



# Breaking The Trauma Triangle

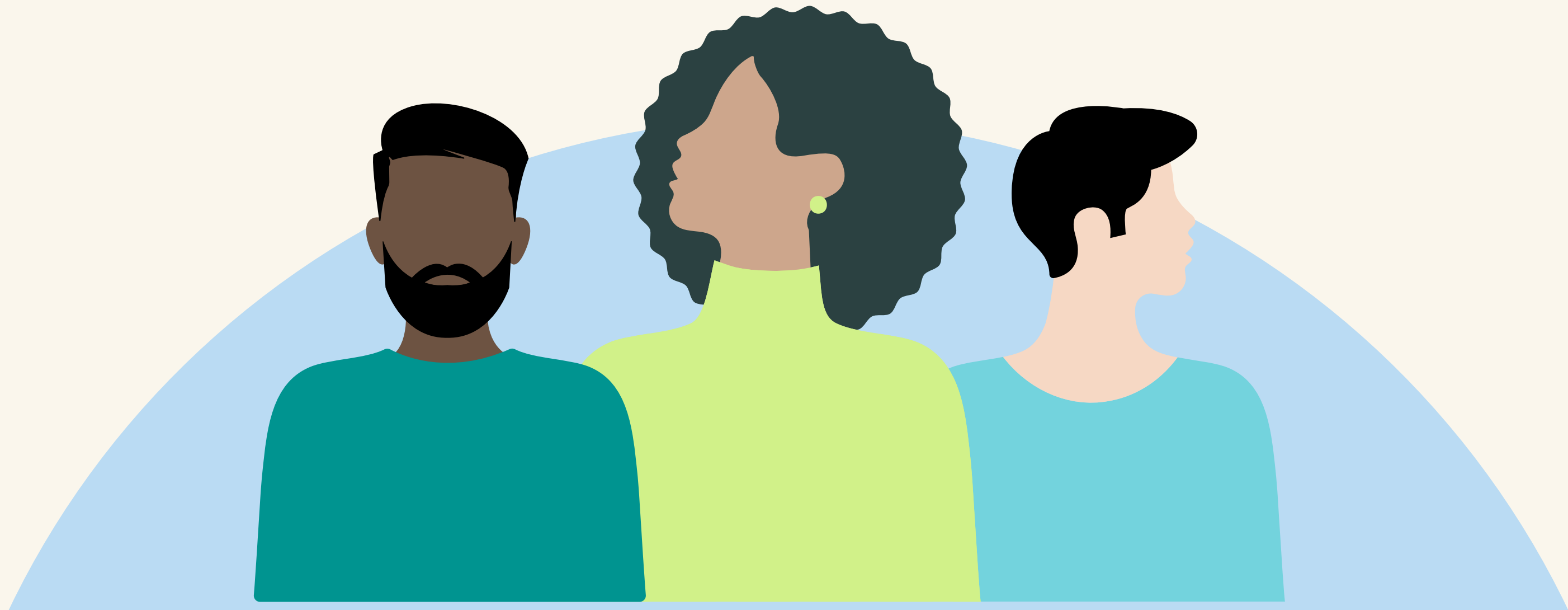
July 25, 2024

Led by Shenandoah Chefalo  
Trauma-Informed Consultant  
[www.chefaloconsulting.com](http://www.chefaloconsulting.com)



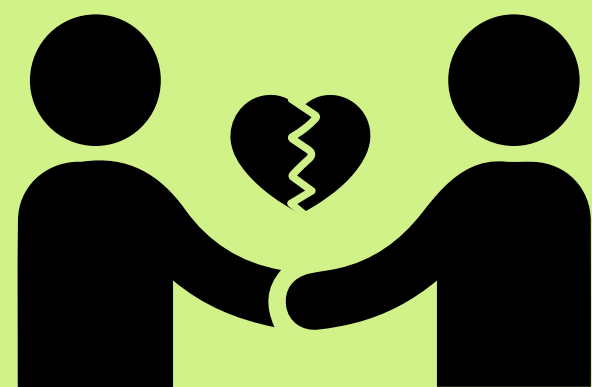


Trauma becomes the central organizing principle of thought, feeling, belief and behavior.





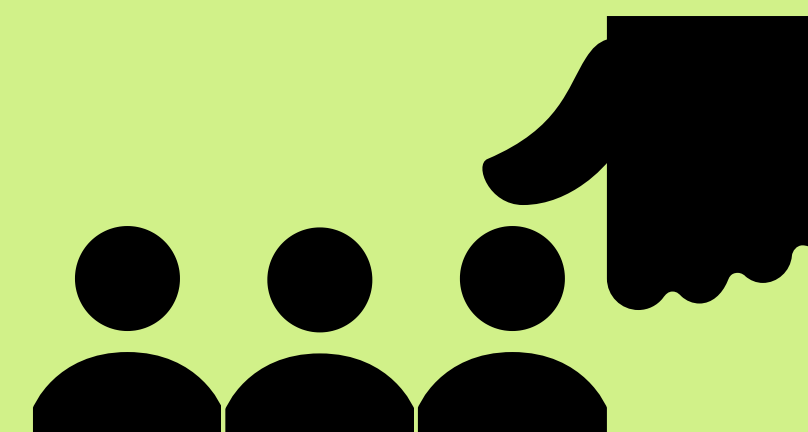
# Learning About Trauma Matters



Disruptions in attachment are universal.



Trauma can affect anyone at any time.



Trauma is pervasive, broad, and diverse in impact.



# What is Trauma?

- Emotionally painful & distressing experiences or situations that overwhelm people's ability to cope, leaving them powerless to circumstances that are outside the realm of "**normal**" human experience.

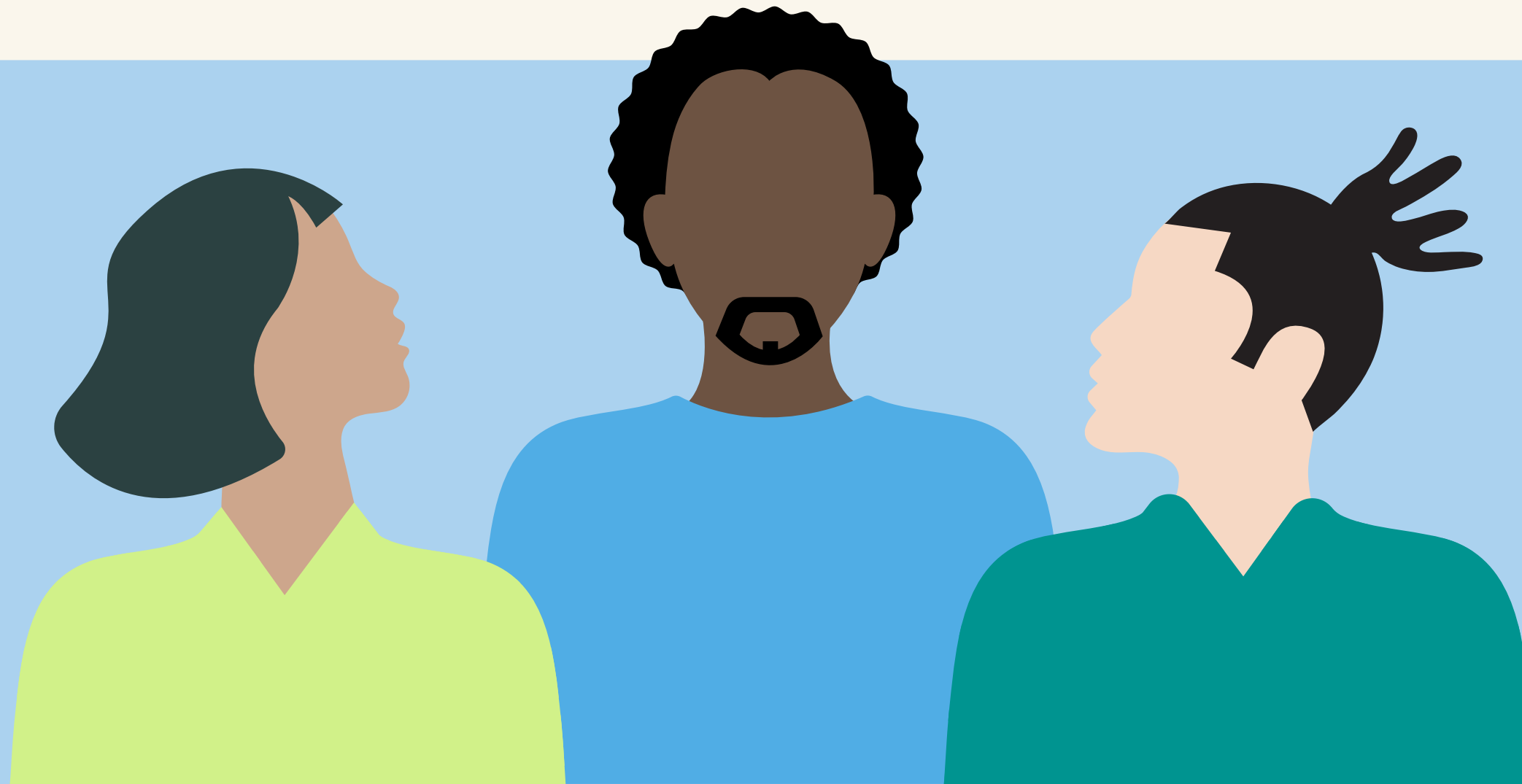
- For some groups of people, trauma can occur frequently and become part of their common human experience.





Traumatization occurs when both the internal and external resources are inadequate to cope with external threats.

-Bessel van der Kolk





# Defining Trauma

- Dr. Shoshana Garfield
- Trauma settles into our bodies after physically and emotionally overwhelming events.
- In roughly 21 days, an overwhelming event becomes trauma when left unresolved



# Defining Trauma

## Complex Trauma

"Complex Trauma results from multiple traumatic events occurring over a period of time. Examples include prolonged, childhood abuse, domestic violence, torture, slavery, genocide, etc."

## Developmental Trauma

Developmental Trauma occurs between the moment of conception, and before the onset of conscious verbal thought at age two or three.

# Defining Trauma

## Race-Based Traumatic Stress

Implies that there are individuals of color who experience racially charged discrimination as traumatic and often generate responses similar to post-traumatic stress.

Robert T. Carter theory of Race-Based Traumatic Stress



## Historical Trauma Response

Historical Trauma Response (HTR) is a constellation of features in reaction to massive group trauma. It is made up of cumulative emotional and psychological wounding over the lifespan and across generations. Examples: Jewish Holocaust survivors and descendants, Japanese American internment camp survivors and descendants, Indigenous People Boarding Schools Survivors, Enslaved people and descendants, etc.

Maria Yellow Horse Braveheart, The historical trauma response among natives and its relationship with substance abuse: a Lakota illustration





Three Core Concepts in Early Development

# 1 Experiences Build Brain Architecture

NATIONAL SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL ON THE DEVELOPING CHILD

Center on the Developing Child  HARVARD UNIVERSITY



# Attachment



Be  
Dependable



Be  
Attentive



Be  
Predictable



Be  
Understanding





# THE BRAIN

## FRONTAL LOBE

Movement, expressive language, problem solving, executive functions

## TEMPORAL LOBE

Auditory understanding, language, perception, memory, learning

## BRAINSTEM

Subconscious, automatic functions, breathing, temperature, heart rate



## PARIETAL LOBE

Touch, pain, sensations, spatial awareness, understanding time

## OCCIPITAL LOBE

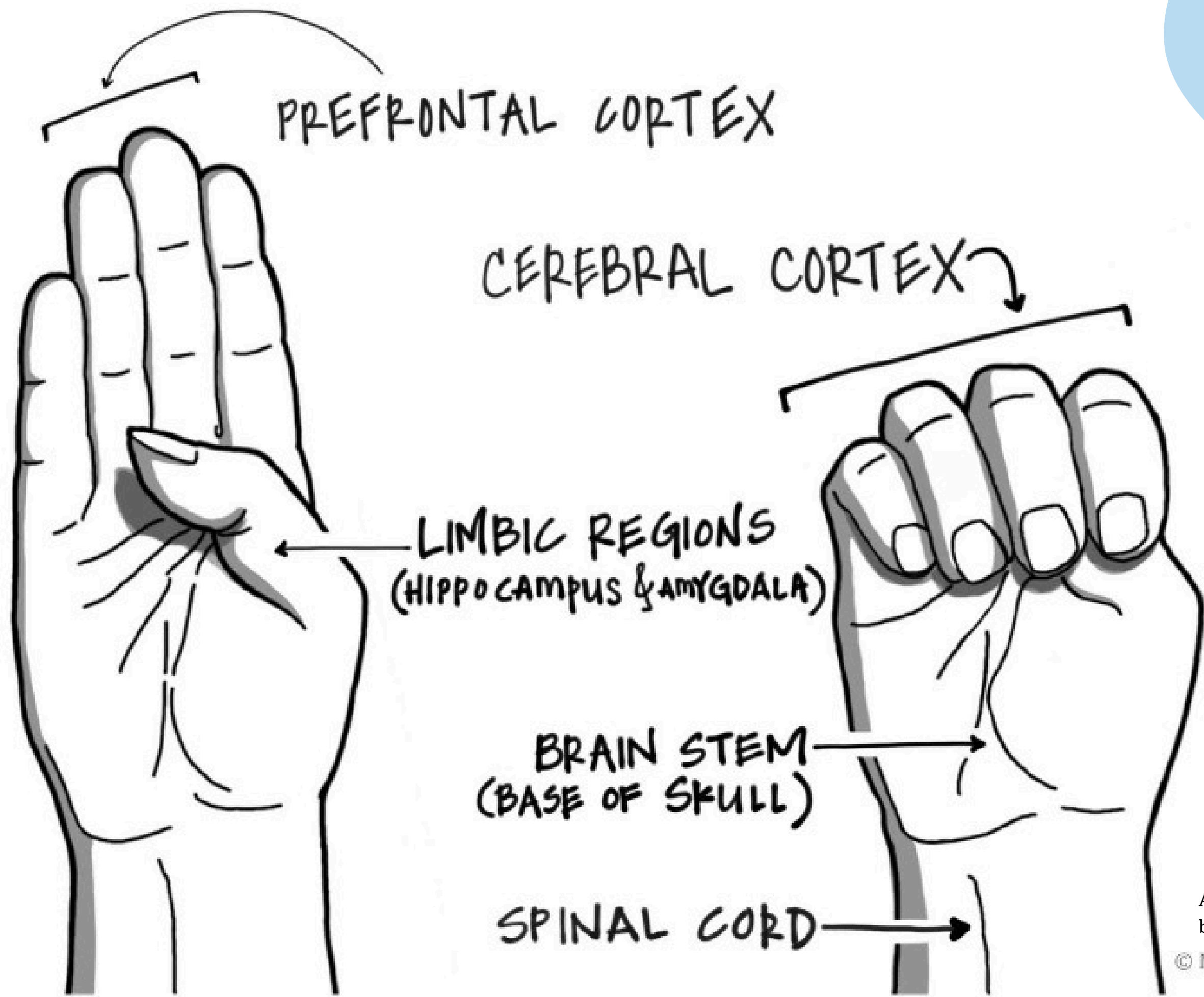
Visual perception (color, form, motion, distance, facial recognition, etc.)

## CEREBELLUM

Balance, posture, coordination, motor skills, movement



# The Hand Model of the Brain



Aware  
by Dr. Dan Siegel  
© Mind Your Brain, Inc. 2018

# Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



Pieter Desmet and Steven Fokkinga, 2020

## Need categories

## Need examples

Self-actualization needs



Self-fulfillment; Growth; Unity  
Understanding; Beauty; Morality;  
Transcendence; Exploration; Play

Esteem needs



Positive self-evaluation; Dignity;  
Achievement; Mastery; Competence;  
Independence; Reputation; Prestige

Social needs



Giving and receiving affection;  
Intimacy; Friendship; Tenderness;  
Affiliation; Love; Belongingness

Safety needs



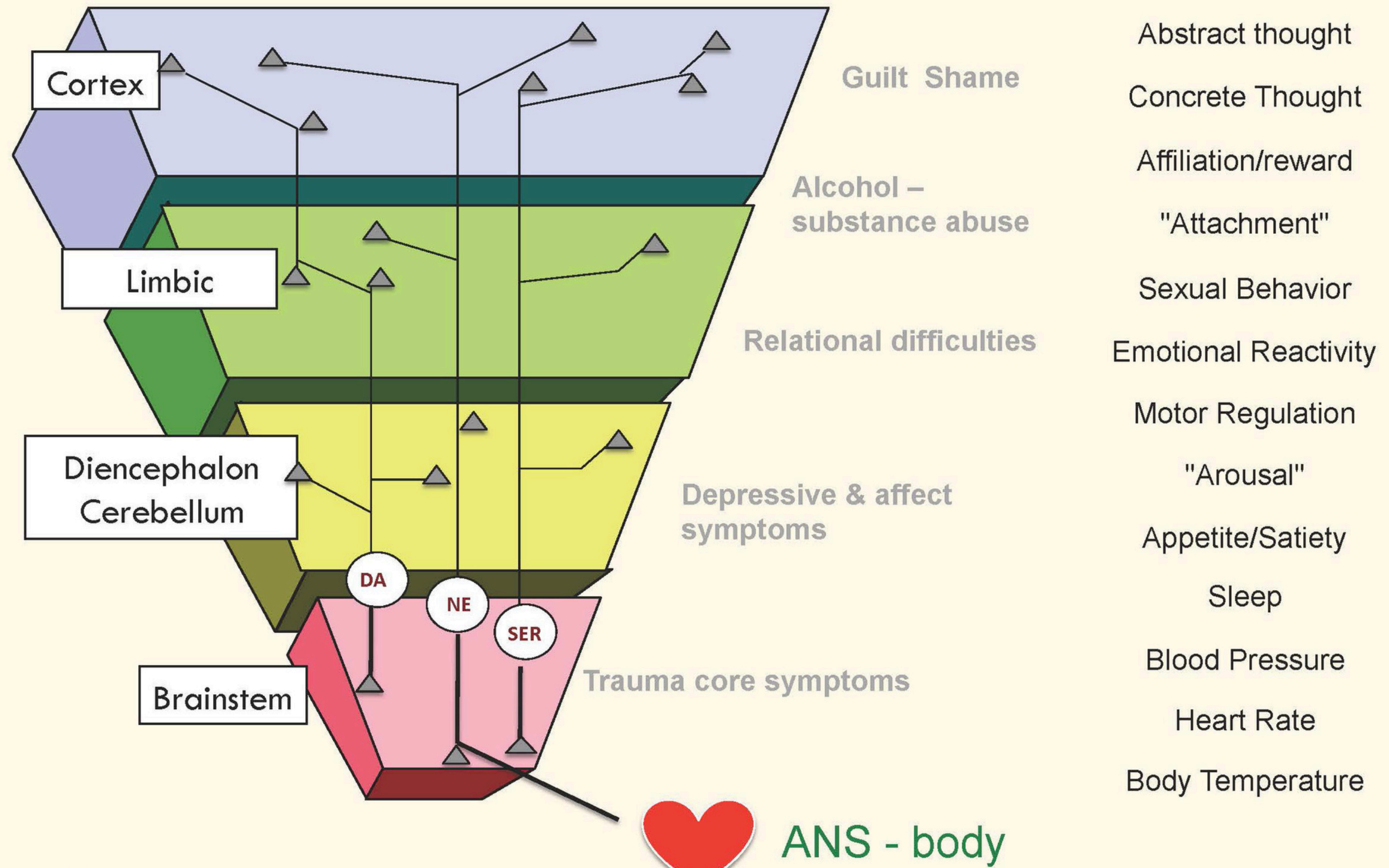
Security; Stability; Predictability;  
Protection; Freedom from fear;  
Structure; Order; Law; Limits

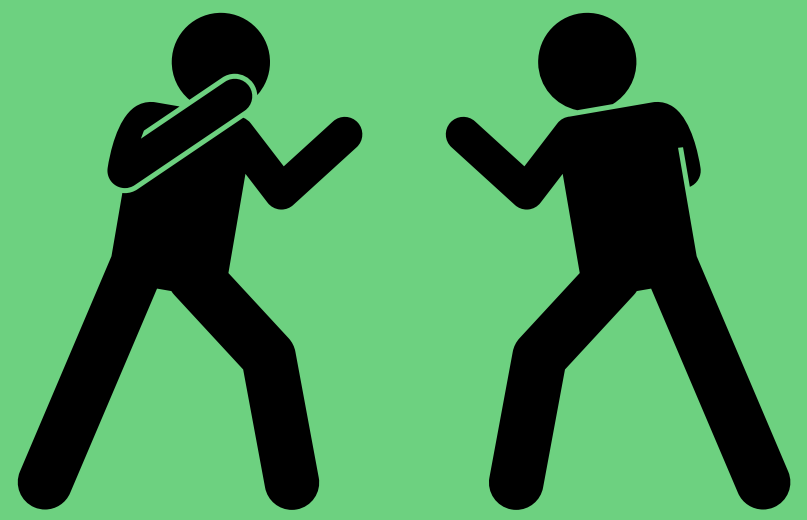
Physiological needs



Nutrition; Water; Air; Sleep; Shelter;  
Clothing (temperature control);  
Reproduction

# Bruce Perry's Neurosequential Model





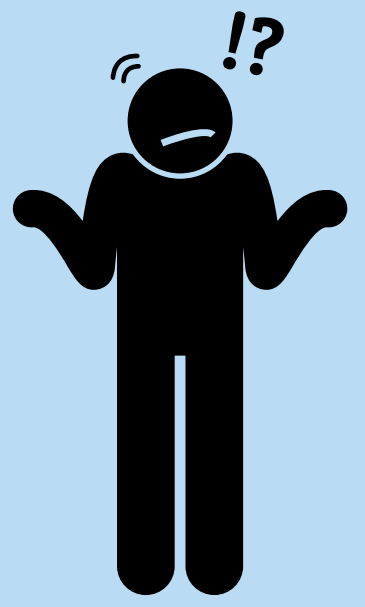
**FIGHT**



**FLIGHT**



**FREEZE**



**APPEASE**





# Trauma in the Body



Hunger

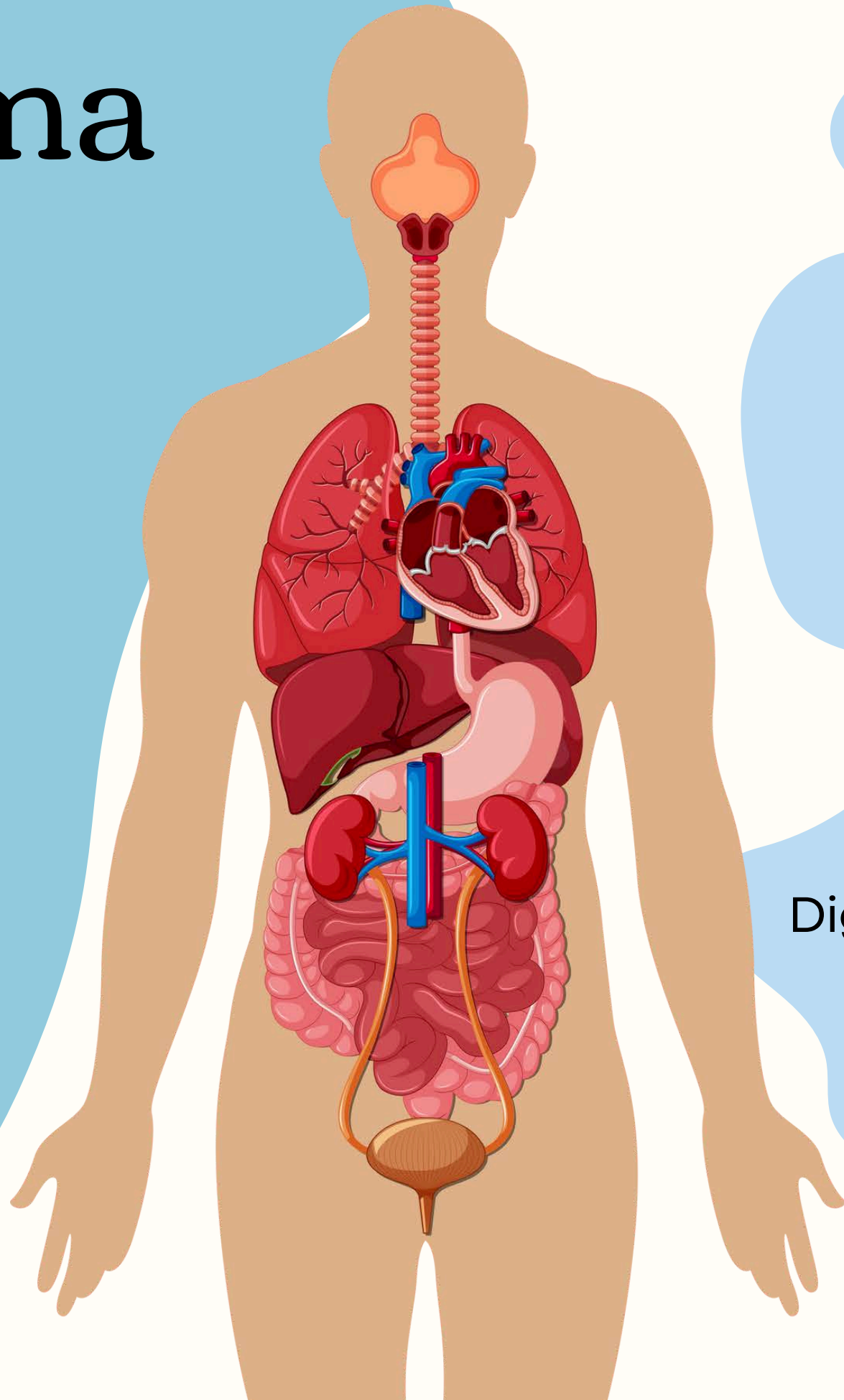
Sleep

Poop

Breathing

Emotions

# Trauma in the Body



**MUSCLES**  
Tension or  
trembling

**BLOOD VESSELS**  
Blood pressure  
increases

**HEART**  
Racing

**SALIVA**  
Flow decreases,  
dry mouth

**EYES**  
Pupils dilate

**LUNGS**  
Shallow  
breathing

**STOMACH**  
Digestive enzymes  
decrease

**BOWELS**  
Constipation or  
diarrhea

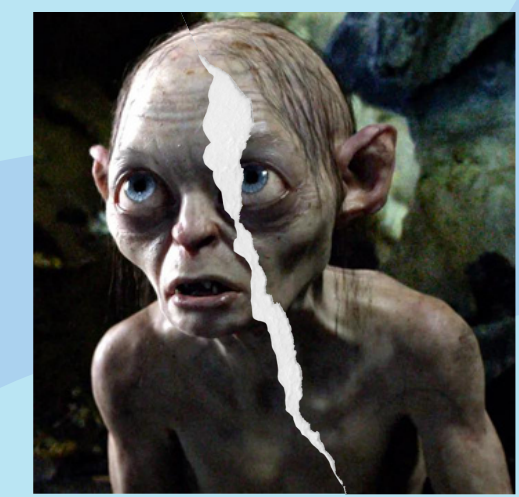
**SKIN**  
Chills and  
sweating





# Community Activity

## Building a Trauma Lens: Practice #3





# Over- looked Trauma Symptoms

## **Reenactments**

Unconscious repeating of trauma in day-to-day life

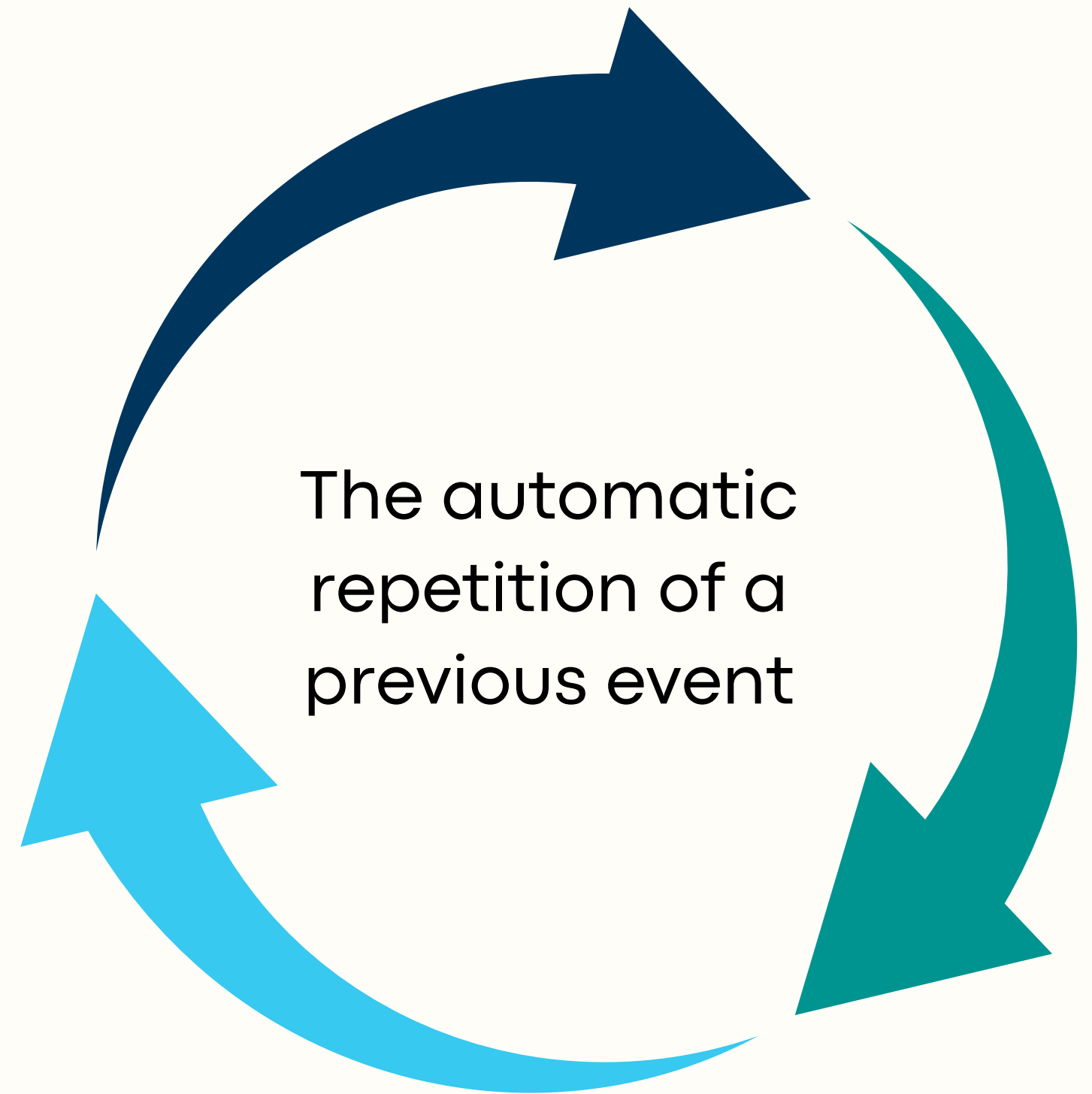
## **Dissociation**

Lack of continuity between thoughts, memories, surroundings, action and identity



# Traumatic Reenactments

Peter Bernstein, PhD "Trauma: Healing the Hidden Epidemic"





# Why Do We Reenact?

Michael S. Levy, Ph.D., a Helpful Way  
to Conceptualize and Understand  
Reenactments

Protection

Habit

Familiarity






Rigid  
Defenses

Maladaptive  
Coping



# How to Recognize Reenactments

Adapted from Dr. Sandra Bloom,  
Creating Sanctuary

-  Do you feel like you don't have control or victimized?
-  Do you dread certain individuals?
-  Is there lack of progress?
-  Are certain tasks impossible?
-  Do you feel stuck in a "Groundhog Day" scenario?

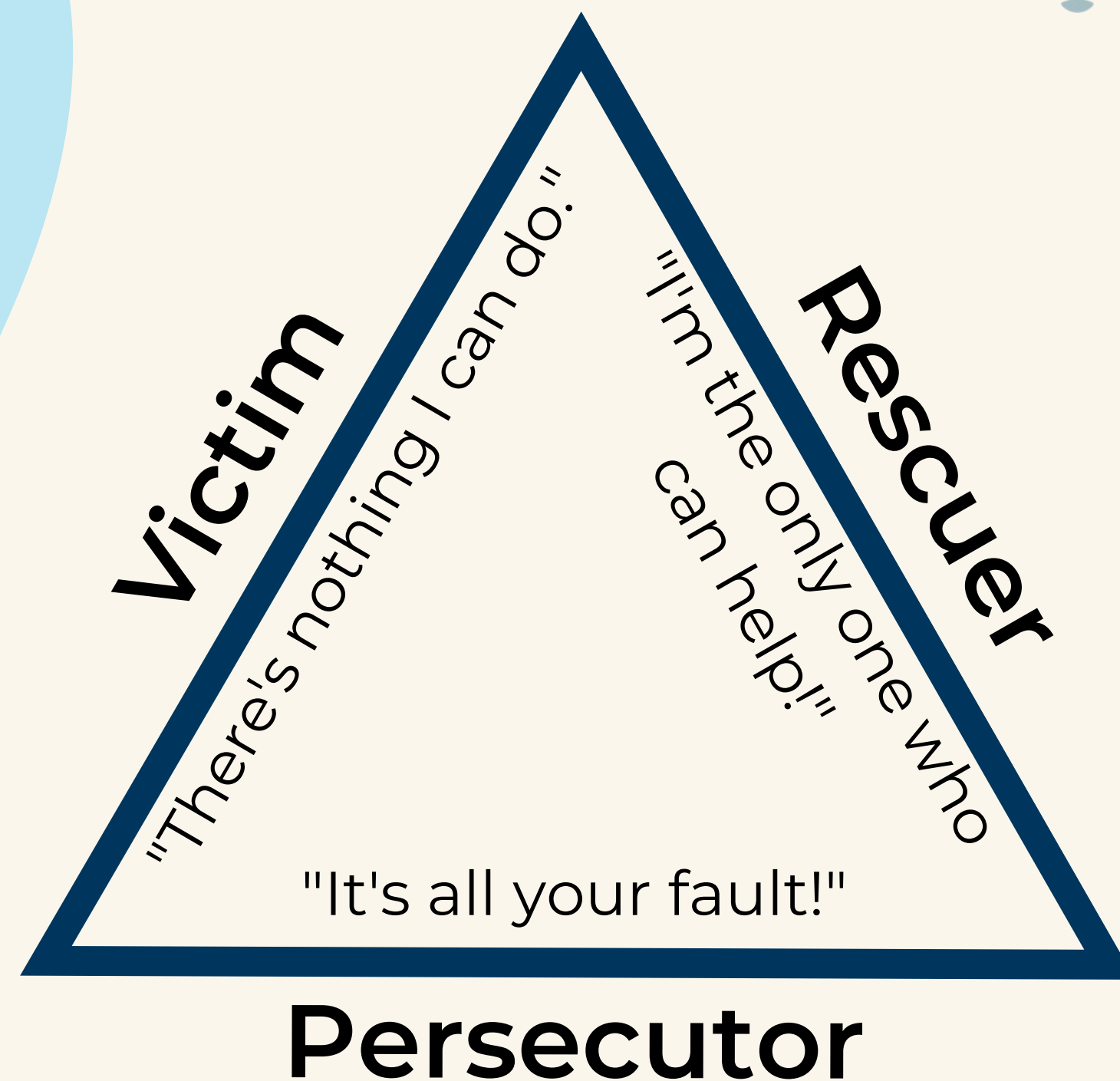


# The Reenactment Triangle

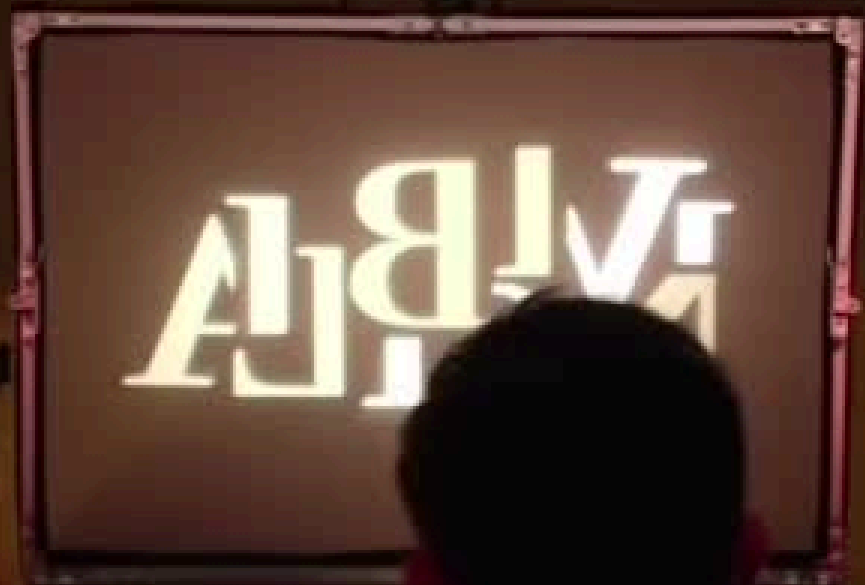
**The Victim: "Poor Me"**  
Powerless, Hopeless, Stuck

**The Persecutor: "It's Your Fault"**  
Control, Blaming, Superior

**The Rescuer: "Poor You"**  
Enabler, Pain Reliever, Self-Sacrificial







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# Escaping: The Victim

## Breaking Reenactments

- ★ Recognize your power.
- ★ Set boundaries and say "no."
- ★ Focus on what you can change.
- ★ Ask for help.



Adapted from Dr. Sandra Bloom,  
Creating Sanctuary



# Escaping: The Rescuer

## Breaking Reenactments

- ★ **Understand your need to rescue.**
- ★ **Trust in the others' abilities.**
- ★ **Say "no."**
- ★ **Set boundaries.**
- ★ **Ask for help.**



Adapted from Dr. Sandra Bloom,  
Creating Sanctuary



# Escaping: The Persecutor

## Breaking Reenactments

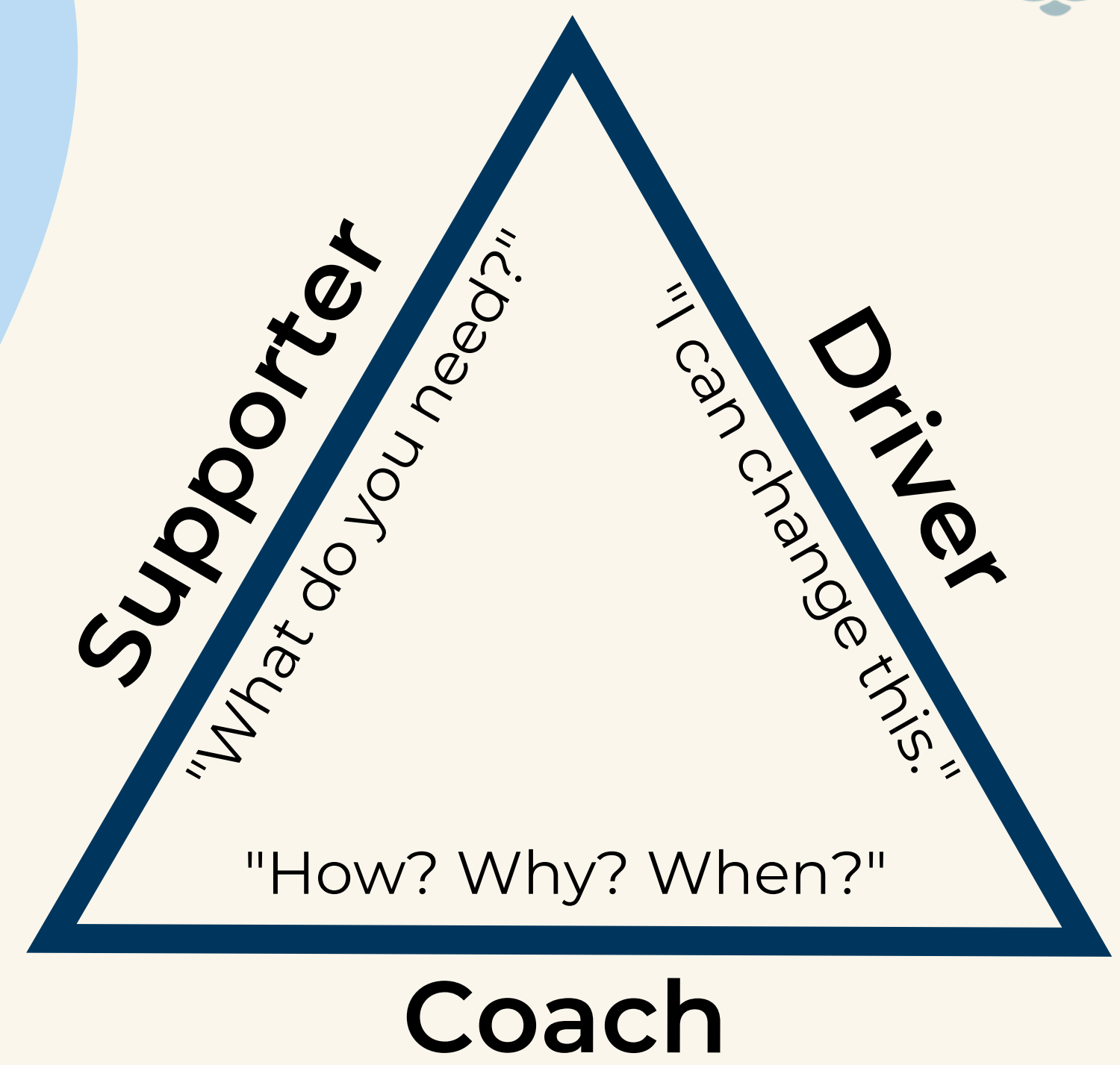
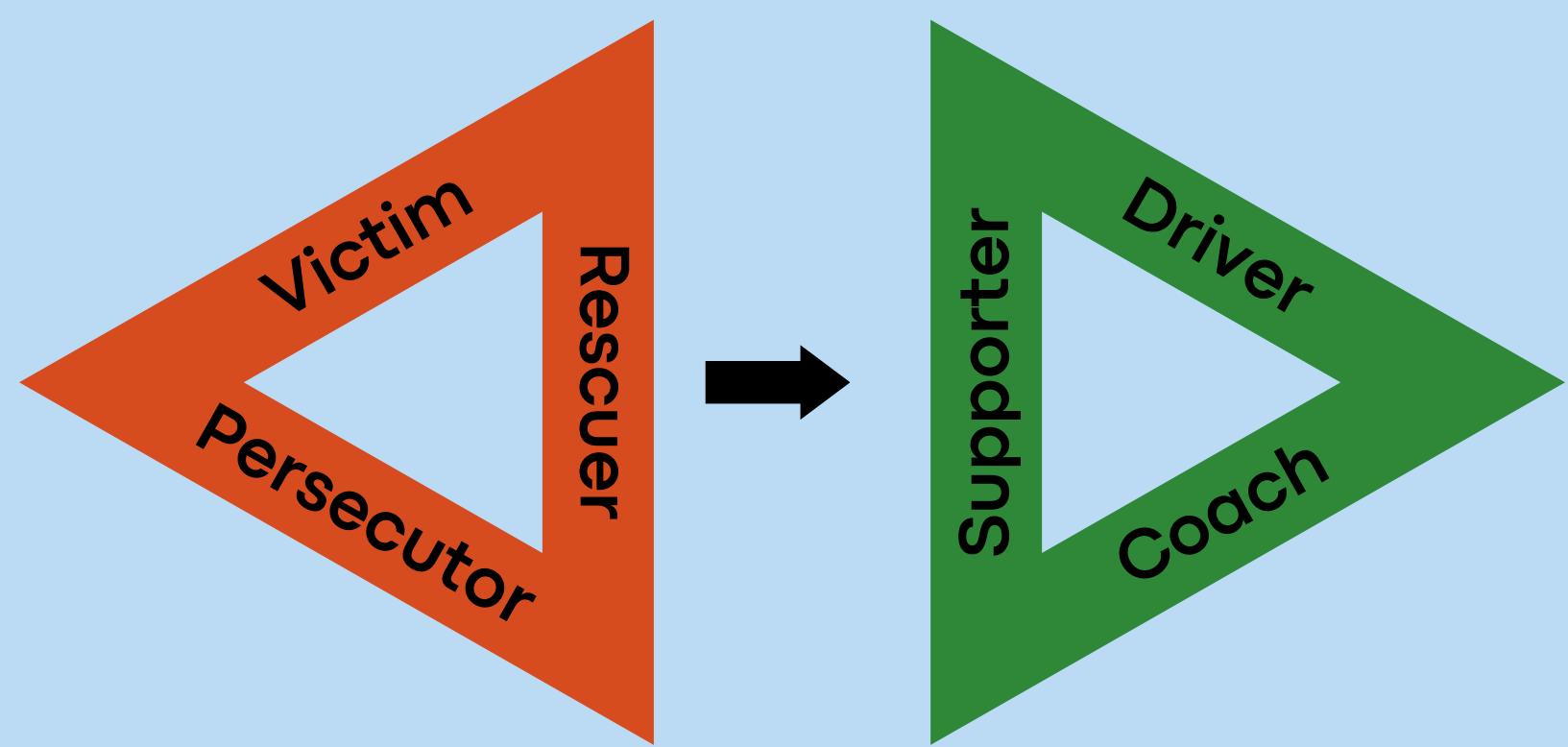
- ★ **Recognize** your vulnerability and control issues
- ★ **Understand** your discomfort with vulnerability.
- ★ **Resist** problem-solving, control, force and anger.
- ★ **Ask** for help.

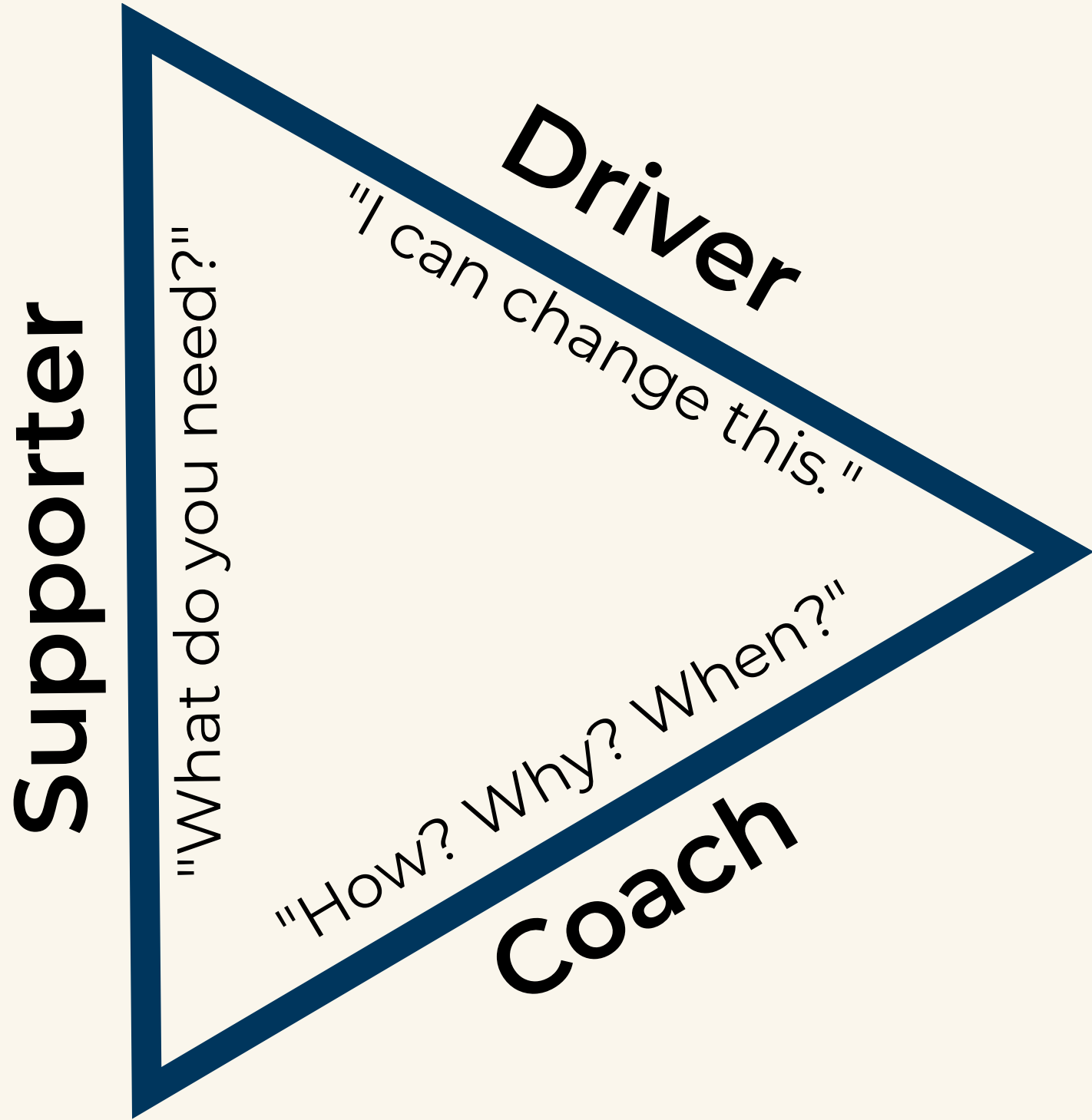
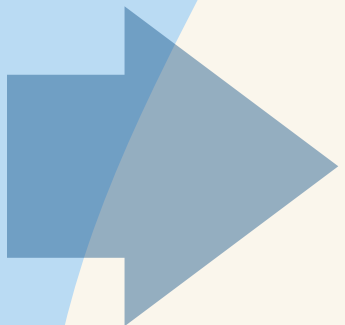
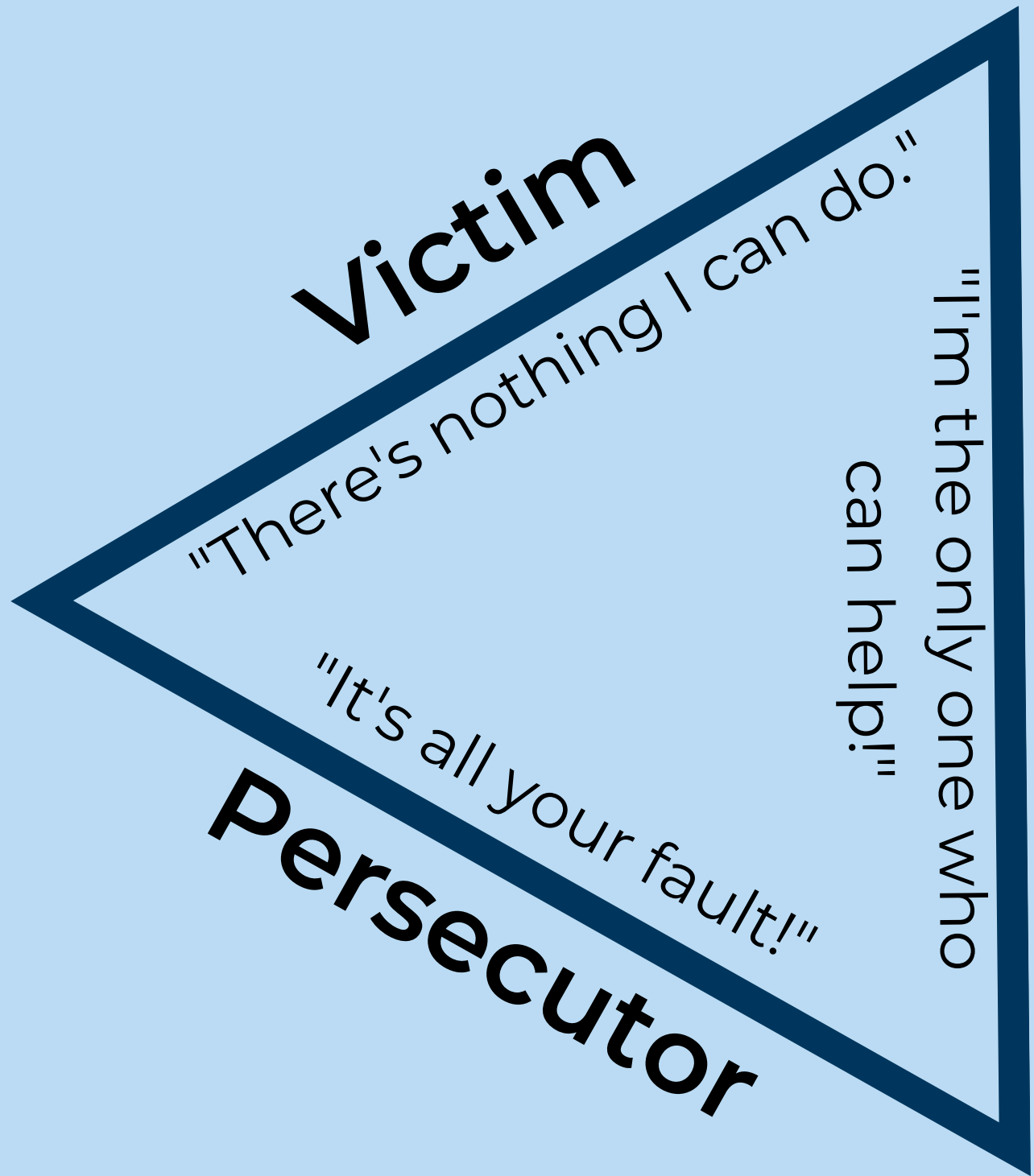


Adapted from Dr. Sandra Bloom,  
Creating Sanctuary



# The Empowerment Triangle





# What Now?



Am I in a  
reenactment?

Use  
creativity

"Name it.  
Tame it."

Does everyone  
understand?

Look at  
behaviors from  
strength-based  
perspectives



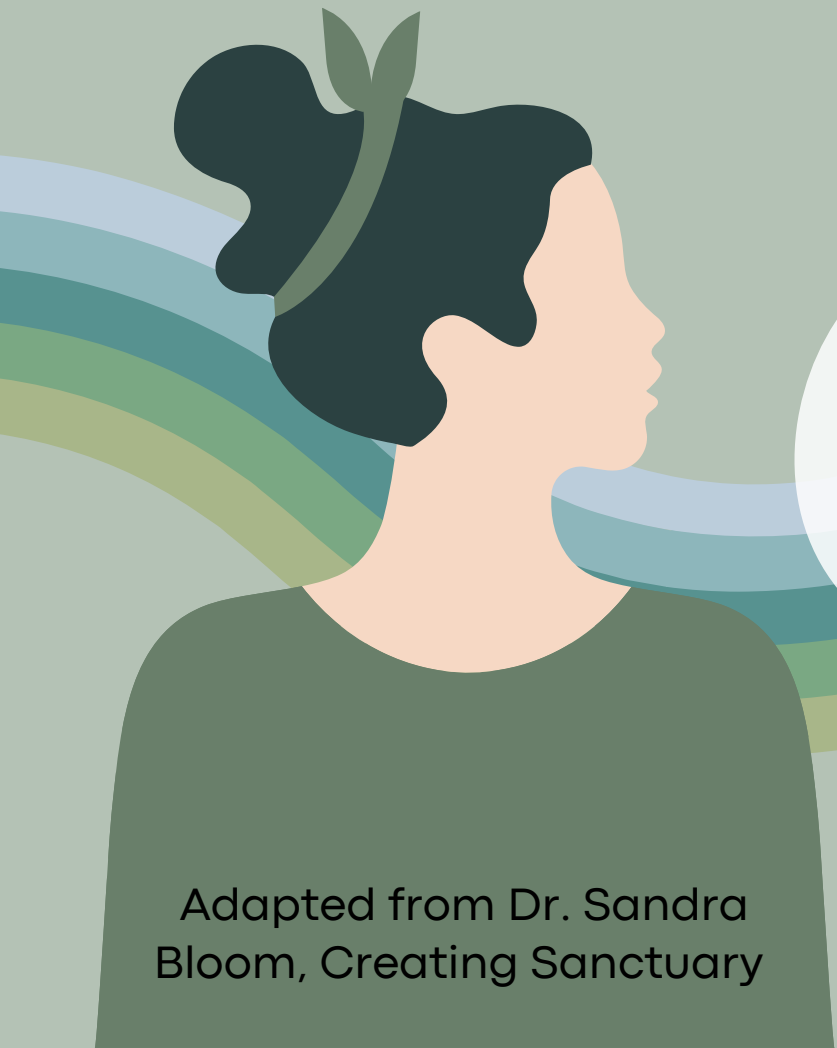
# Dissociation

Dissociation is a disconnection between a person's thoughts, memories, feelings, actions, or sense of who they are. This is a normal process that everyone experiences.

American Psychiatric Assoc.



# The Impact of Dissociation



Alexithymia

Emotional numbness

Memory lapses

Mood shifts

Disconnection from self and others

Protective mechanisms turn off



# Responding to Dissociation

Creating a Trauma Sensitive Culture



Staying Present  
and practicing  
mindfulness



Have sensory  
strategies



Know your  
triggers and  
seek help when  
necessary



Develop  
emotional  
intelligence and  
cultural humility



Develop and  
Practice  
professional  
relationships



# Thank You

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contact me and to learn more about  
our programs and resources.