The Kalra Method

A Trauma Informed Approach To Witness Evidence and Management

Acknowledgements

Stephen Porges

Janina Fisher

Bessel Van Der Kolk

Ron Curtz

Peter Levine

Pat Ogden

Daniel Siegel

A Trauma Informed Approach

A commitment to the twin goals of eliciting the most accurate and nuanced evidence from witnesses, while minimizing re-traumatization.

What is Trauma?

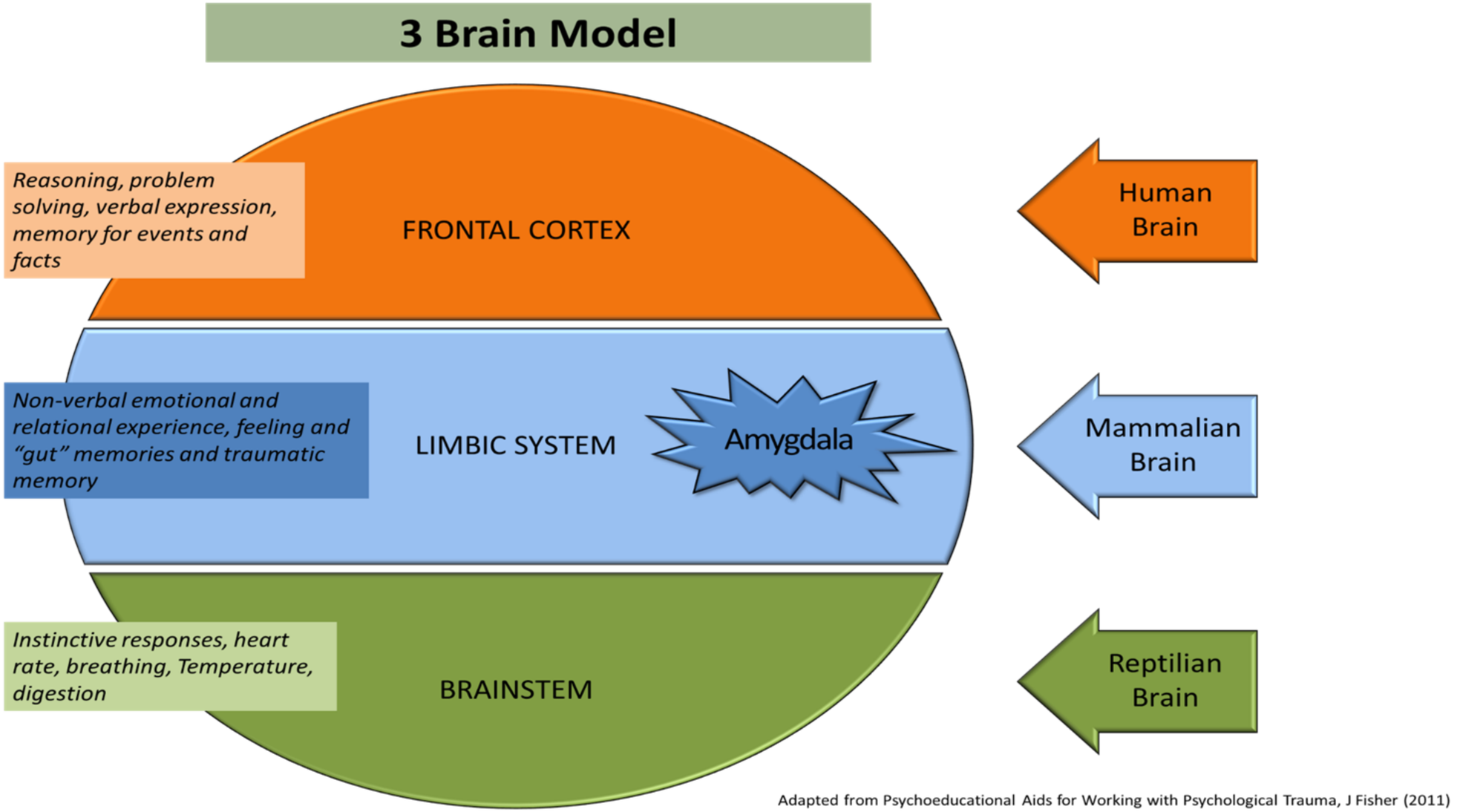
DSM-5 defines TRAUMA as:

- A direct personal experience of an event that involves actual or threatened death or serious injury; threat to one's physical integrity;
- Witnessing an event that involves the above experience
- Learning about unexpected or violent death, serious harm, or threat of death, or injury experienced by a family member or close associate

“Trauma is a physiological event that occurs when an experience overwhelms our capacity to cope”

Dan Siegel

Neurobiology



Adapted from Psychoeducational Aids for Working with Psychological Trauma, J Fisher (2011)

Understanding The Impact of Trauma

When a traumatic event occurs, the more primitive systems in the brain record nuanced experiential and sensory information. However, this information often remains unintegrated with the narrative.

TRAUMATIC MEMORY

"Under conditions of extreme stress, there is a failure of ... memory processing, which results in an inability to integrate incoming input into a coherent autobiographical narrative, leaving the sensory elements of the experience unintegrated and unattached.."

Van der Kolk, Hopper & Osterman, 2001

Triggers and Triggering

Triggers can be defined as internal or external environmental cues, which are associated with a traumatic event.

When triggered, trauma that occurred in the past is re-experienced as present threat, driving the nervous system into a survival response.

When accessing the details of a traumatic memory, individuals may become triggered and experience involuntary, sudden, overwhelming feelings, sensations, and impulses, and lose the ability to think and communicate clearly.

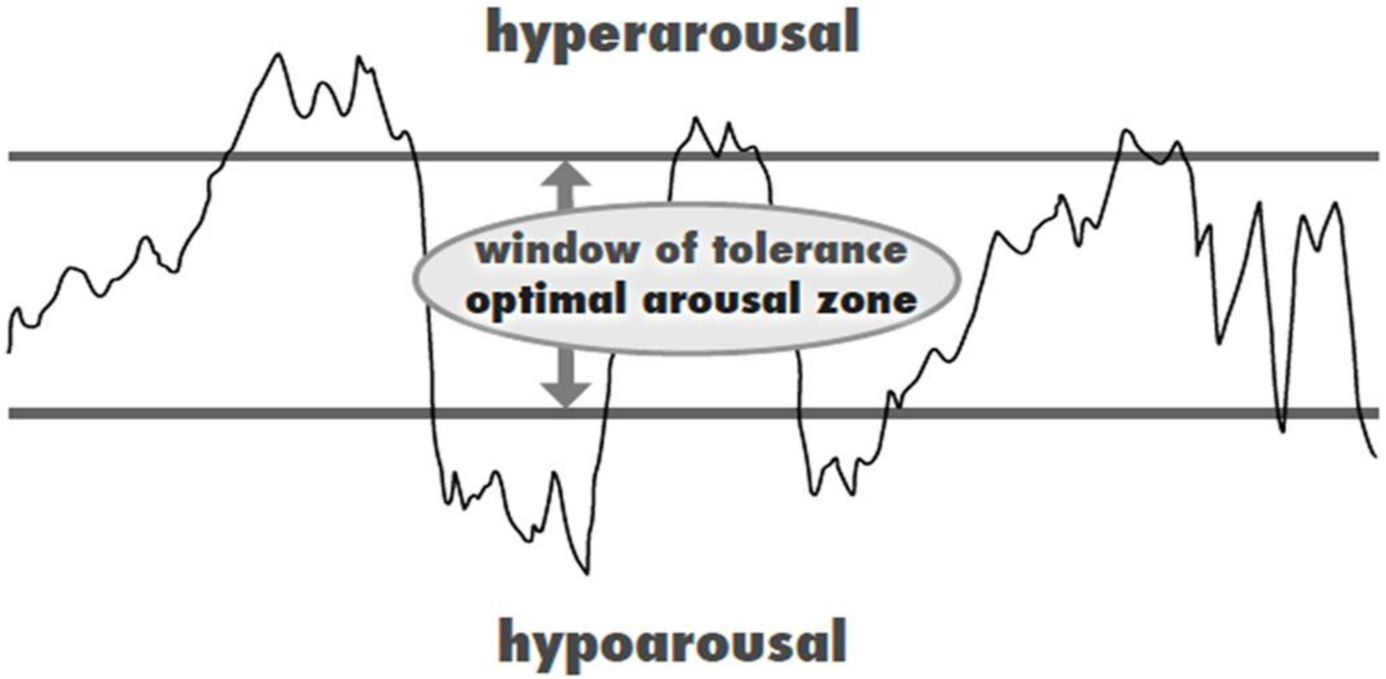
Key Takeaway:

If an individual is triggered he/she/they will not be able to provide you with the detailed, coherent testimony you desire.

By helping the witness regulate his/her/their nervous system, you can gain access to important information stored in the brain.

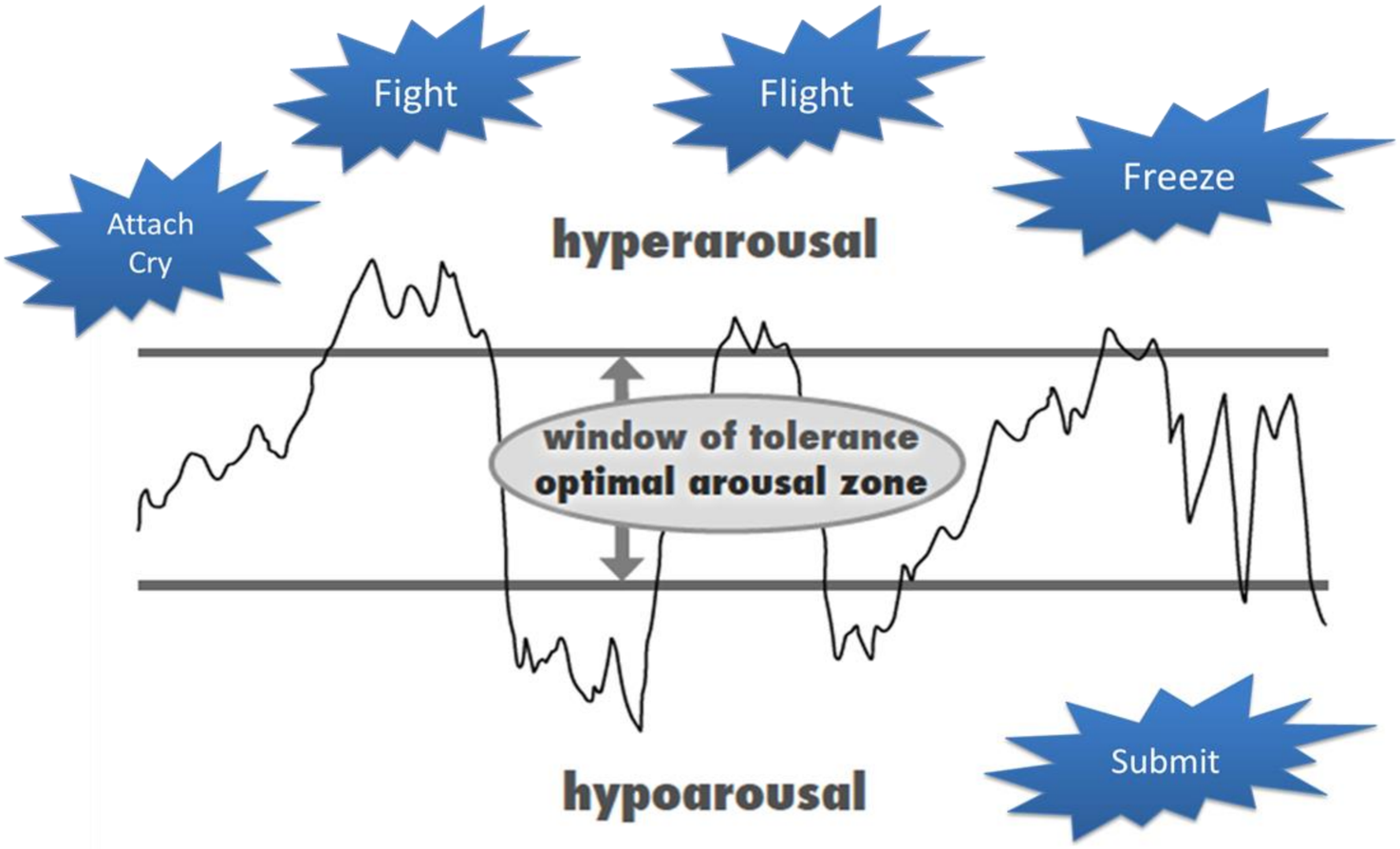
Window of Tolerance

A simple model for understanding the regulation of the autonomic nervous system



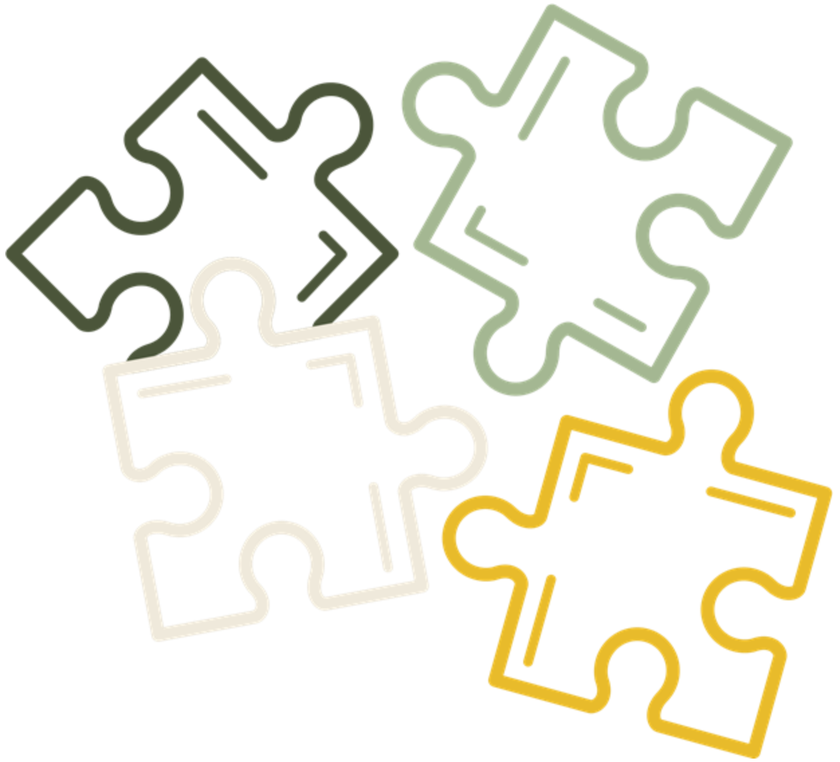
Ogden, Minton & Pain, 2006

Window of Tolerance



THE KALRA METHOD:
4 STEP METHOD OF WORKING WITH TRAUMA

1. Mindfulness
2. Relationship
3. Regulation
4. Examination



Mindfulness

A fruitful interaction starts with self

- **Awareness:** (recognition) of sensation, thought, emotion, movement, external stimulus
- **Detachment:** noticing internal information but ‘not engaging with it in a way that causes distress
- **Labeling:** assigning neutral language (non-judgmental) to what is noticed internally.

A Mindfulness Based 3 Step Check

Limbic Resonance Can Be Your Friend:

Remember The 3 C's

- Mind→ Cultivate Curiosity
- Heart→ Connect to Compassion
- Body→ Calm Composure

Building a Container

The Importance of Relationship:

The type of connection you build with your witness will dramatically impact the quality of evidence that your witness will be able to provide. Social engagement is critical to regulation.

Tools for Facilitating Relationship:

1. **Safety-** will assist in soothing autonomic arousal
2. **Presence-** will send unconscious signals of safety
3. **Compassion-** will help the witness feel understood and build trust

Creating Safety

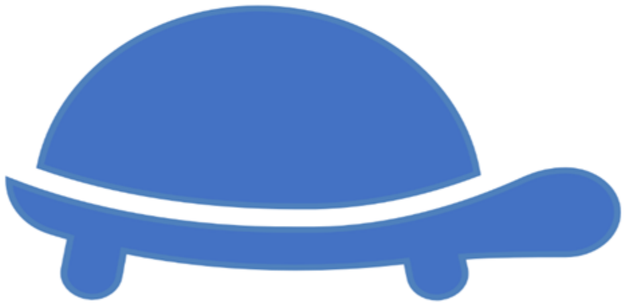
Anticipate Needs and Prepare the Environment

A trauma-informed interaction facilitates safety through the creation of:

- Predictability
- Choice
- Comfort

Neuroception

The Science of Safe Presence



SPACE AND PACE

Slow things down……

Compassionate Communication

Compassion and empathy are not the same. They are neurologically distinct states that engage separate neural pathways.

Empathy is a feeling state and compassion is a doing state

Compassionate communication helps a person feel seen, understood and supported. This helps reduce feelings of fear and shame and increases a sense of safety and connection.

To help you communicate with compassion use the **3N** approach.

Autonomic Arousal

Recognize the signs:

- Hyperarousal
- Hypoarousal

A properly regulated nervous system is the conduit to rich evidentiary details.

Recognizing Hyperarousal

Traumatic hyperarousal results in the body going into a state of high alert

Signs of Hyperarousal

- Increased respiration/increased heart rate
- Flushed face
- Difficulty slowing down or being still, quick startle
- Repeated swallowing
- Difficulty thinking
- General symptoms of anxiety

Unchecked hyperactivation can lead to overwhelm and panic

Regulating Interventions

General Techniques to Reduce Sympathetic Activation (hyperarousal):

- Limbic Breathing
- Touching or drinking cold water
- Clenching stomach muscles
- Engaging outer thigh muscles
- Slowly opening and closing jaw (chewing gum, yawning)
- Engage the frontal cortex: numbers, objects, colors
- Slow down or Take a break
- RELATIONSHIP

Recognizing Hypoarousal

Traumatic hypoarousal results in the body going into a state of shutdown

Signs of Hypoarousal

- Confusion
- Fixed gaze / eyes glazed /Slow blinking
- Flat affect/ numbing
- Unresponsiveness
- Inability to hear
- Appears vacant

When dissociated, a witness will not have access to the frontal cortex. Trying to get effective testimony out of a dissociated witness is like trying to draw blood from a stone.

Regulating Interventions

General Techniques to Reduce Parasympathetic Activation (hypoarousal)

- Tell your witness that she is safe and that there is no present danger
- Ask you witness to look around and notice the surroundings
- Tell witness to feel her feet on the ground
- Tell witness to feel the weight of her body in the chair
- If have a dog, get the witness to pet the dog
- Ask the witness to stroke her arm, and to notice the sensation
- Ask the witness to repeat random numbers or count backwards from 100 by 3
- Ask the witness to name objects in the room
- Provide the witness with something to smell (coffee beans or essential oils are great)
- RELATIONSHIP

Conducting an Embodied Examination

- Embody the memory- Ask your witness to return, in her mind to the traumatic event.
- Tour the memory using the 5 senses- Use present tense language to gather sensorial data.
- Focus on emotion and sensations- Ask your witness what emotions and sensations being experienced
- Weave between narrative and feelings/sensations

Accessing and eliciting the experiential information (emotion and sensation based) connected to the traumatic event is critical to a successful outcome.

Questions?

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