

Trauma Informed Practice: Healing and Resilience Through the Arts

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Entry Activity

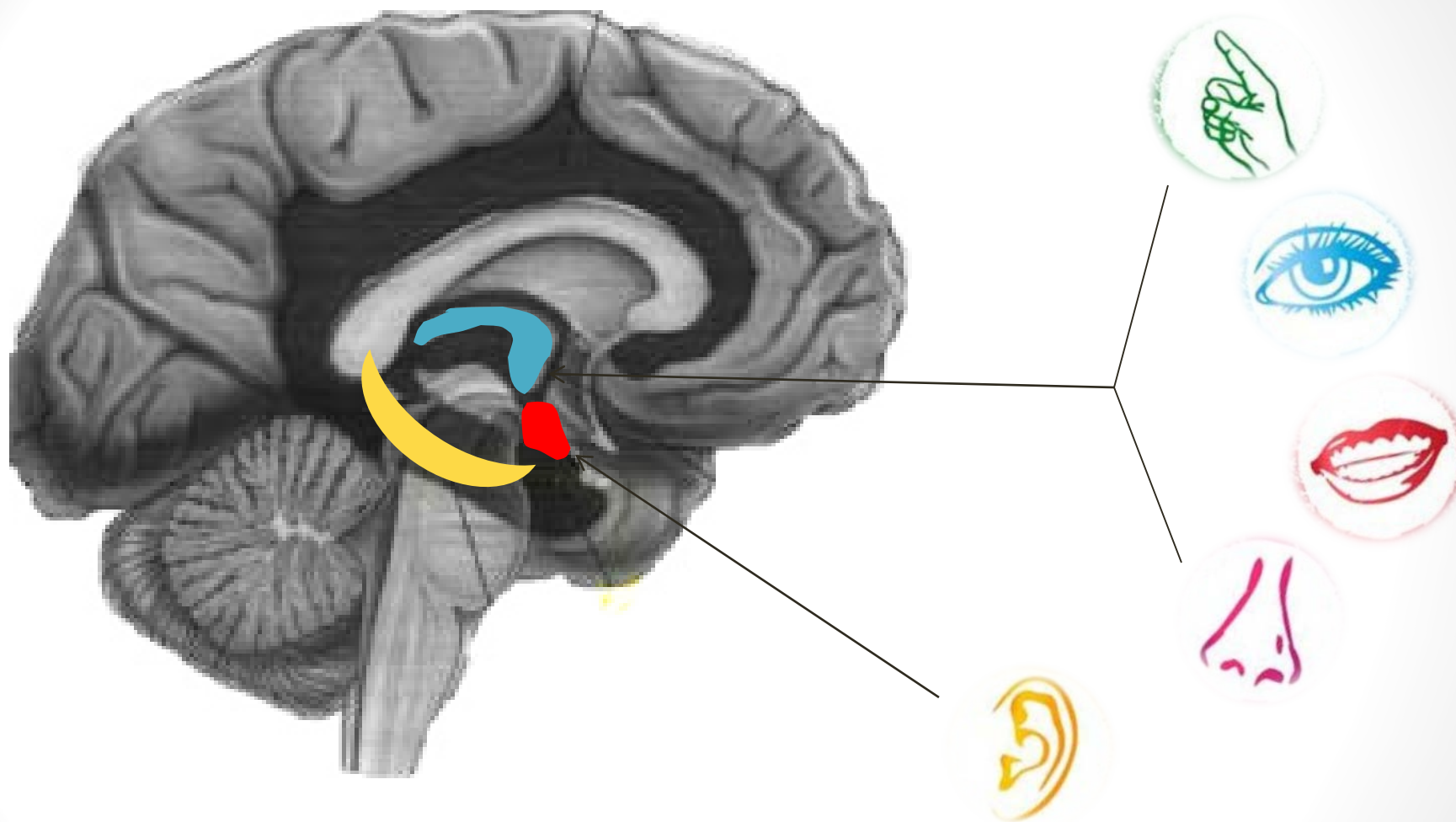
- As you get settled, please answer the following question on a POST-IT:

How do you create safety in your classroom or in your community?

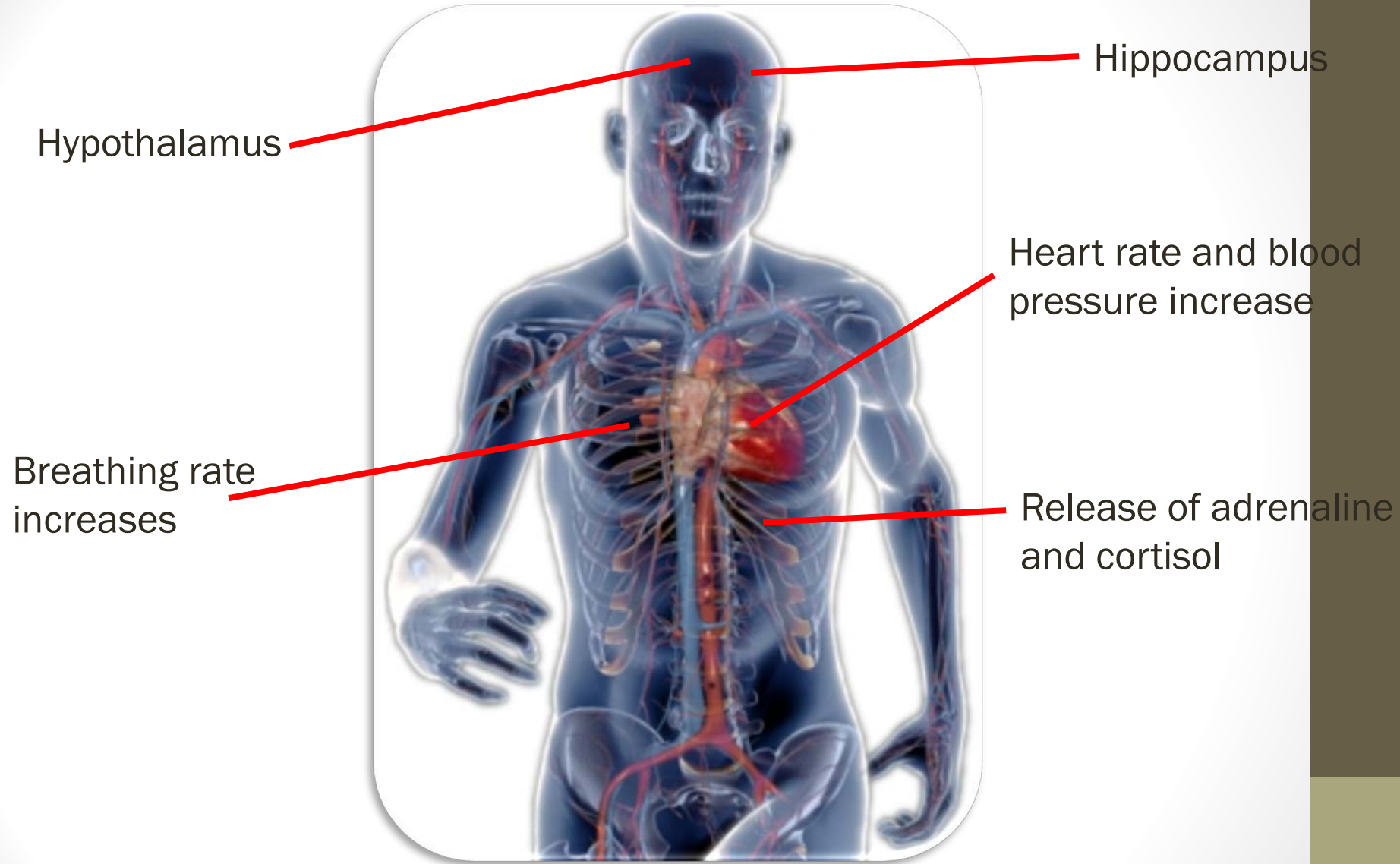
Definition of Trauma

- Trauma is defined as an experience that creates lasting, substantial psycho-social, emotional, and somatic impact on individuals
- Differentiate between singular event trauma vs. chronic trauma vs. systemic trauma
- Socio-emotional and Cognitive Development Birth to Adolescence:
 - Tasks of early childhood
 - Tasks of adolescence

The Fear Response in the Brain



Fight, Flee, or Freeze (to protect)



Development Birth to 5

“The Relational Brain”

- Our brains are hard wired for relationships and growth is *largely dependent* on the nature and quality of a child’s early relationships with caregivers and others.
- Developing a secure attachment (world is safe and predictable) is correlated with the ability to self-regulate emotion and problem-solve in later childhood/adolescence. To do this parents respond to infant/toddlers emotions (sad, angry, happy).
- A balance of stress hormones (not too much or too little) are needed to develop an appropriately regulated “warning” system for responding to threat
- Higher exposure to new words and languages builds capacity for later literacy and language capacity.

Development in Adolescence

- From early childhood, children gradually gain higher level cognitive and self regulation skills. Then, in adolescence, the brain undergoes another rapid period of intense growth and development.
- Key development time for perspective taking, and cognitive control.
- Peer relationships significantly heighten in importance as youth begin to individuate from authority figures. At the same time, youth still rely on caregivers to help them navigate independence.
- The brain begins rapidly building and pruning connections as youth begin to experience the world independently.
- High tolerance for risk; High sensitivity to reward

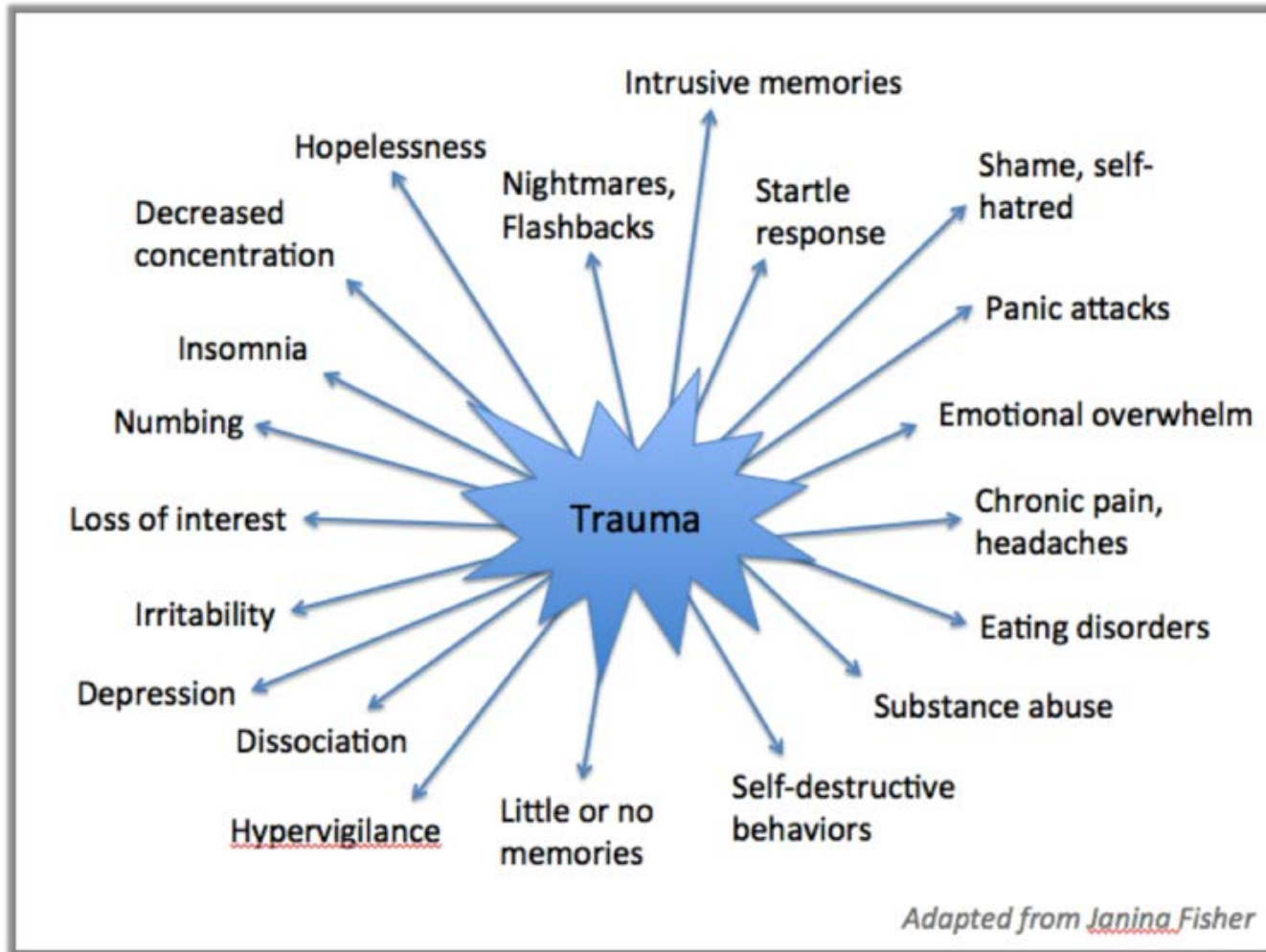
Architecture Game



Resiliency (basis for brain architecture game)

- Genetic foundation for tolerating emotional frustration : cognitive control (ability to reflect on choices before acting).
- Genetic foundation for perceiving others' perspectives and one's impact on others.
- Social support. A wider support network reinforces identity, sense of worth and opportunities for instrumental support.
- Privilege. The availability of support and opportunity. Food, housing and economic stability.
- Skill building for emotion regulation, problem-solving, and identity development.

Responses Chart



- **Attachment.** Traumatized children feel that the world is uncertain and unpredictable. Their relationships can be characterized by problems with boundaries, as well as distrust and suspiciousness. As a result, traumatized children can become socially isolated and have difficulty relating to and empathizing with others.
- **Biology.** Traumatized children demonstrate biologically based challenges, including problems with movement and sensation, hypersensitivity to physical contact, and insensitivity to pain. They can have problems with coordination, balance, and body tone, as well as unexplained physical symptoms and increased medical problems (e.g., asthma, skin problems, and autoimmune disorders).
- **Mood regulation.** Children exposed to trauma can have difficulty regulating their emotions, as well as difficulty knowing and describing their feelings and internal states. They can have difficulty appropriately communicating wishes and desires to others.
- **Dissociation.** Some traumatized children sometimes experience a feeling of detachment or depersonalization, as if they are “observing” something happening to themselves that is unreal. They can also withdraw from the outside world or demonstrate amnesia-like states.
- **Behavioral control.** Traumatized children can demonstrate poor impulse control, self-destructive behavior, and aggression against others. Sleep disturbances and eating disorders can also be manifestations of child traumatic stress.
- **Cognition.** Children exposed to trauma can have problems focusing on and completing tasks in school, as well as difficulty planning and anticipating. They sometimes have difficulty understanding their own contribution to what happens to them. Some traumatized children demonstrate learning difficulties and problems with language development.
- **Self-concept.** Traumatized children can experience the lack of a continuous, predictable sense of self. They can suffer from disturbances of body image, low self-esteem, shame, and guilt.



RIVER STORIES

RIVER STORIES PROMPT:

Name three events that define who you are/have become as a person. Reflect on the experiences. Feel free to close your eyes, draw, color. Then describe each experience in three words. You should have (9) total words.

Each person will choose one event and create a gesture that encapsulates it. You will then teach the other members of your group your gesture and collaborate to create a choreo-poem using everyone's gestures and some of the words you used to describe the event.

CHOREOPOEM:

Create a choreopoem that transforms your experiences into an empowered mantra.

Each person will choose one event and create a gesture that encapsulates it. You will then teach the other members of your group your gesture and collaborate to create a choreo-poem using everyone's gestures and some of the words you used to describe the event.

CHOREOPOEM PROMPT:

Each person will choose one event and create a gesture that encapsulates it. You will then teach the other members of your group your gesture and collaborate to create a choreopoem using everyone's gestures and some of the words you used to describe the event.

Ingredients for the choreopoems:

- We need to see each person's gesture at least once.
- Everyone should use at least one of their words (feel free to use more).
- Repetition can be used.
- New words and gestures can be added.
- Should be no longer than two minutes.

Key Principles of Trauma Informed Care

- Safety, Trustworthiness, and Transparency (Protect)
 - Focus on Relationships/ Peer Support (Connect)
 - Collaboration, Mutuality, Voice, and Choice (Respect)
 - Skill-Building, Empowerment (Teach & Re- Direct)
 - Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues (Listen and Re-frame)
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- PROMPT: Using the core principles of trauma informed care, brainstorm strategies and applications in your teaching practice (given your discipline) that could work to support these principles.

Creating a Safe Learning Environment

- Reframing the question “What’s wrong with you?” with “What is happening to you?”
- Be willing to explore your own privilege and projections and how they impact the way you see and engage young people.
 - Privilege walk game or privilege bingo
 - Treasure chest, hope chest, ice chest writing activity
- Share elements of your own story
- Structure some elements of classroom in predictable ways.
- Involve youth in setting up a community agreement, establishing rules of engagement, and self care plans.

What can you do . . .

- When presented with a difficult behavior, remember that
 - #1 The task of adolescence is to individuate from authority. Youth have to test these bounds in order to feel that they can make this jump to adulthood. Provide a positive adult model for them for how to manage these challenges by enforcing clear and consistent rules in a supportive manner.
 - #2 If the behavior happens after youth are asked to reflect on something emotional or personal, the youth may be trying to avoid experiencing a difficult emotion or memory. Give the youth the opportunity to take a break from the activity if they like, and connect with the emotion they are experiencing if it feels appropriate (validate).
 - #3 You can frame activities up front to help youth manage any emotions that activities may bring up. Introduce activities and normalize that they may bring up emotions. Create a plan if youth feel that they need to leave for a period of time and let know that activities are voluntary.