

SPARTAN Resilience

Becoming a Gatekeeper for Your Own Nervous System

MSU Fall Extension Conference 2024



University Health and Wellbeing
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

SPARTAN Resilience

Be Here Now

Make any changes that best support your ability to be fully present here with us today.



University Health and Wellbeing
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Grounding Practice:

Feet, Seat, Hands

Feet: Let your attention drop down to into your feet. Note the sensations there. Now guide your attention to your feet on the floor. Keep bringing your attention to the contact your feet have with the floor.

Seat: Now guide your attention up to your seat in the chair. Note where your body is contact with the chair or whatever you are sitting on. Whatever you feel is fine. Just notice what you feel there, at your seat.

Hands: Now allow your attention to find your hands, however you have chosen to position them. Bring your awareness to whatever your hands are resting on or are in contact with.

**Which space of the three was your favorite to rest your attention on.
Rest your attention there for a few more breaths.**



Lisa Laughman she/her/hers

Coordinator, Spartan Resilience Education
MSU Division of University Health and Wellbeing

36 years of clinical social work
experience

29 years learning and teaching
the principles and concepts in our
resilience training model

20 years of service as an MSU
Employee Assistance Counselor

My own body of evidence



Photo credit: Karen Pace

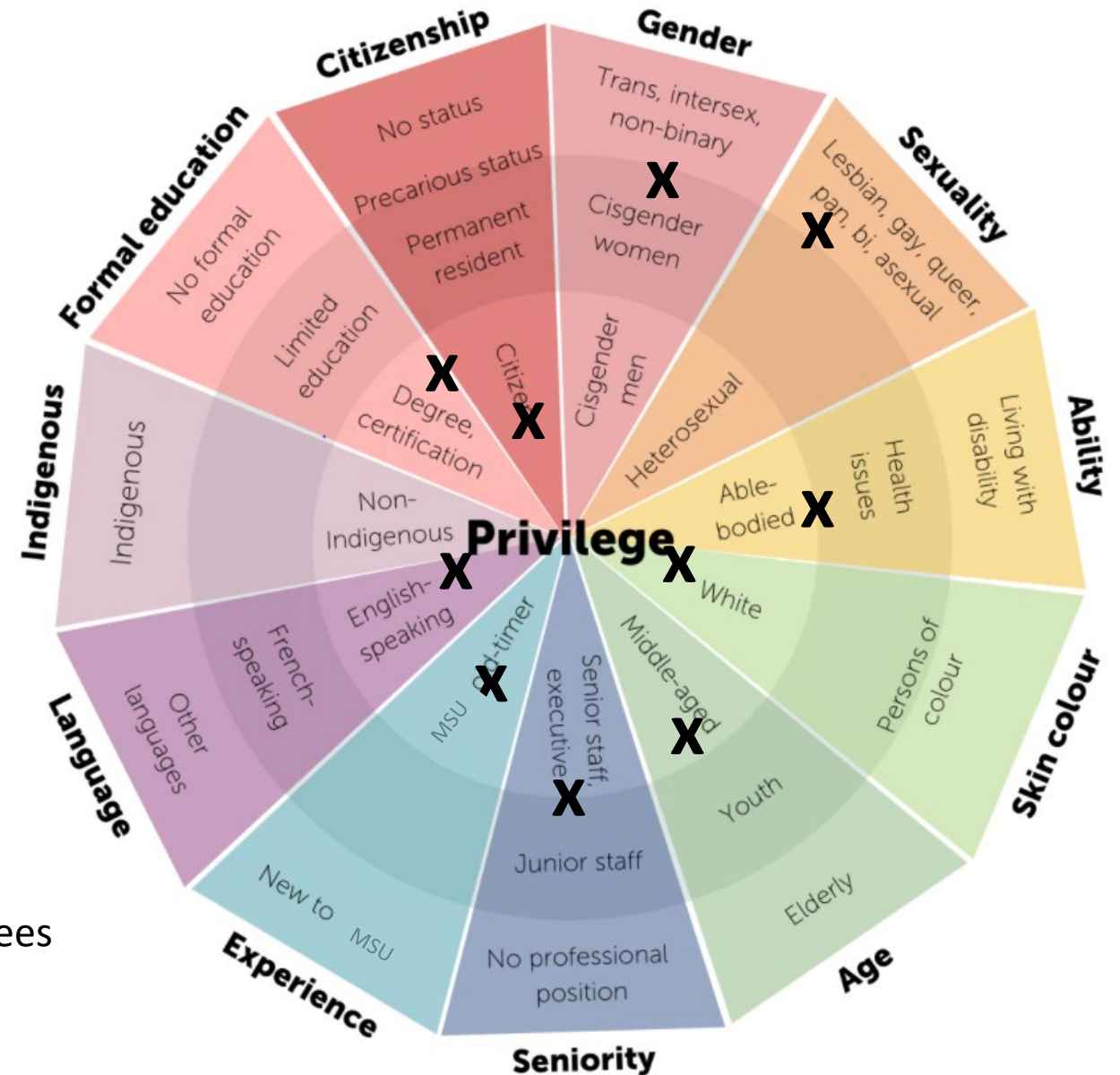
How I enter the space today...

Non-target Group Identities

– supported and uplifted by the systems we live in
white, non-indigenous, middle class, middle age, college degree, member of a union

Target Group Identities

– not supported and often marginalized identities
lesbian, non-traditionally female, invisible mental health disability, do not have a PhD, am not an executive leader



The Power Wheel – from the Canadian Council for Refugees

<https://ccrweb.ca/en/anti-oppression>

In support of safer learning and working spaces

**Listen to
Understand**

**Stories stay.
Lessons leave**

**Recognize
power**

**Take care of
yourself as
needed**

**One mic,
one voice**

**Response
over reaction**



**Curiosity
before
judgment**

**Allow for
both/and
thinking**

Be present
*Be kind, simply
begin again*

**Take space
Make space**

**You gotta
name it
to tame it**

**Wisdom and
capacity for
growth exists
in all of us**



University Health and Wellbeing
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

SPARTAN Resilience

Main Premise:

You deserve to have a wise, caring helper serving as a gatekeeper of your nervous system

SPARTAN Resilience


Become your own wise helper.

Wake Up
Your
Witness Self

Map Your
Stress
Response
*Strengthen Your
Relaxation
Response*

Complete
Your Stress
Cycles

Develop
Grounded
Confidence



We want to
process and
release the stress
we are currently
carrying....

And help ourselves
experience less
stress in the first
place.

Our nervous system is always in one of two states:

- ❑ state of stress
- ❑ state of restoration
(healing/safety/rest/ease)

Which state do you live in?
Which state do you visit?

Most people are operating with a chronically dysregulated nervous system

What we mean by nervous system dysregulation

- When our nervous system activates when it doesn't need to be
- When our nervous system normalizes to be in a constant state of activation and stimulation

Source: Alex Howard – Decoding Your Nervous System

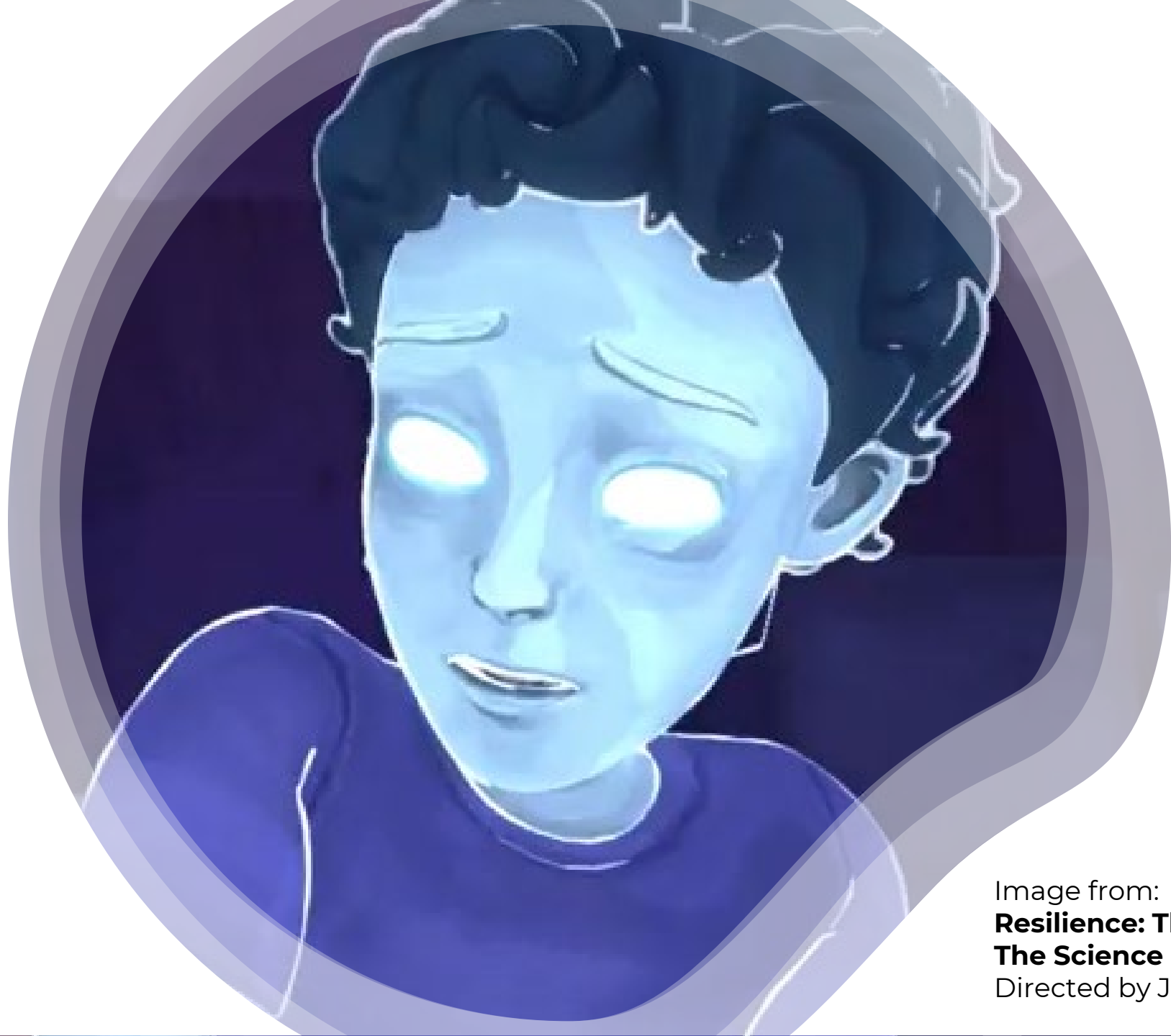


Image from:
**Resilience: The Biology of Stress and
The Science of Hope.**
Directed by James Redford

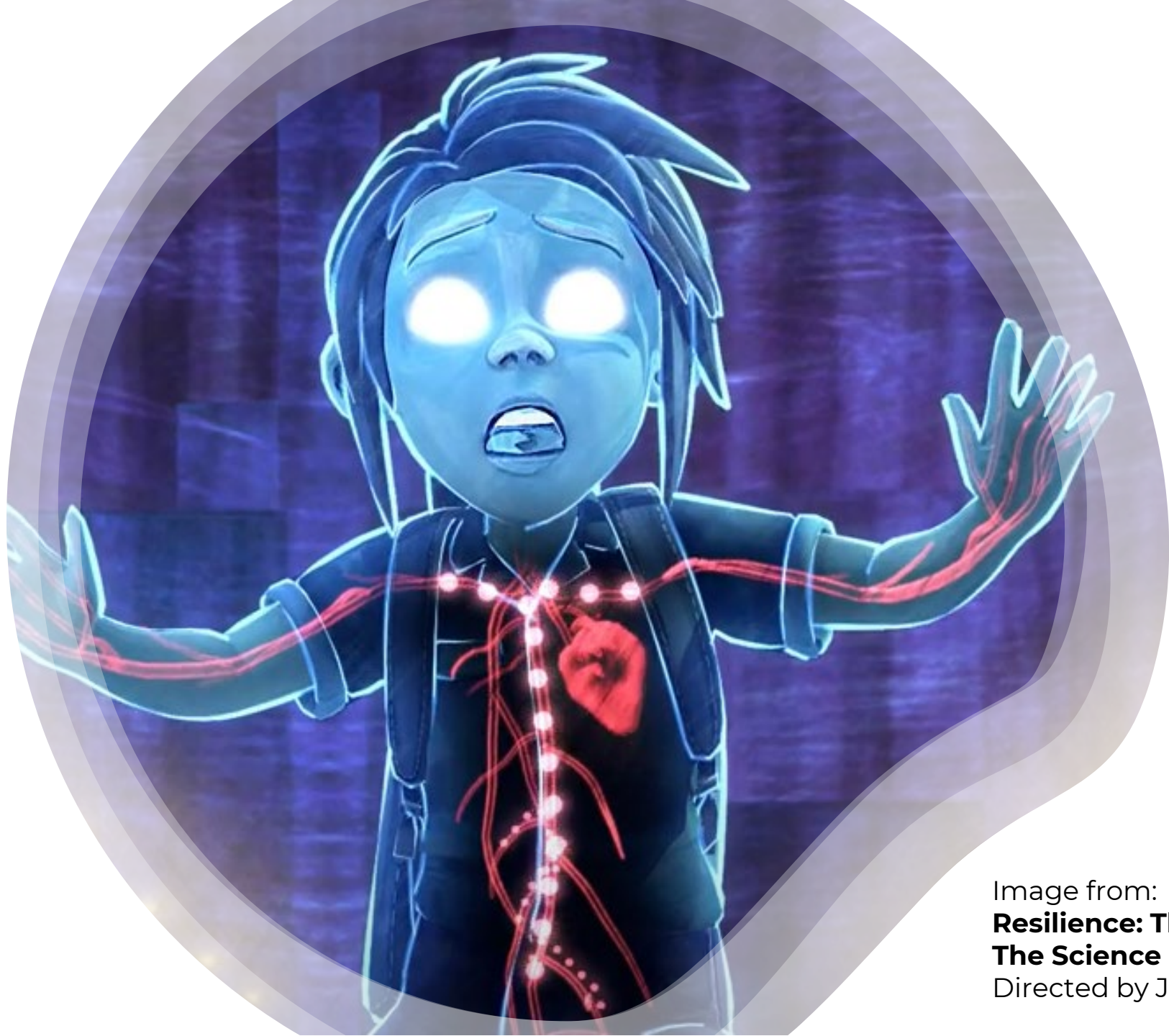
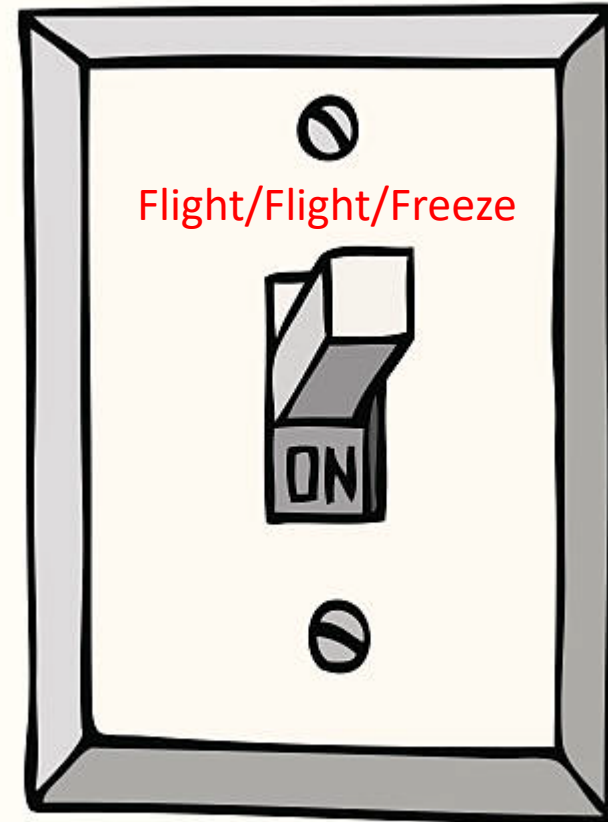
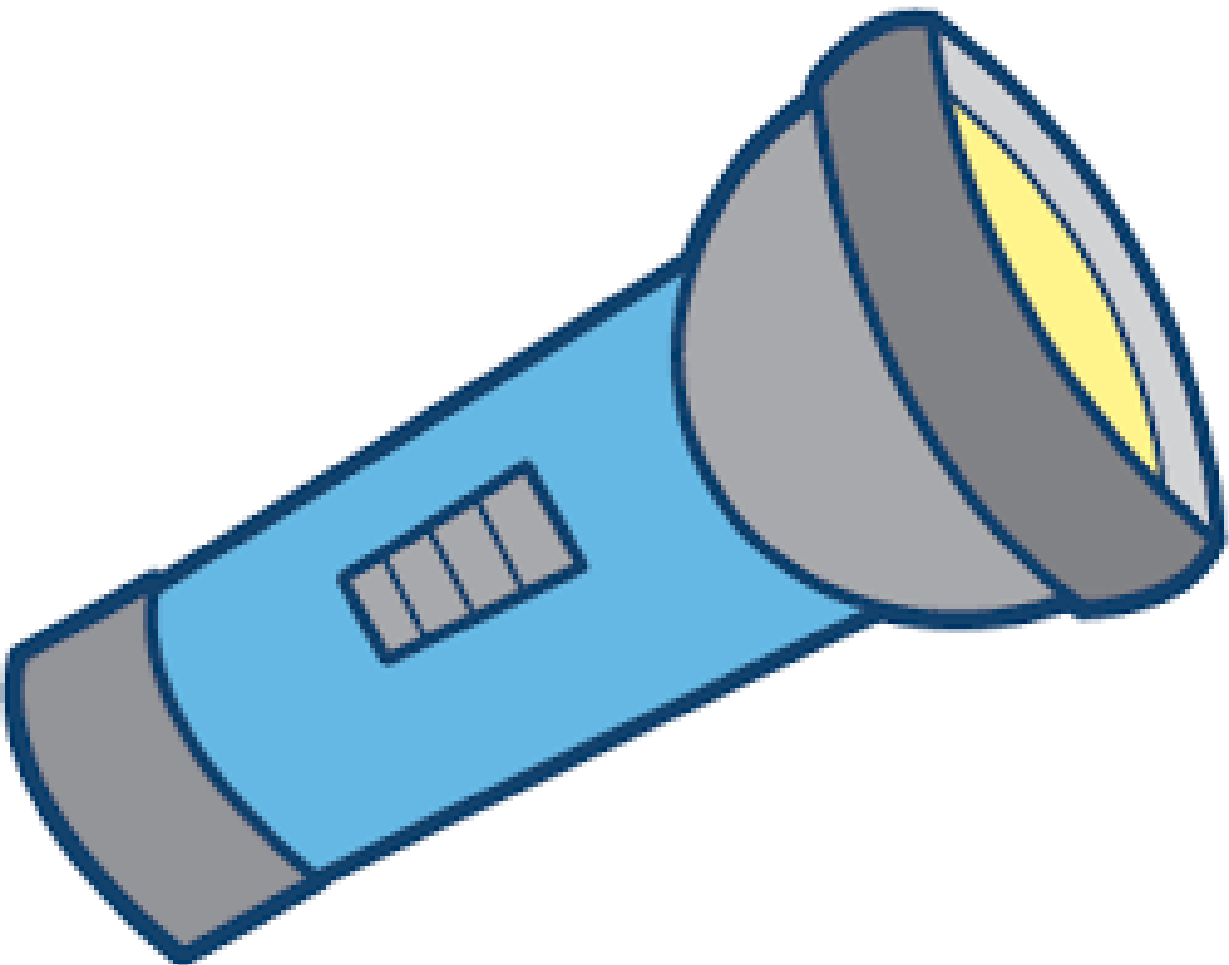


Image from:
**Resilience: The Biology of Stress and
The Science of Hope.**
Directed by James Redford

**Do you know how
to flip the switch off?**

**To switch it off you
first have to realize
it's on.**





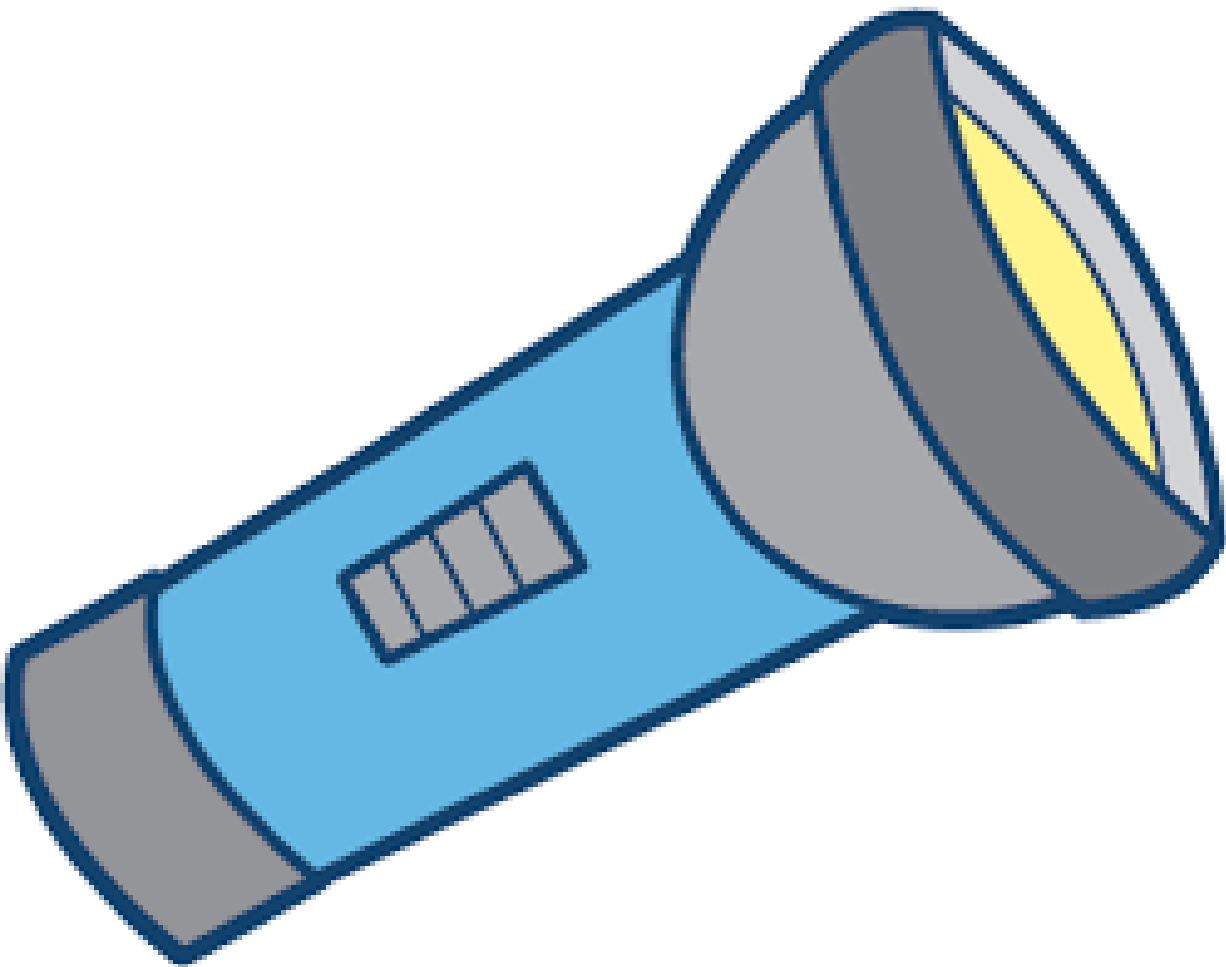
Wake Up The Witness Self

Use your witness
self to catch
yourself in a stress
response.



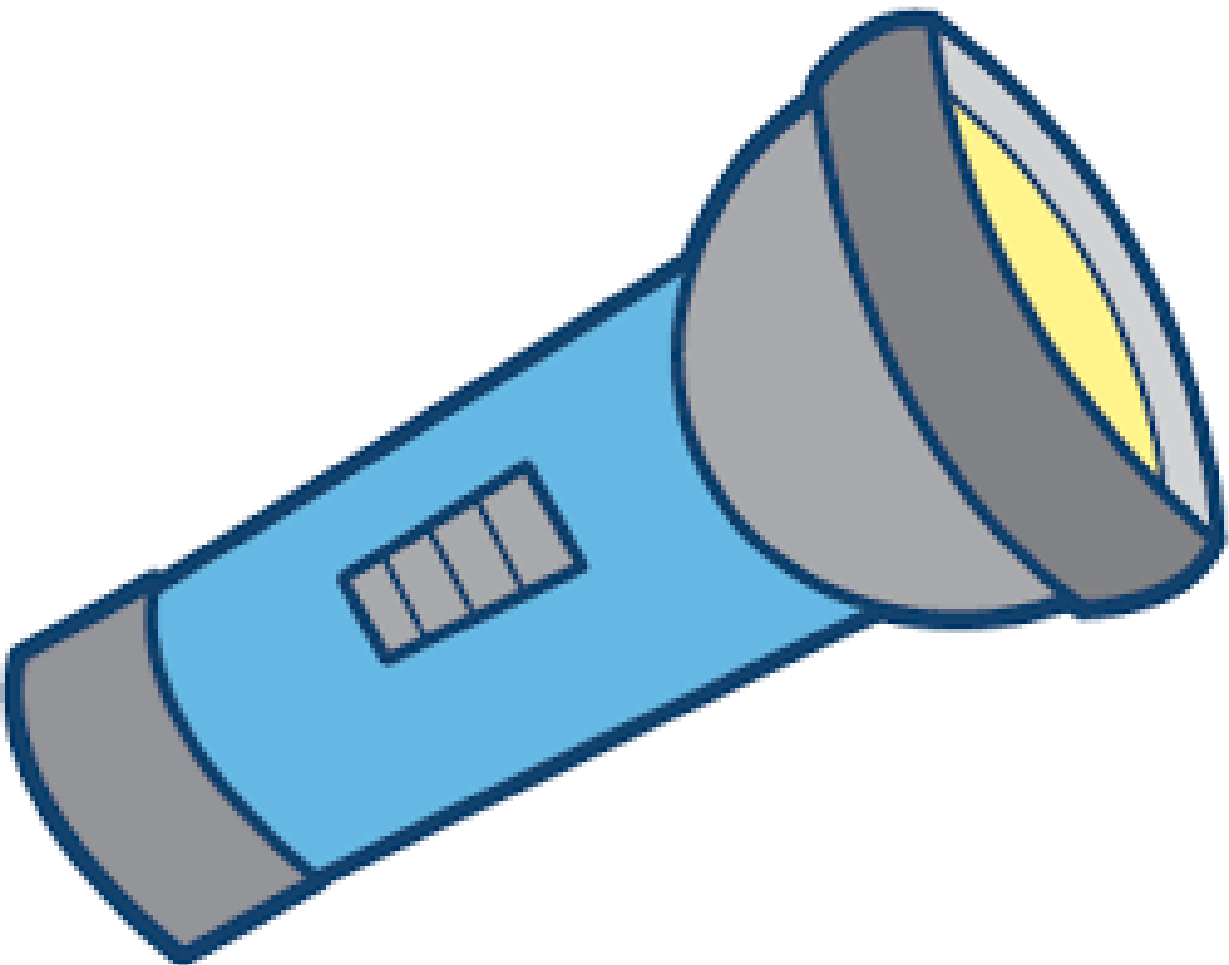
5 Mental Patterns that drive your nervous system towards chronic dysregulation

- **Helper** – we define ourselves by what we do for others
- **Achiever** – We define ourselves by what we accomplish (outcomes)
- **Perfectionist** – While the achiever is focused on the outcome, we are focused on the way we get to the outcome – constant obsessing over the details to get things right, do things right.
- **Anxiety** – We are constantly trying to think ourselves into a feeling of safety
- **Controller** – We are trying to build a sense of safety by being in control of ourselves, our environment, the people around us.



Wake Up The Witness Self

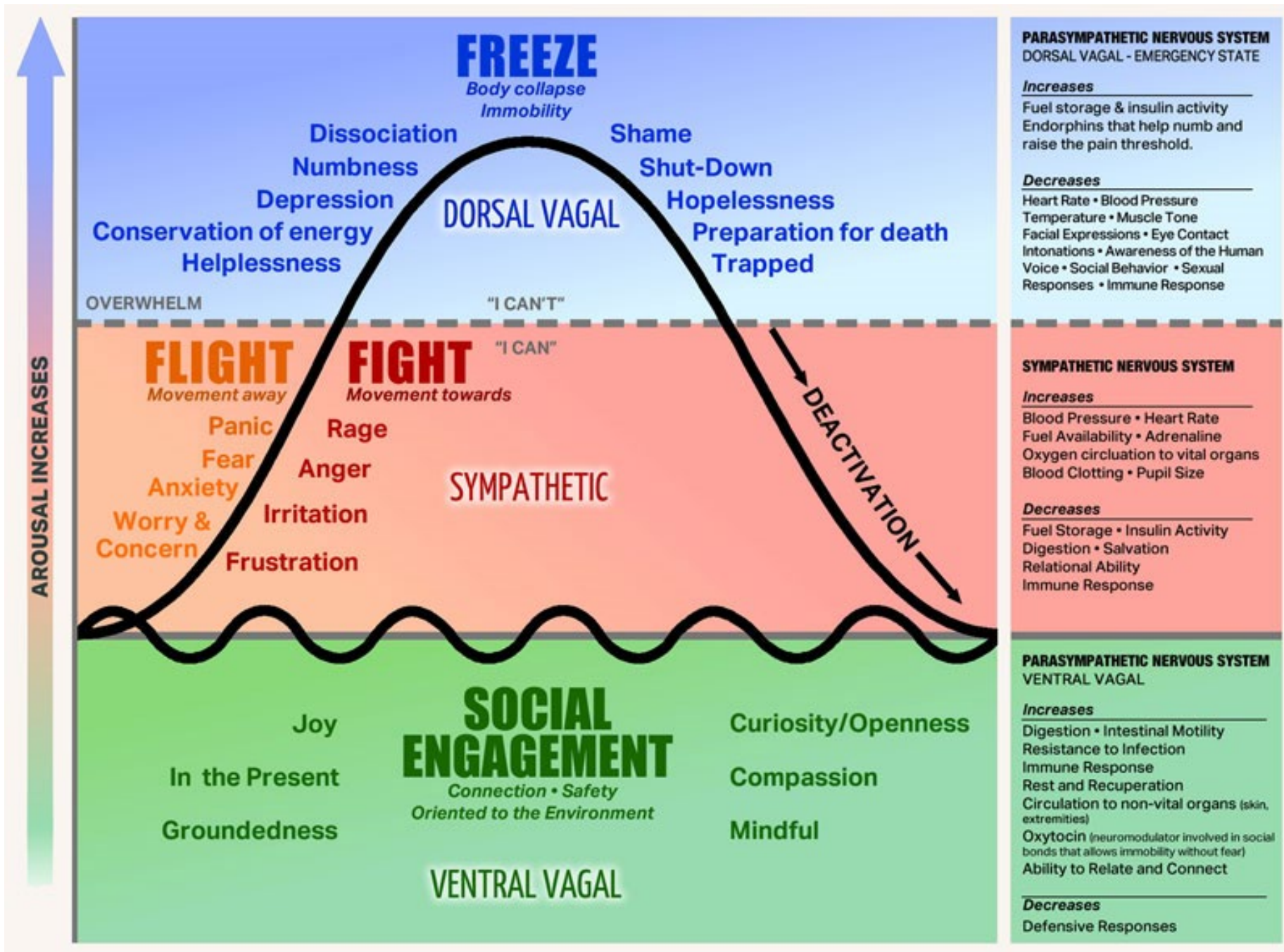
Begin to notice
these stress
inducing thought
patterns and your
trauma reactions



**Notice,
and gently
self correct**



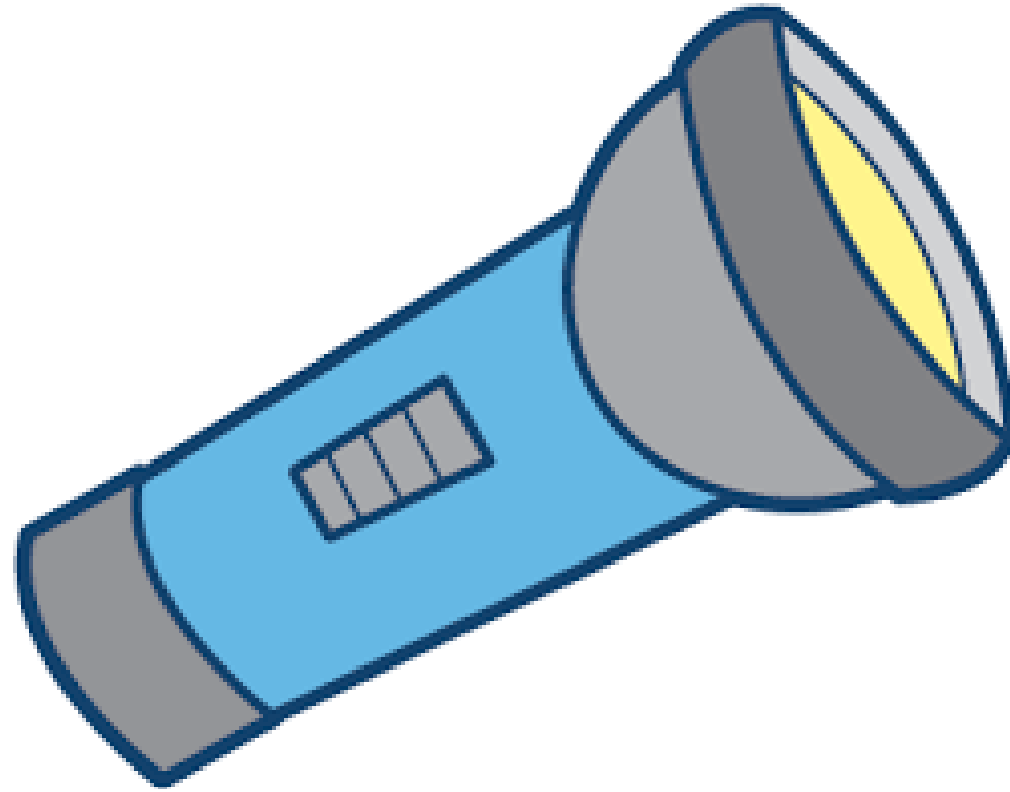
Beating Yourself Up
Is Never A Fair Fight



What goes up...

does not necessarily come down.

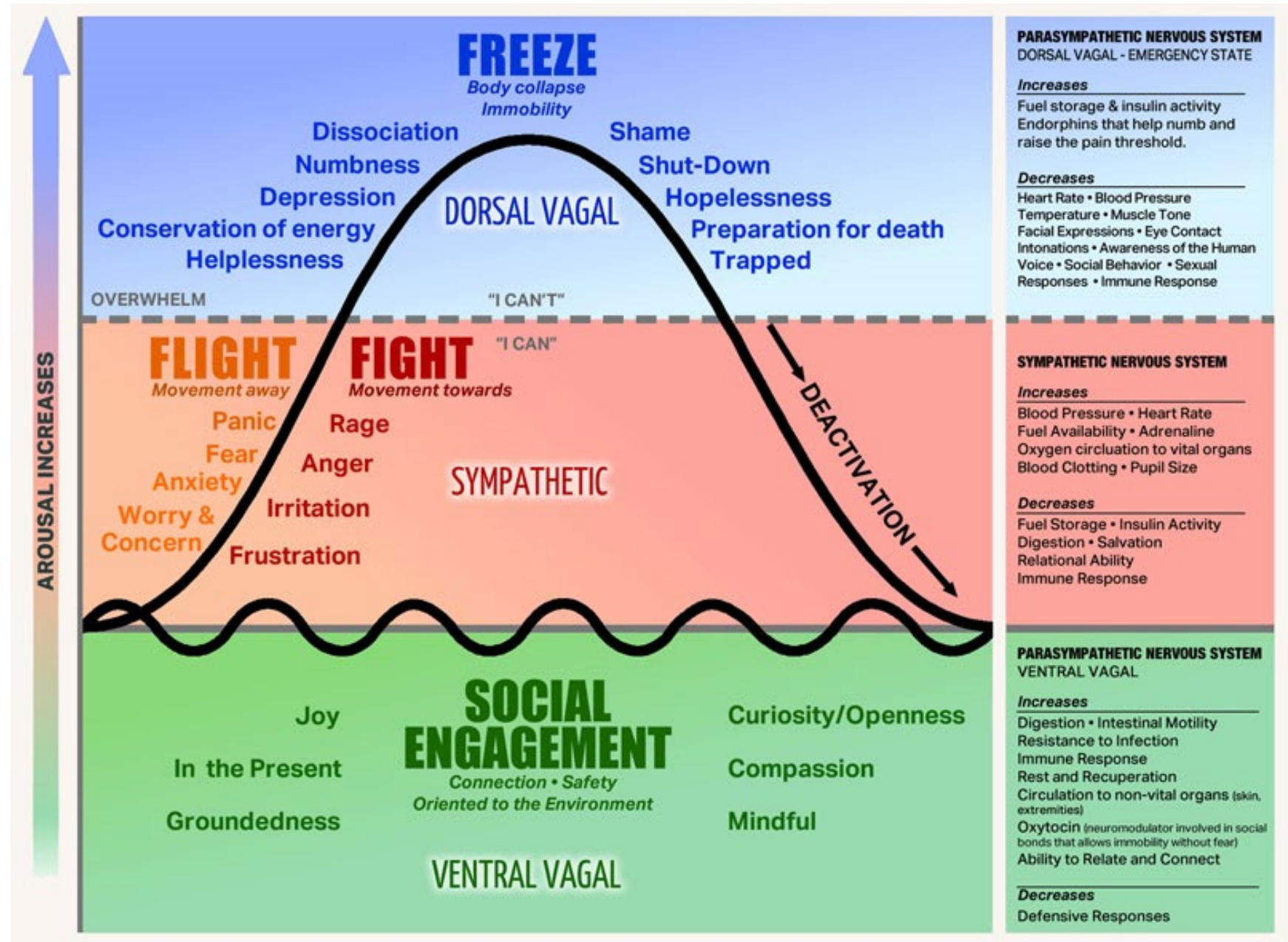
<https://themovementparadigm.com/how-to-map-your-own-nervous-system-the-polyvagal-theory/>

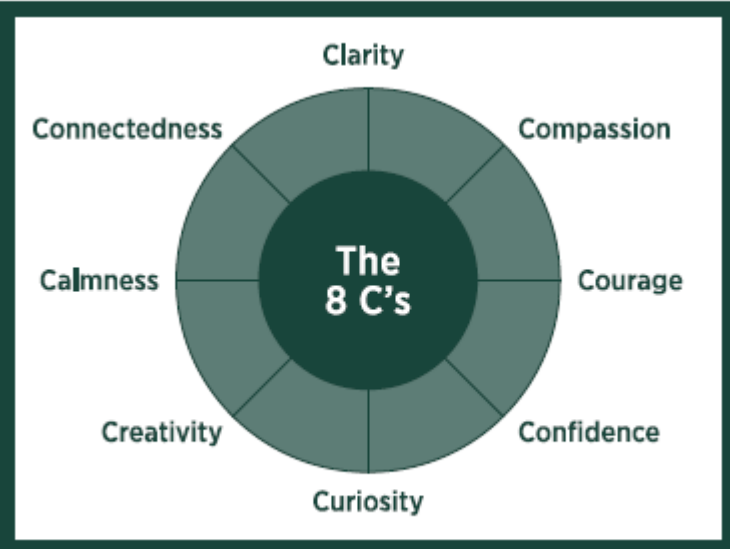
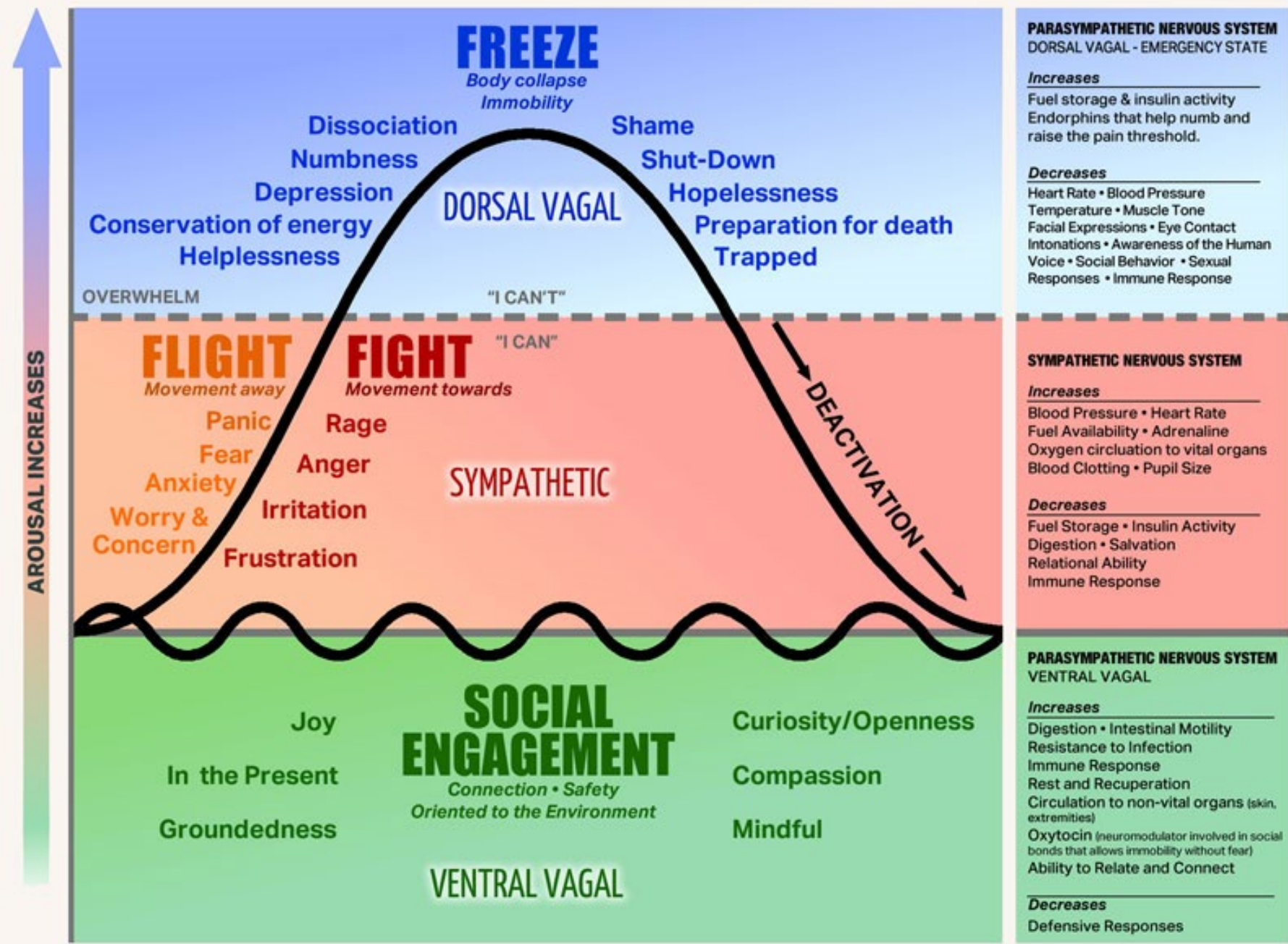


**Witness Yourself
as you walk through your day**

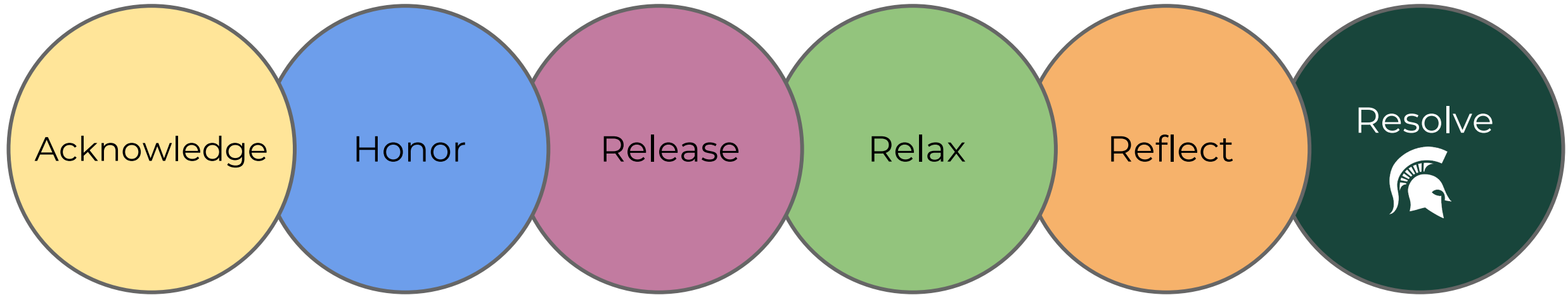
mindful **STATE**

Our main objective is to operate from the **lowest effective level** of stress response possible in any given situation.





The 6-word framework for resilience.



Use this QR code learn more about the 6-word framework



SPARTAN
Resilience



HEALTH PROMOTION AND ENGAGEMENT
University Health and Wellbeing

BE KIND to YOURSELF

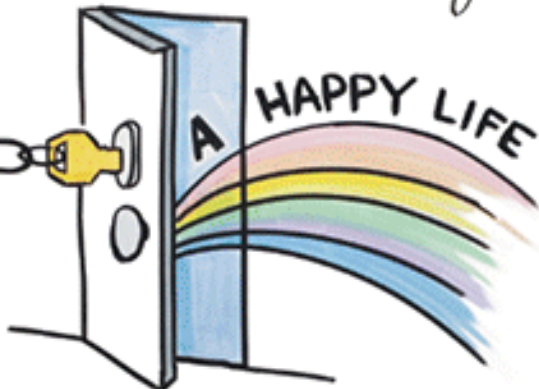
by KRISTIN NEFF



RESEARCH
AND MORE
RESEARCH



self-compassion



SELF-COMPASSION
A SOURCE OF STRENGTH
and RESILIENCE

1 SELF KINDNESS



WE ARE AS CARING
TOWARD OURSELVES
AS WE ARE TOWARD
OTHERS

2 RECOGNIZING OUR COMMON HUMANITY



SHARED HUMAN
EXPERIENCE

3 MINDFULNESS

BEING OPEN TO THE
REALITY OF THE
PRESENT MOMENT

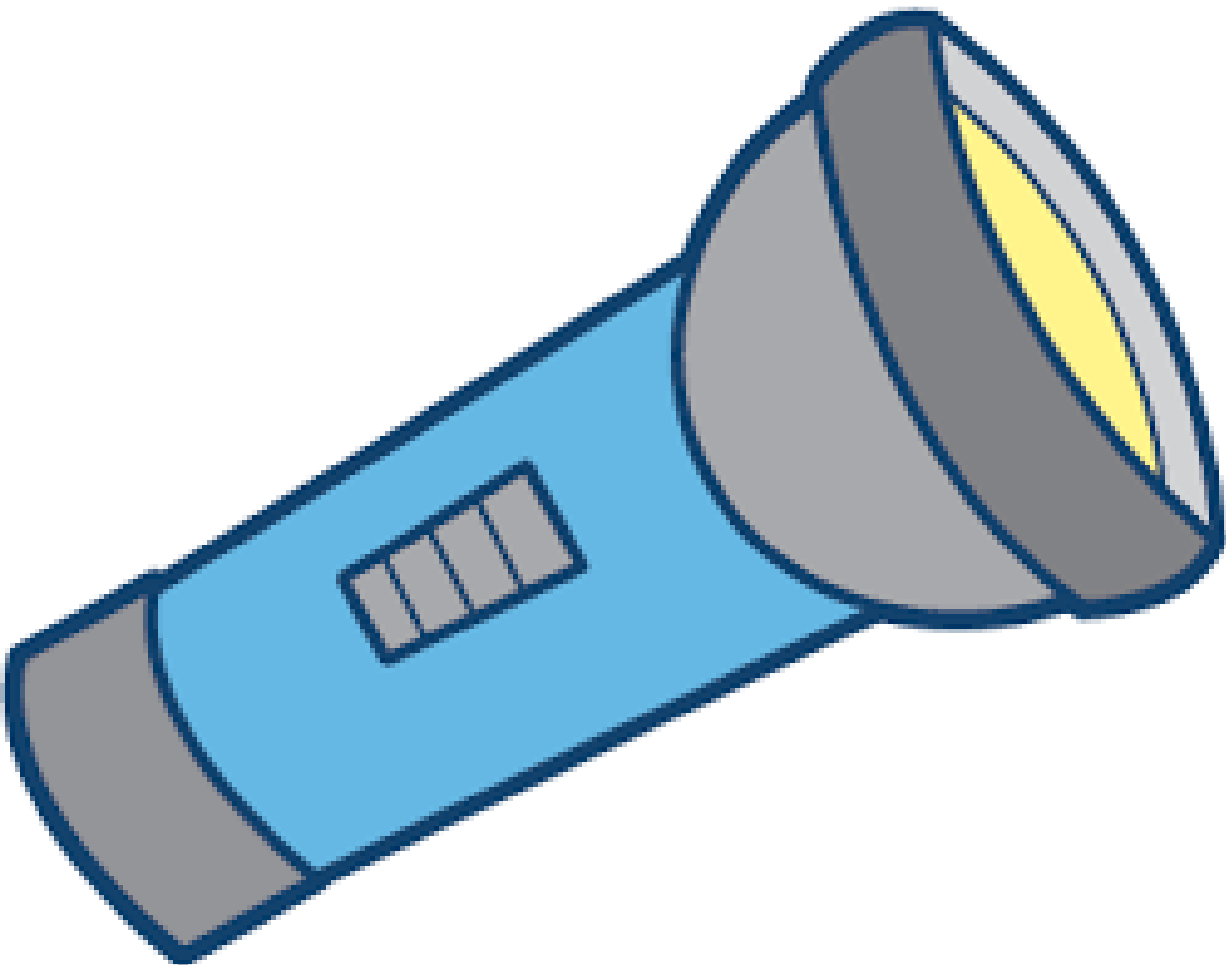


ACKNOWLEDGE
OUR SUFFERING
WITHOUT
EXAGGERATING
IT



MOMENT
of CONNECTION
WITH OTHERS


see your words.com

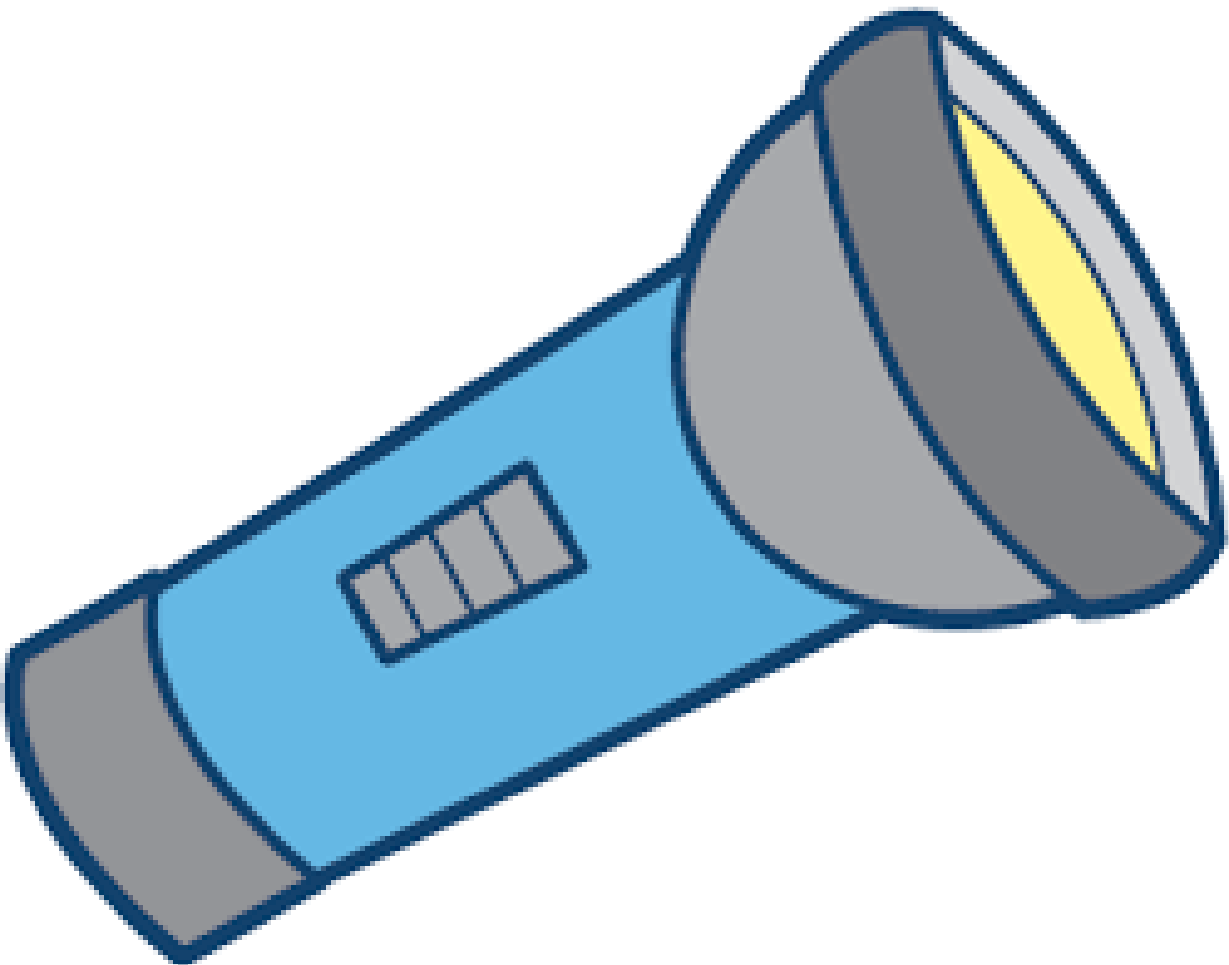


Wake Up The Witness Self

You are holding your flashlight of attention and can direct it wherever you want.

What you shine your attention on comes to life physiologically in your body.



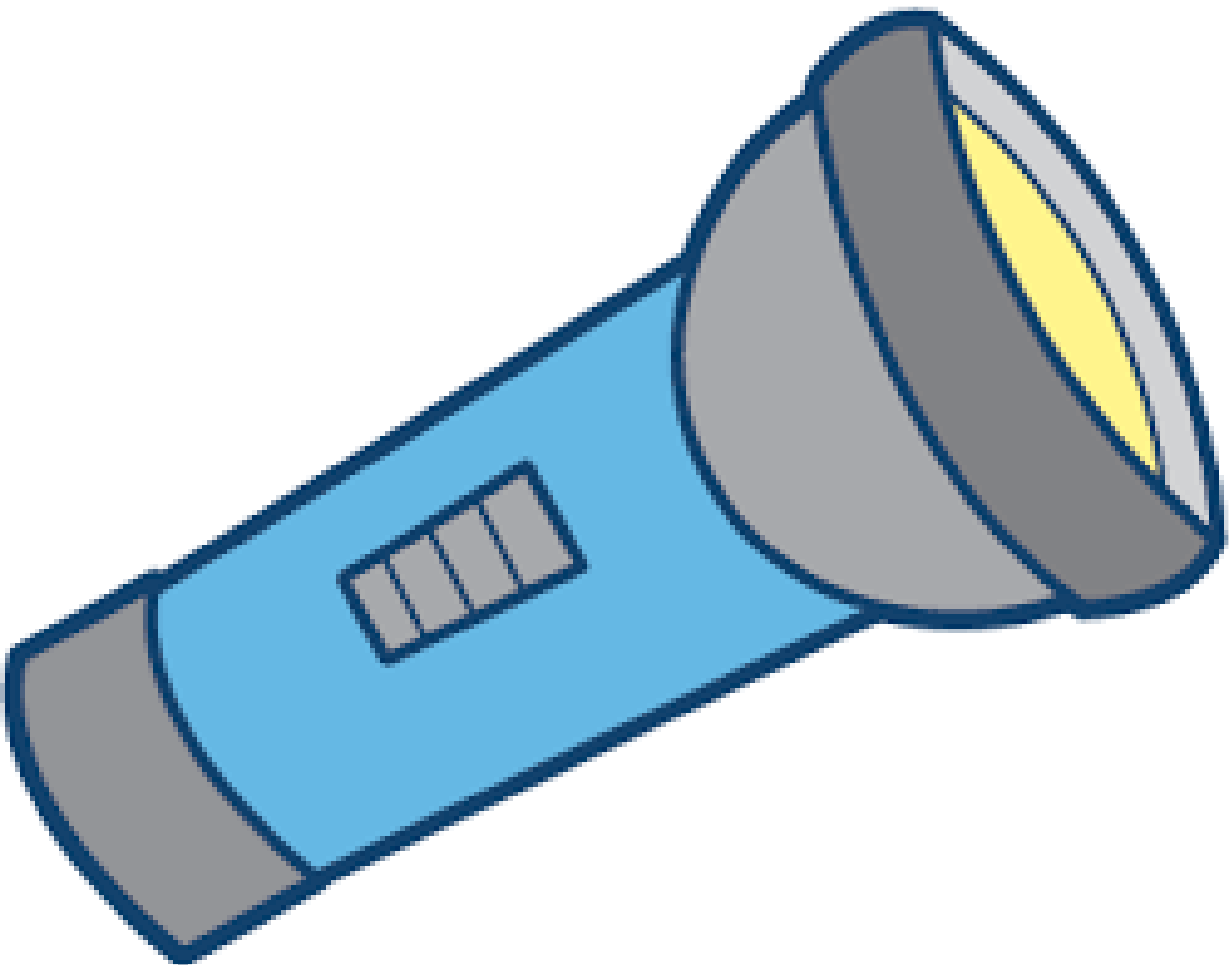


Ask your Witness Self

What is my current state of being?

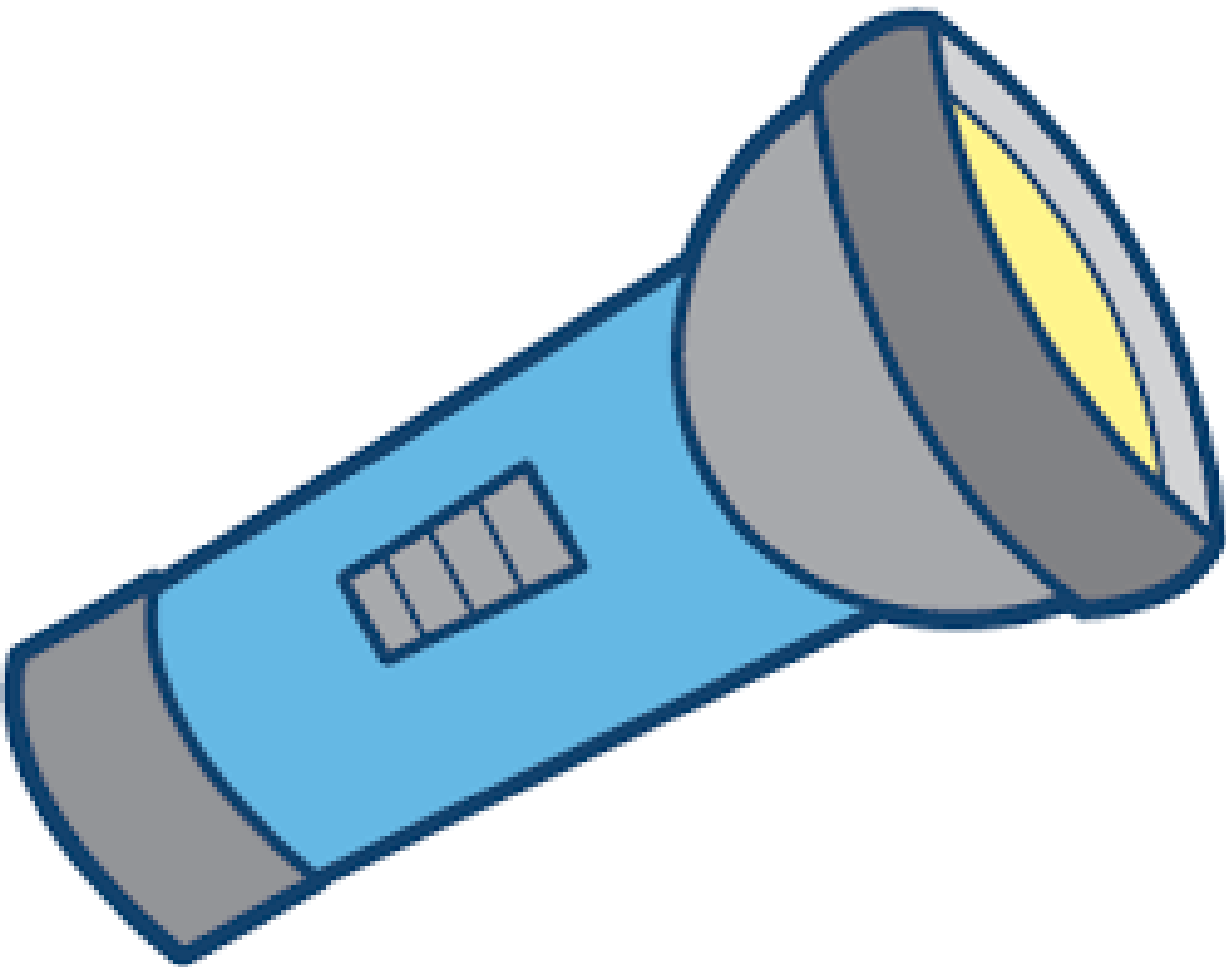
Jot down how you would best describe your current state of being in one or two words?





Coming Into Presence





Ask your Witness Self

What changed in your state of being while we did this grounding practice?

What shifted? What is different?



5 Guiding Questions

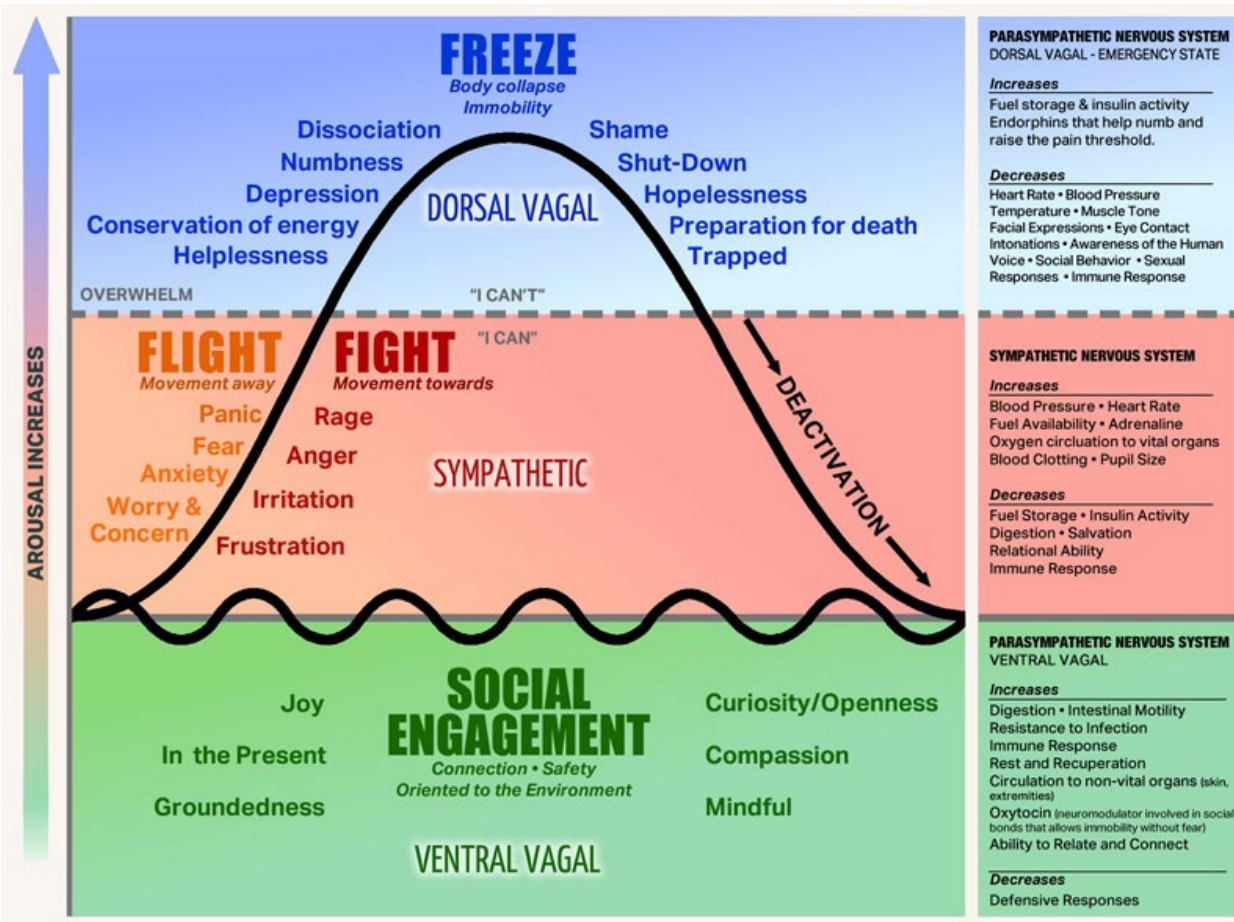
1. What is the level of my stress?

2. How do I know? (look to map)

3. Is this level of response helping me?

4. Can I bring in a practice to help me settle?

5. How do I know it is working?



Grounding Practices

Settling the Breath - **Return to Point**

Orienting to the Presenting Moment
What 5 Things, Feet/Seat/Hands

Self Soothing Gestures and Comforting Language

Tapping or Bilateral movement
Butterfly Hug, Arm Swipe

Ventral Vagal Reset

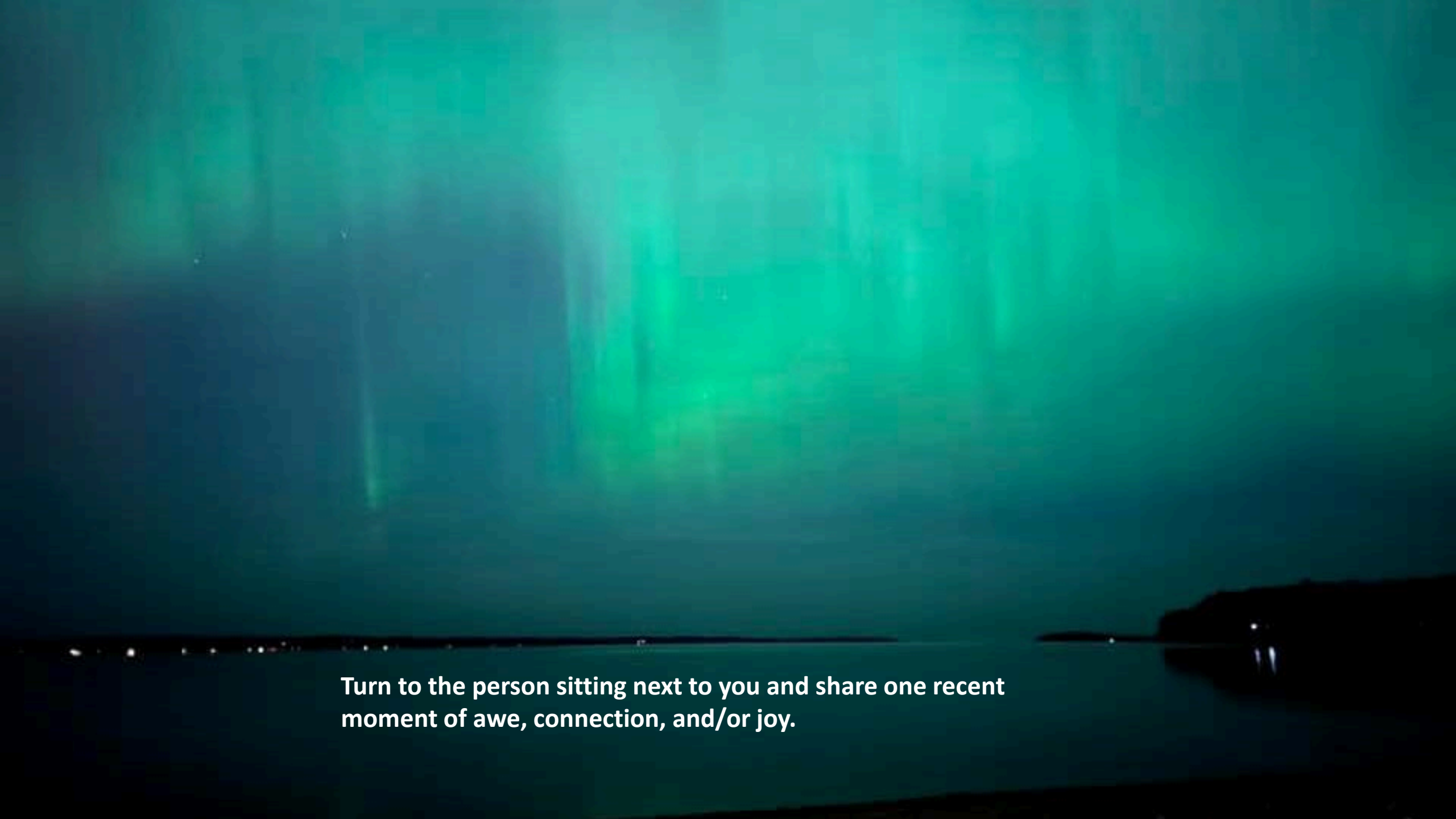
Anchoring/Savoring – **Filling Up Your Awe Reservoir**

Let's fill
up our
**shared
pool of
awe and
joy.**

our spartan



reservoir

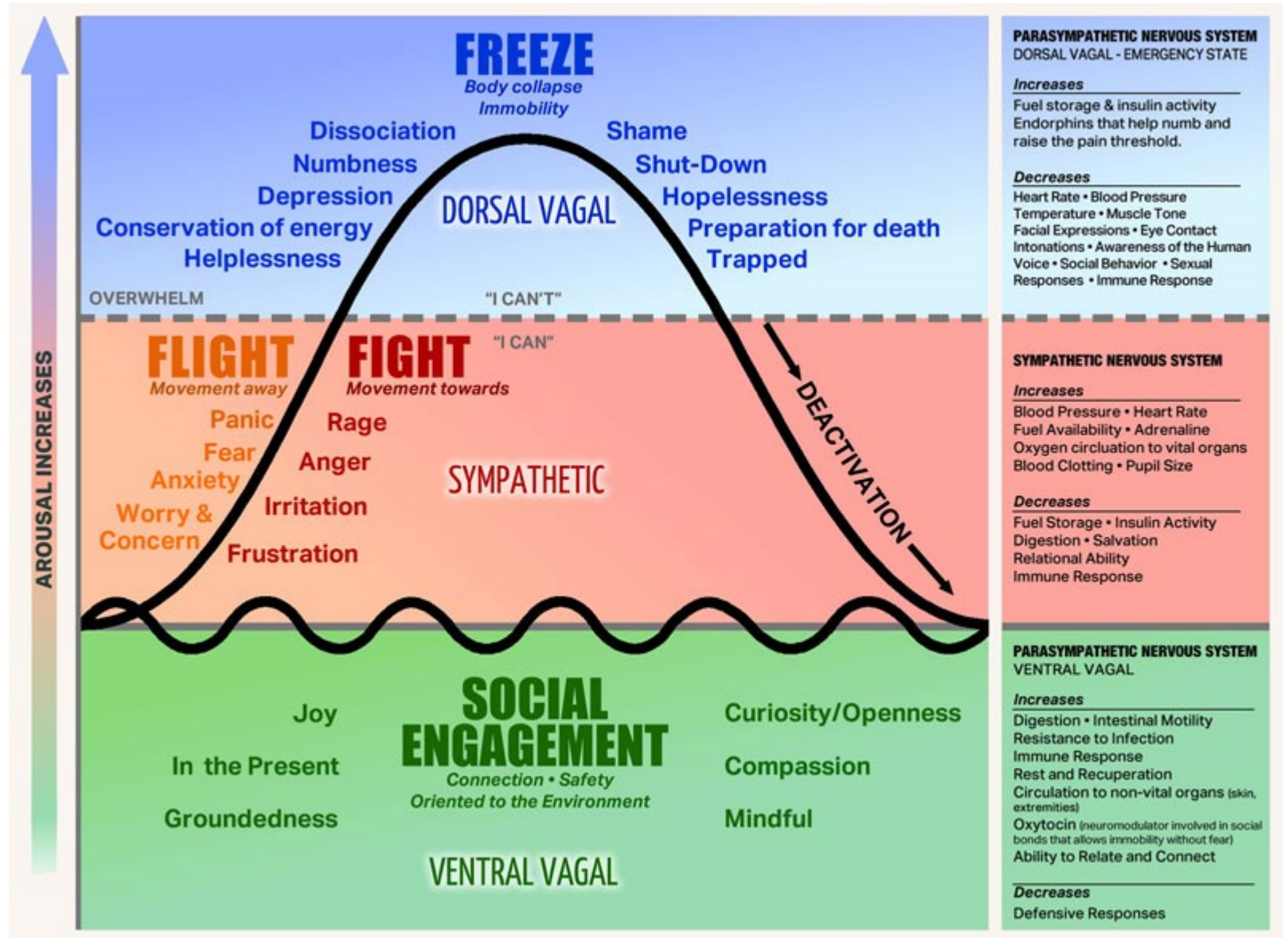
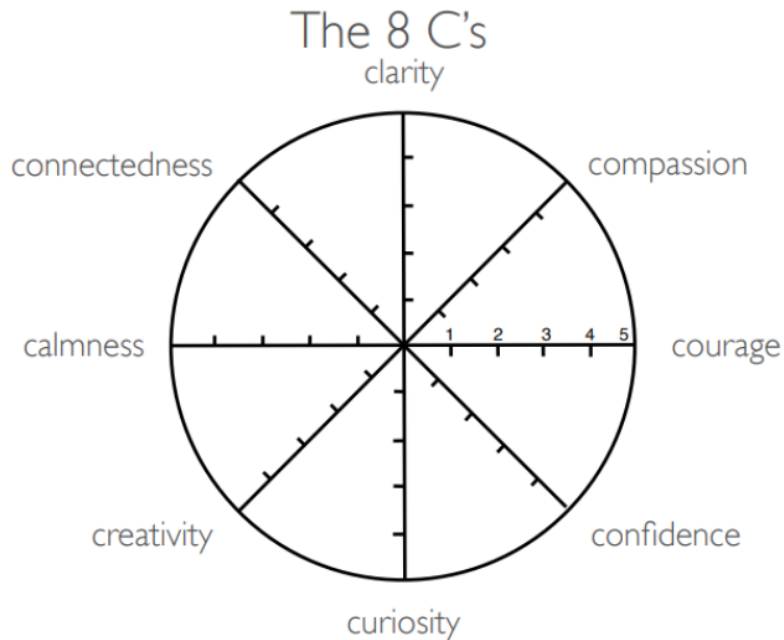


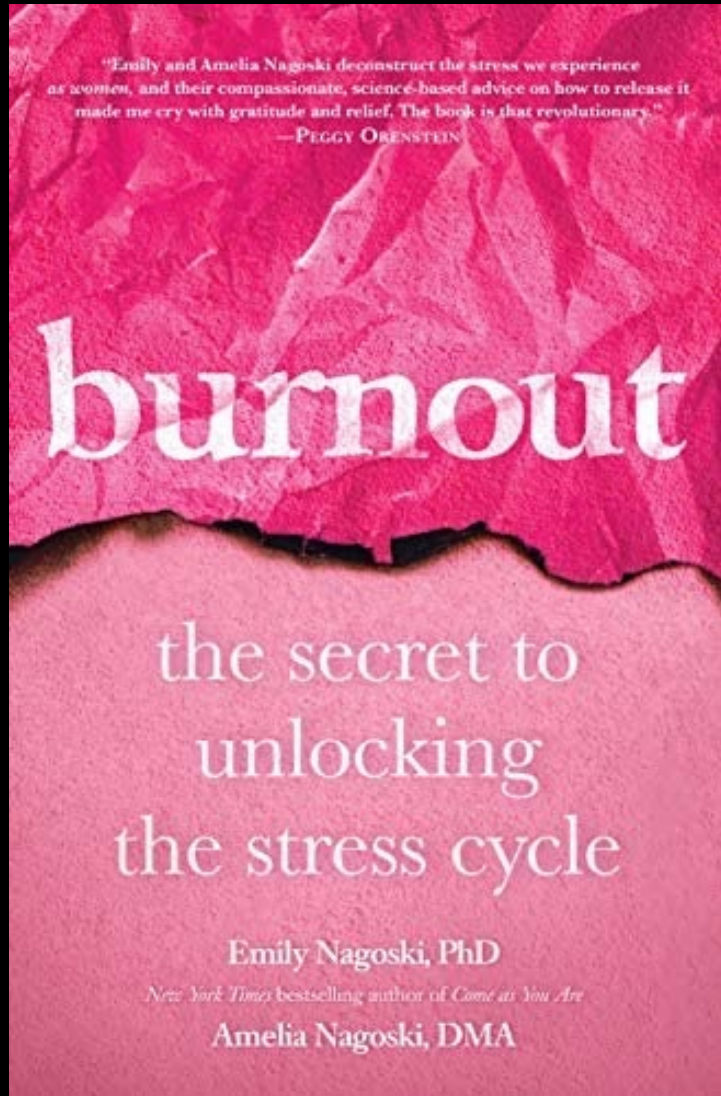
Turn to the person sitting next to you and share one recent moment of awe, connection, and/or joy.



**We understand
how a sponge
works better than
we understand
how people work.**

It is easier to operate from a lower stress response if we have a regular daily practice of “completing the stress cycles”





COMPLETING YOUR STRESS CYCLES

<https://brenebrown.com/podcast/brene-with-emily-and-amelia-nagoski-on-burnout-and-how-to-complete-the-stress-cycle/>

When we have a super stressful moment and our nervous system kicks into fight/flight/freeze

it is kind of like slamming on the brakes for safety.

Once the stressor is taken care of, we don't go back and intentionally complete the stress cycle.





Reasons we get stuck inside the stress

1. **Chronic Stressor(s)**
2. **We confuse completing the stressor with completing the stress cycle**
3. **Safety**
4. **Social Appropriateness**
5. **Human Giver Syndrome**

NOTE: possible trigger on next slide – holistically exhausted woman



“If we had set out to design a system to induce burnout in half the population, we could not have constructed anything more efficient”.

How able to provide “The Spartan Experience” is she?

How ready for “daring leadership” is she?

And yet she won't think there is something wrong with the set up, she will likely think there is something wrong with her.

And he may think he is losing his grip

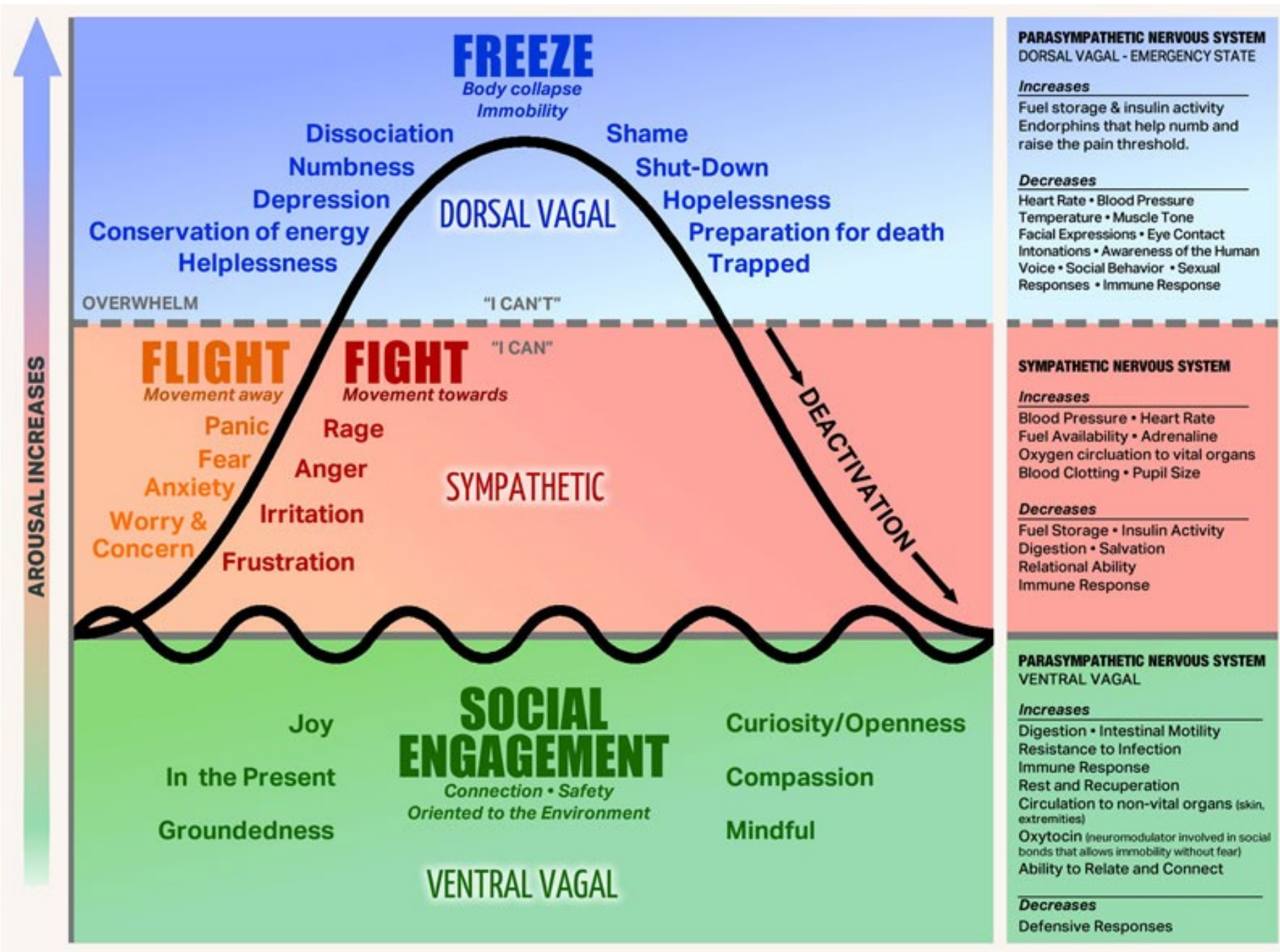
but he will likely hide it,
stuff it, tell himself to
get over it, buck up,
numb it out, and not
allow himself to talk
about it or get any
decent kind of support.



Same for this guy.



Photo: Willowpix/iStockphoto



What goes up...
does not
necessarily
come down.

We develop a
**backlog of
uncompleted
stress cycles**

**Burnout is
inevitable**

<https://themovementparadigm.com/how-to-map-your-own-nervous-system-the-polyvagal-theory/>

The 3 Elements of Burnout



BURNOUT: THE SECRET TO UNLOCKING THE STRESS CYCLE
– EMILY NAGOSKI, PHD AND AMELIA NAGOSKI, DMA (2019)

1. **Emotional Exhaustion**
Carrying too much for too long
2. **Depersonalization**
The depletion of empathy, caring,
and compassion
3. **Decreased Sense of Accomplishment**
An unconquering sense of futility:
feeling that nothing you do makes
any difference



Photo credit: Lisa Laughman, Pictured Rocks, MI

Why it is important to complete the stress cycle

“the threat is gone, but your body is still in full action mode, because you haven’t done anything your body recognizes as a cue that you are safe. Your body is just stuck in the middle of the stress response.

Just telling yourself, “you’re safe now, calm down,” doesn’t help.

BURNOUT: THE SECRET TO UNLOCKING THE STRESS CYCLE
– EMILY NAGOSKI, PHD AND AMELIA NAGOSKI, DMA (2019)



Why it is important to complete the stress cycle

Addressing the stressor does not mean you have addressed the stress itself. **Your body is soaked in stress juice, just waiting for some cue** that you are now safe from the threat and can relax

Acknowledge, Honor, Release

“we are not built to live in this state. If we get stuck there, the physiological response intended to save us can instead slowly kill us.”



Offer Cues for Safety

“you have to **DO SOMETHING** that **SIGNALS** your body that you are **SAFE**, or else you’ll stay in that state, with neurochemicals and hormones degrading but never shifting into relaxation.

Your digestive system, immune system, cardiovascular system, musculoskeletal system, and reproductive system never get the signal they are safe.”



Remember to
“complete your stress cycles”

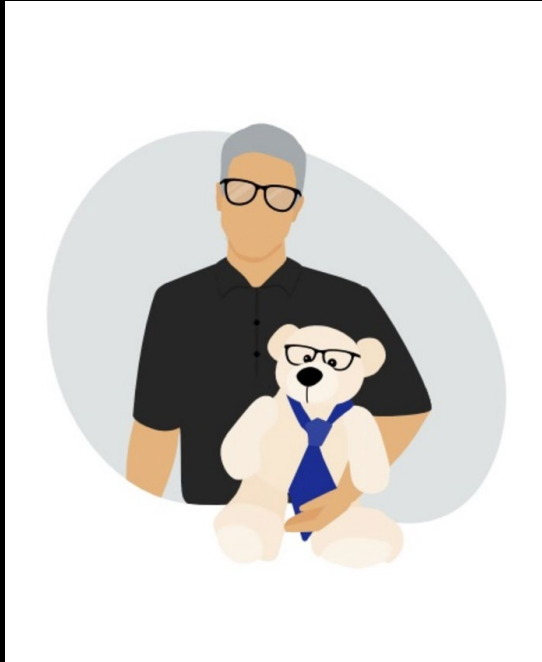
- Physical Activity
- Breathing
- Positive Social Interaction
- Laughter
- Affection
- Crying/Sobbing
- Creative Expression
- Engagement with Something Larger
- Other suggestions

**Stress
Mitigation
Practices**



**Questions,
Comments
and
Take-Aways**

Deepening Your Essential Skills Learning Community



This healing-centered learning community meets the **second and fourth Thursdays of each month** from 12:30-1:30 pm, via zoom.

Sessions are facilitated by:

Lisa Laughman,
Coordinator of Spartan Resilience Education

Use QR code to register



Introducing the Spartan Resilience Education Certificate

- ✓ Complete all 8 courses to earn certificate
- ✓ Attend live webinars or watch recordings off-line
- ✓ After watching all sessions, complete the participant survey for the course
- ✓ You will be prompted to send an email to spartanresilience@msu.edu
- ✓ We will track your course completion and send you a certificate once you have attended all 8 courses

Supervisors encouraged to support employee attendance



MSU Grief and Loss Support Sessions

Joining our trauma-informed, healing-centered community will give you the opportunity to:

- Share your unique grief journey.
- Receive empathy and non-judgmental support.
- Gain resources to support healthy grieving.
- Learn core resilience skills and strategies
- Gain basic education re: grief, ambiguous loss, tasks of mourning, and transformational grief practices.



**Sessions are drop-in and free of charge
Come when you need to.
Use QR Code to enroll.**

