

Trauma

Questionnaires

- Please spend 5 minutes answering the questionnaire that has been provided

What is trauma?

- The traumatic event can cause overwhelming emotions and can be extremely distressing.
- The ability to cope can become impaired.
- Subjective experience
- The effects of the trauma can last for a long time.



What experiences might cause trauma?

- Childhood abuse
- Serious accidents
- Witness to violence, either at home or externally.
- Disasters
- Fires
- Conflict
- Immigration, including refuge
- Homelessness
- Parents involved in military conflict
- Disruption with attachment
- Intrusive medical examinations

Trauma is deceptive

- It is difficult to recognise an individual who is traumatised. Their behaviours might present as:
- ADHD
- Bipolar disorder
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Aggression
- Withdrawal

Hyper vigilance

- An individual who has been traumatised might be hyper vigilant
- Perpetually scanning for danger
- On edge and constantly moving
- Inability to focus.
- (Which is why they may be diagnosed with ADHD)



Distractions

- Alcohol and drug addictions
- Risk taking behaviours
- Early sexualised behaviour



Stressors and support

- Discrimination
 - Poverty
 - Community disturbance and violence
 - Homelessness and high levels of mobility
-
- Support networks:
 - Friends, family, neighbours, teachers,
 - Caring support networks.

Safety

- When a traumatic event occurs the sense of safety for the individual has been compromised.
- Safety is the basic need that we all require to live our lives (see Maslow's hierarchy of needs)
- Types of safety include:
 - Emotional
 - Physical
 - Social
- Loss of safety is one of the key aspects of trauma

Grounding exercise



Traumatic events and world view

- How does a traumatic event change the worldview perspective of an individual
- Having just watched that video of the baby bear, consider how his worldview might have changed.

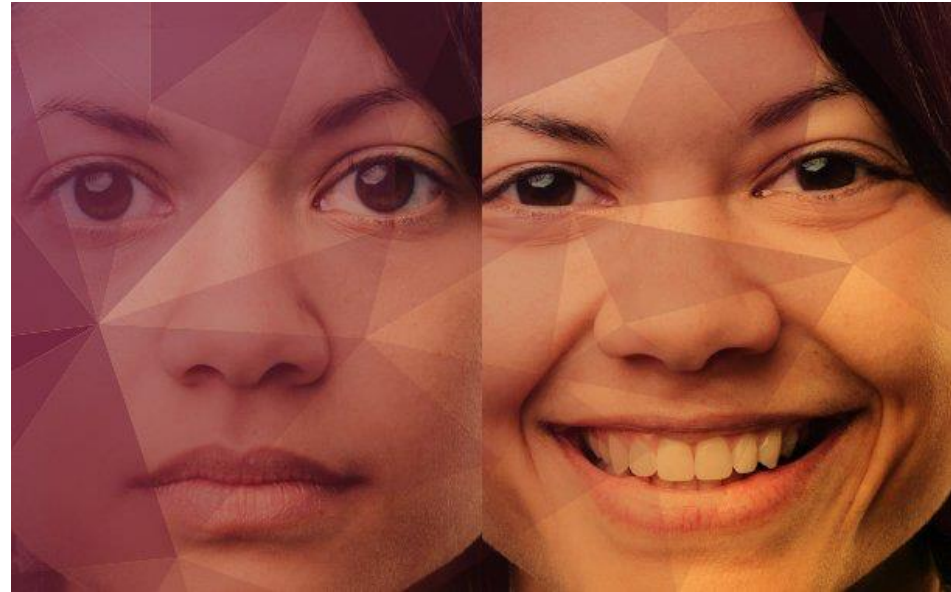
Triggers

- Sounds
- Smells
- Tastes
- Environment
- Tones of voice
- Time of year
- Objects



Lack of safety

- Behaviours might include:
- Dissociation
- Sleeping
- Mood shifts
- Disconnected
- Aggressiveness
- Overly compliant



Trauma and the brain

- Re-experiencing
- Avoidance
- Arousal



Early childhood trauma

- Early childhood trauma can shape the development of the brain
- This also includes during pregnancy. It can influence how the brain develops from an early age.
- This can have a knock on effect throughout the individuals life.

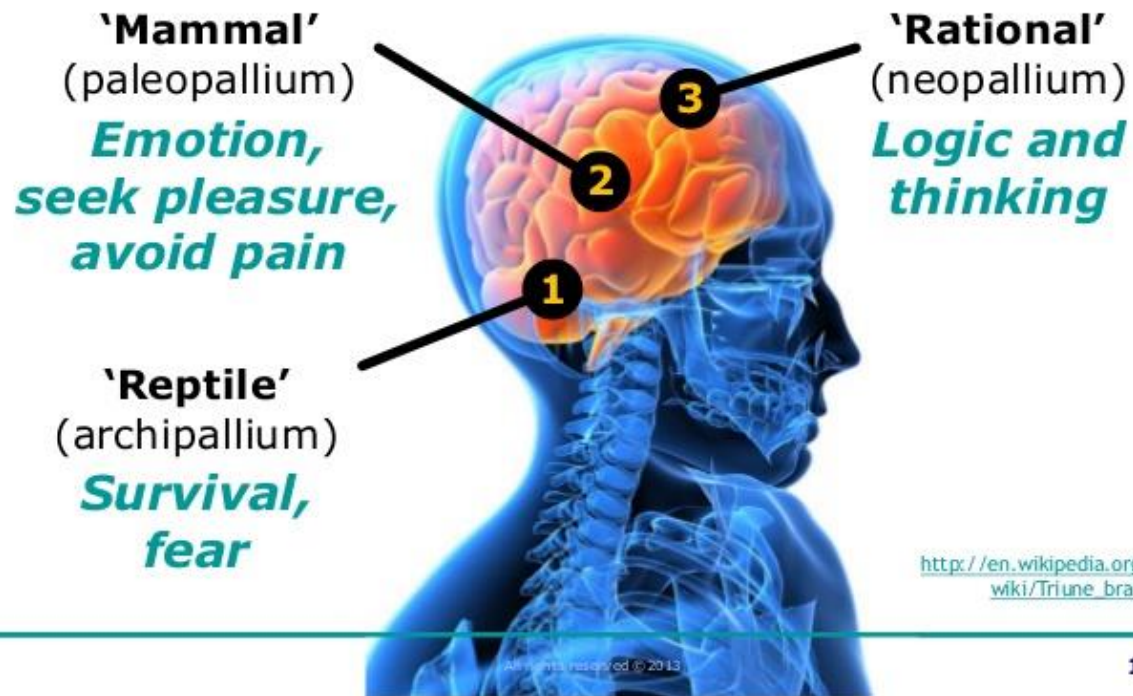
Trauma and brain function

- Learning
- Attention and memory
- Automatic responses
- Ability to build and maintain relationships
- Self regulation



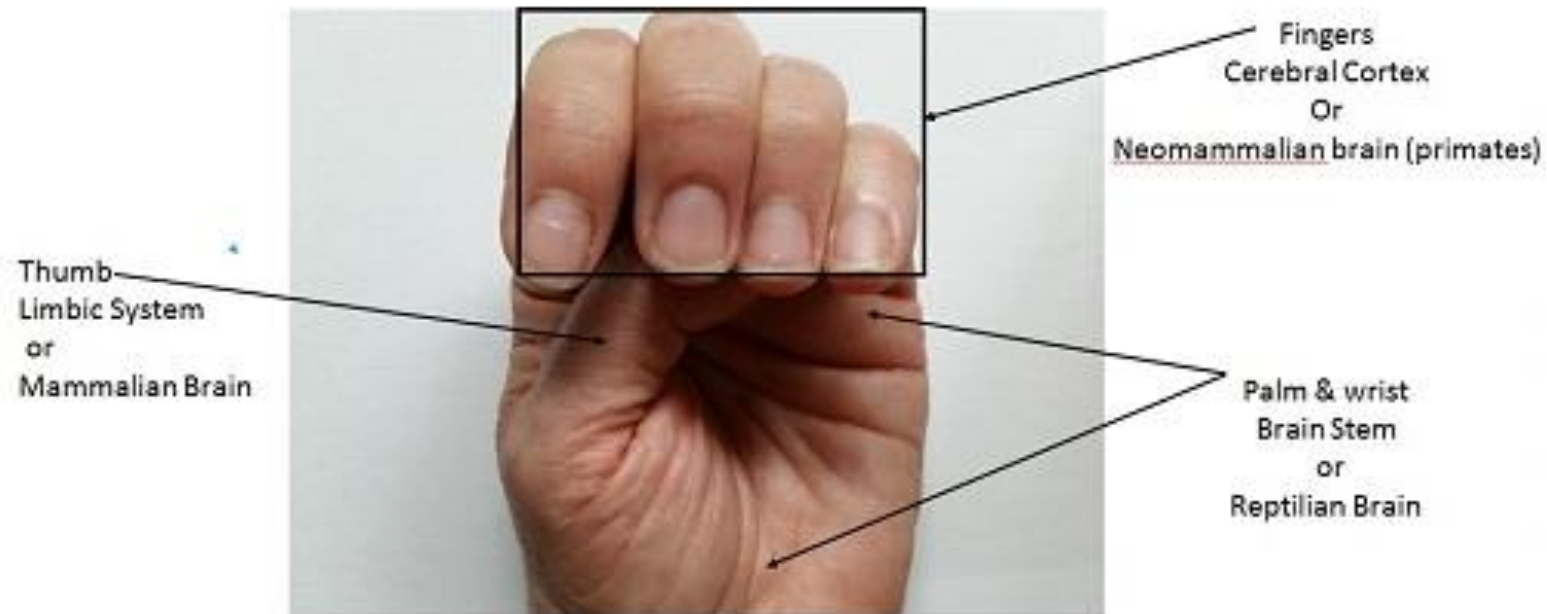
Triune brain model

The triune brain



Hand Model of the Triune Brain

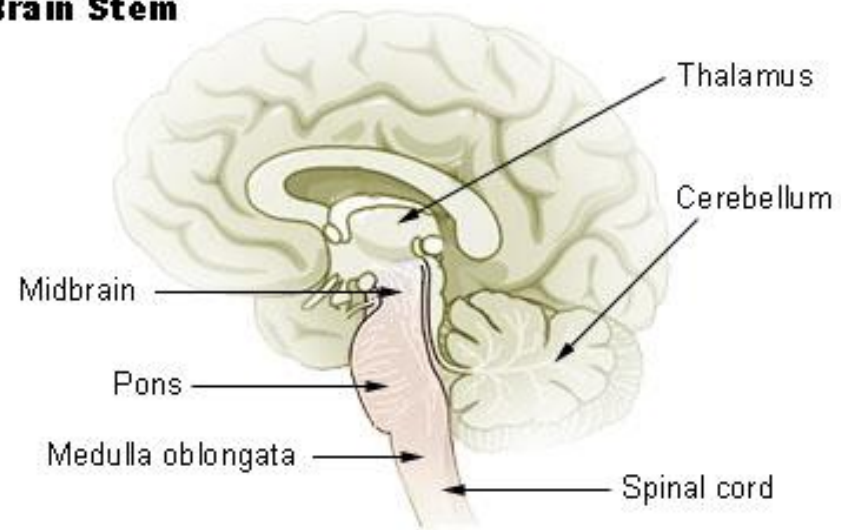
The hand model of the triune brain



The brain stem

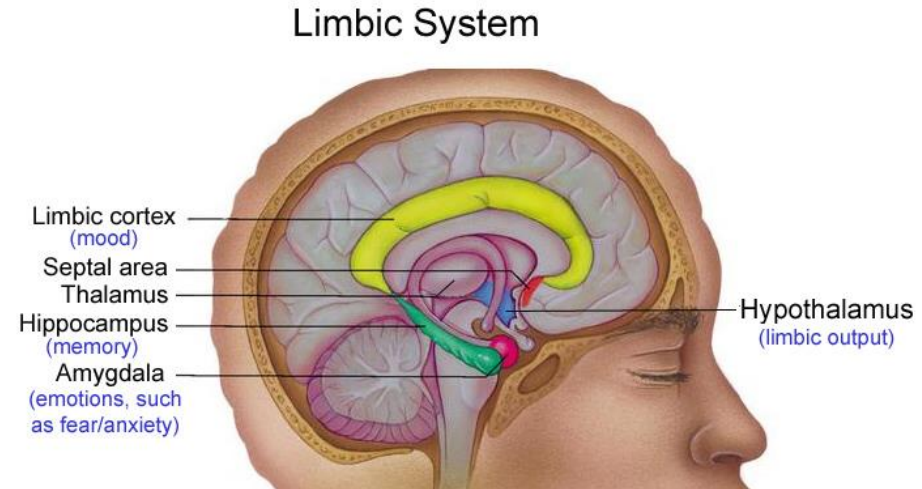
- Develops first
- Most primitive part
- Promotes survival
- Organises and helps to regulate the rest of the brain

Brain Stem



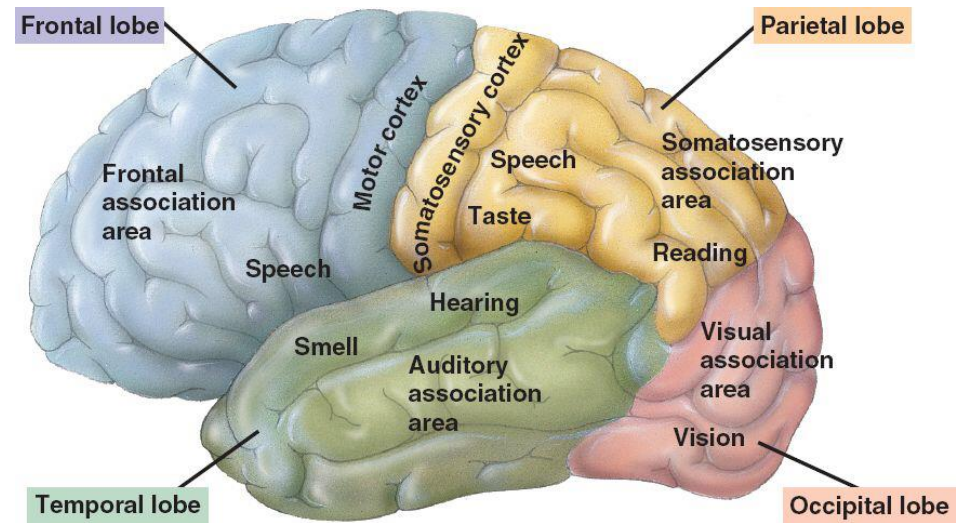
The limbic system

- More complex,
- Has plasticity
- Responsible for:
- Emotional states
- Memory
- Self preservation



The cortex

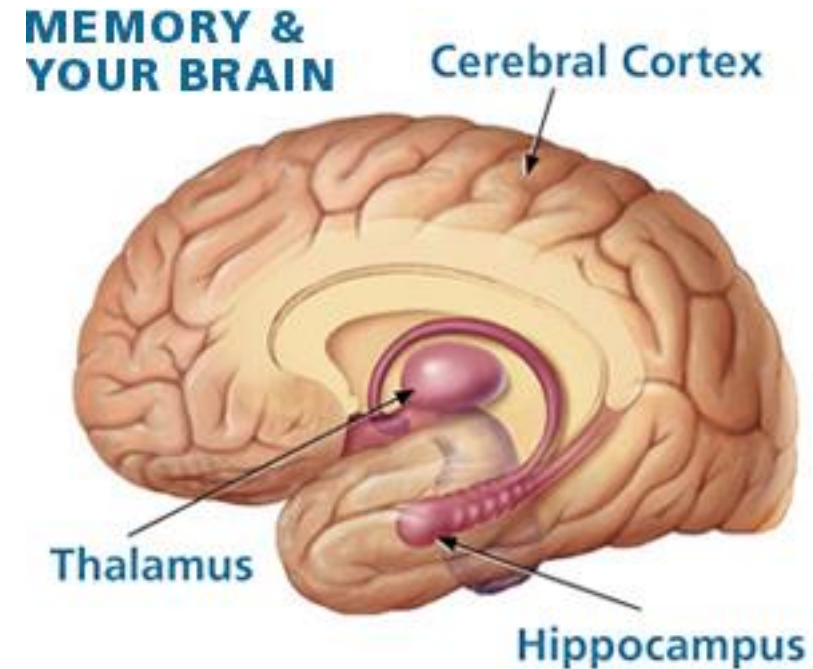
- Outer layering of brain
- Most complex and has most plasticity
- Responsible for:
- Logical and coherent thinking
- Language and communication
- Sensory experiences
- Impulse control



Trauma and memories

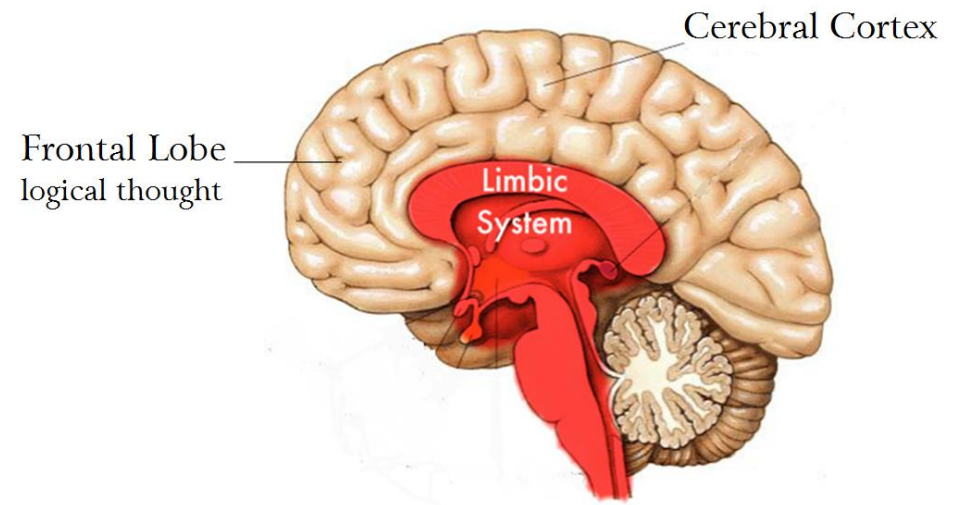
When we have “normal” memories they are:

- Stored in the cortex
- Experienced as a memory
- Have associated language, one memory can lead to another and so on..



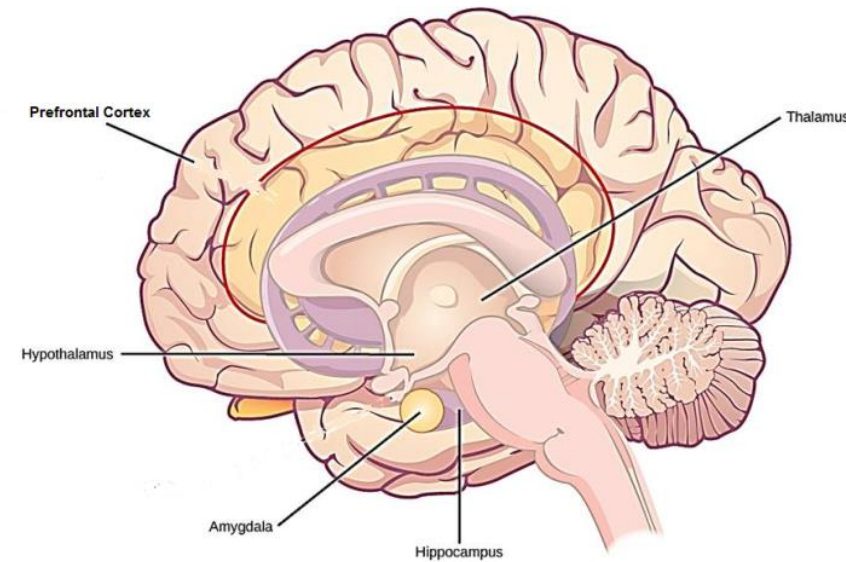
Trauma and memories

- When we have traumatic memories they are:
- Stored in limbic system
- The individual has no control over the retrieval
- They can be triggered by different things
- Re-experienced through flashbacks nightmares, etc.



Non-cognitive

- Traumatic experiences and symptoms are housed in the
- Primitive brain
- They are non-conscious, non-verbal and non-cognitive.
- Autonomic nervous system (ans)

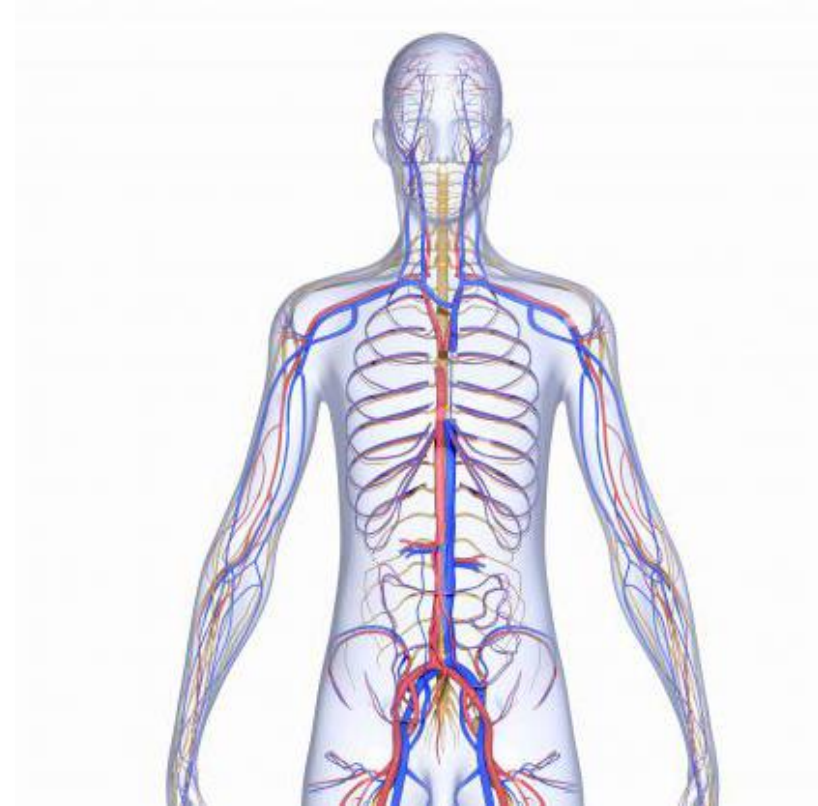


Autonomic nervous system



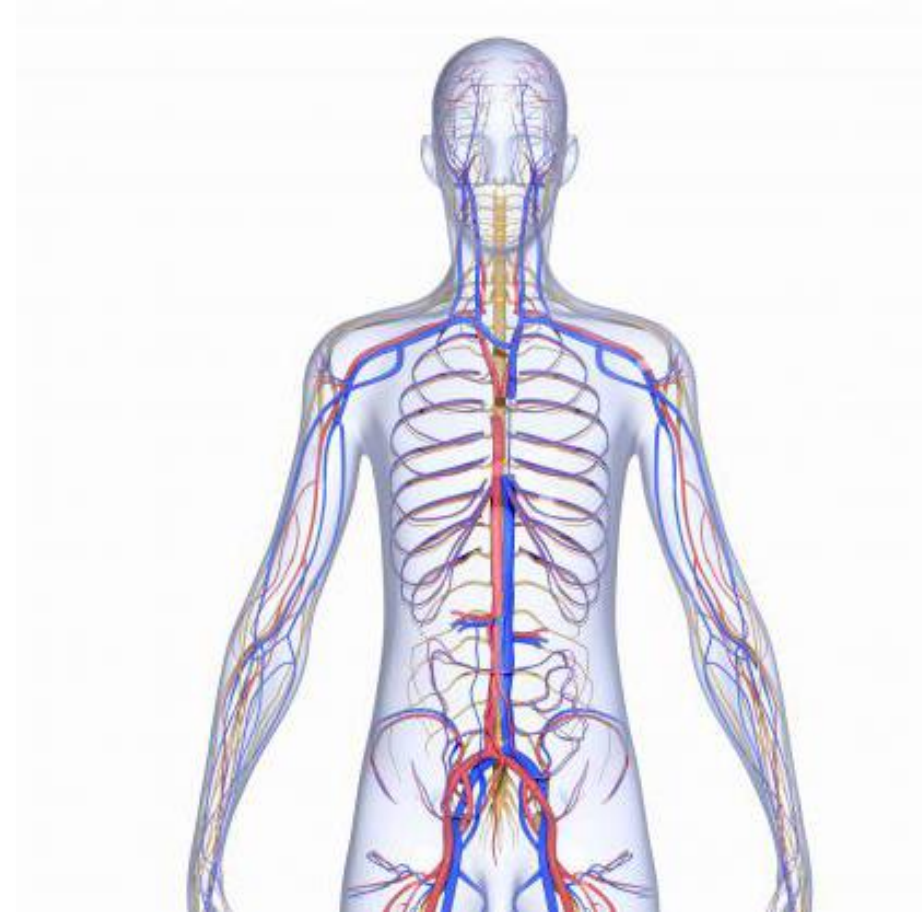
The autonomic nervous system

- Regulates the
- Heart rate
- Temperature
- Pupil dilation, which changes according to the light in the room
- Hormonal balance
- Breathing
- Digestion regulation
- All controlled by the ANS



The autonomic nervous system

- Influences:
- Body sensations
- Emotional state
- Sense of self and others
- World view



Trauma symptoms are
adaptive survival responses
to an actual or perceived
threat.

If there is a sense of threat,
There will be a reaction in the
ANS.

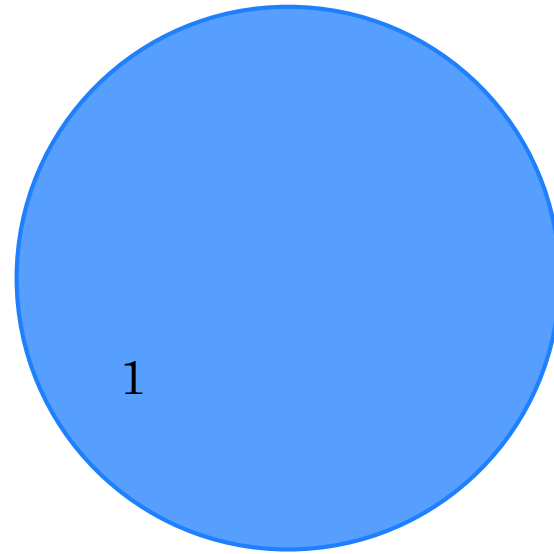
The greater the threat, the
greater the reaction.

ANS

- Even after the event, the ANS can retain activation
- Attractor states "troughs" built into the ANS

Activation

0



Threat level

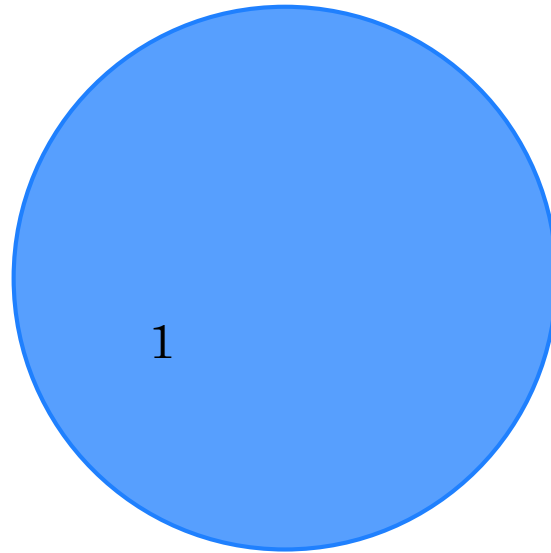
State 1 – mild stress

- Increases energy
- Fear
- Anxiety
- Anger
- Hyper-alertness
- Excitement
- Irritability
- Increased heart-rate and breathing
- Insomnia
- Speedy thoughts
- Somatic tension
- Restlessness
- Feeling nervous

Activation

0

Threat level



Threat reduction for wild mammals

- When the threat has passed
- They will find somewhere calm to rest
- They go back to the somatic state they were in when the threat occurred
- The symptoms increase in severity and then leave.
- Almost all wild animals **DO NOT STAY TRAUMATISED**



Human reaction

- With humans we move into that activated state, but we
- ALMOST ALWAYS INTERRUPT THE PROCESS
- Because:
- We don't understand what is happening
- It feels worse before it feels better
- We have a big frontal lobe!

How do we interrupt or stop the process?

- We distract
- Movement
- Mental engagement
- Substances



Activation

0

Threat level

1

2

State 2 symptoms

- Panic
- Hyperventilation
- Heart racing
- Sweating
- Shaking, trembling
- Rage
- Terror
- Maximum performance
- Very fast thoughts
- Does not and can not last long.

Stress and trauma

- Fighting and flight
- No dissociation so far
- Sympathetic branch of the ANS
- When the threat increases to such a level that we don't think we will make it, a parasympathetic response occurs and the body goes into shut down.



Activation

0

1

2

Threat level

3

State 3: moderate trauma

- Lethargy
- Sleepiness
- Heaviness
- Collapsed posture
- Feeling cold
- Nausea
- Confusion
- Slow thoughts
- Hopelessness

2

1

0

3

4

State 4: severe trauma or dissociation

- Blank effect
- Numbness
- Slackness
- Feelings of unreality
- Complete dissociation



The healing process

- You have to go through the feelings and emotions of state 3, feeling depressed, hopeless.
- State 3 to 2: going from feeling depressed to a high anxiety state.
- State 2 to 1 moving from high anxiety to low anxiety.
- Finally state 1 to 0



Summary

- What are your over-riding thoughts following this lecture?
- Complete the questionnaire now, reflecting on all that has been learnt during this time.
- Next week....