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**Welcome!**



# Trauma-Informed Small Business Support

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# Agenda

- Brief mindfulness
- Didactic
  - Overview of trauma's impact on the brain and behavior
  - Harnessing curiosity for connection
  - Strategies for meeting clients where they are
- Small group – Client Vignettes
- Debrief and questions



# Let's Take a Moment to Land

**Why are we talking about this?**



# Goals

- Learn how trauma affects the brain and behavior
- Learn how to harness curiosity to create connection with clients
- Learn strategies for applying the entrepreneurial quality of flexibility to really meet clients where they are

# So that we can:

- Have more clients that are 'coachable'
- Celebrate more client successes
- Increase our own personal fulfilment as our skills as advisors increase, helping more people

# Key Takeaways

- A trauma-informed approach is a mindset applied across the board
- We don't need to know if someone has a trauma history
- Transparency and clear communication support safety and control
- We have expertise, but clients are the experts (of their lives)
- Curiosity build bridges – and makes better maps!
- Quality over quantity increases impact
- Self awareness is vital



# Impact of Trauma

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## Prefrontal Cortex

Rational thinking - regulates emotions such as fear responses from the amygdala - with PTSD this has a reduced volume

## Hippocampus

Responsible for memory and differentiating between past and present - works to remember and make sense of the trauma. With consistent exposure to trauma, it shrinks.

## Amygdala

Wired for survival, when active it is hard to think rationally. The more hyperactive the amygdala is, the more signs of PTSD are present.

**The brain creates templates**

## THE TRAUMA RESPONSE

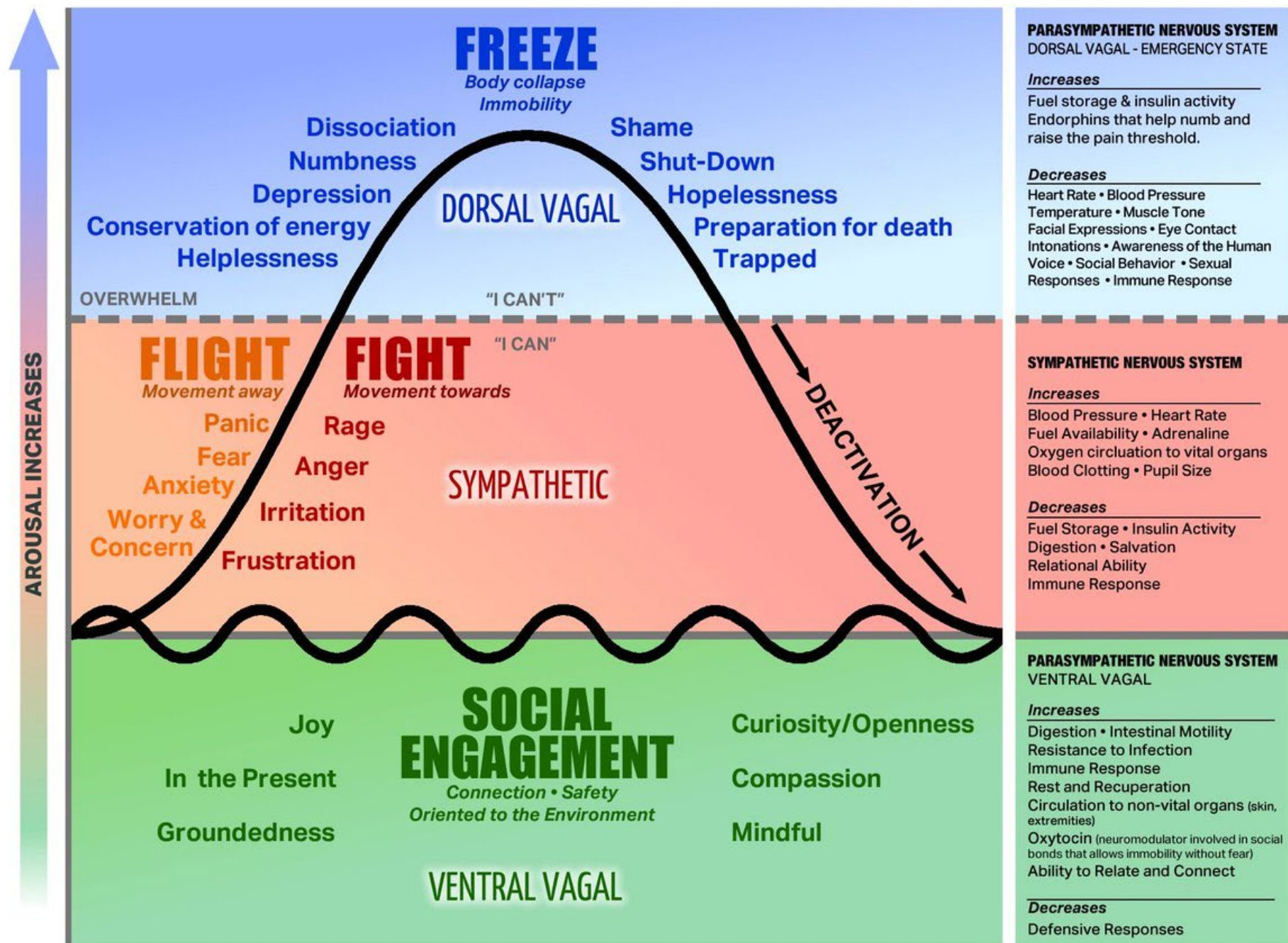
**FLIGHT**  
"run away from the bear"  
remove self from situation

**FIGHT**  
"fight the bear"  
when flight is not an option  
verbally or physically attack

**FREEZE**  
"play dead"  
when flight and fight are not an option  
body shuts down -  
inability to think, speak, fight, or flight

**FAWN**  
"keep the bear happy"  
when there's no other option  
do whatever it takes to avoid/diffuse danger

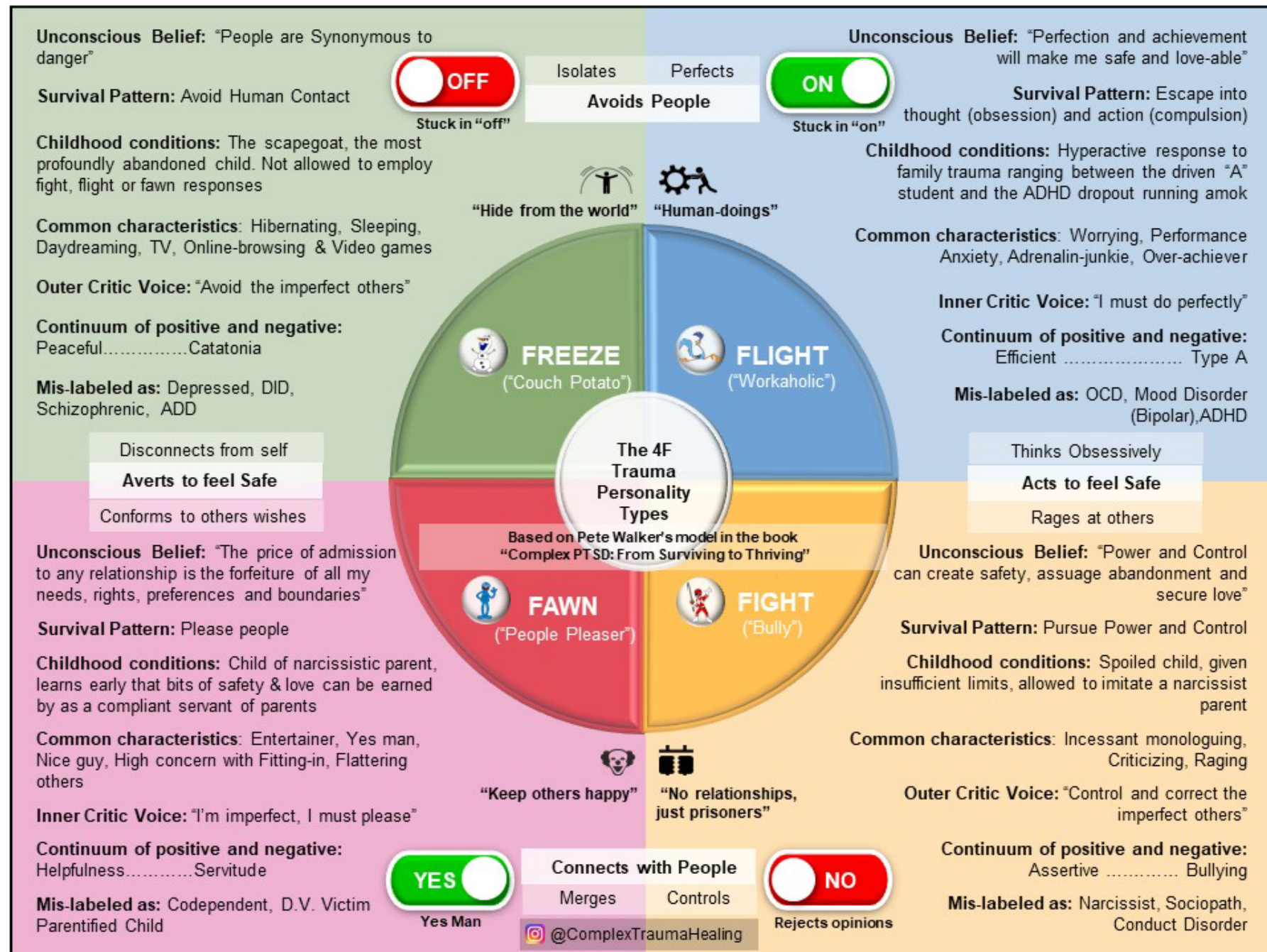




Adapted by Ruby Jo Walker from: Cheryl Sanders, Steve Hoskinson, Steven Porges and Peter Levine

[rubyjowalker.com](http://rubyjowalker.com)





# Curiosity for Connection

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**Curiosity builds empathy,  
and empathy builds genuine connection**





“Empathy is crucial for authentic connection. It empowers you to connect on a deeper level as you recognize and validate the feelings of another. When you approach relationships with curiosity, empathy grows. Conversations go beyond the simple exchange of information to shared moments of understanding.”

Domenic Romano in Inc.’s

How to Use the Art of Curiosity to Build Genuine Connections

<https://www.inc.com/entrepreneurs-organization/how-to-use-art-of-curiosity-to-build-genuine-connections.html>

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# Setting the Foundation

- Invite feedback
- Give them control
  - Preferred communication method
  - Preferred processing method
  - Accessibility needs
- Other experience with TA
  - What worked, what didn't



# Setting the Foundation

- Use clear and transparent communication
  - Format emails clearly
  - Structure call agenda clearly
  - Use bullet-pointed action item emails
  - Explain what you are doing and why



# Centering the Client

- Be truly interested and actively listen
- Get curious about their “why”
- Use reflective statements
- Infer but clarify
- “Tell me more”
- Avoid reframing



# Taking Care of You

- Curiosity has to be genuine – people can tell!
- Having an off day? Be transparent, model
- Having trouble being curious?
  - Is it only a certain client?
  - Is it most everyone?
- Selfcare is mandatory!



# Flexibility as an Advisor

# Quality over Quantity

Numbers can tell stories, but what story do you want your numbers to tell?



**People who have experienced trauma have a barrier that others don't**

**Any barrier can make asking for help overwhelming, and make trust feel threatening**

**Meet people where they are by moving at the speed of trust**



# What does this have to do with flexibility?

- Trauma can impact anyone, but...
- Certain factors increase prevalence:
  - Poverty
  - Connection to the military or exposure to war
  - Certain developmental and intellectual disabilities
  - Addiction
  - Membership in groups often targeted by hate crimes
  - Incarceration

- Many of our clients experience or possess these factors
- The different ways trauma responses can show up in behavior mean we have to be willing to adapt our way of working to the individual
- “What does the client need?” vs. “This is how business advising looks”

Numbers can tell stories, but what story do you want  
your numbers to tell?



# Being Flexible

- Our business expertise is ‘what’ we offer clients
- A trauma-informed approach is about ‘how’ we offer it
- Review:
  - Transparent and clear communication
  - Genuine curiosity
  - Affirm and reaffirm the client is in control

# Being Flexible

- Model slowing down
- Model mindful presence
- Model play/creativity
- Model intentional decision making

# Being Flexible

- If anxiety and difficulty with focus and organization are present for the client:
  - Be curious about what works for them
  - Break down advice into clear steps and move one at a time
  - Reinforce peer support for accountability/cheerleading and body-doubling
  - Expect and plan for shorter, frequent connection points

# Being Flexible

- In general:
  - Respect when people are in listening mode
  - Avoid putting quieter folks on the spot in groups
  - Emphasize choice
  - Follow up with people who no show or leave mid-way  
and be curious about barriers

# Being Flexible

- In general:
  - Always do warm introductions, AND get permission first
  - Normalize challenges, normalize not knowing
  - Nurture collaboration with other TA providers
  - Maintain a list of community resources



# Extras:

- When asking members of the BIPOC community, the LGBTQIA+ community, the disabled community, and others to provide a service, consider:
  - Be mindful and transparent with the ask
  - Acknowledge you are asking for emotional labor also
  - Be particularly transparent when you are unable to compensate
    - find ways to ensure it's mutually beneficial
- Stewardship – ensure that our advice aligns with the client's values, and supports community resilience

**Pause**



# Client Vignettes

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# Small group discussion

- 25 min
- Choose a notetaker
- Choose a speaker
- Choose 1-2 vignettes to discuss as a group
- Prepare the speaker to share your takeaways

# Debrief and Questions

# Thank you!

Please reach out!

Email is best:

[creber@cweonline.org](mailto:creber@cweonline.org)

