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# WHAT IS TRAUMA?:

TRIGGERS, HEALING AND ADVOCACY

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**TRAUMA IS THE RESPONSE TO A DEEPLY DISTRESSING OR DISTURBING EVENT THAT OVERWHELMS AN INDIVIDUAL'S ABILITY TO COPE, CAUSES FEELINGS OF HELPLESSNESS, DIMINISHES THEIR SENSE OF SELF AND THEIR ABILITY TO FEEL THE FULL RANGE OF EMOTIONS AND EXPERIENCES.**

**What is Trauma?**

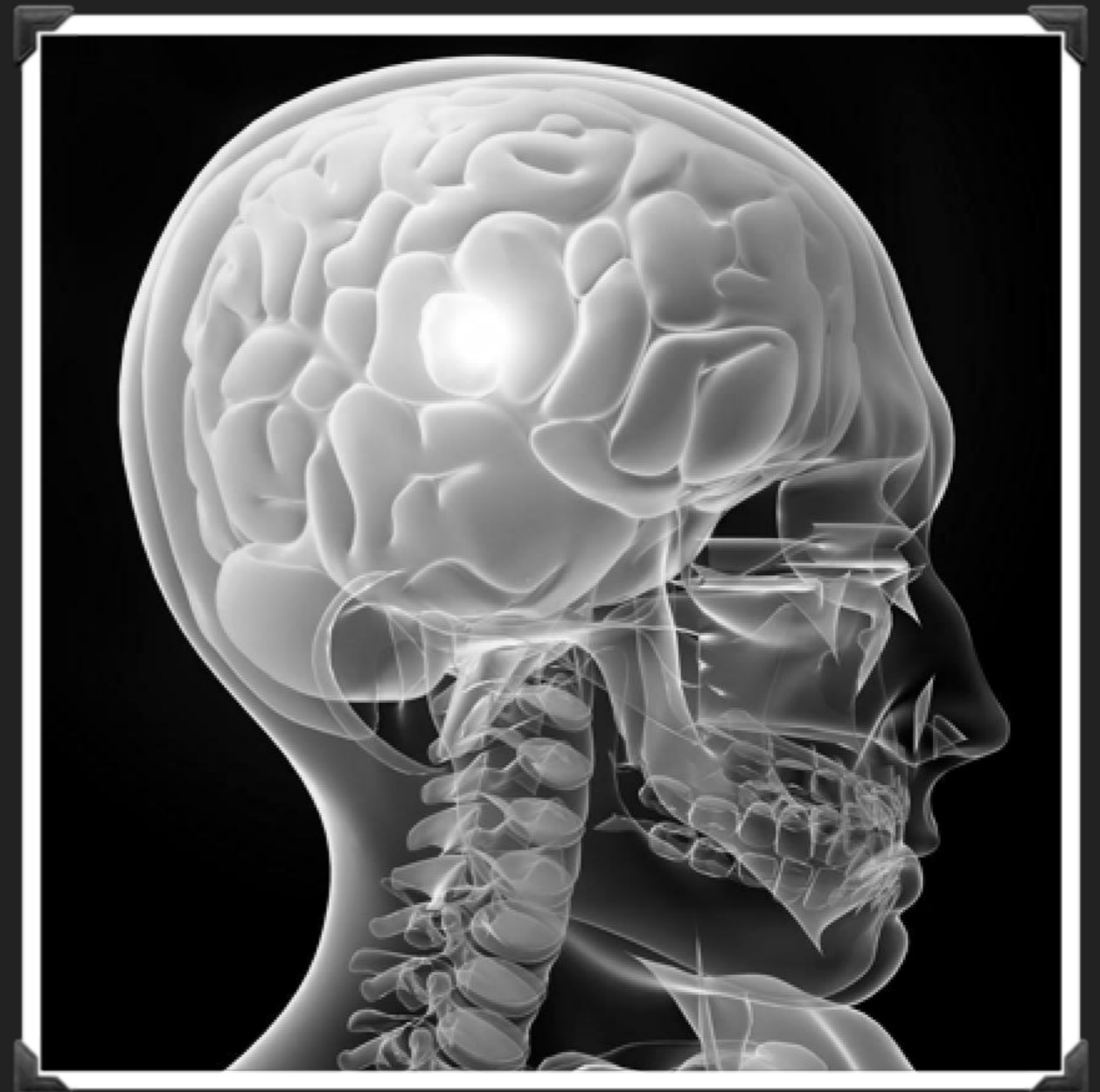
# TYPES OF TRAUMA?

- Complex Trauma
- Vicarious Trauma
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Refugee Trauma
- Medical Trauma
- Early Childhood Trauma
- Community Violence
- Bullying
- Intimate Partner Violence
- Physical Abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Terrorism and Violence
- Traumatic Grief
- Traumatic Stress



# WHAT CAUSE THE TRAUMA?

- Serious accidents
- Natural disasters
- Robbery
- Rape
- Major surgeries
- Chronic or repetitive experiences (e.g. child abuse, cheating, lying, and neglect.)
- War, combat and concentration camps
- Hostile environment
- Oppression
- Arguments
- Break-ups
- Major life changes
- Become part of negative spiral from previous trauma

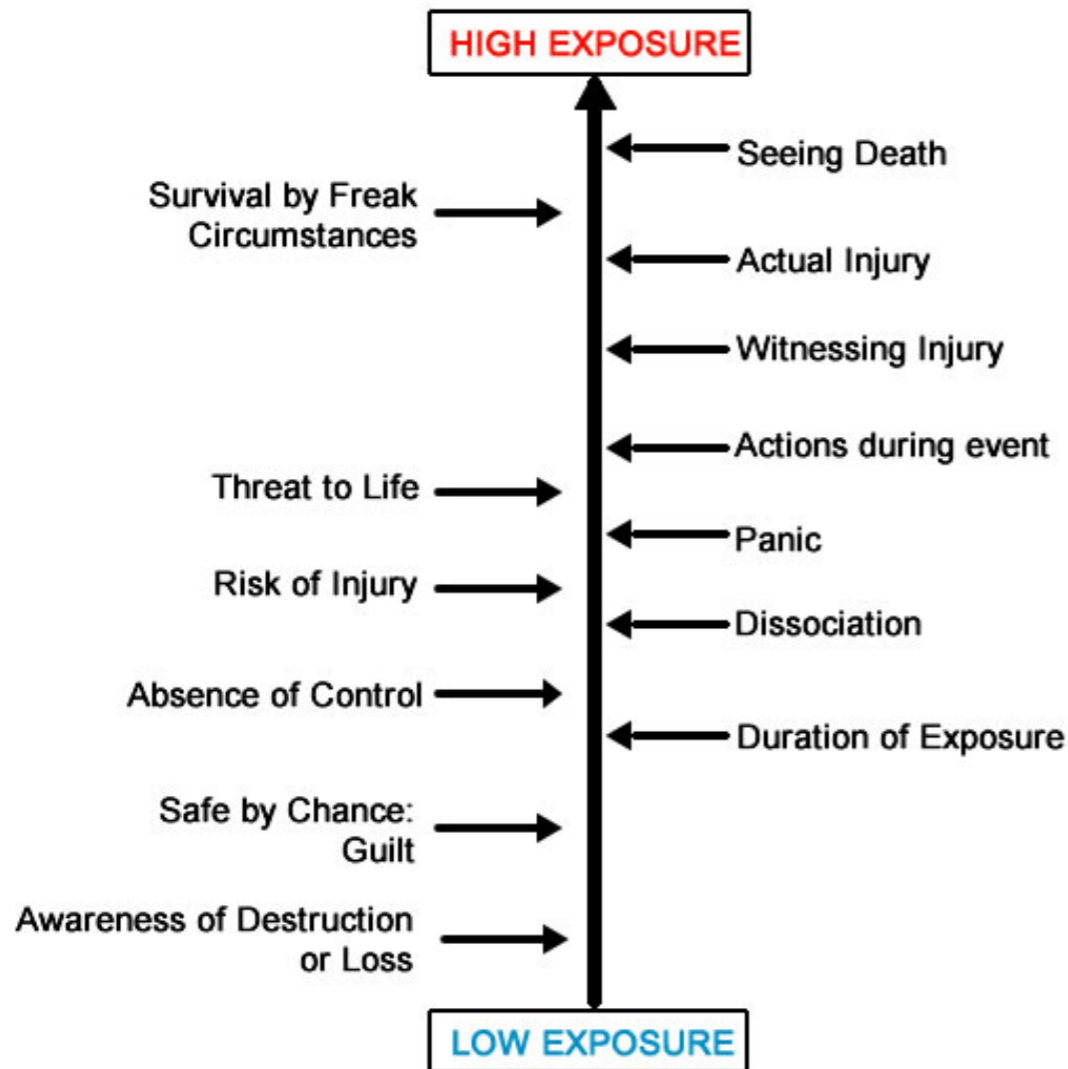


# EFFECTS OF TRAUMA

- ▶ Insomnia
- ▶ Chronic pain
- ▶ Breathing problems
- ▶ Heart palpitations
- ▶ Tension
- ▶ Digestive problems
- ▶ Chronic fatigue
- ▶ Autoimmune disorders
- ▶ Increase feeling anxious
- ▶ Difficult to maintain happiness



### Hypothetical Hierarchy of elements of a Traumatic Experience



source: Traumatic Stress: The Effects of Overwhelming Experience on Mind, Body, and Society p.147

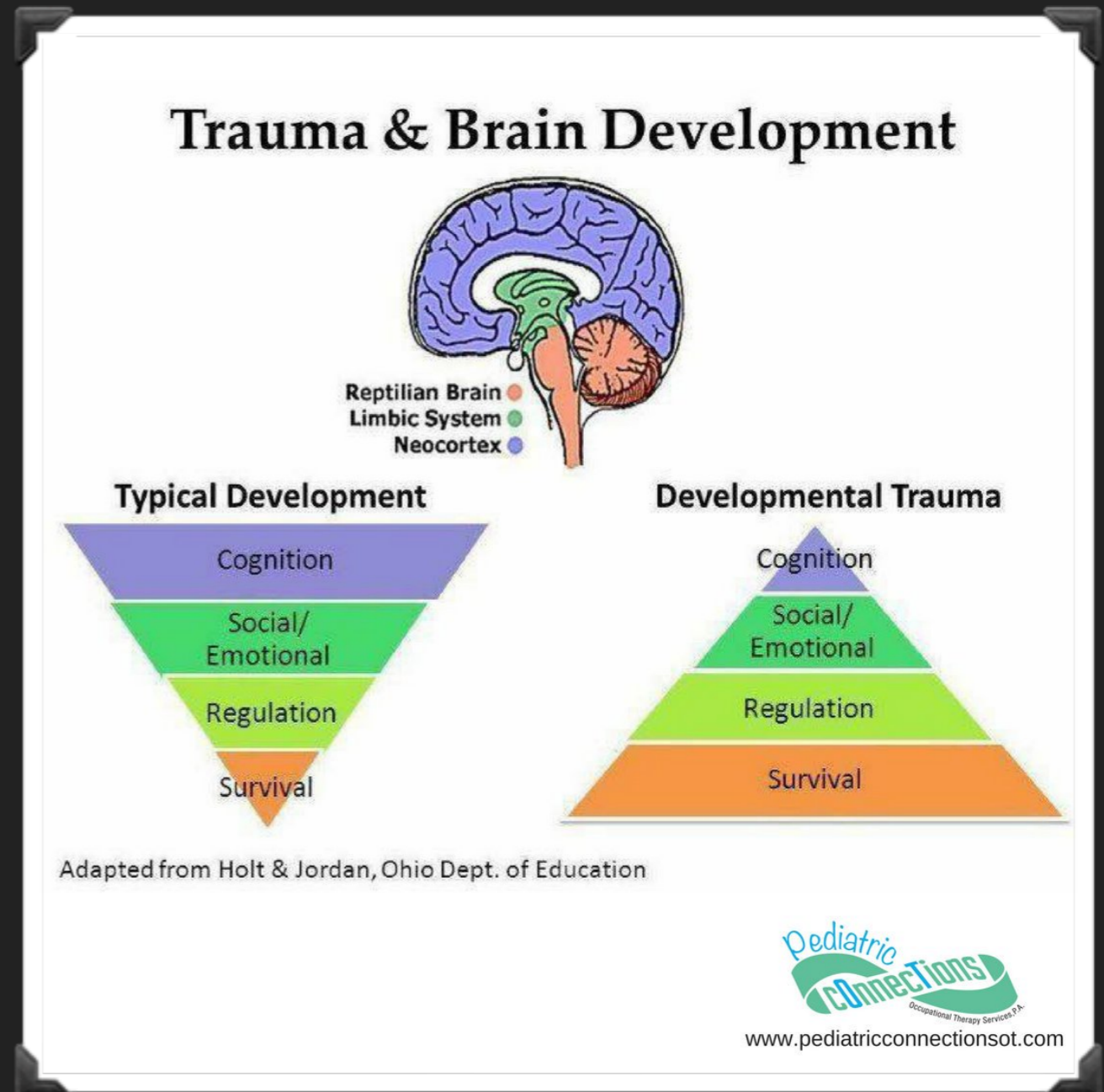
<http://traumadissociation.com/trauma-abuse>

According to Trauma Dissociation, there are different levels of exposure to trauma but we also need to be mindful of the individual's levels of resilience.

See the difference between typical development and developmental trauma?

What is the difference?

What type of response can you think from a typical development individual versus developmental trauma about certain situations?



## TRAUMATIC STRESS

- ▶ A reaction to traumatic event
- ▶ Physical responses to traumatic events:
  - ▶ Trembling
  - ▶ Pounding heart
  - ▶ Rapid breathing
  - ▶ Lump in throat
  - ▶ Racing thoughts
  - ▶ Stomach tightening
- ▶ Can you think of other physical responses to traumatic events?





## SIGNS OF TRAUMATIC STRESS

- ▶ **Shock and disbelief** - you may have a hard time accepting the reality of what happened
- ▶ **Fear** - that the same thing will happen again, or that you'll lose control or break down.
- ▶ **Helplessness** - the sudden, unpredictable nature of violent crime, accidents or nature disaster may leave you feeling vulnerable and helpless.
- ▶ **Guilt** - that you survived the others died, or that you could have done more to help.
- ▶ **Anger** - you may be angry at God or others you feel are responsible
- ▶ **Shame** - especially over feelings or fears you can't control.
- ▶ **Relief** - you may feel relieved that the worst is over, and even helpful that your life will return to normal.

## THE 4F TRAUMA PERSONALITY TYPES


- ▶ There are four basic survival strategies and defensive styles that develop out from our instinctive survival skills: ***Fight, Flight, Freeze or Fawn.***
- ▶ Unconscious belief, ingrained defense survival pattern, childhood contributing environment, approach to connection, approach to feeling safe (threat response), relation to others, common characteristics and activities, decision making, avoids, and relation with perfection.
- ▶ More suitable for Complex PTSD but can be relevant to other trauma.


# The 4F Trauma Personality Types

Based on Pete Walker's model in the book "Complex PTSD: From Surviving to Thriving"

 @ComplexTraumaHealing

This model elaborates the four basic survival strategies and defensive styles that develop out of our instinctive Fight, Flight, Freeze and Fawn Response. Variances in your childhood abuse/neglect pattern, birth order and genetics result in you gravitating towards a specific 4F survival strategy. You do this as a child to prevent, escape or ameliorate further traumatization.

4F Types (Typical Label)	 <b>FIGHT</b> ("Bully")	 <b>FLIGHT</b> ("Workaholic")	 <b>FREEZE</b> ("Couch Potato")	 <b>FAWN</b> ("People Pleaser")
<b>Unconscious Belief</b>	"Power and Control can create safety, assuage abandonment and secure love"	"Perfection and achievement will make me safe and love-able"	"People are Synonymous to danger"	"The price of admission to any relationship is the forfeiture of all my needs, rights, preferences and boundaries"
<b>Ingrained Defense Survival Pattern</b>	Pursue Power and Control	Escape into thought (obsession) and action (compulsion)	Avoid Human Contact	Please people
<b>Childhood contributing environment</b>	Spoiled child, given insufficient limits, allowed to imitate a narcissist parent	Hyperactive response to family trauma ranging between the driven "A" student and the ADHD dropout running amok	The scapegoat, the most profoundly abandoned child. Not allowed to employ fight, flight or fawn responses	Child of narcissistic parent, learns early that bits of safety & love can be earned by as a compliant servant of parents
<b>Approach to Connection</b>	<b>Connect</b> - By controlling others	<b>Withdraw</b> - By staying focused on personal performance	<b>Withdraw</b> - By avoiding people	<b>Connect</b> - By merging with People
<b>Approach to Feeling Safe (Threat Response)</b>	<b>Action</b> - Attack (Confronts)	<b>Action</b> - Achieve (Performs)	<b>Inaction</b> - Avoid (Withdraws)	<b>Inaction</b> - Acquiesce (Goes Along)
<b>Catchphrase</b>	 "No relationships, just prisoners"	 "Human-doings"	 "Hide from the world"	 "Keep others happy"
<b>Relation to others</b>	Controlling	Micromanaging	Detached	Exploited
<b>Common characteristics and activities</b>	Incessant monologuing, Criticizing, Raging	Worrying, Performance Anxiety, Adrenalin-junkie, Over-achiever	Hibernating, Sleeping, Daydreaming, TV, Online-browsing & Video games	Entertainer, Yes man, Nice guy, High concern with Fitting-in, Flattering others
<b>Continuum of +ve and -ve</b>	Assertive ..... Bullying	Efficient ..... Type A	Peaceful.....Catatonia	Helpfulness.....Servitude
<b>Decision Making</b>	Impulsive	Over-analytical	Struggles	Defers to others
<b>Avoids</b>	Isolation	Inaction	People	Conflict
<b>Relation with Perfection</b>	Demands Perfection	Compelled by Perfectionism	Achievement-Phobic	Social Perfectionism
<b>Mis-labeled as</b>	Narcissist, Sociopath, Conduct Disorder	OCD, Mood Disorder (Bipolar), ADHD	Depressed, DID, Schizophrenic, ADD	Codependent, D.V. Victim Parentified Child

 This is a behavioral "Personality Type" model applicable only to survivors of childhood trauma and this should not be confused with the Fight Flight and Freeze threat "Response". Each of these trauma personality types is on a continuum that runs from mild to extreme. There are a few pure types with one predominant strategy and most other survivors are hybrids of the 4Fs.

# Recovery from Polarized 4F Trauma Personality Types

Based on Pete Walker's model in the book "Complex PTSD: From Surviving to Thriving"

@ComplexTraumaHealing

It is recommended to self-assess your own hierarchical use of the 4F responses. Try to determine your dominant type and hybrid, and think about what percentage of your time is spent in each of the 4F responses. Recovery primarily involves psychoeducation, redirection of unhelpful responses, grieving, shrinking the critic and skill development. Also, a key recovery goal is to have adaptability – an easy and appropriate access to all the 4F responses.



## FREEZE

- Understanding the cost of Isolation
- Redirect social anxiety towards self-compassion
- Grieve about childhood helplessness
- Shrink the outer critic attributing imperfections to others
- Learn coping skills for Dissociation (Suzette Boon's book)
- Establish a therapeutic relationship
- Identify relational healing through friends, pets, books or support groups



## FLIGHT

- Understanding the cost of Perfectionism causing self abandonment
- Redirect over-analytical thinking towards childhood losses
- Grieve about childhood losses through incessant activity
- Shrink the inner critic demanding perfection from self
- Develop mindfulness to relax and decrease the habitual doing
- Prioritize and engage life at different speeds including neutral
- Introspect about what hurt you are trying to escape from



## FAWN

- Understanding the cost of forfeiting boundaries, rights and needs
- Redirect people pleasing towards self-compassion
- Grieve about childhood stifling of individuality
- Shrink the inner critic voices deterring the assertiveness
- Develop mindfulness to the fear that triggers the self-abdication
- Practice self-expression, authenticity, reduce the habit of emotional mood mirroring
- Learn to accept disapproval and learn assertion skills



## FIGHT

- Understand cost of power that causes abandonment from intimate
- Redirect the rage towards the awful childhood circumstances
- Grieve to release hurt rather than polarizing to anger it out
- Shrink the outer critic demanding perfection from others
- Develop mindfulness about needs, rights and feelings of intimates
- Take self initiated timeouts
- Adapt to using other 4F responses especially like Fawn's empathy

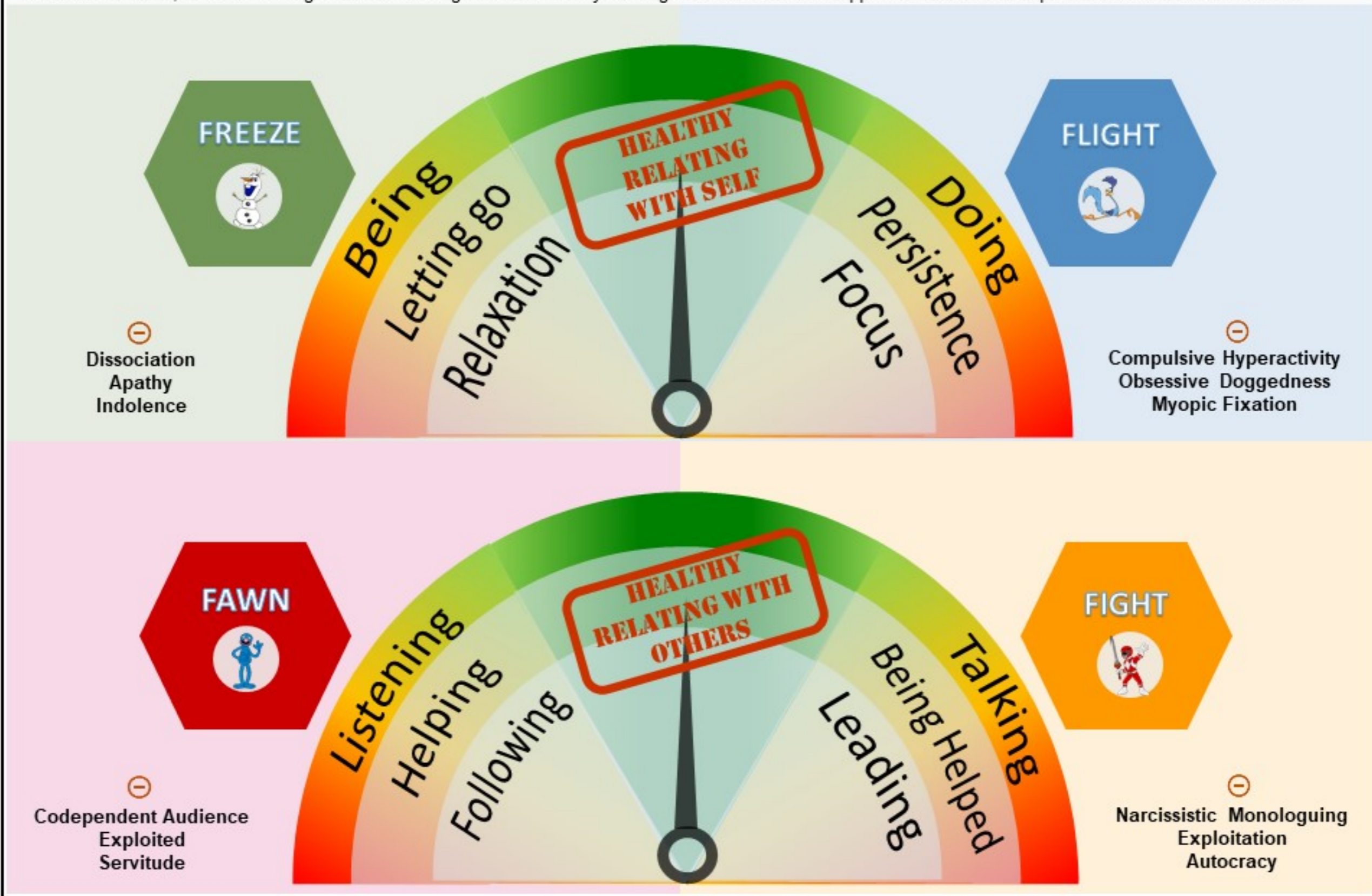


# Relationship Recovery from The 4F Trauma Personality Types

Based on Pete Walker's model in the book "Complex PTSD: From Surviving to Thriving"

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A key recovery goal is to have adaptability – an easy and appropriate access to all the 4F's. The degree to which we are balanced along each of these two below continuums, reflects the degree of our healing. Normal healthy relating to self and others happens around the mid point of these two continuums..



# HOW DO WE MOVE ON FROM TRAUMA?

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THE JOURNEY OF  
HEALING

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**ONE SIZE DOES  
NOT FIT ALL**

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# FIRST STEP OF HEALING JOURNEY

- ▶ Recognize your triggers.
- ▶ Face them head-on slowly or quickly depends on your ability and strength during time period of your life.
- ▶ Find your favorite healthy coping skill and grow on it.





## WHAT IS A 'BEING TRIGGERED'

- ▶ “Triggers can be internal or external, including smells, sights, sounds, and emotions that remind the person of the past trauma in some way. When a person with post-traumatic stress disorder experiences being triggered in this way, it can lead to overwhelming emotions, including sadness, anxiety, panic, and flashbacks.”

## TYPES OF TRIGGERS

- ▶ Internal
  - ▶ Stress, anxiety, feeling overwhelmed, a racing heart, anger, sadness, feeling lonely, feeling abandoned, frustration, feeling out of control, pain and tension.



# TYPES OF TRIGGERS

- ▶ External
  - ▶ Going to a specific location that reminds them of a traumatic event.
  - ▶ An anniversary date
  - ▶ A violent movie
  - ▶ A particular smell that is connected to a past trauma
  - ▶ A particular interaction.
  - ▶ Being alone too much
  - ▶ Money problems
  - ▶ Sexual harassment
  - ▶ A particular time of day (e.g., sunset)



## HOW TO COPE WITH TRIGGERS

- ▶ Practice relaxation techniques
- ▶ Avoid unhealthy behaviors (what is it?)
- ▶ Become aware of your triggers
- ▶ Have someone to talk with when you feel triggered
- ▶ Keep a journal
- ▶ Engage in regular exercise
- ▶ Read self-help books to add new coping strategies
- ▶ Practice mindfulness
- ▶ Practice self-soothing
- ▶ Practice deep breathing



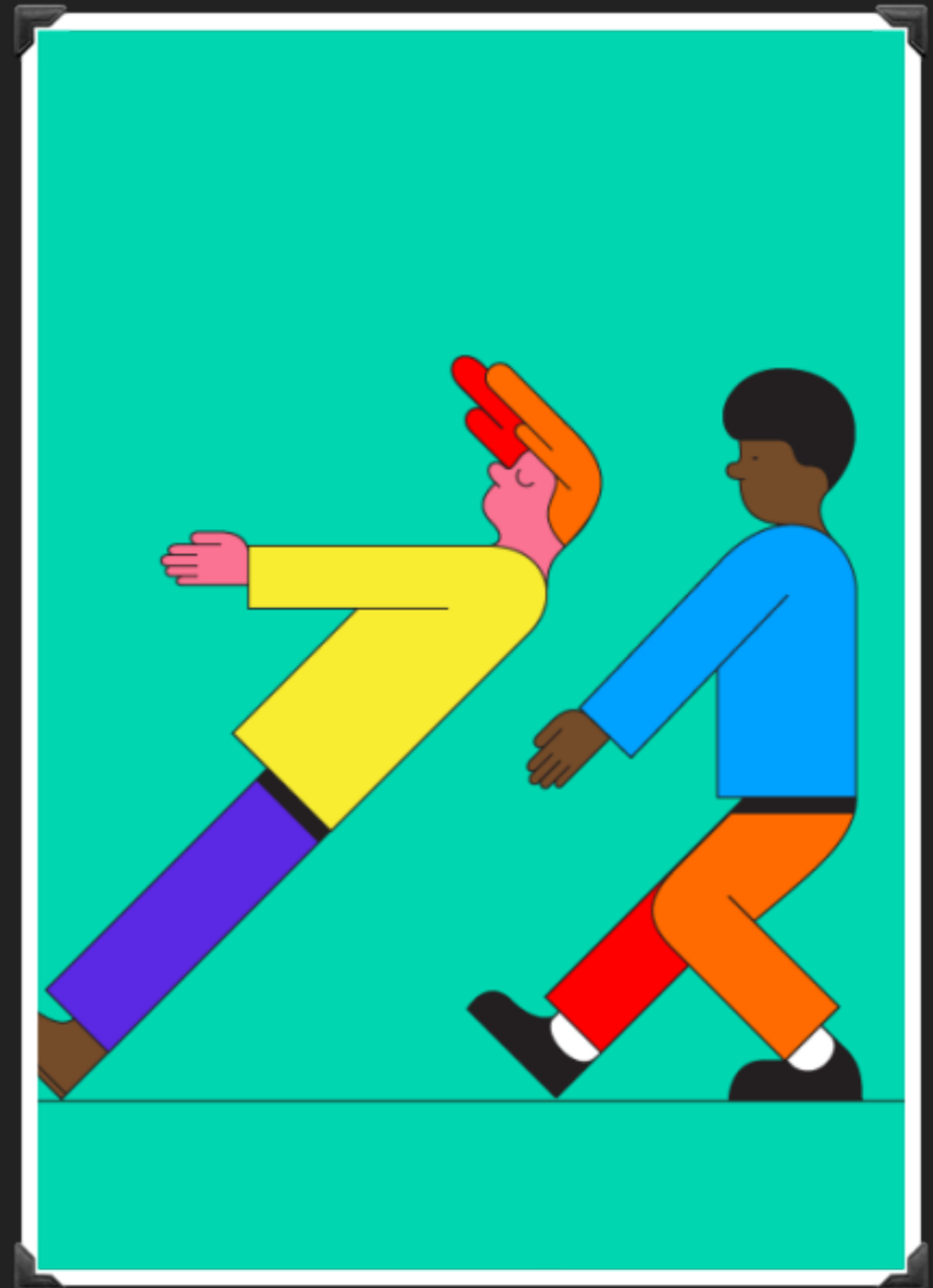
**JUST BREATHE.  
YOU ARE HERE.  
WITH US.**

# RELAXATION TOOLS

- ▶ 4 breathing techniques: <https://www.nlm.org/healthbeat/healthy-tips/4-breathing-techniques-for-better-health>
- ▶ Breathing shape: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u9Q8D6n-3qw>
- ▶ Breathing cloud: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vXZ5I7G6T2I>
- ▶ Yoga with CC: <https://www.youtube.com/user/yogawithadriene>
- ▶ Aromatherapy: <https://www.verywellmind.com/aromatherapy-scents-for-stress-relief-3144599>
- ▶ Explore funny gifs or look for pictures of a place that is similar to your happy place through search engine.

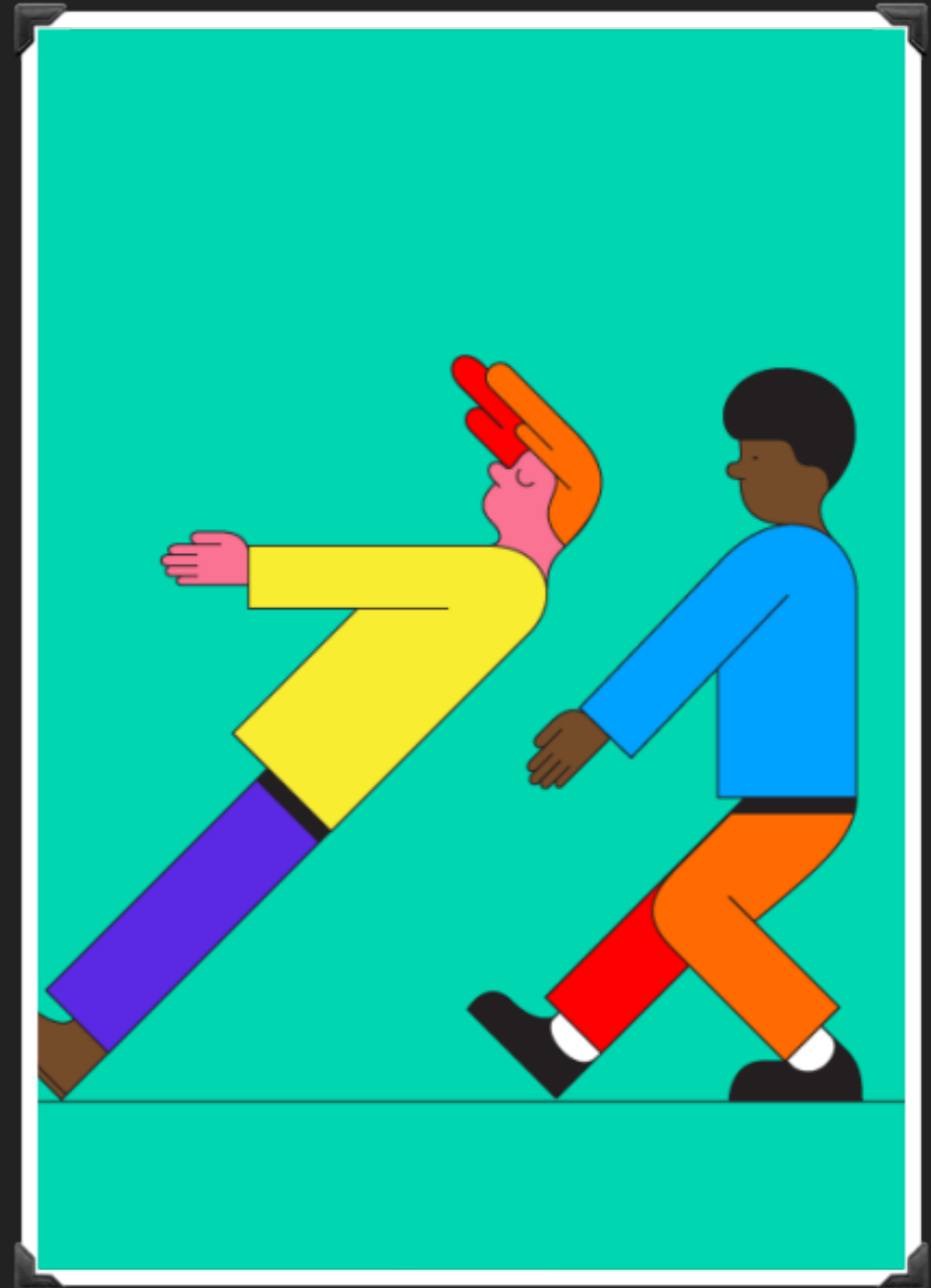
## ADVOCACY

- ▶ Trauma change your perception
  - ▶ Trust, Security, and Love.
- ▶ Support the survivor. Don't doubt them.
- ▶ Be open with their journey even if it can seem confusing.
- ▶ Be mindful of their triggers and support their healing journey to reduce the triggers.



## ADVOCACY

- ▶ Be mindful of your own countertransference thought or feeling.
- ▶ Remind yourself it's the survivor's process, not your process.
- ▶ Always take care of yourself. Burnout is real.





## REFERENCES

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