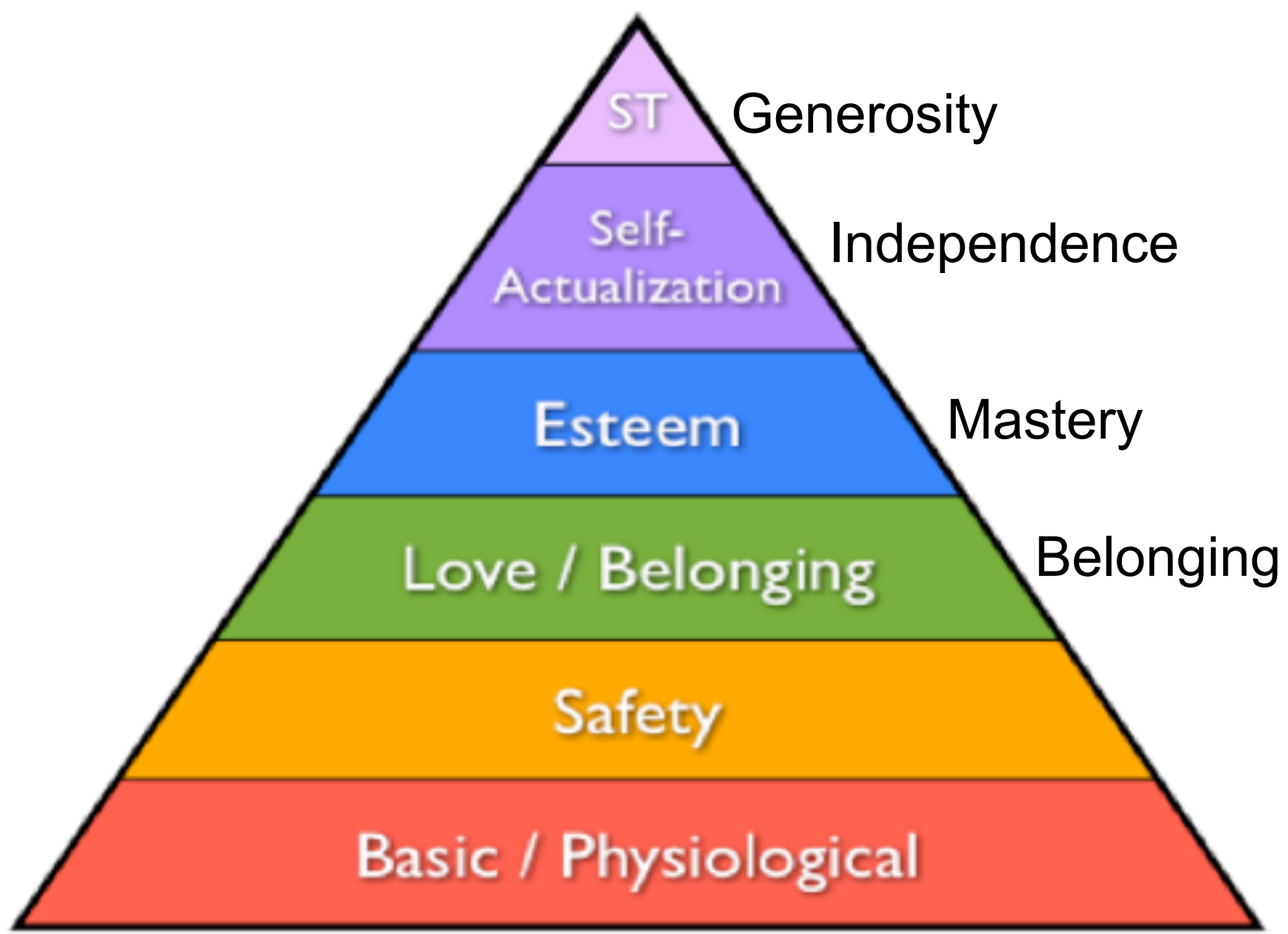
**Belongingness**

**Significance**

Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern

Koltko-Rivera

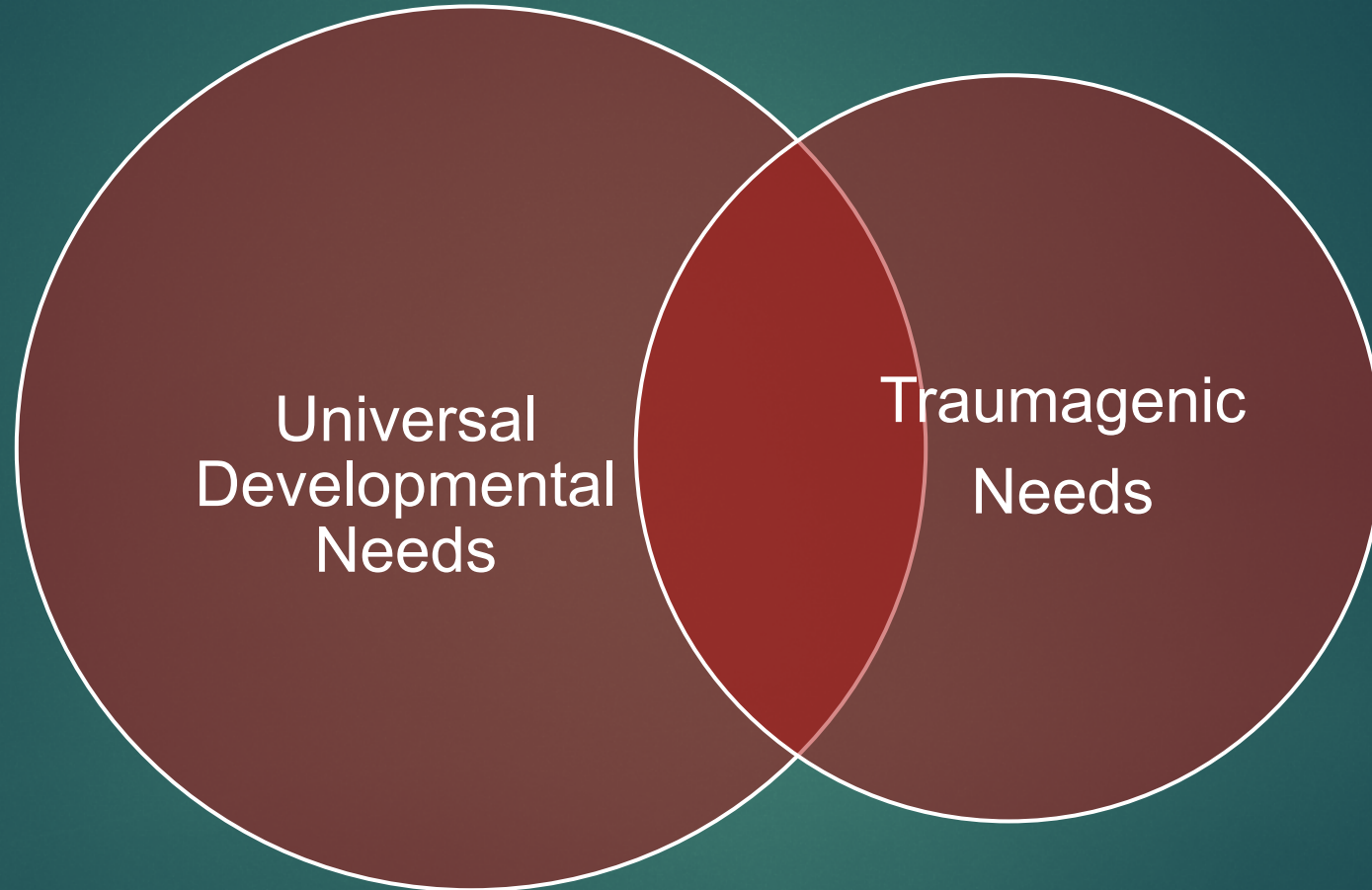
Coopersmith



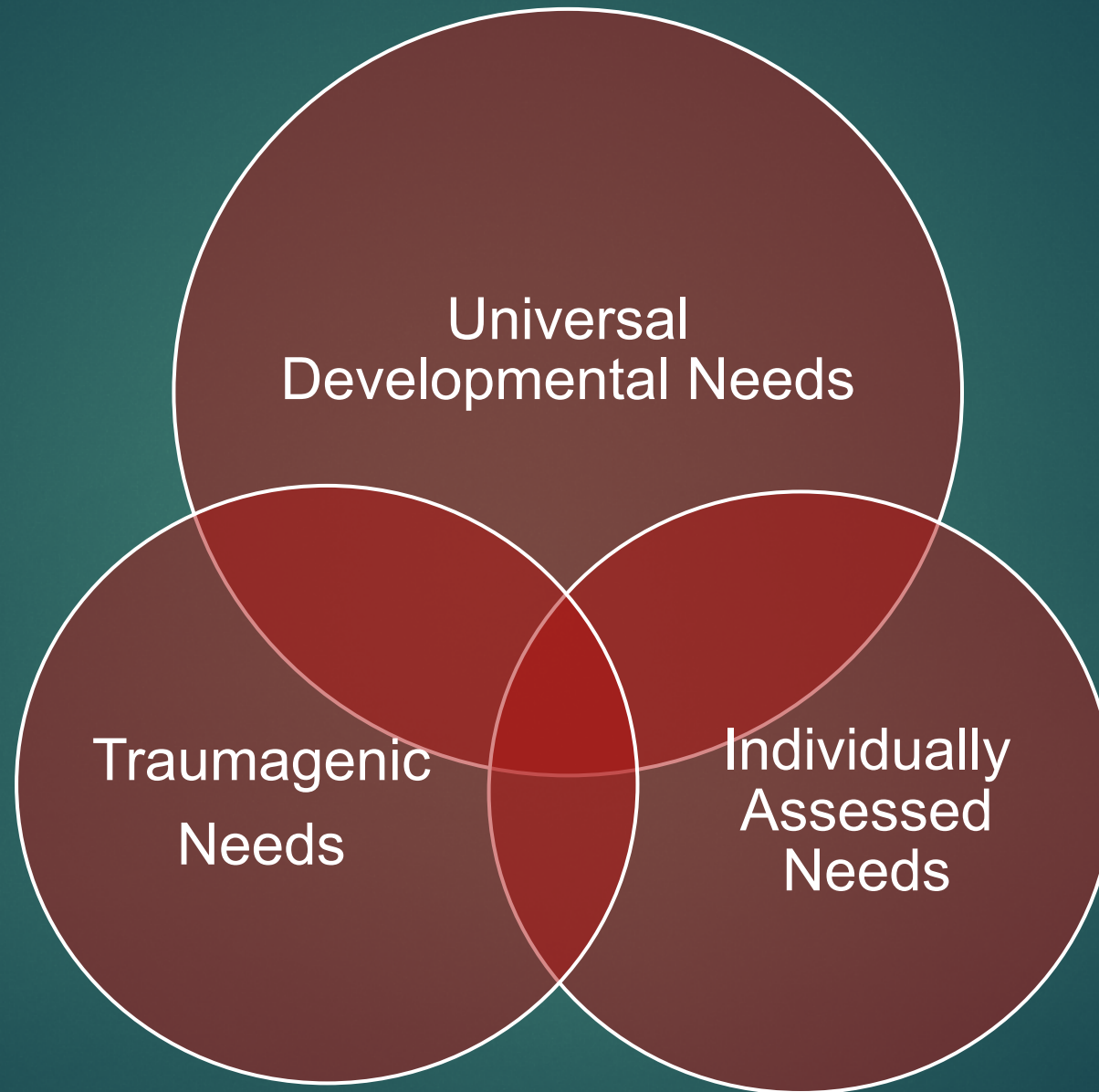




# Universal Developmental Needs









# Trauma

*A psychologically distressing event that is outside the range of usual human experience, often involving a sense of intense fear, terror or helplessness*

Bruce Perry



*Any event that is extremely upsetting, at least temporarily overwhelms an individual's internal resources, and produces lasting psychological symptoms*

Briere & Scott





**Complex, Developmental and Relational Traumas** are forms of Type 2 trauma

These result from exposure to ‘multiple, chronic, and prolonged, adverse events, most often of an interpersonal nature’

Bessel van der Kolk





The essence of trauma  
is feeling godforsaken,  
cut-off from the human  
race

van der Kolk



*Connectedness evolved as the primary  
biological imperative in mammals in their quest  
for survival*

Stephen Porges



*An adverse event  
becomes traumatic  
when it is  
accompanied by a  
sense that one is  
not accompanied -  
that one's ....mind  
is alone'*

*Peter Fonagy*





being alone *may be central to potential trauma becoming embedded trauma*

*Trauma is...a relational experience in that embedding of trauma may arise not primarily from the nature of events, but from **who is with us** before, during, and after overwhelming happening (or non-happening in the case of neglect).*

Bonnie Badenoch

*Normally an accessible other mind provides the social referencing that enables us to frame frightening or otherwise overwhelming experiences.*

Peter Fonagy



Framing  
adverse  
experiences





A young child who receives inconsistent, neglectful, or rejecting caregiving is forced to manage overwhelming experiences by relying on primitive coping skills such as aggression, dissociation, and avoidance.

Kinniburgh et al.



*The ability to offer the safe sanctuary of presence is central to treating trauma...If we felt alone, we needed accompaniment. If we were frightened, we needed protection. If we were shamed, we needed acceptance. If we were hurt, we needed comfort...*

***Lack of support in the midst of wounding seems central to the movement from potential trauma to embedded trauma, and the provision of support that is responsive to the particular wounds is equally central to healing***

Bonnie Badenoch



# Promoting Connections

- Providing focused attention (being present)
- Spending time with them (when possible)
- Noticing and remarking on their interests and strengths
- Encouraging and motivating them
- Finding shared interests
- Being aware of, responding to their inner worlds



*The more healthy relationships a person has, the more likely he/she will be to recover from trauma and thrive. Relationships are the agent of change.*

Perry & Szalavitz.



*Our sense of safety modulates everything from our ability to attend, concentrate, and learn, to our core beliefs about the world, the future and ourselves.*

Louis Cozolino



*Being able to feel safe  
with other people is  
the single most  
important aspect of  
mental health*

Bessel van der Kolk

# THE BODY KEEPS THE SCORE



*Mind, Brain  
and Body in the  
Transformation  
of Trauma*

BESSEL VAN DER KOLK



*Traumatised children  
reset their normal level  
of arousal ...where no  
external threat exists  
they are in a persistent  
state of alarm*

Bruce Perry





*Humans are on a quest to calm neural defence systems **by detecting features of safety...***

Stephen Porges



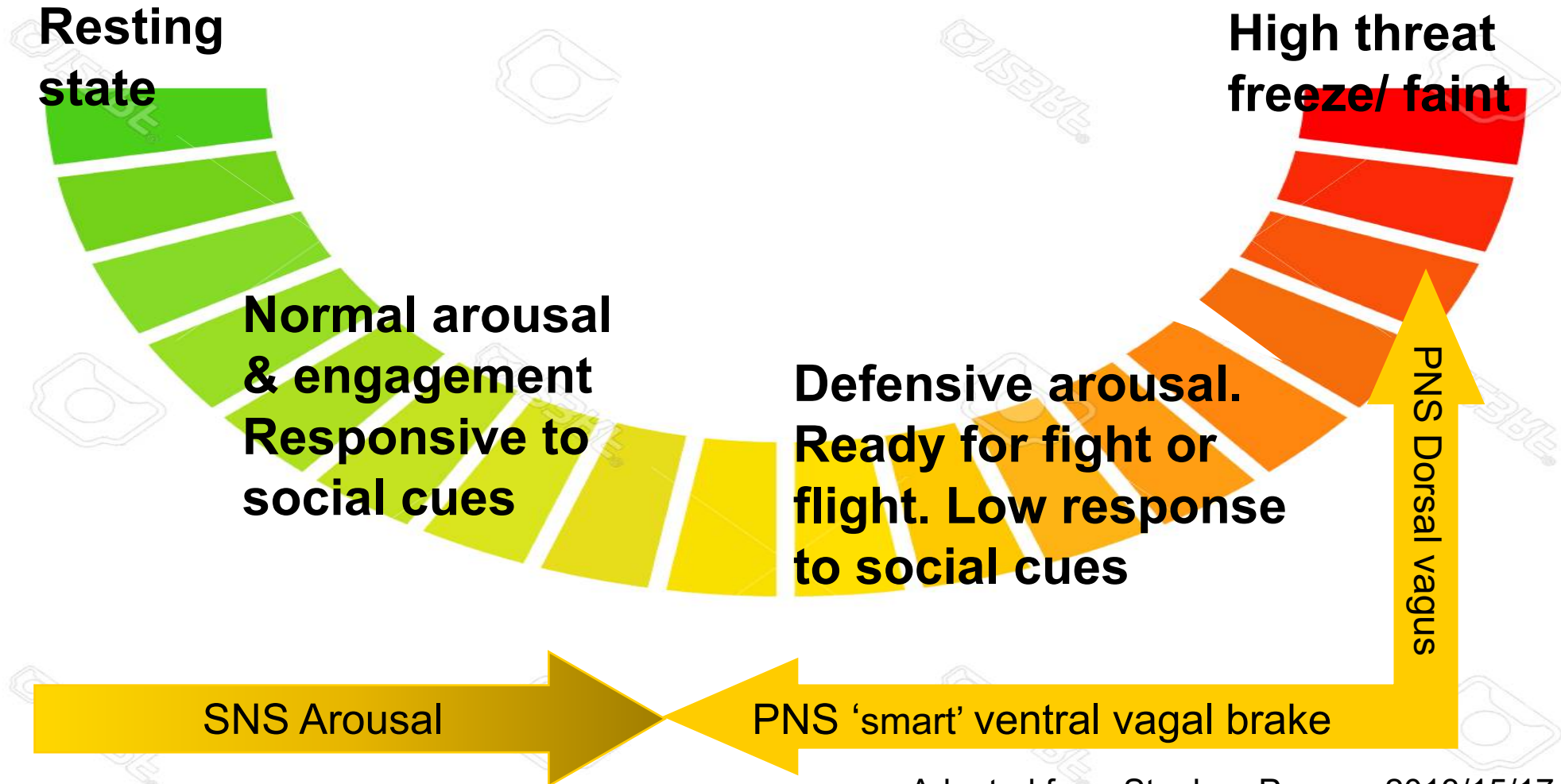


# ***SAFETY***

Physical  
Social/relational  
Cultural  
Emotional

# Visceral state, Autonomic Balance and the 'Vagal Brake'

Perception, Interoception, Neuroception,



Adapted from Stephen Porges, 2013/15/17



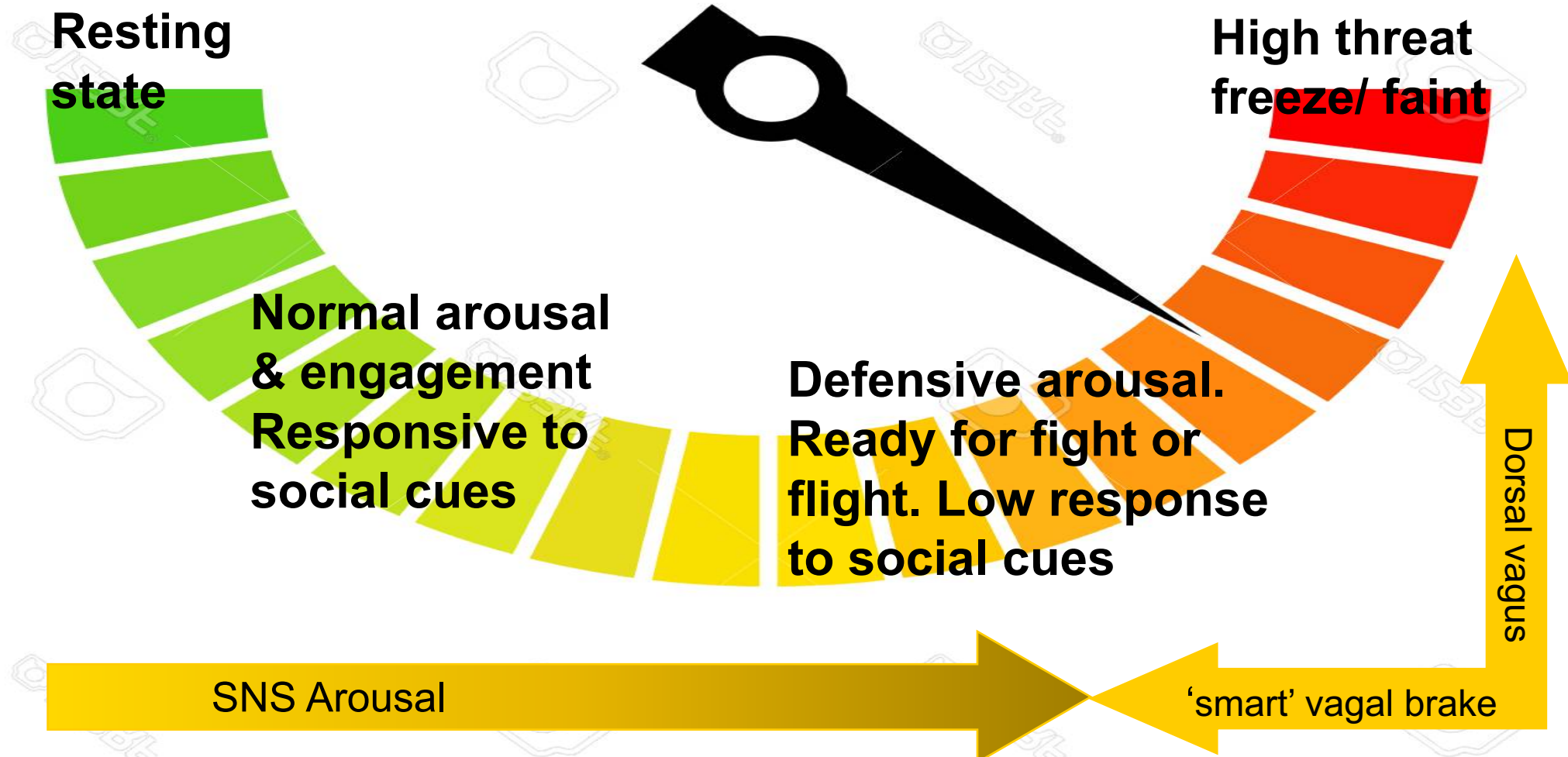
## Social engagement



Adapted from  
Porges 2017

# Visceral state, Autonomic Balance and the 'Vagal Brake'

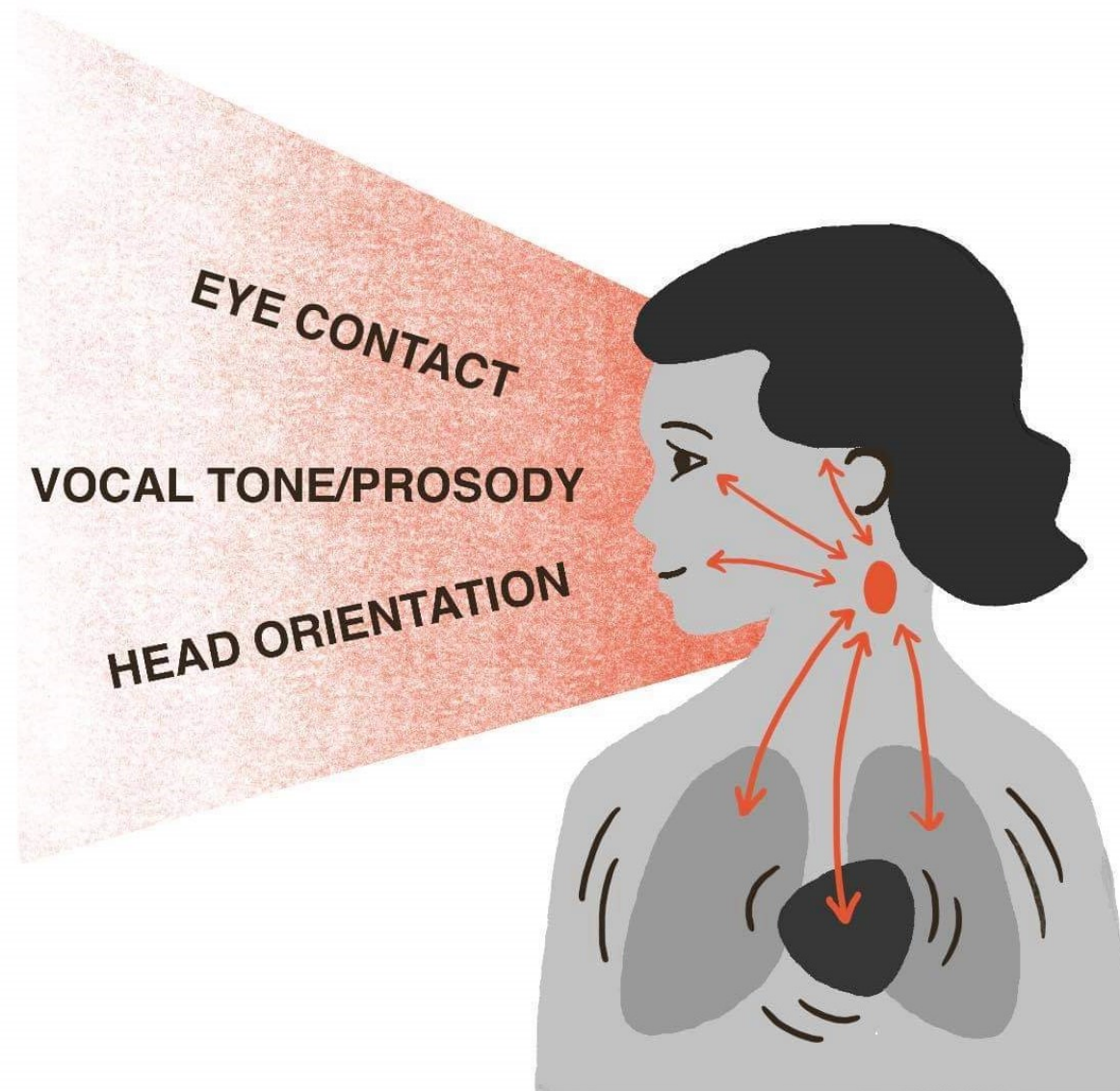
Perception, Interoception, Neuroception,



Adapted from Stephen Porges, 2013/15/17



## Face-Heart Connection



Adapted from  
Porges 2017

*Our nervous system 'anticipates a reciprocal response to a social engagement behaviour'. This promotes 'social interactions, bonding, and trust.' When the expectation is violated, the expectancy 'may trigger physiological states of defence'*

Porges, 2017





*Some children who experience trauma and abuse, experience a mismatch; **the nervous system appraises the environment as dangerous even when it is safe.** This mismatch results in physiological states that support defensive strategies*

Stephen Porges



# Safety

## Myelinated Vagus

- optimal arousal
- rest and digest
- social engagement (tend and befriend)
- executive functioning



# Danger

## Sympathetic Nervous System

- hyperarousal
- fight or flight and active avoidance
- activation of SAM and HPA axis
- vagal withdrawal



# Threat

## Unmyelinated Vagus

- hypoarousal
- passive avoidance
- Immobilization, feigning death, fainting, and shutdown
- PTSD



*The removal of threat is not the same as the  
creation of safety*

Stephen Porges



*Humans are on a quest to calm neural defence systems **by detecting features of safety**...*

*This quest is initiated at birth and continues throughout the lifespan, with needs for trusting friendships and loving partnerships*

Stephen Porges

# The Three Core *Trauma-Related* Needs

1. The need for healthy connections
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*Connection is the  
energy that exists  
between people  
when they feel  
seen, heard, and  
valued...*

Brené Brown



## *Trauma affects ...*

- attachment
- social skills
- biological systems and health
- regulation of emotions and impulses
- dissociation
- behavioural control
- cognitive functioning
- self-concept, shame and guilt
- future orientation



**The most significant consequence of early relational trauma is the child's failure to develop the capacity to self-regulate the intensity and duration of emotional states**

Allan Schore

**At the core of traumatic stress is a breakdown in the capacity to regulate internal states**

Bessel van der Kolk



*The traumatised young person is 'drowning in a sea of fragmented and overwhelming emotions, sensations, and frightening thoughts'*

Louis Cozolino



The primary function of parents can be thought of as teaching their children skills that will help them manage their emotional arousal

Bessel van der Kolk





*...dyadic regulation shapes self-regulation...  
the child learns to regulate her own states of  
arousal and inner processing through  
interactions with another*

Daniel Siegel



*At its root, the ability to learn self-regulation is dependent on there being available, trustworthy, empathic and committed caregivers*

Allan Schore

*Self-regulation is not a learned skill...through processes of co-regulation an individual develops a capacity to self-regulate*

Stephen Porges



*Self-regulation is a product of... 'the mutual, synchronous, and reciprocal interactions between individuals...'*

Stephen Porges

*Kids in stress  
create in adults  
their feelings and,  
if not trained, the  
adults will mirror  
their behavior*

Long & Fecser





# Coercive Regulation versus Co-Regulation

Coercive Regulation	Co-Regulation
One-way reaction	Two-way engagement
Focus on young person's behaviours	Focus on young person's emotions
Harsh, aggressive tone	Soothing, assertive tone
Retaliating to young person's hostility	Absorbing young person's hostility
Ignoring support needs	Meeting support needs

*Rather than advocating teaching self-regulation, we might speak about entering into **relational environments that support internalization of nourishing others** for ongoing regulation*

Bonnie Badenoch



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