

Trauma Responses

	Brain State	Brain's Job	Event (or perceived event)	Feelings/Thoughts	Behaviours
				Unconscious tells you these are the best ways to survive	
Reptilian Brain	Shutdown	Shuts us down and makes us immobile when threat is nearby.	Trauma or death	Depressed, numb, it's hopeless, I am going to die, I want to disappear, low energy, low motivation, lots of fear, low confidence, overwhelmed.	Blank face, no voice, no eye-contact, collapsed, immobile body, irrational, disassociated
	Flop				
	Freeze			Overwhelmed, pain, I can't escape, I'm cornered, I can't protect myself.	Deer in the headlights, flat voice, no eye contact, ridged immobile body, irrational
Mammalian Brain	Flight	Action oriented to fight, run, or get the system back to harmony.	Danger: life is threatened	Anxiety, panic, I can try to escape! Who is friend or foe?	Fearful face, shrill voice, less eye contact, tense body in motion, avoidance behaviours, less rational
	Fight			Anger, frustration, I can confront danger, who is friend or foe?	Aggressive face and voice, less eye contact, tense body in motion, confrontational, less rational
	Fawn		Chance of safety	Friendly and alert, safe in an uncomfortable situation, I can restore peace and harmony, If I help the aggressor feel safe, I'll be safe.	Appease, negotiate, open friendly with concerned face and voice, eye contact, relaxed and alert body while social, reciprocal

					responses to nonreciprocal/aggressive behaviour.
Safety Brain	Social Safety	Desire to connect, be part of something bigger than self.	Social engagement, Play	Curious. Creative, bold, I can do it! We can do this together!	Excited, friendly face, energetic voice, eye contact, relaxed body while social and in motion, reciprocal, synchronous
	Intimacy		No barriers, Ultimate trust	Love, empathy, compassion, calm in close connection, I belong, we are connected	Soft, open face, soothing voice, eye contact not required, relaxed body while social and immobile, reciprocal, synchronous.

Some key ideas:

- DSM definition of trauma doesn't have to be our working definition. I suggest that we use a working definition of: an event that has sent a child/teen into their reptilian brain. Once this has happened, **they are more likely to return to that part of their brain** if something triggers a memory of the traumatic event.
- A trigger can be a smell, weather, word, voice, season...anything, and it might not be something we can pick up on.
- When a child is in their reptilian brain, their executive functioning is shut down; meaning, they can't plan or make good choices.
- Discipline/consequences cannot occur when a child is in reptilian brain. If they do, we are more likely to traumatize them further.
- The key to get someone from reptilian brain to executive function brain (safety brain) is helping them to **feel safe** consistently.
- Note that the green area shows the thoughts, feelings, and behaviours that are most conducive to learning and being social in appropriate ways.
- This strategy can be a universal design for learning – we all learn and work better in a safe environment with people we feel are safe!

Sincerely,

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