

# Trauma and PTSD

Aalyia Rehman



# Life sucks

...a good amount of the time

What is trauma?  
What causes it?  
What do you associate with it?

*\*can be specific examples*

# What is Trauma?

“Unlike other forms of psychological disorders, the core issue in trauma is reality.”  
— Bessel A. van der Kolk

- Trauma refers to the experience that cause intense physical and psychological reactions.
- Results from an event(s) or conditions that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being
  - When trauma has lasting adverse effects, it is known as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Types of Trauma

# What is PTSD?

- PTSD is a clinically diagnosed condition mental health disorder
  - Not everyone with trauma has PTSD

To be diagnosed, must have (for at least 1 month):

At least 1 re-experiencing symptom	At least 1 avoidance symptom	At least 2 arousal and reactivity symptoms	At least 2 cognition and mood symptoms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Flashbacks</li><li>- Bad dreams</li><li>- Scary thoughts</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Avoiding places, events, or objects related to trauma</li><li>- Avoiding thoughts and feelings related to trauma</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Easily startled</li><li>- On edge</li><li>- Trouble sleeping</li><li>- Angry outbursts</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Trouble remembering trauma events</li><li>- Negative thinking</li><li>- blame/guilt</li><li>- Loss of interest</li></ul>

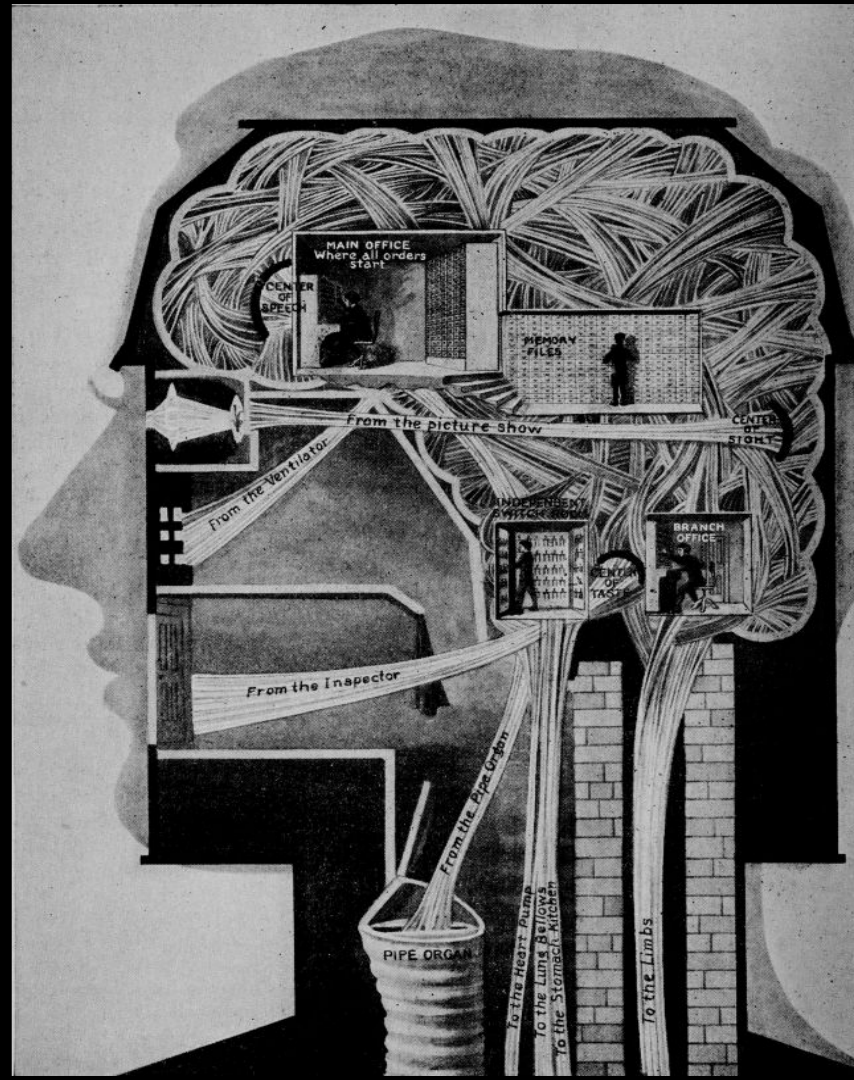
## Types of Trauma

- **Type 1:** trauma, commonly related to PTSD, usually stemming from one single traumatizing incident
- **Type 2:** trauma, commonly related to PTSD, usually occurs over a longer period of time
- **Historical/Collective:** trauma that comes from difficulties that affect certain communities, cultures, or groups
- **Second:** trauma that occurs when: witnessing traumatic events OR hearing about someone else's traumatic experiences
- **Little T:** Everyday experiences that still greatly impact someone mentally or physically

Examples of Trauma

# Why does it happen?

- The human brain is designed to protect us!
- Memories serve as an early warning system that the event may occur again
- We employ protective responses to help us deal with the perceived danger:
  - Fight, Fright, Freeze
  - Dissociation



# Brain responses impact our cognitive abilities

*Type word from bracket that best finishes the sentence in the chat*

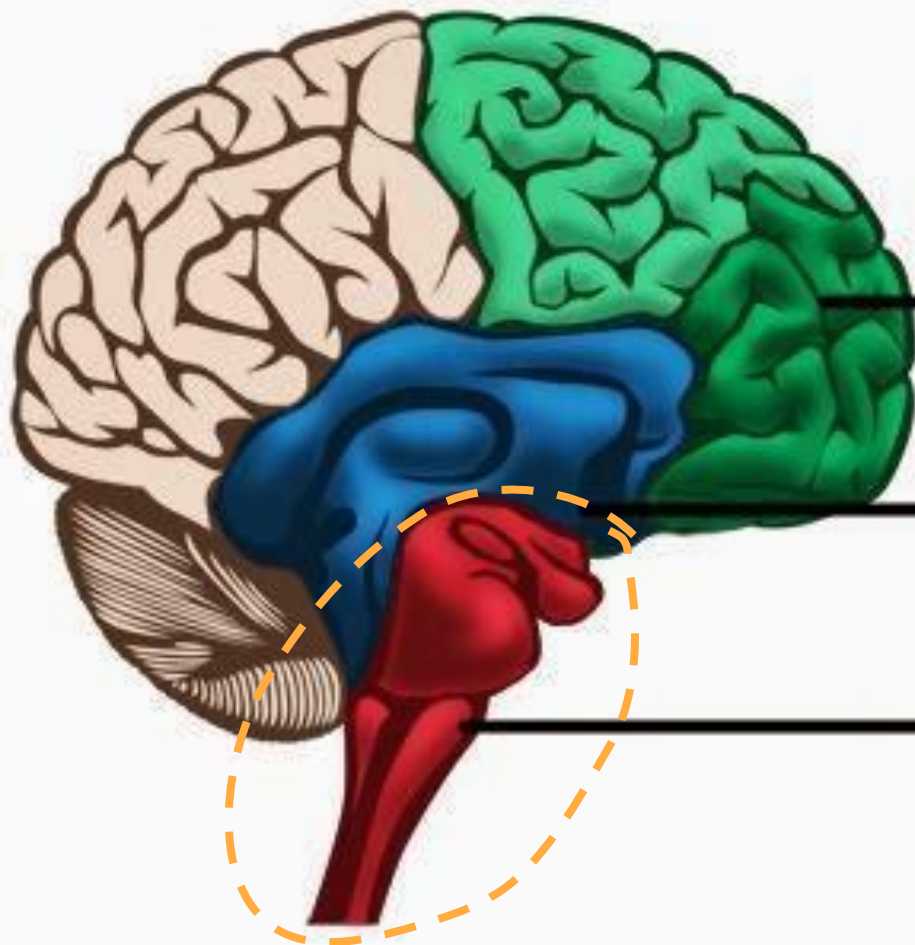
1. When **CALM**, a person can think... (abstractly, respond emotionally, reactive)
2. When **AROUSSED**, a person can think... (reactive, reflexive, concretely)
3. When **ALARMED**, a person tends to... (reactive, respond emotionally, reflexive)
4. When **FEARFUL**, a person is more...(reactive, reflexive, concretely)
5. When **TERRORIZED**, a person is more...(abstractly, respond emotionally, reflexive)



# Brain responses impact our cognitive abilities

*Type word from bracket that best finishes the sentence in the chat*

1. When **CALM**, a person can think **abstractly**
2. When **AROUSSED**, a person can think **concretely**
3. When **ALARMED**, a person tends to **respond emotionally**
4. When **FEARFUL**, a person is more **reactive**
5. When **TERRORIZED**, a person is more **reflexive**



### **Executive State**

Prefrontal Lobes

What can I learn from this?

### **Emotional State**

Limbic System

Am I loved?

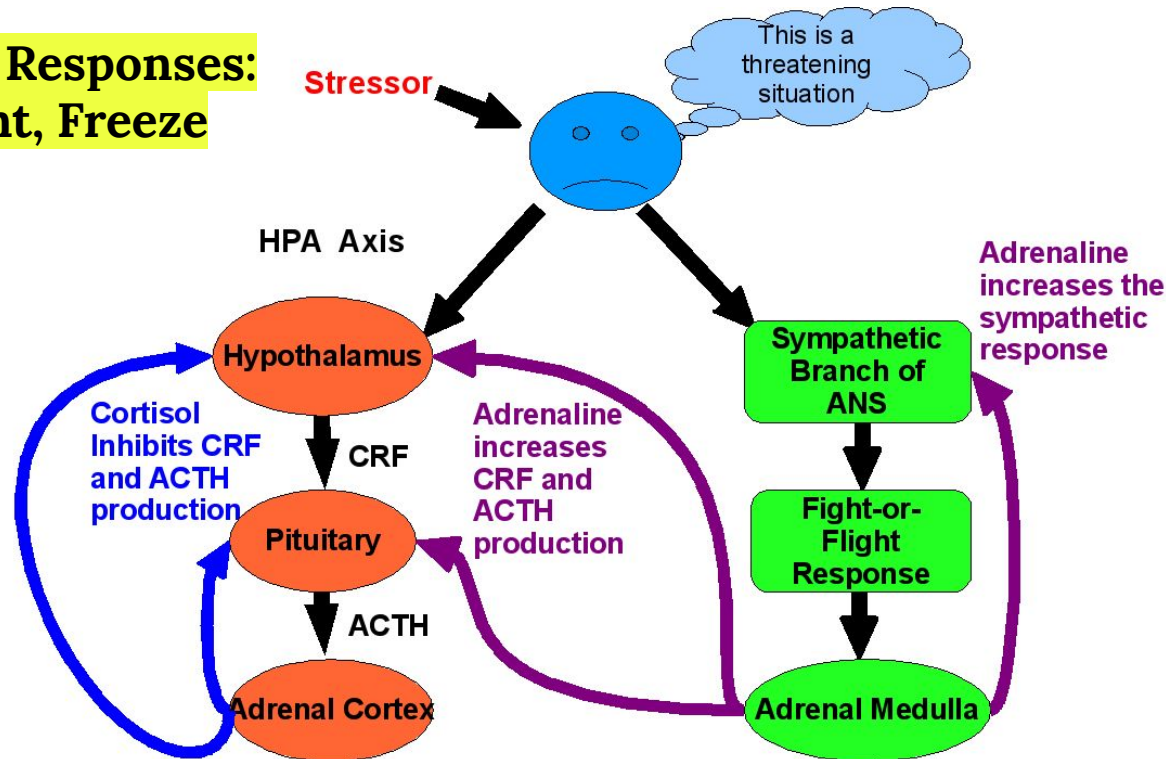
### **Survival State**

Brain Stem

Am I safe?

# Why does it happen?

## Protective Responses: Fight, Flight, Freeze



# Why does it happen?

FIGHT, FLIGHT, OR FREEZE?

- Withdrawing
- Fleeing the classroom
- Skipping class
- Daydreaming
- Seeming to sleep
- Avoiding others
- Hiding or wandering
- Becoming disengaged

# Why does it happen?

FIGHT, FLIGHT, OR FREEZE?

## **FLIGHT**

- Withdrawing
- Fleeing the classroom
- Skipping class
- Daydreaming
- Seeming to sleep
- Avoiding others
- Hiding or wandering
- Becoming disengaged
- Acting out
- Behaving aggressively
- Acting silly
- Hyperactivity
- Arguing
- Screaming/yelling

# Why does it happen?

FIGHT, FLIGHT, OR FREEZE?

## FLIGHT

- Withdrawing
- Fleeing the classroom
- Skipping class
- Daydreaming
- Seeming to sleep
- Avoiding others
- Hiding or wandering
- Becoming disengaged

## FIGHT

- Acting out
- Behaving aggressively
- Acting silly
- Hyperactivity
- Arguing
- Screaming/yelling

- Exhibiting numbness
- Refusing to answer
- Refusing to get needs met
- Giving blank look
- Feeling unable to move or act

# Why does it happen?

## FIGHT, FLIGHT, OR FREEZE?

### FLIGHT

- Withdrawing
- Fleeing the classroom
- Skipping class
- Daydreaming
- Seeming to sleep
- Avoiding others
- Hiding or wandering
- Becoming disengaged

### FIGHT

- Acting out
- Behaving aggressively
- Acting silly
- Hyperactivity
- Arguing
- Screaming/yelling

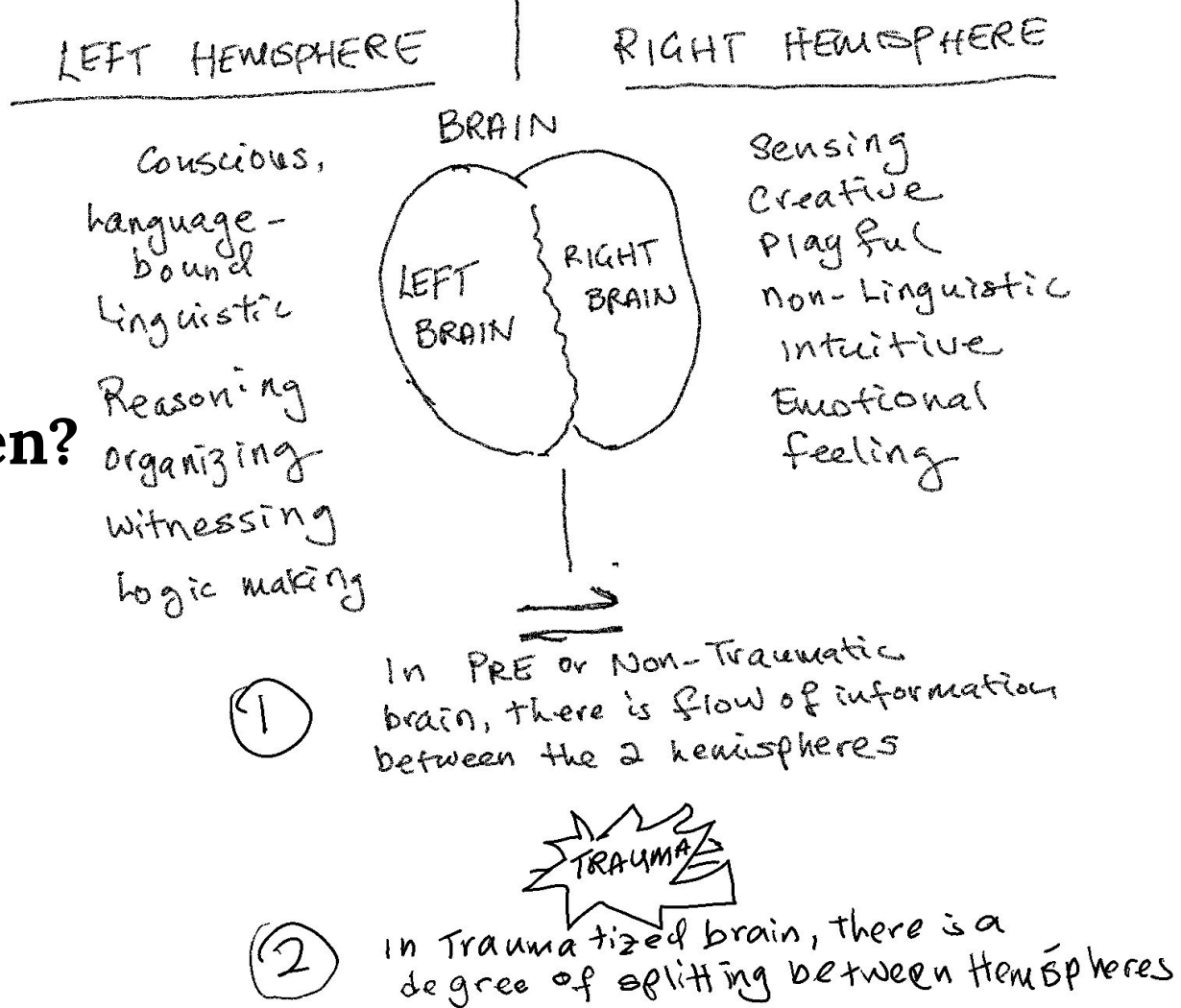
### FREEZE

- Exhibiting numbness
- Refusing to answer
- Refusing to get needs met
- Giving blank look
- Feeling unable to move or act

De-escalating 3F behaviours

# Why does it happen?

## Protective Responses: Dissociation

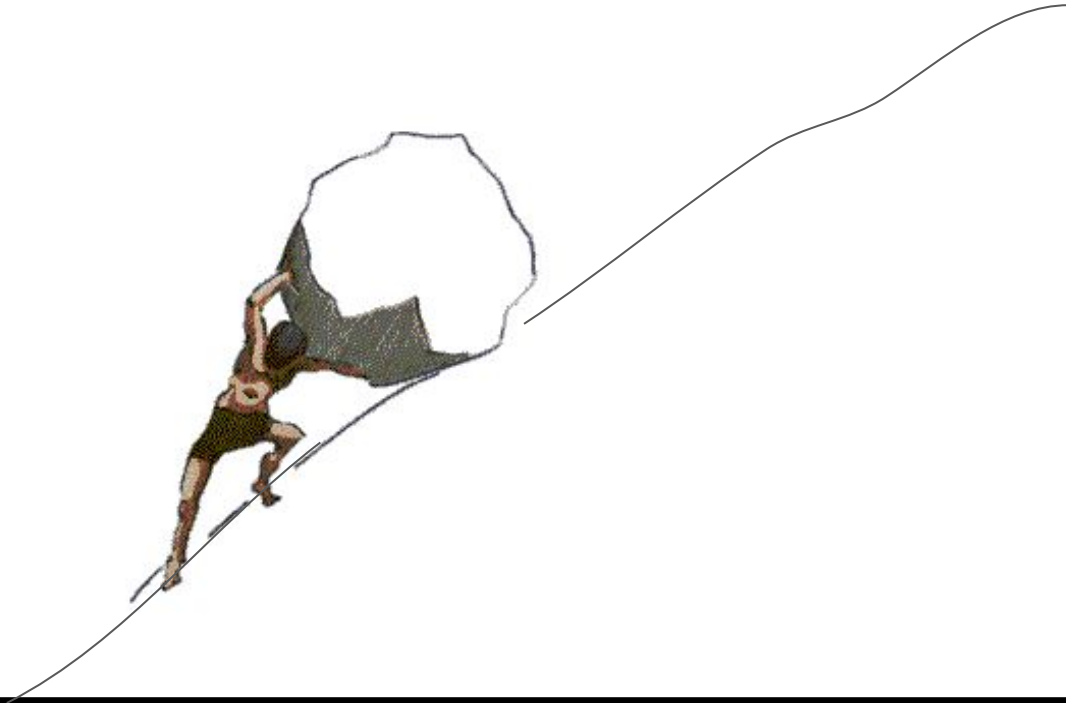




# Trauma can feel like the myth of Sisyphus...

The gods had condemned Sisyphus to ceaselessly rolling a rock up to the top of a mountain, whence the stone would fall back of its own weight.

- Albert Camus



# Who gets trauma and PTSD?

- **Anyone** can get trauma *BUT* certain groups are more susceptible than others
  - Social determinants of health can impact the resiliency of one's mental health
- Trauma impacts can be mitigated by protective factors



Protective Factors

# Common Symptoms and Signs

Physical	Cognitive/Mental	Emotional	Behavioral
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Chills</li><li>• Difficulty breathing</li><li>• Dizziness</li><li>• Elevated blood pressure</li><li>• Fainting</li><li>• Fatigue</li><li>• Grinding teeth</li><li>• Headaches</li><li>• Muscle tremors</li><li>• Nausea</li><li>• Pain</li><li>• Profuse sweating</li><li>• Rapid heart rate</li><li>• Twitches</li><li>• Weakness</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Blaming someone</li><li>• Change in alertness</li><li>• Confusion</li><li>• Hyper-vigilance</li><li>• Increased or decreased awareness of surroundings</li><li>• Intrusive images</li><li>• Memory problems</li><li>• Nightmares</li><li>• Poor abstract thinking</li><li>• Poor attention</li><li>• Poor concentration</li><li>• Poor decision-making</li><li>• Poor problem solving</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Agitation</li><li>• Anxiety</li><li>• Apprehension</li><li>• Denial</li><li>• Depression</li><li>• Emotional shock</li><li>• Fear</li><li>• Feeling overwhelmed</li><li>• Grief</li><li>• Guilt</li><li>• Inappropriate emotional response</li><li>• Irritability</li><li>• Loss of emotional control</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increased alcohol consumption</li><li>• Antisocial acts</li><li>• Change in activity</li><li>• Change in communication</li><li>• Change in sexual functioning</li><li>• Change in speech pattern</li><li>• Emotional outbursts</li><li>• Inability to rest</li><li>• Change in appetite</li><li>• Pacing</li><li>• Startle reflex intensified</li><li>• Suspiciousness</li><li>• Social withdrawal</li></ul>

What other mental or behavioural issues share some of these symptoms?

# What does it look like in our classrooms?

Preschool Children	Elementary School Children	Middle and High School Children
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Feel helpless and uncertain</li><li>• Fear of being separated from their parent/caregiver</li><li>• Cry and/or scream a lot</li><li>• Eat poorly and lose weight</li><li>• Return to bedwetting</li><li>• Return to using baby talk</li><li>• Develop new fears</li><li>• Have nightmares</li><li>• Recreate the trauma through play</li><li>• Are not developing to the next growth stage</li><li>• Have changes in behavior</li><li>• Ask questions about death</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Become anxious and fearful</li><li>• Worry about their own or others' safety</li><li>• Become clingy with a teacher or a parent</li><li>• Feel guilt or shame</li><li>• Tell others about the traumatic event again and again</li><li>• Become upset if they get a small bump or bruise</li><li>• Have a hard time concentrating</li><li>• Experience numbness</li><li>• Have fears that the event will happen again</li><li>• Have difficulties sleeping</li><li>• Show changes in school performance</li><li>• Become easily startled</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Feel depressed and alone</li><li>• Discuss the traumatic events in detail</li><li>• Develop eating disorders and self-harming behaviors such as cutting</li><li>• Start using or abusing alcohol or drugs</li><li>• Become sexually active</li><li>• Feel like they're going crazy</li><li>• Feel different from everyone else</li><li>• Take too many risks</li><li>• Have sleep disturbances</li><li>• Don't want to go places that remind them of the event</li><li>• Say they have no feeling about the event</li><li>• Show changes in behavior</li></ul>

## The Case of Sophie



Sophie is 8 years old and has lived with her aunt, Helen, for the past 5 months. Helen is seeking custody of Sophie. Sophie's behaviours are escalating and it's becoming more difficult to take care of her.

- Sophie tends to be clingy and asks non-stop how long she'll be living with Helen and in the classroom with her teacher.
- She can be explosive when her needs aren't met and when things don't as she'd planned. These meltdown happen frequently (yell and cuss)
- Sophie gets overwhelmed by noise and the school bell. She wants to know what's happening around her even when she's not directly involved
- When she's stressed, she sucks her thumb, plays with her hair or rocks back and forth
- She has difficulty making new friends as she can be bossy and intimidating
- She pushes others around physically and emotionally
- She refuses to do tasks asked of her and can get frustrated easily
- She often calls herself dumb and compares herself to others

## The Case of Sophie



**What are some strategies we can use to strengthen relationships (teacher-peer OR peer-peer) in the classroom?**

- Sophie tends to be clingy and asks non-stop how long she'll be living with Helen and in the classroom with her teacher.
- She can be explosive when her needs aren't met and when things don't as she'd planned. These meltdown happen frequently (yell and cuss)
- Sophie gets overwhelmed by noise and the school bell. She wants to know what's happening around her even when she's not directly involved
- When she's stressed, she sucks her thumb, plays with her hair or rocks back and forth
- She has difficulty making new friends as she can be bossy and intimidating
- She pushes others around physically and emotionally
- She refuses to do tasks asked of her and can get frustrated easily
- She often calls herself dumb and compares herself to others

## The Case of Sophie



**What are some coping strategies  
we could introduce in the  
classroom?**

- Sophie tends to be clingy and asks non-stop how long she'll be living with Helen and in the classroom with her teacher.
- She can be explosive when her needs aren't met and when things don't as she'd planned. These meltdown happen frequently (yell and cuss)
- Sophie gets overwhelmed by noise and the school bell. She wants to know what's happening around her even when she's not directly involved
- When she's stressed, she sucks her thumb, plays with her hair or rocks back and forth
- She has difficulty making new friends as she can be bossy and intimidating
- She pushes others around physically and emotionally
- She refuses to do tasks asked of her and can get frustrated easily
- She often calls herself dumb and compares herself to others

## The Case of Sophie



**What are some accommodations teachers can use to help students who struggle with executive functioning skills?**

- Sophie tends to be clingy and asks non-stop how long she'll be living with Helen and in the classroom with her teacher.
- She can be explosive when her needs aren't met and when things don't as she'd planned. These meltdown happen frequently (yell and cuss)
- Sophie gets overwhelmed by noise and the school bell. She wants to know what's happening around her even when she's not directly involved
- When she's stressed, she sucks her thumb, plays with her hair or rocks back and forth
- She has difficulty making new friends as she can be bossy and intimidating
- She pushes others around physically and emotionally
- She refuses to do tasks asked of her and can get frustrated easily
- She often calls herself dumb and compares herself to others





**Trauma Teacher Toolbox**

# TRAUMA TEACHER TOOLBOX

- [Addressing Student Trauma, Anxiety, and Depression \(Immigrant Students and Families\)](#)
- Understanding good practice in responding to trauma in the classroom  
[Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#)
- [Supporting Students Experiencing Trauma During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)
- [Strategies to Create a Trauma Sensitive Classroom](#)
- [IEP Accommodations for Students with Trauma](#)
- [Educators Guide to PTSD](#)
- [Trauma Activity Packet 101](#)
- [Trauma Child Toolkit for Teachers](#)

# How do we respond?

## 1. LISTEN

- a. Teacher provides students with opportunities to share experiences, feelings, or concerns about safety
- b. Avoid making judgements and predictions and validate their experiences without probing for details

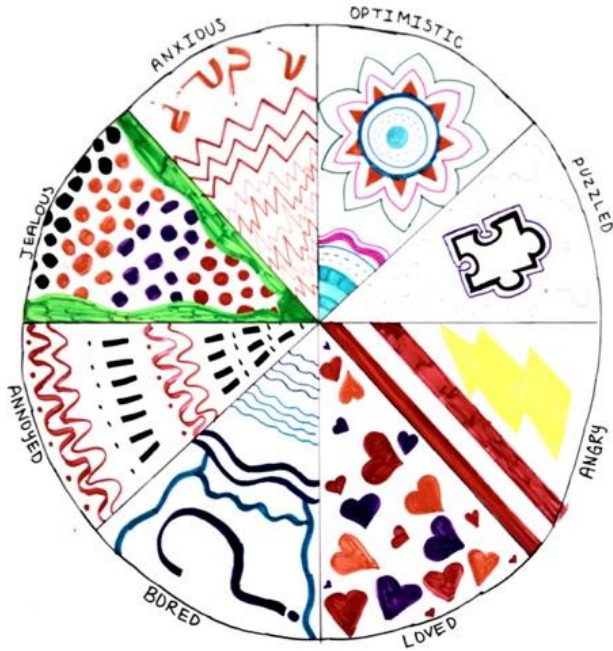
## 2. PROTECT

- a. Re-establish students feelings of physical and emotional safety
- b. Maintain structure, stability, predictability, and make efforts to re-establish routines, expectations and rules
- c. Protect students from further emotional and physical harm

## 3. CONNECT

- a. Re-establish normal social relationships and stay connected to others
- b. Identify systems of care

## Grade 1: Emotion Wheel



### General Outline of Lesson:

Asking students to name their emotions is an important first step to regulating their emotions.

Students will create a wheel of emotions that enables them to visualize and identify big emotions that are personally relevant to them.

### Extensions:

- Use wheel as classroom tool to solve disputes
- Use wheel to spark creative writing.

# References

- Center of Child Trauma, Services, and Interventions (n.d). What is Child Trauma? *Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine*. <http://cctasi.northwestern.edu/child-trauma/>
- Friedman, M. J., Resick, P. A., Bryant, R. A., Strain, J., Horowitz, M., & Spiegel, D. (2011). Classification of trauma and stressor-related disorders in DSM-5. *Depression and anxiety*, 28(9), 737-749.
- Kataoka, S., Langle, A. K., Wong, M., Baweja, S., & Stein, B. D. (2012). Responding to students with posttraumatic stress disorder in schools. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Clinics*, 21(1), 119-133.
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2012). Trauma and Violence. SAMHSA. <https://www.samhsa.gov/trauma-violence>
- Turnbull, G. J. (1998). A review of post-traumatic stress disorder. Part I: Historical development and classification. *Injury*, 29(2), 87-91.