

# Trauma - Informed School Design



Creating just and equitable schools through empowered youth voice

*Adapted by*  
Community | Learning | Design  
and Milestone Democratic School

From the  
Core Curriculum of the  
Wisconsin Hawthorn Project



Trauma results in a fundamental reorganization of the way mind and brain manage perceptions. It changes not only how we think and what we think about, but also our very capacity to think. We have discovered that helping victims of trauma find the words to describe what has happened to them is profoundly meaningful, but usually it is not enough. The act of telling the story doesn't necessarily alter the automatic physical and hormonal responses of bodies that remain hypervigilant, prepared to be assaulted or violated at any time. For real change to take place, the body needs to learn that the danger has passed and to live in the reality of the present. Our search to understand trauma has led us to think differently not only about the structure of the mind but also about the processes by which it heals.

*The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*

by Bessel van der Kolk M.D.

- Trauma can be the body's response to anything unfamiliar or anything it doesn't understand.
- Trauma responses are unpredictable. Two bodies may respond very differently to the same stressful or painful event.
- Healing involves discomfort, but so does refusing to heal. And, over time, refusing to heal is always more painful.
- There are two kinds of pain. *Clean pain* is pain that mends and can build your capacity for growth. It's the pain you feel when you know what to say or do; when you really, really don't want to say or do it; and when you do it anyway, responding from the best parts of yourself. *Dirty pain* is the pain of avoidance, blame, or denial—when you respond from your most wounded parts.

*My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies*

by Resmaa Menakem

# Body - Centered Practice

*From*

My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending  
Our Hearts and Bodies

By: Resmaa Menakem MSW LICSW SEP

Narrated by: Cary Hite

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**What do you already know about  
“Trauma -informed practices”?**

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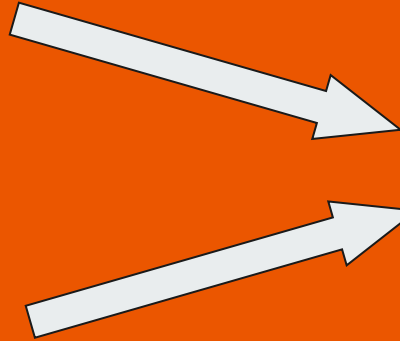
**What are you wondering about  
“Trauma -informed practices”?**

# Our goal for today:

We THINK  
we know...

We know we  
DON'T know...

We KNOW  
we know...





# While we organize...

Get to know each other, and help  
establish some guidelines

Turn to another person (preferably someone  
you don't know well) and:

- Share your preferred name and preferred pronouns
- Take turns answering the following:
  - What qualities do you admire in people you work with short-term?
  - What hopes do you have for new collaborators?
  - What groundrules are important to you when working together?
  - What conditions do you need to be your most-authentic self within this inauthentic situation?



# Gratitude to, and Reciprocity with...

- Jess Dallman, Natural Wisdom Counseling and Wisconsin Hawthorn Project; author and developer of the Core Curriculum from which this resource has been adapted

Find Jess's work at

<https://www.wihawthornproject.com/>

- The Youth Design Team of Milestone Democratic School:
  - Alex Ralyn
  - Devika Pal
  - Gersely Rios
  - Jurie Mayo
  - Malik McDonald
  - Mariah Justice
  - Stefano Oviedo
  - Trendell Dobbs

In a gift economy, the  
more you give, the richer  
you are

The gift economy represents  
a shift from consumption to  
contribution, transaction to  
trust, scarcity to abundance  
and isolation to community.

Charles Eisenstein

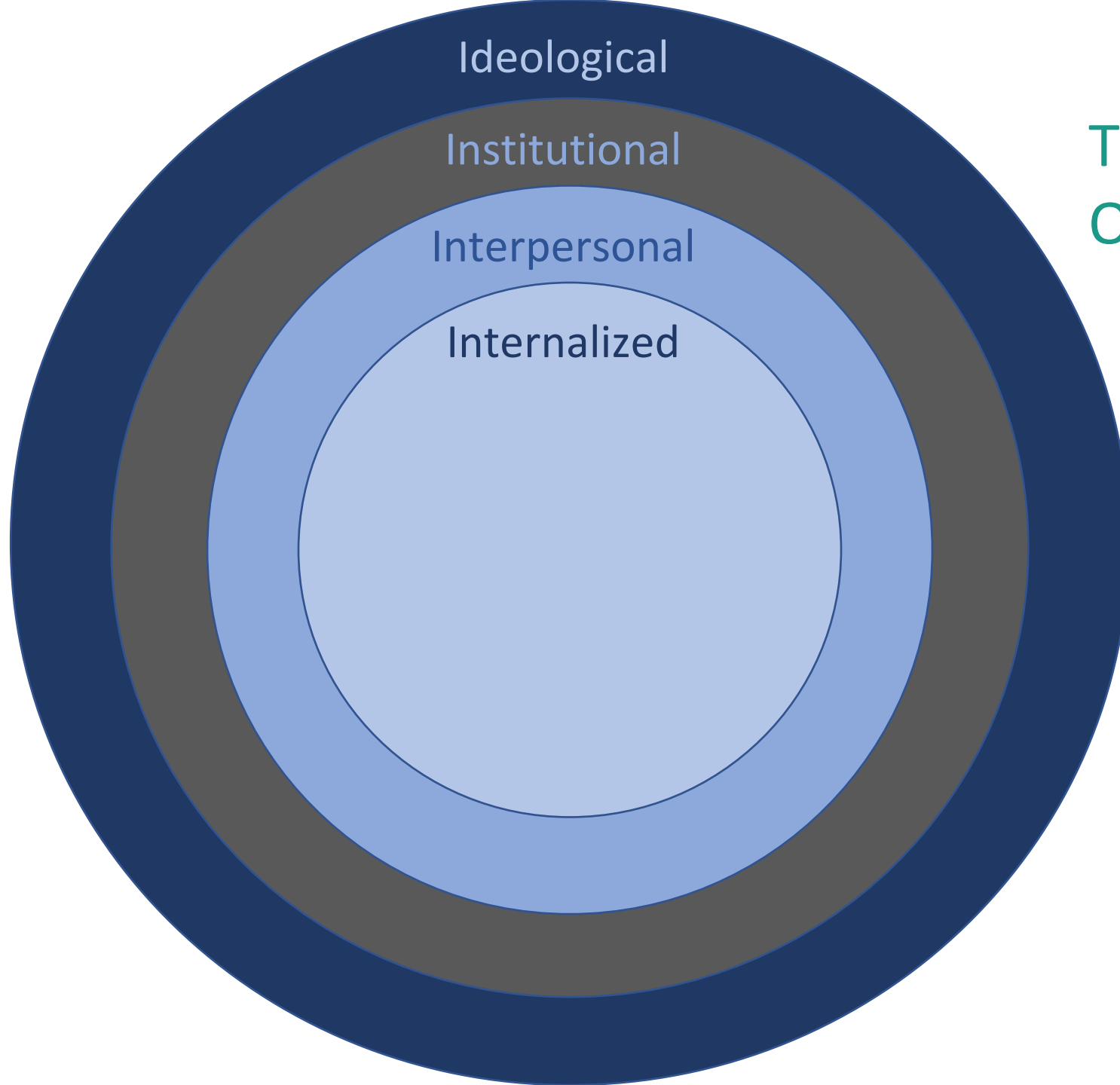
# Co-Creating Brave Space

- Stay Engaged
- Expect Non-Closure
- Express Your Truth
- Experience Discomfort
- Honor the Author



# Oppression and Trauma

—



## The Four I's of Oppression

Ideological

Institutional

Interpersonal

Internalized

Ideological

## The Four I's of Oppression

Dominant thoughts,  
ways of knowing, and  
paradigms (generally  
associated with values and  
judgements)

He is most often cast in roles that need what Robert Zemeckis (who directed “Forrest Gump,” among other Hanks movies) calls “that classic **Everyman** quality.” Over my reporting, many, many people told me what an **Everyman** he is.



- White
- Cis-hetero
- Male
- Adult
- Apparently non-disabled
- English speaker
- Not in poverty, “comfortable”
  
- Definitely “good,” “kind,” “decent”

Menakem:  
White folks represent all humanity, folks of color (“Othered”) only represent their racialized self

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/13/movies/tom-hanks-mister-rogers.html>

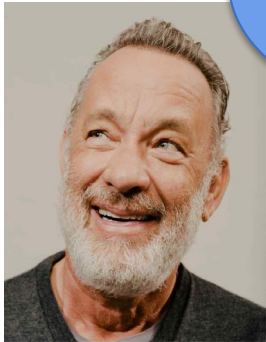
Ideological

Institutional

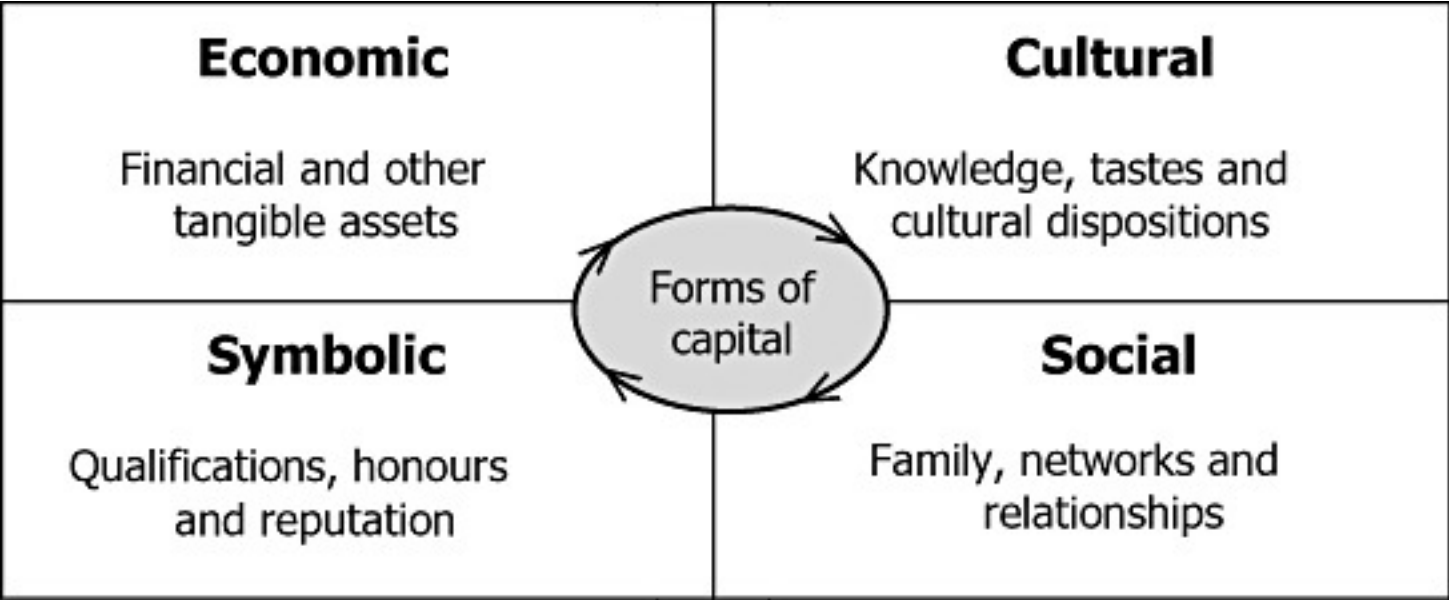
Ways in which policies,  
rules, laws, and systems  
reinforce the dominant  
ideology

## The Four I's of Oppression

Depending on the field in which it functions, and at the cost of the more or less expensive transformations which are the precondition for its efficacy in the field in question, capital can present itself in three fundamental guises: as *economic capital*, which is immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the forms of property rights; as *cultural capital*, which is convertible, on certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the forms of educational qualifications; and as *social capital*, made up of social obligations ('connections'), which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the forms of a title of nobility.<sup>[3]</sup>

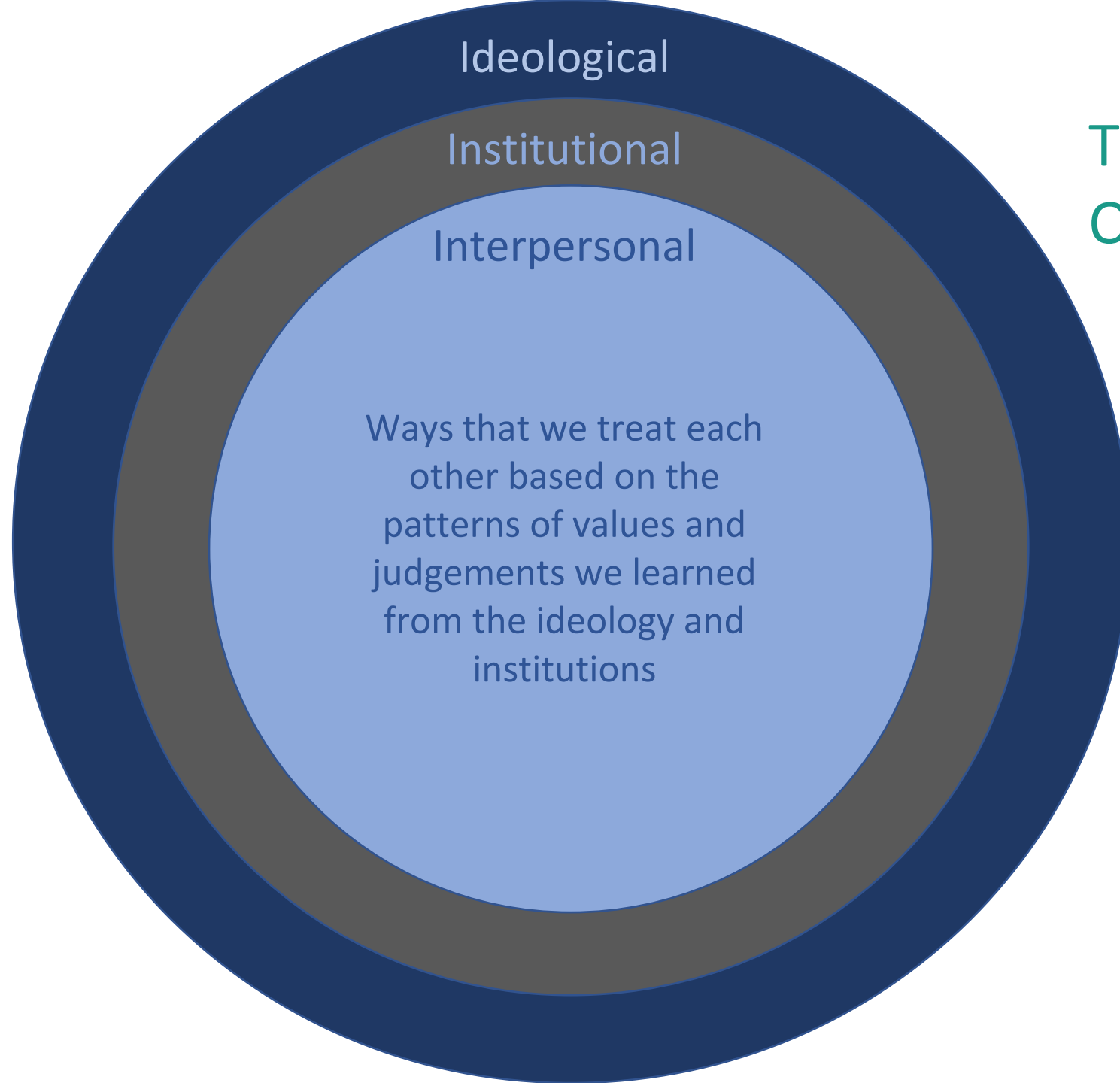


I have all of these! Don't you?!



<https://archive.org/details/PierreBourdieuTheFormsOfCapital/>





## The Four I's of Oppression

Ways that we treat each other based on the patterns of values and judgements we learned from the ideology and institutions



DONATE



# HATE INCIDENTS

Incidents of apparent hate crimes and hate group activities listed here are drawn primarily from media sources.

These incidents include only a fraction of the approximately 260,000 reported and unreported hate crimes that a 2013 government study estimated occur annually.

Search Hate Incidents by keyword



All Incident Types



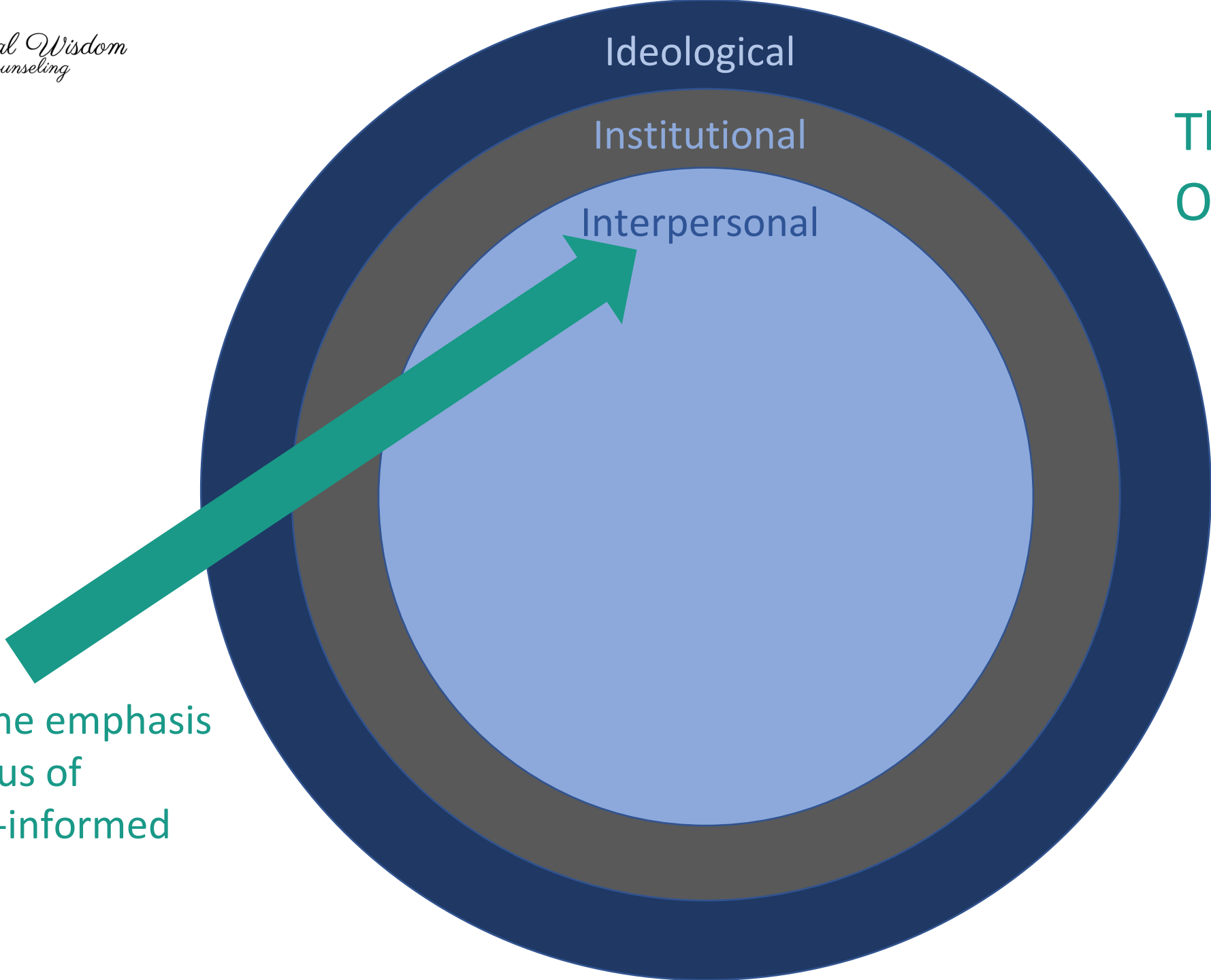
All States



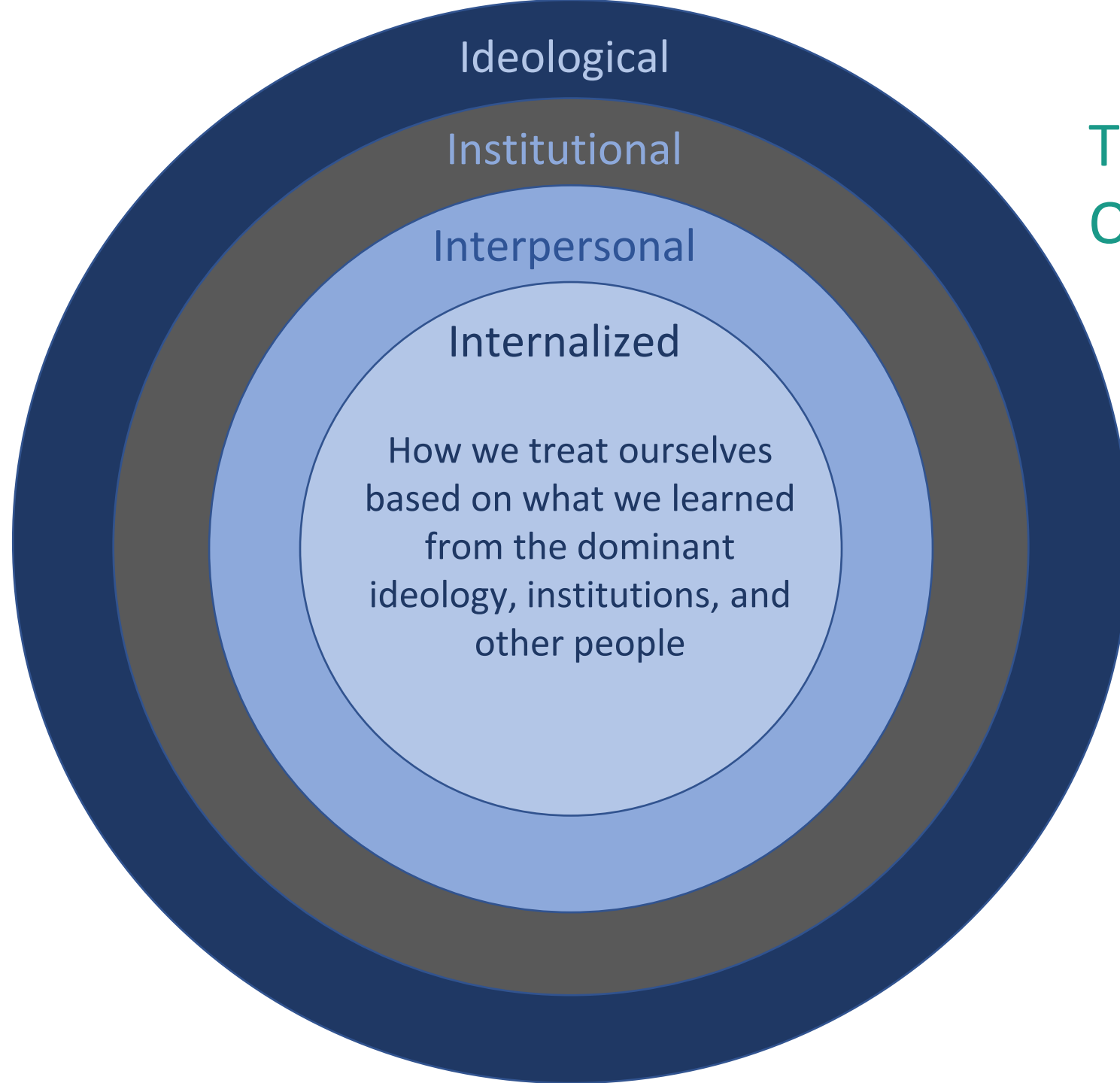
Showing 4115 Results

Reset Search x

# The Four I's of Oppression



Often the emphasis and focus of trauma-informed work



Ideological

Institutional

Interpersonal

Internalized

How we treat ourselves  
based on what we learned  
from the dominant  
ideology, institutions, and  
other people

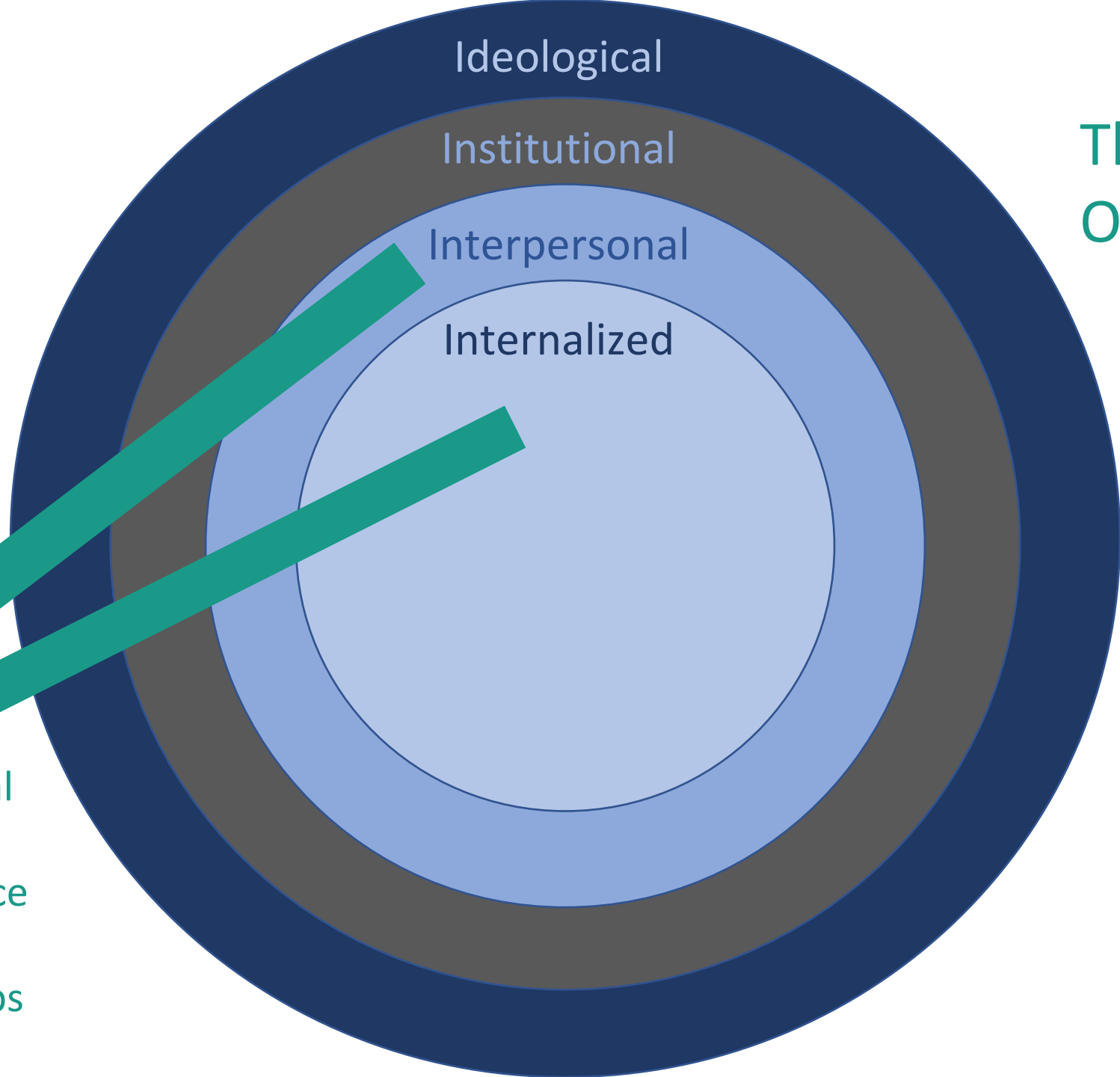
## The Four I's of Oppression

**"If you're not careful,  
the newspapers  
will have you hating  
the people who are  
being oppressed,  
and loving the people  
who are doing  
the oppressing."**

**MALCOLM X**



# The Four I's of Oppression



Combined,  
leads to “horizontal  
oppression”, or  
trauma and violence  
within and among  
marginalized groups

**What is trauma, then?**

—

# The Three E's of Trauma



## Event

- Events / circumstances cause trauma.



## Experience

- An individual's experience of the event determines whether it is traumatic



## Effects

- Effects of trauma include adverse physical, social, emotional, or spiritual consequences.



# Types of Trauma

- Interpersonal Trauma
- Historical Trauma
- Intergenerational Trauma
- Environmental & Disaster Trauma
- Developmental, Attachment, & Early Childhood Trauma
- Institutional & Systemic Trauma
- Complex Trauma
- Chronic Trauma
- Medical Trauma
- Refugee Trauma
- Traumatic Grief & Loss
- Social & Societal Trauma
- Immigration Trauma
- Birth Trauma
- Vicarious Trauma
- Secondary Trauma
- Domestic Violence
- Community Violence
- War, Terrorism, & Political Violence
- Abrupt, Uncontrollable Change
- Maltreatment & Abuse
- Human Trafficking
- Torture
- Neglect
- Bullying
- Death and Loss

# Signs and Symptoms



## Behavioral

- Blowing up when being corrected
- Fighting when criticized or teased
- Resisting transitions or change
- Very protective of personal space
- Reckless or self-destructive behavior
- Frequently seeking attention
- Reverting to younger behaviors

## Emotional/Physical

- Nightmares or sleeping problems
- Sensitive to noise or to being touched
- Fear of being separated from family
- Difficulty trusting others
- Feeling very sad, angry, afraid; emotional swings
- Unexplained medical problems

## Psychological

- Confusing what is safe and what is dangerous
- Trouble focusing or concentrating
- Difficulty imagining the future

# Impact of Stress/Trauma

- Physical
- Emotional
- Cognitive
- Spiritual
- Relational

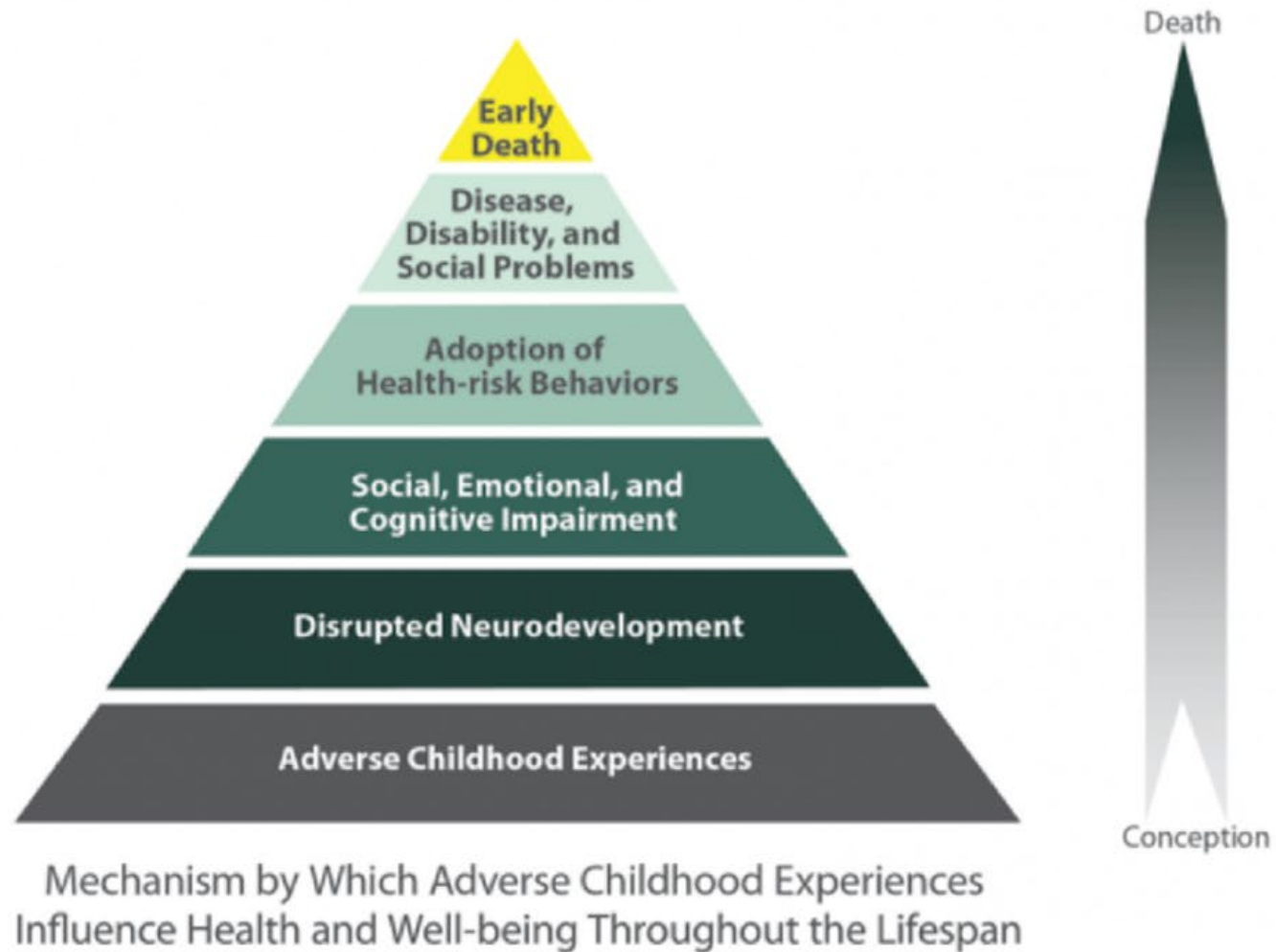
# Measuring Stress/Trauma

- Physiology
  - Skin Conductivity
  - Heart Rate
  - Blood Pressure
  - Cortisol Levels
- Life Stress Test
- Adverse Childhood Experiences

**ACE Score Prevalence for CDC-Kaiser ACE Study Participants by Sex, Waves 1 and 2.**

| Number of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE Score) | Women Percent (N = 9,367) | Men Percent (N = 7,970) | Total Percent (N = 17,337) |
|---|---------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| 0   | 34.5%                     | 38.0%                   | 36.1%                      |
| 1   | 24.5%                     | 27.9%                   | 26.0%                      |
| 2   | 15.5%                     | 16.4%                   | 15.9%                      |
| 3   | 10.3%                     | 8.5%                    | 9.5%                       |
| 4 or more   | 15.2%                     | 9.2%                    | 12.5%                      |

The ACE Pyramid represents the conceptual framework for the ACE Study. The ACE Study has uncovered how ACEs are strongly related to development of risk factors for disease, and well-being throughout the life course.



Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are common. Almost two-thirds of study participants reported at least one ACE, and more than one in five reported three or more ACEs.

The ACE score, a total sum of the different categories of ACEs reported by participants, is used to assess cumulative childhood stress. Study findings repeatedly reveal a graded dose-response relationship between ACEs and negative health and well-being outcomes across the life course.

As the number of ACEs increases so does the risk for the following\*:

- Alcoholism and alcohol abuse
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
- Depression
- Fetal death
- Health-related quality of life
- Illicit drug use
- Ischemic heart disease
- Liver disease
- Poor work performance
- Financial stress
- Risk for intimate partner violence
- Multiple sexual partners
- Sexually transmitted diseases
- Smoking
- Suicide attempts
- Unintended pregnancies
- Early initiation of smoking
- Early initiation of sexual activity
- Adolescent pregnancy
- Risk for sexual violence
- Poor academic achievement

Dose-response describes the change in an outcome (e.g., alcoholism) associated with differing levels of exposure (or doses) to a stressor (e.g. ACEs). A graded dose-response means that as the dose of the stressor increases the intensity of the outcome also increases.

\*This list is not exhaustive. For more outcomes see [selected journal publications](#).

✓ ACEs Prevalence

The prevalence estimates reported below are from the entire ACE Study sample (n=17,337).

Prevalence of ACEs by Category for CDC-Kaiser ACE Study Participants by Sex, Waves 1 and 2.

| ACE Category                   | Women               | Men                 | Total                |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
|                                | Percent (N = 9,367) | Percent (N = 7,970) | Percent (N = 17,337) |
| <b>ABUSE</b>                   |                     |                     |                      |
| Emotional Abuse                | 13.1%               | 7.6%                | 10.6%                |
| Physical Abuse                 | 27%                 | 29.9%               | 28.3%                |
| Sexual Abuse                   | 24.7%               | 16%                 | 20.7%                |
| <b>HOUSEHOLD CHALLENGES</b>    |                     |                     |                      |
| Mother Treated Violently       | 13.7%               | 11.5%               | 12.7%                |
| Household Substance Abuse      | 29.5%               | 23.8%               | 26.9%                |
| Household Mental Illness       | 23.3%               | 14.8%               | 19.4%                |
| Parental Separation or Divorce | 24.5%               | 21.8%               | 23.3%                |
| Incarcerated Household Member  | 5.2%                | 4.1%                | 4.7%                 |
| <b>NEGLECT</b>                 |                     |                     |                      |
| Emotional Neglect <sup>3</sup> | 16.7%               | 12.4%               | 14.8%                |
| Physical Neglect <sup>3</sup>  | 9.2%                | 10.7%               | 9.9%                 |

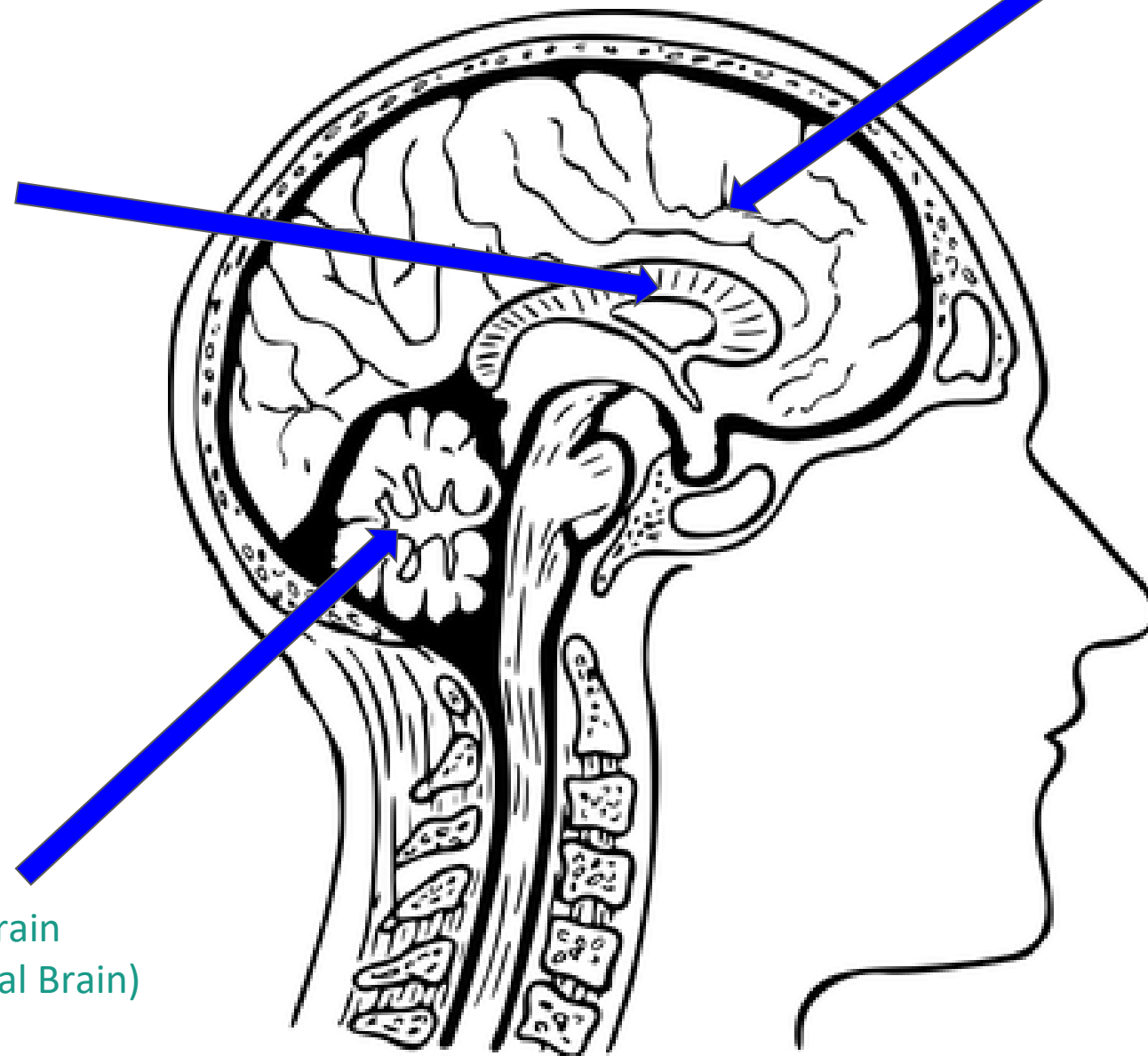
Note: <sup>3</sup>Collected during Wave 2 only (N=8,629). Research papers that use Wave 1 and/or Wave 2 data may contain slightly different prevalence estimates.

# Triune Brain

Mid Brain  
(Emotional Brain)

Frontal Cortex  
(Thinking Brain)

Hind Brain  
(Survival Brain)



How can our school be  
“trauma -informed”?

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# The Four R's of a Trauma-Informed Environment

## Realizes

- *Realizes* widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery

## Recognizes

- *Recognizes* signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff, and others involved with the system

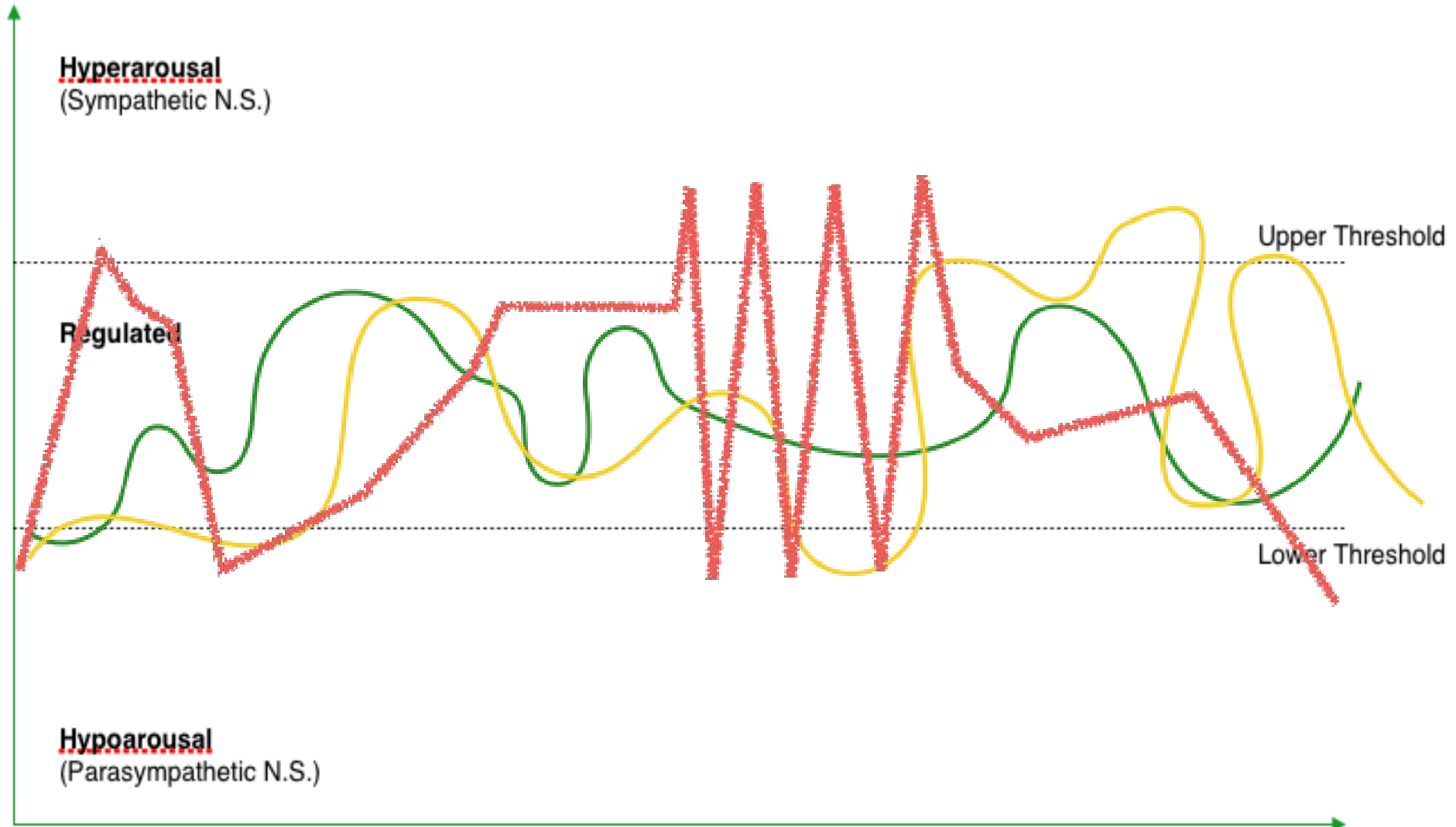
## Responds

- *Responds* by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices

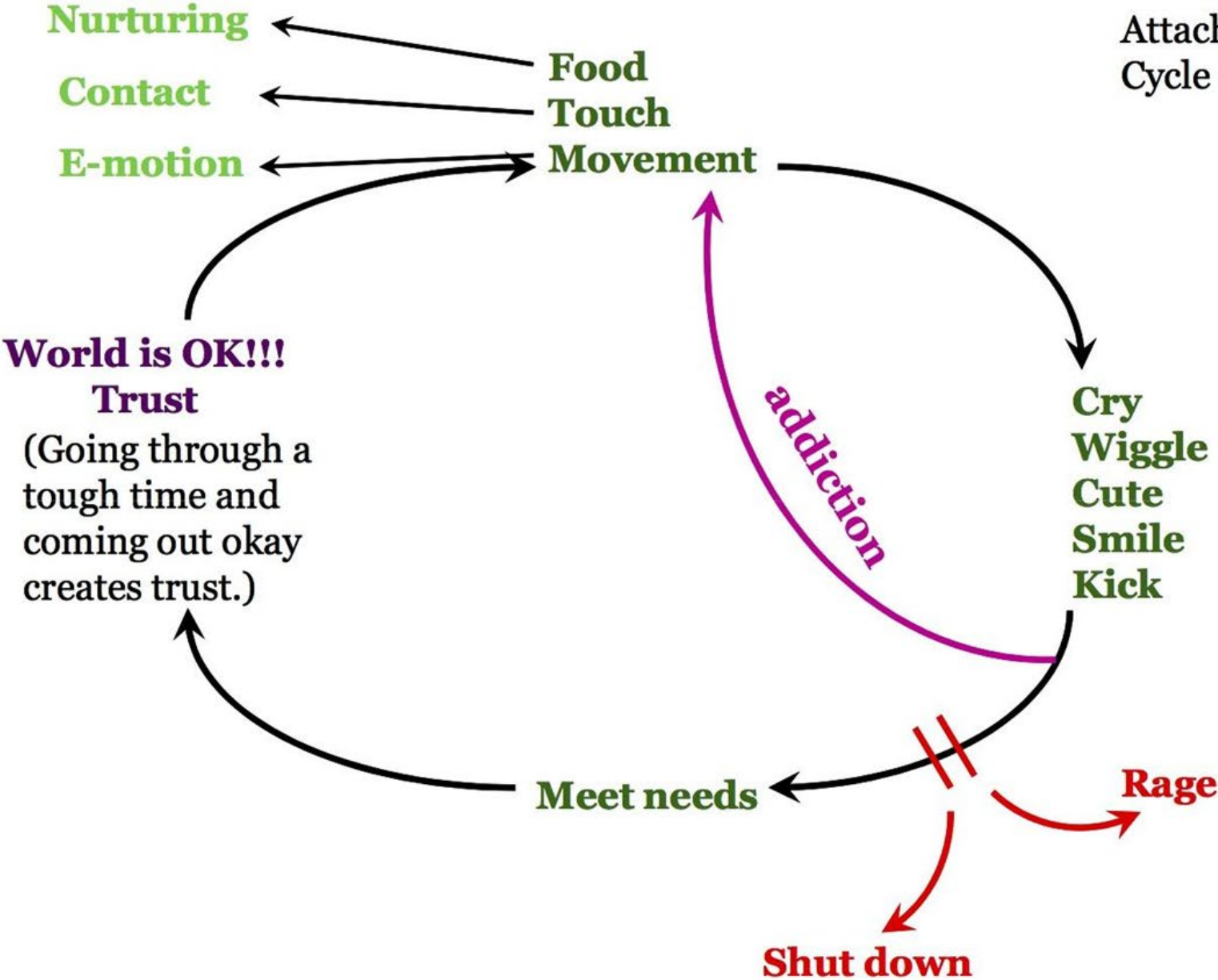
## Resists

- *Seeks to actively Resist* re-traumatization.

# Window of Tolerance



Freeman  
Attachment  
Cycle



Creating an  
environment of physical  
and emotional safety for  
the survivors and  
providers

# Regulating Intervention: Play

- Games
- Dance/Movement
- Art
  - Music
  - Paint/Draw/Sculpt
  - Poetry



# Regulating Intervention: Nature

- Nervous System Regulation
- Fascination & Play
- Resiliency & Stress Recovery



# Regulating Interventions: Mindfulness

- Body Scan
- Breath Work
- Awareness Exercises

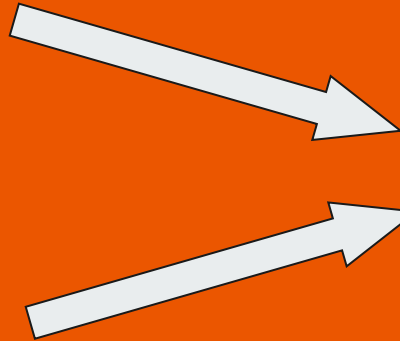


# How did we do?

We THINK  
we know...

We know we  
DON'T know...

We KNOW  
we know...





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With gratitude and reciprocity -

“May tomorrow bring us more  
justice and some peace.”  
(Miriam Kaba)