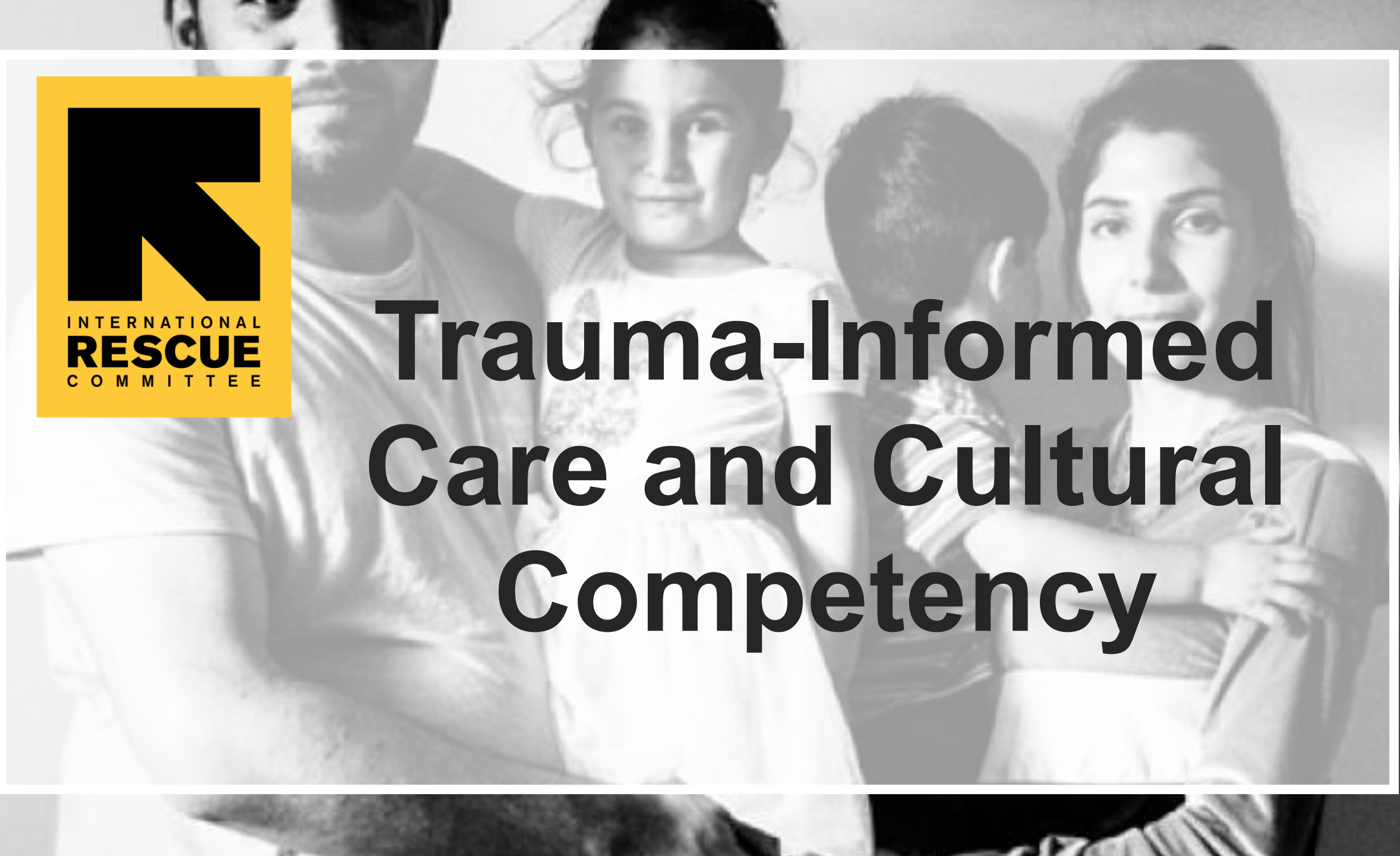




Trauma-Informed Care and Cultural Competency



Introduction

WHERE WE WORK

The IRC helps people whose lives and livelihoods have been shattered by conflict and disaster, including the climate crisis, to survive, recover and rebuild their lives. The IRC worked in more than 40 countries and more than 40 U.S. cities as of the end of fiscal year 2024.

- Direct IRC programming
- ▲ Remote or partner-led programming
- IRC office (no programming)



Objectives

By the end of today you should :

- 1. Realise** how trauma can affect individuals
- 2. Recognise** the 4 ways someone may show signs of trauma
- 3. Respond** with 4 trauma-informed approaches
- 4. Resist re-traumatisation** for yourself and others by shifting from cultural competence to cultural humility



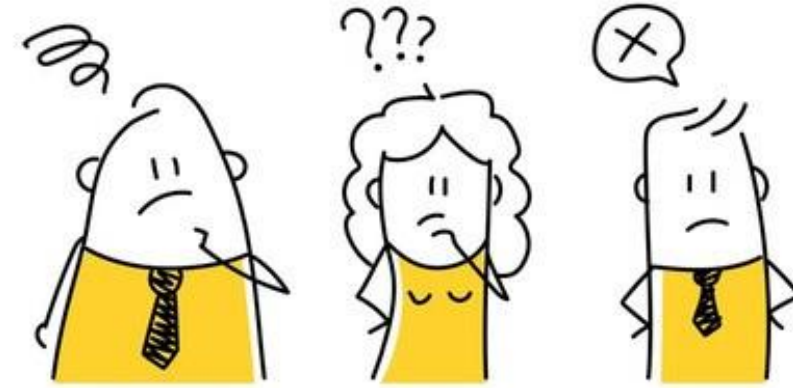
2. Recognise the 4 ways someone may show signs of trauma

STRESS

The body's reaction to challenge or demand. It can be positive (e.g. getting married) or negative (e.g. worrying about finances).

TOXIC STRESS

Ongoing constant state of stress usually due to environmental factors. For example, living with extreme poverty or chronic illness.



A TRAUMATIC EVENT

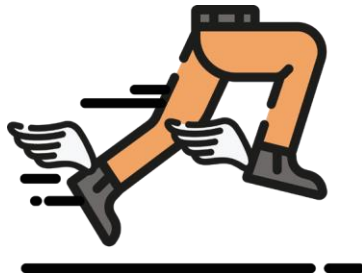
A reaction to a life-threatening, disturbing or abnormal event, e.g. violence, abuse, natural disaster, war, where no control is possible. Not everyone who is exposed to a traumatic event will go on to have lasting psychological effects.



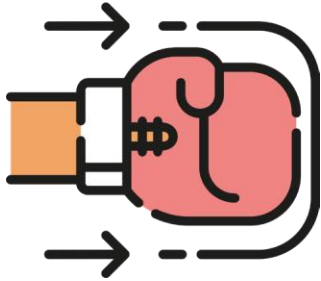
'HAVING TRAUMA'

Someone might have a short-term traumatic response and/or longer-term ongoing physiological, cognitive, emotional, behavioural effects from exposure to traumatic event or events. If these ongoing effects begin to overwhelm someone's ability to cope with everyday life, they may manifest as complex trauma or PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder).





Flight



Fight

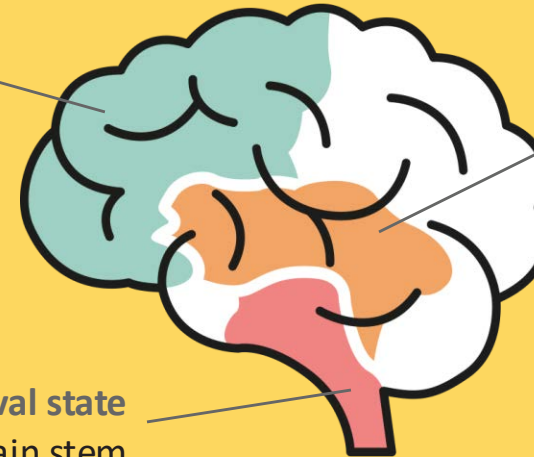


Freeze

Immediate impacts on the brain

The brain goes into **survival mode** during a traumatic event. Some people struggle to leave this survival mode after the event is over, especially if they experience multiple traumas.

Executive state
Prefrontal lobes



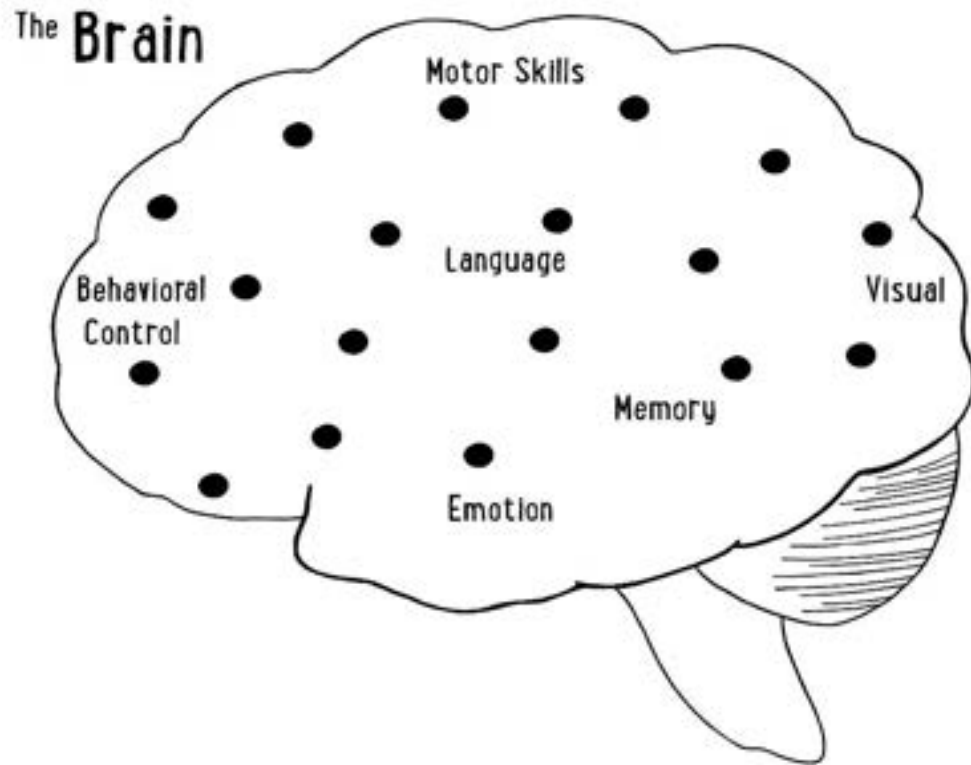
Emotional state
Limbic system

Survival state
Brain stem

Changes in Amygdala
and Hippocampus

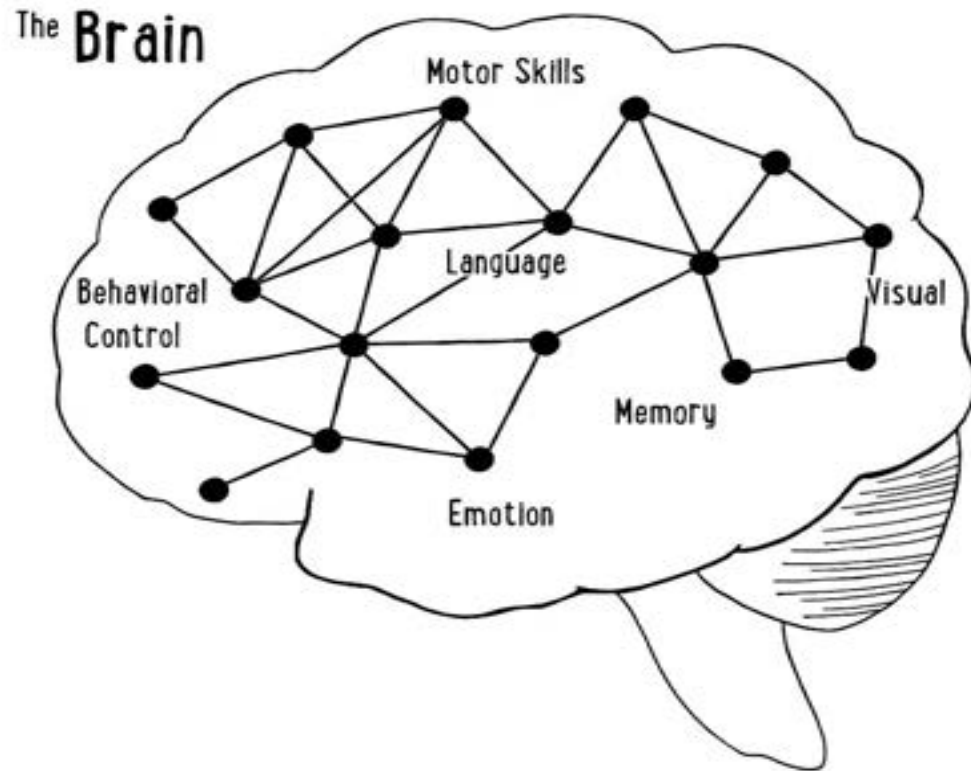
How do toxic stress and trauma affect the brain?

There are neurons in different parts of the brain.



Neurons in the brain

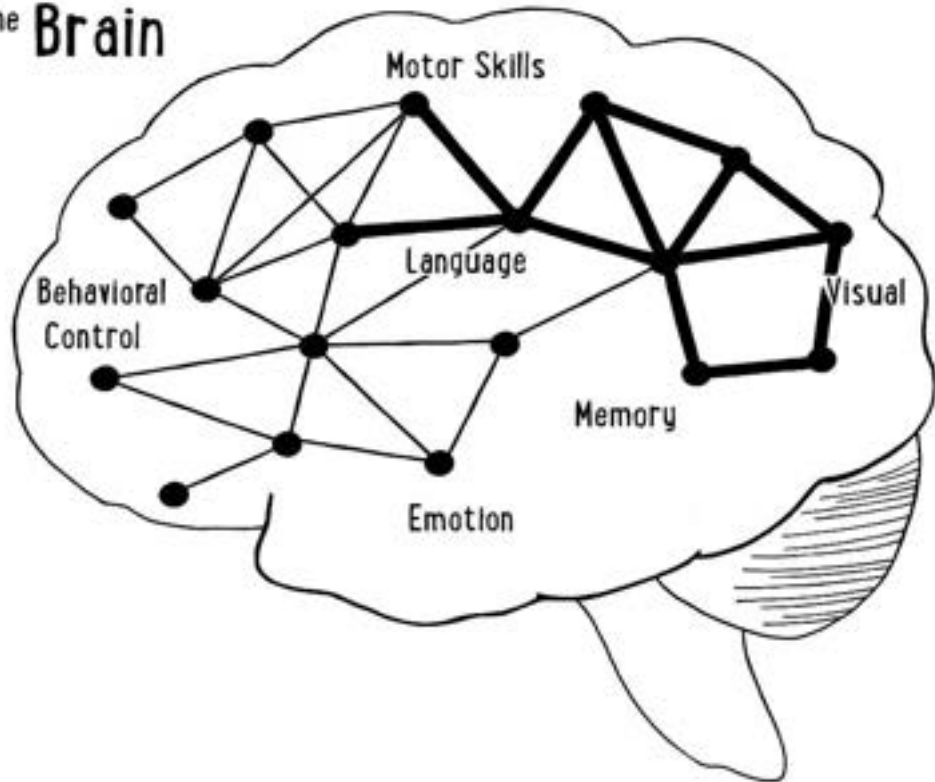
How do toxic stress and trauma affect the brain?



These neurons form connections as the brain develops, helping us to perform different functions like behavioural control, motor skills, language, visual, memory and emotion.

Neurons form connections

The Brain



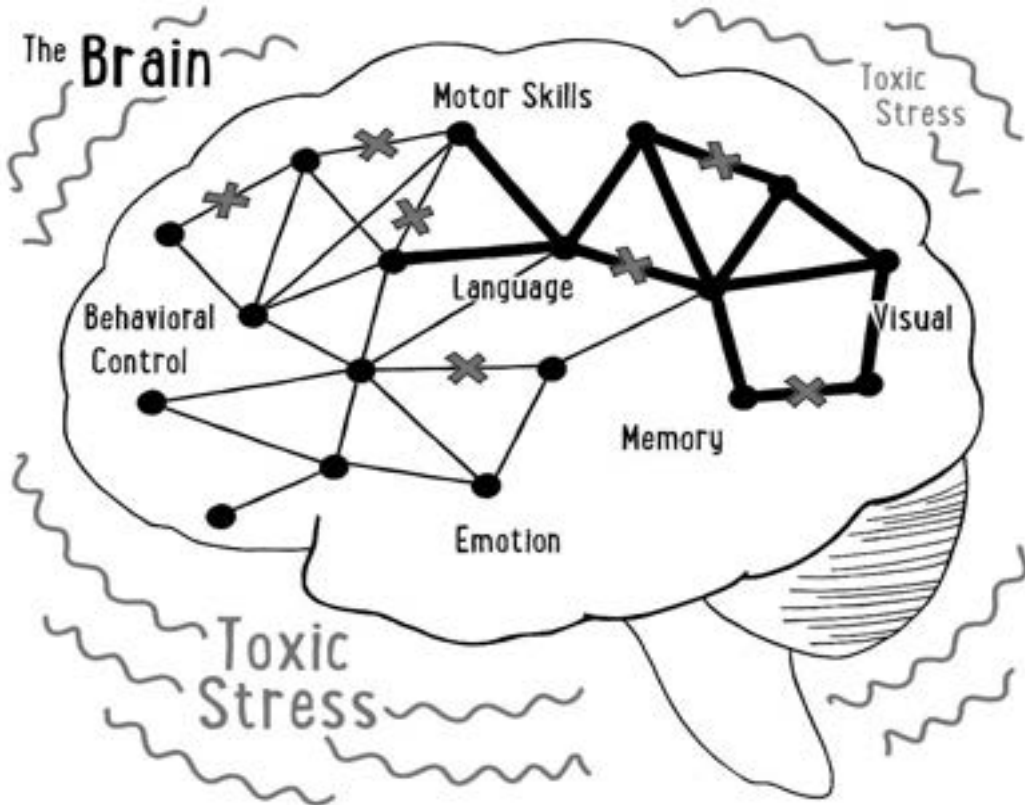
Healthy development

How do toxic stress and trauma affect the brain?

The brain develops in a healthy manner, strengthening the connections between neurons, when the following conditions are met:

- Safe and predictable environment
- Supportive and consistent relationships
- A nurturing environment

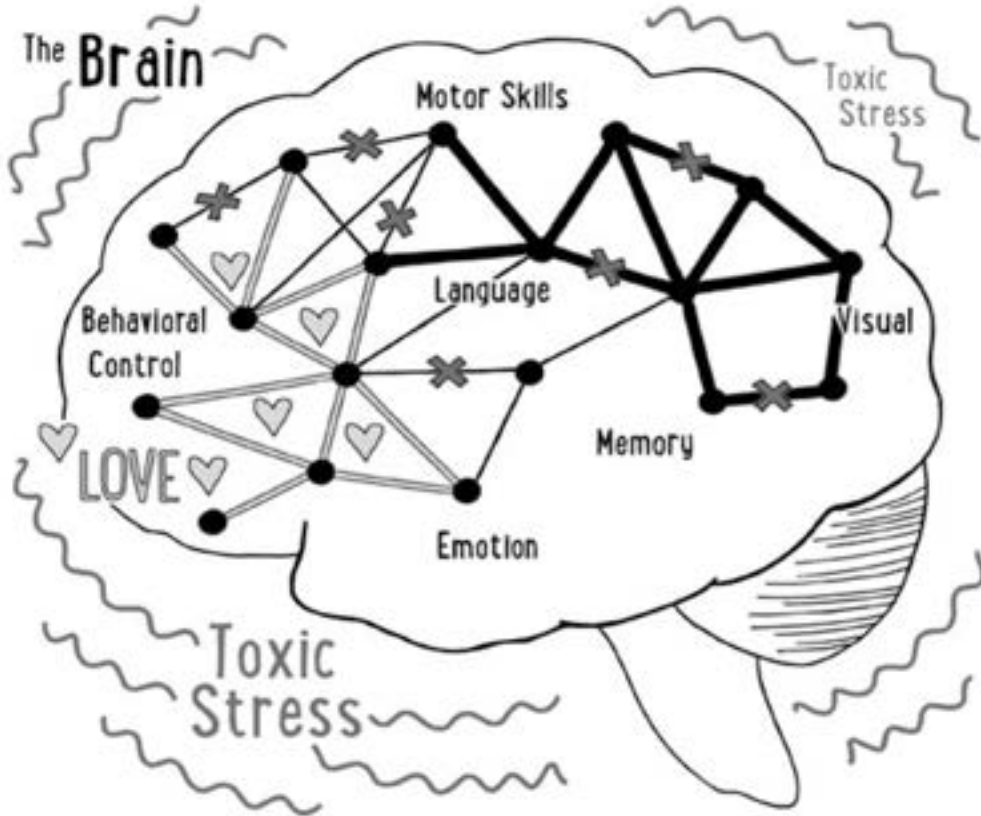
How do toxic stress and trauma affect the brain?



Severe Adversity

When people experience severe adversity for a prolonged period, brain development can be affected by this toxic stress, and the brain connections may start to break off. Childhood is particularly a time of rapid brain development and severe adversity can cause damage to growing brains.

How do toxic stress and trauma affect the brain?



Toxic Stress

The good news is that brains continue to develop all our lives ('neuroplasticity').

This is shaped by genetics and hormones but also environment: sleep, diet, exercise but also things like cognitive stimulation, low stress levels and socialisation.

2. Recognise the 4 ways someone may show signs of trauma

COGNITIVE IMPACTS	PHYSIOLOGICAL IMPACTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Trouble concentrating and filtering distractions• Persistent thoughts about traumatic events• Memory impairment• Negative thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sleeping problems• Stomach or headaches• Pains that don't seem to have physical cause
EMOTIONAL IMPACTS	BEHAVIOURAL IMPACTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fear or anxiety• Agitation or irritability• Hopelessness• Apathy• Trouble managing emotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Trouble managing behaviour• Avoidance of social contact• Engagement in risky behaviour• Poor self-regulation



20 SECOND STRETCH



3. Respond with 4 trauma-informed approaches

SAFETY



SENSE OF SELF-WORTH

CHOICE & VOICE



SENSE OF CONTROL

CULTURE & COMMUNITY



SENSE OF BELONGING

TRUST & TRANSPARENCY



POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS



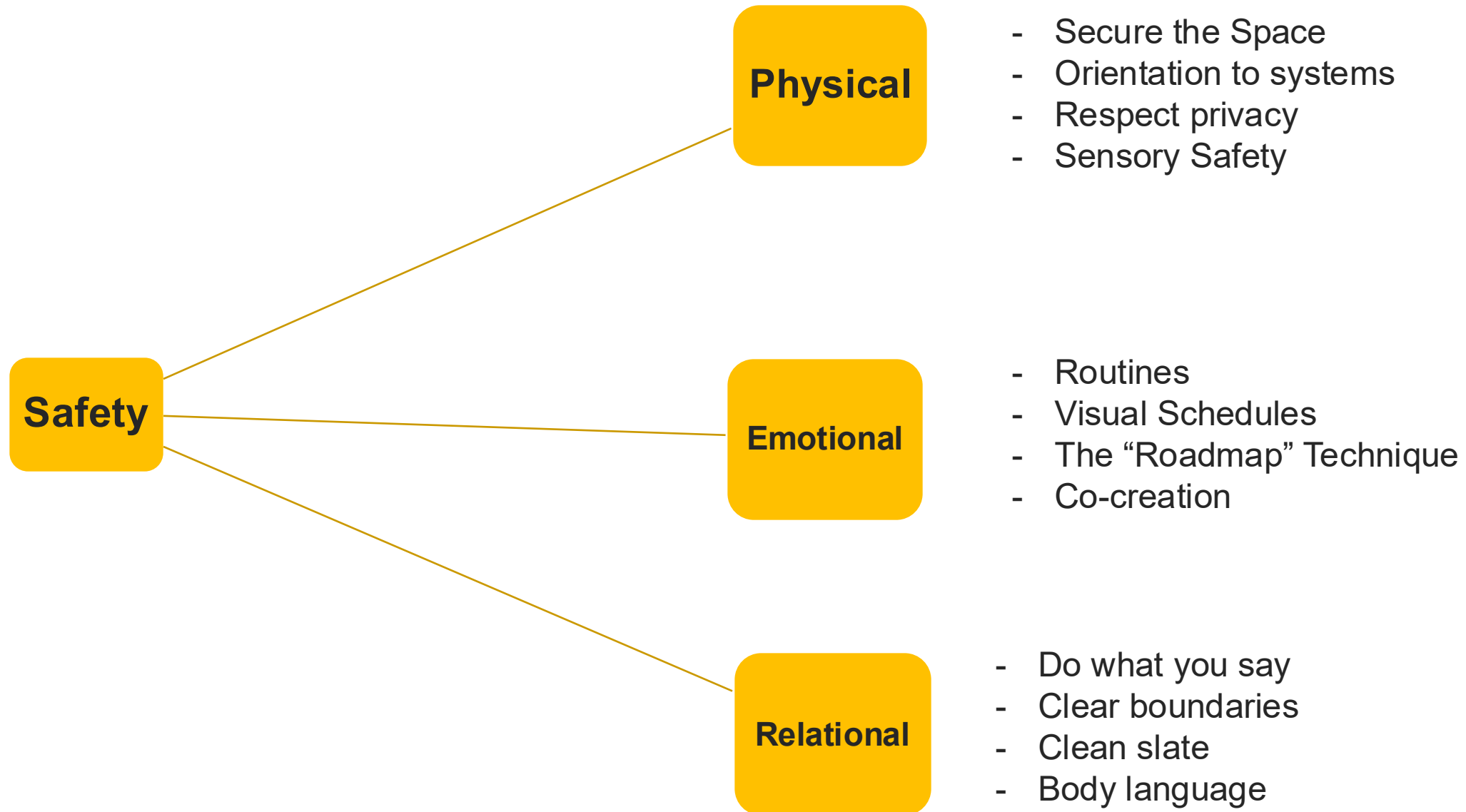
SAFETY



SENSE OF SELF-WORTH



3. Respond with 4 trauma-informed approaches - **SAFETY**



3. Respond with 4 trauma-informed approaches - SAFETY

When someone is hyper aroused

Assist them with strategies to

'down regulate'

- Slow low low
- break/safe space
- walking
- Drinking
- Opening a window
- breathing techniques

Avoid questioning and consequences.

Seek out a **trusted person**.



HYPERAROUSAL

Anxious, out of control, overwhelmed. Your body wants to fight or run away. It's not something you choose – these reactions just take over.

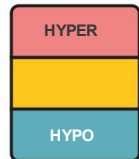


WINDOW OF TOLERANCE

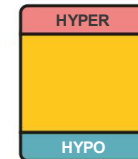
When you are in your Window of Tolerance, you feel like you can deal with whatever's happening in your life. You might feel stress or pressure, but it doesn't bother you too much. This is the ideal place to be.



When stress and trauma shrink your Window of Tolerance, it doesn't take much to throw you off balance.



Working with a practitioner can help expand your Window of Tolerance so that you are able to cope with challenges.



When someone is hypo aroused

Assist them with strategies to *'up regulate'*:

- grounding exercises
- standing
- stretching
- jumping
- tapping or squeezing body parts
- sensory toys
- drink/splash water on face
- balancing games



HYPOAROUSAL

Spacy, zoned out, numb, frozen. Your body wants to shut down. It's not something you choose – these reactions just take over.



3. Respond with 4 trauma-informed approaches - **SAFETY**

Another way to approach 'hyper arousal' : DE-ESCALATION

- | | | | |
|----------|-----------------|----------|--|
| 1 | Evaluate | 4 | Small, simple, immediate tasks to end situation.
'Let's sit down now and look at your file together.' |
| 2 | Listen | 1 | Do I know this person and are they safe to support right now? |
| 3 | Validate | 5 | When calm, ask what you can do together to prevent another de-escalated situation. |
| 4 | Plan | 2 | Nod, repeat key phrases, show attentiveness |
| 5 | Prevent | 3 | 'Yes it must be difficult...'
'Yes this situation is frustrating...' |



It's important not to get drawn in by rhetorical questions or inflammatory statements. You can validate the emotion within a statement without validating the content of that statement.



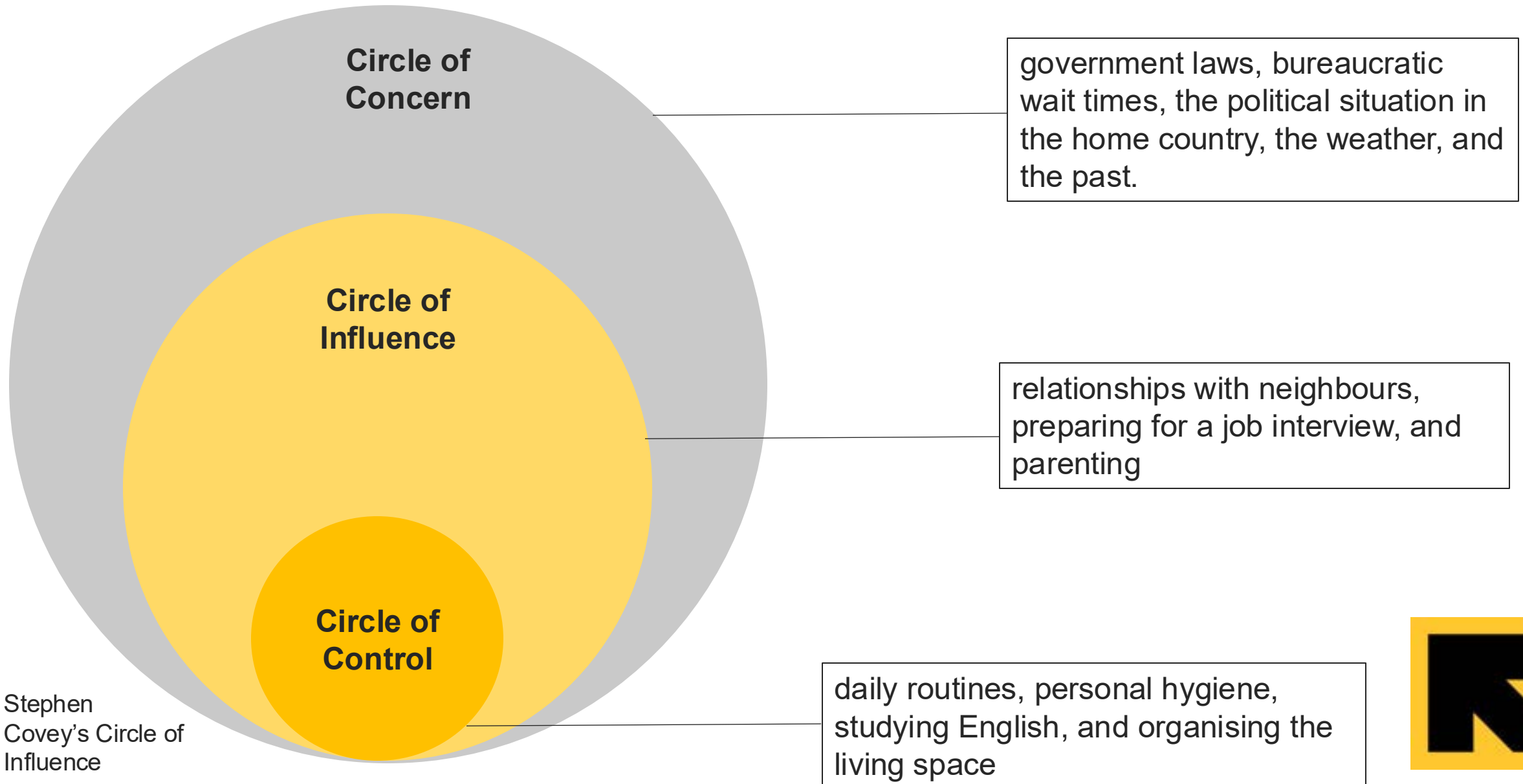
CHOICE & VOICE



SENSE OF CONTROL



3. Respond with 4 trauma-informed approaches – **CHOICE & VOICE**



3. Respond with 4 trauma-informed approaches – CHOICE & VOICE

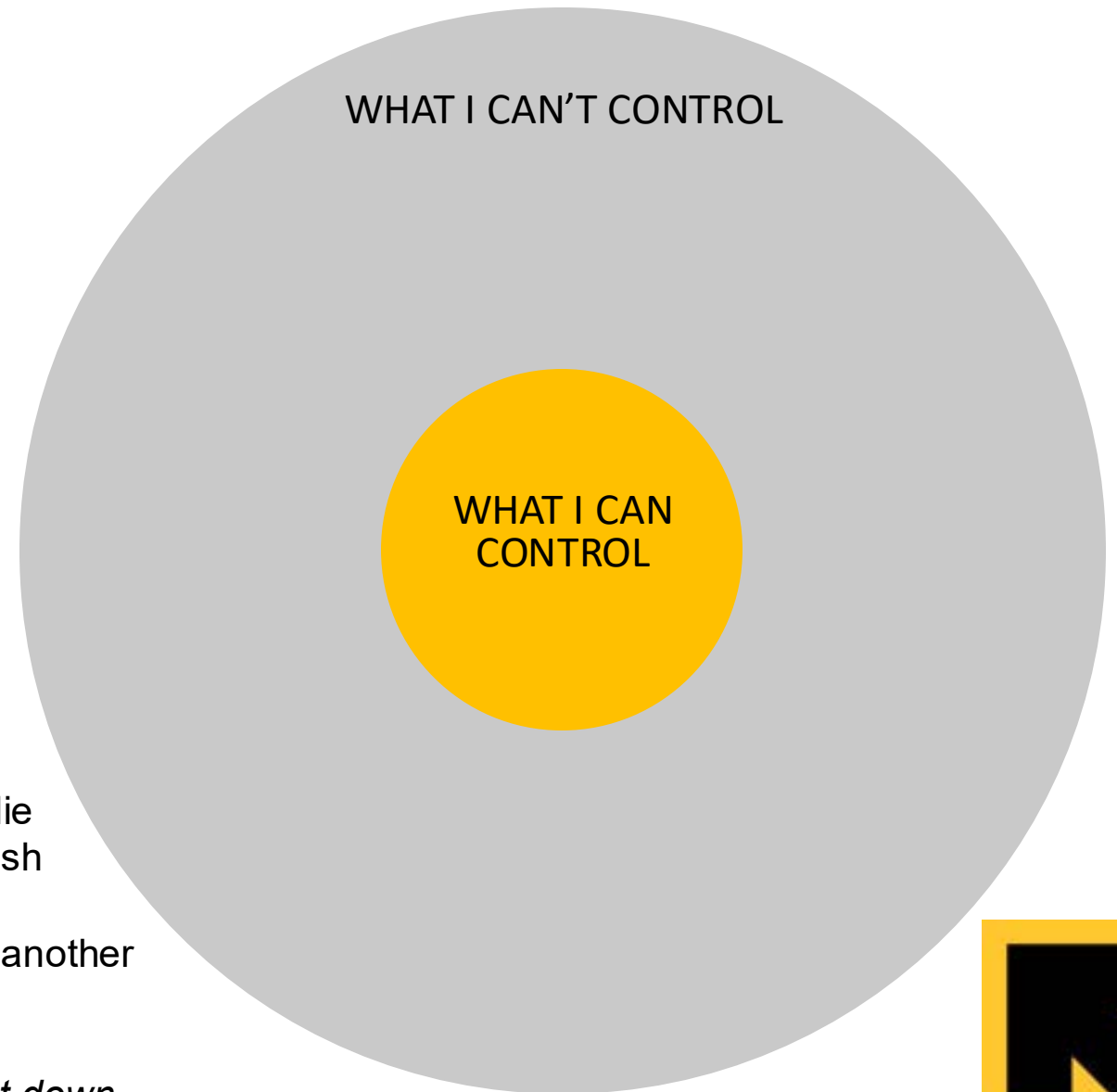


dependent

- I'm not clever enough to learn English so I won't try
- I'm not strong enough to start a new career path
- I'm not rich enough to afford to buy good food here
- *If I try, I'll just do it wrong.*

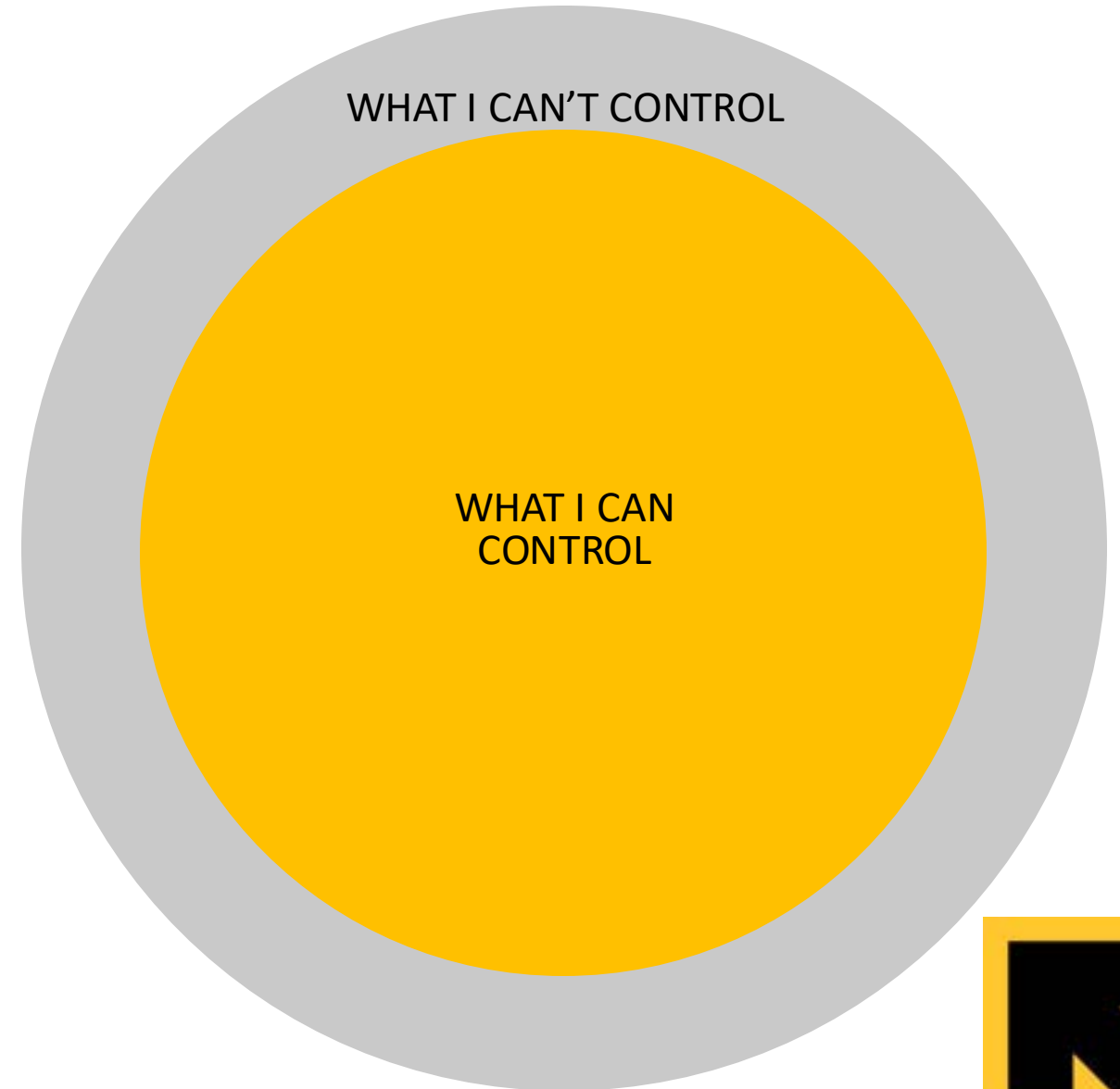
withdrawn

- Other people always lie
- Other people are selfish
- Other people always say one thing and do another
- Other people always have bad intentions
- *If I reach out, I'll be let down*



3. Respond with 4 trauma-informed approaches – **CHOICE & VOICE**

LARGE CIRCLE OF CONTROL



Expand the Circle of Control

Facilitate Independence

Structured Choice

Restoring Voice



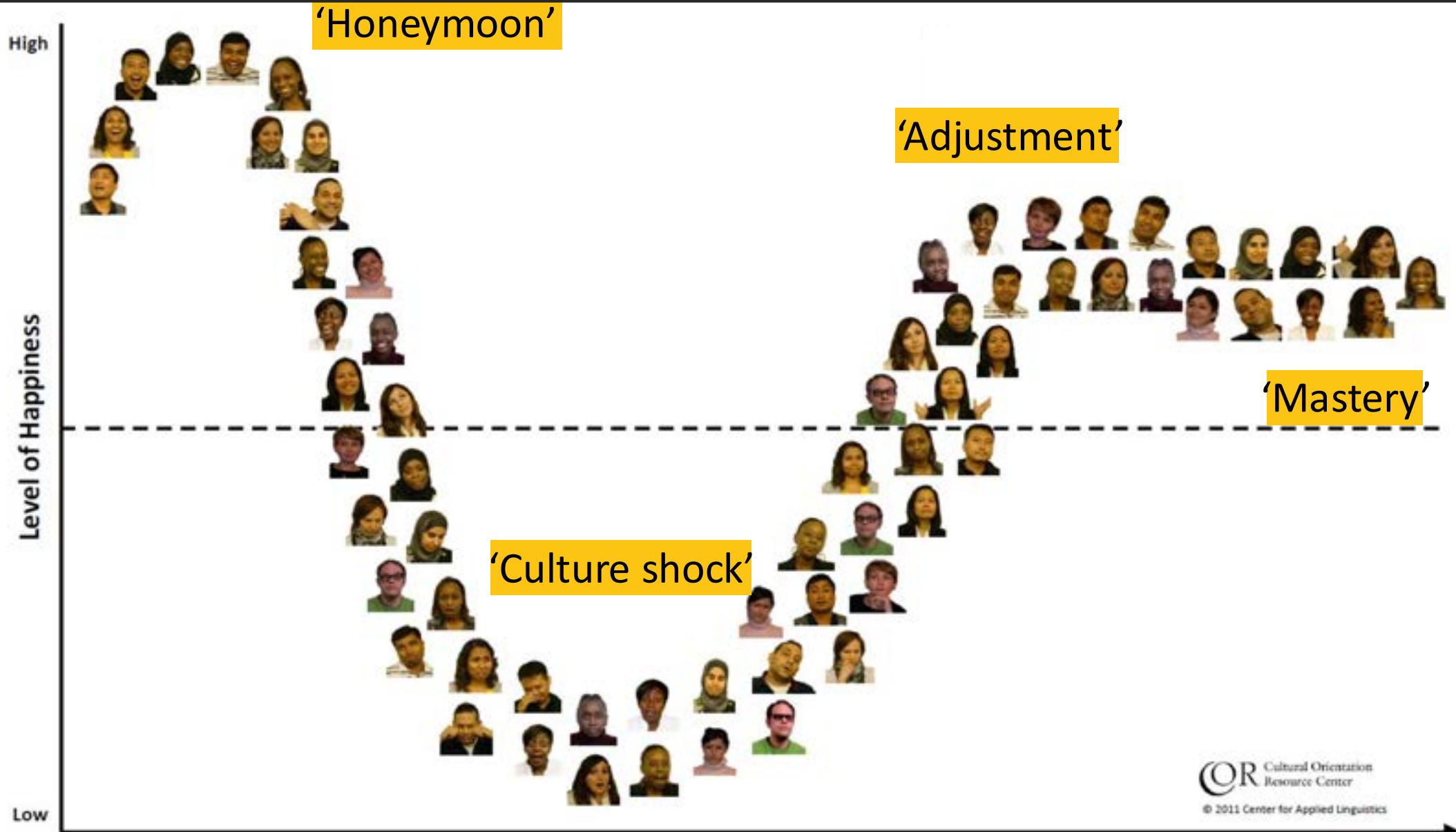
CULTURE & COMMUNITY

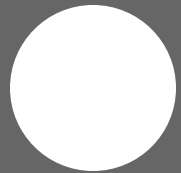


SENSE OF BELONGING

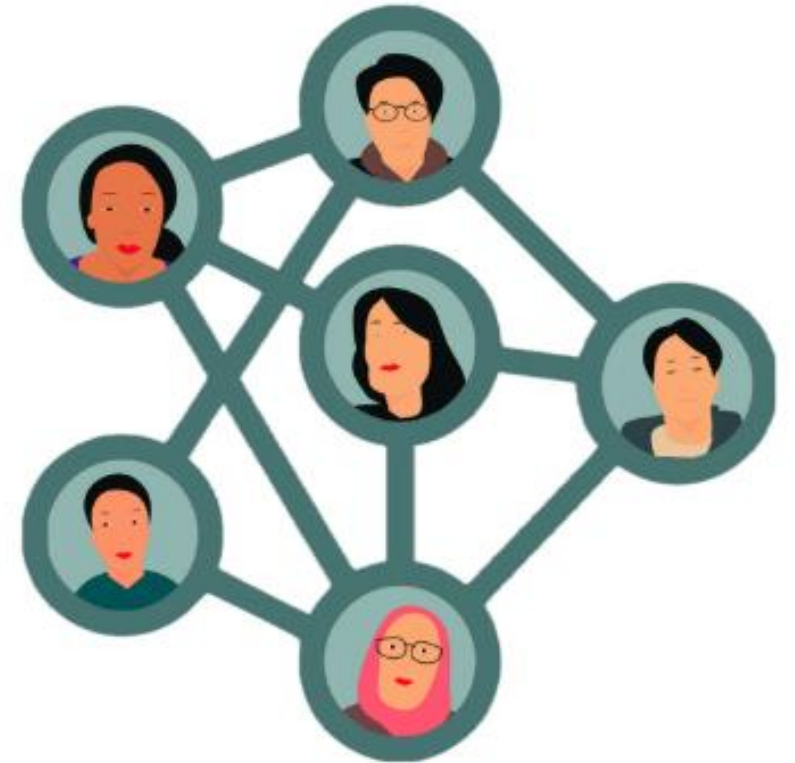
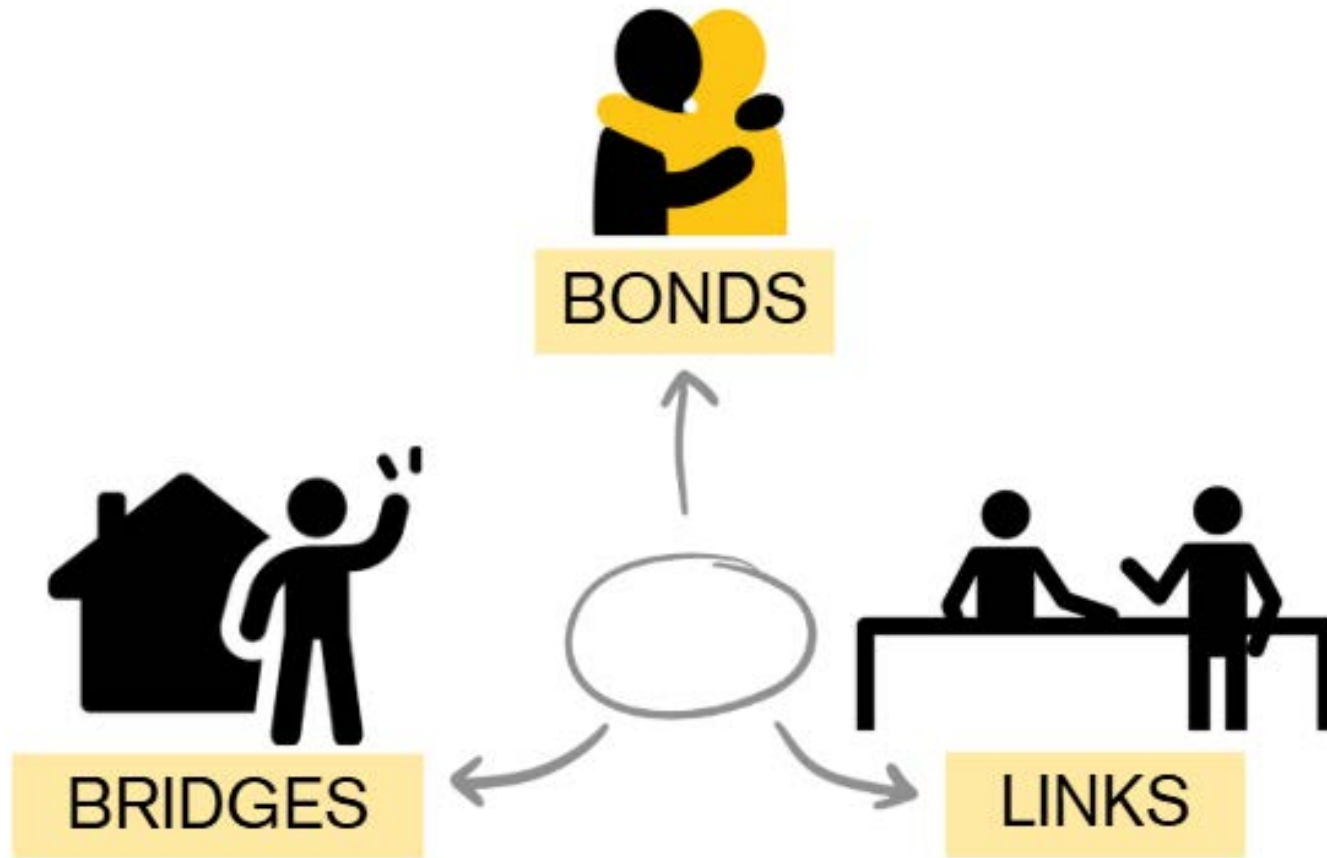
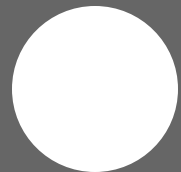
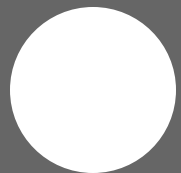


3. Respond with 4 trauma-informed approaches – **CULTURE & COMMUNITY**





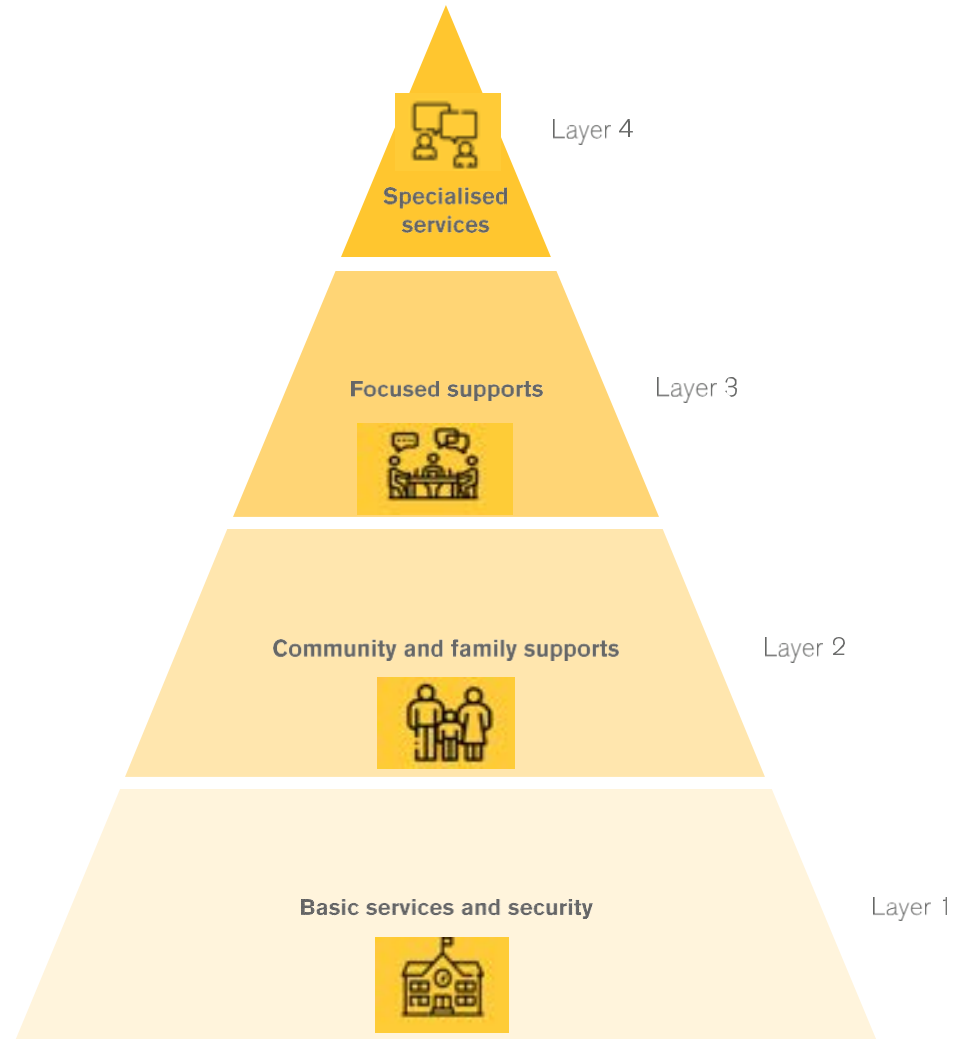
RECOGNISE



**WHO WOULD SUPPORT YOU IF YOU
MOVED TO A NEW PLACE?**

3. Respond with 4 trauma-informed approaches – **CULTURE & COMMUNITY**

Psychosocial support pyramid



3. Respond with 4 trauma-informed approaches – **CULTURE & COMMUNITY**

Psychosocial support pyramid

A. Helping someone register with a GP

1

B. Organising a community dinner.

2

C. Checking in weekly with a family

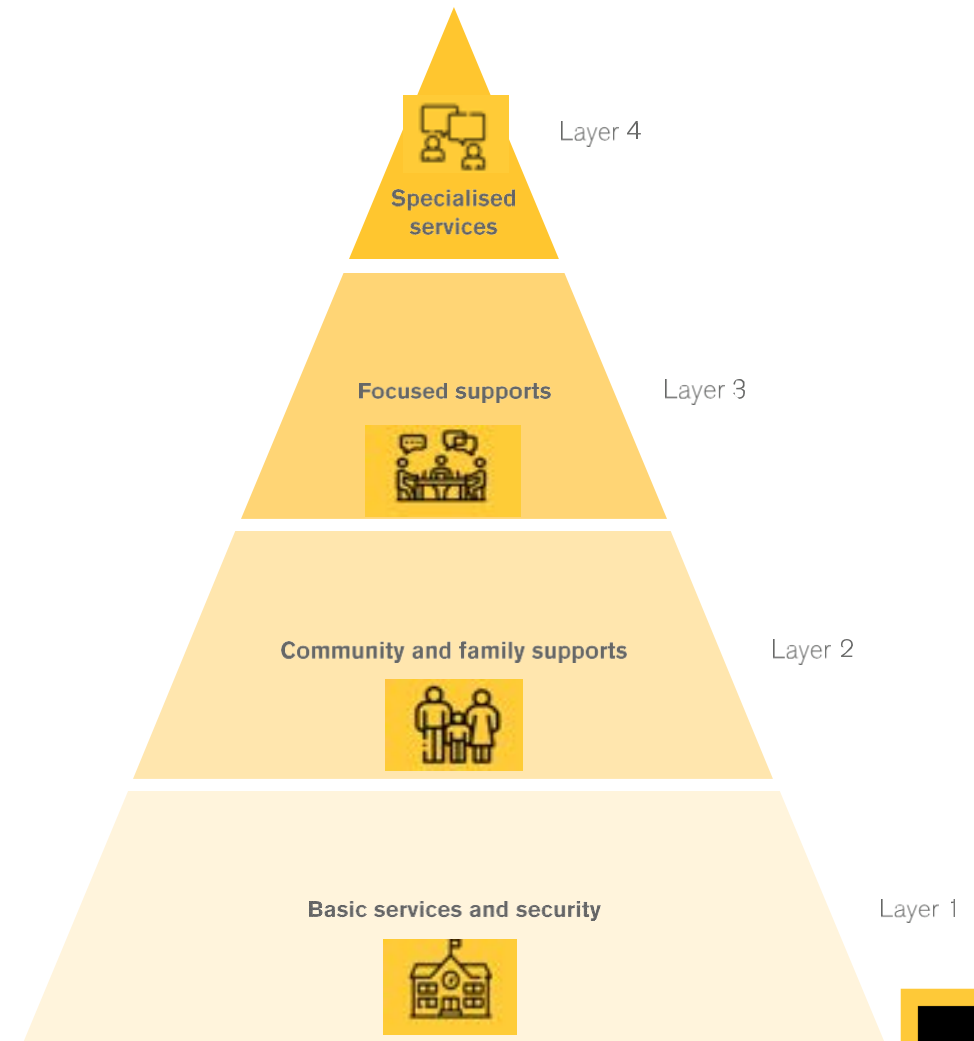
2

D. Referring someone to a social worker for emotional support

3

E. A person receiving therapy for trauma

4



TRUST & TRANSPARENCY



POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS



3. Respond with 4 trauma-informed approaches – **TRUST & TRANSPARENCY**



Jake is having a sensitive conversation with a client, Nasrin. What's wrong with this picture?

What could he have done differently BEFORE the conversation?

3. Respond with 4 trauma-informed approaches – **TRUST & TRANSPARENCY**



Nasrin is now having the conversation with Angela.

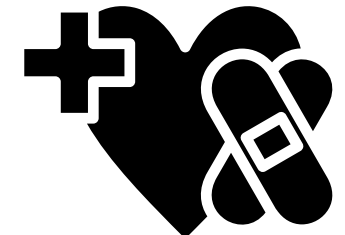
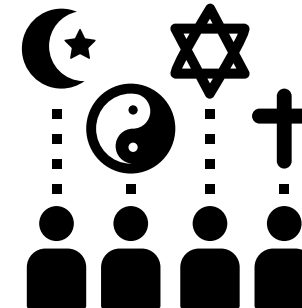
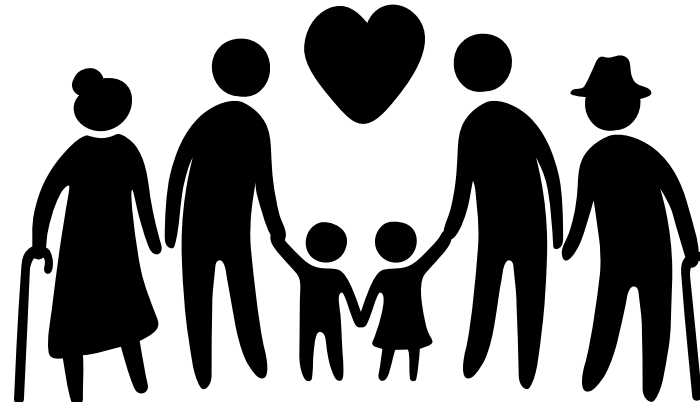
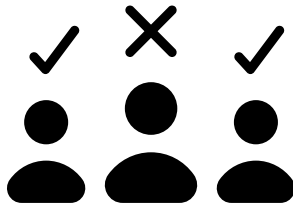
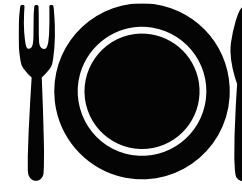
What's right with this picture?

What could Angela do AFTER the conversation?

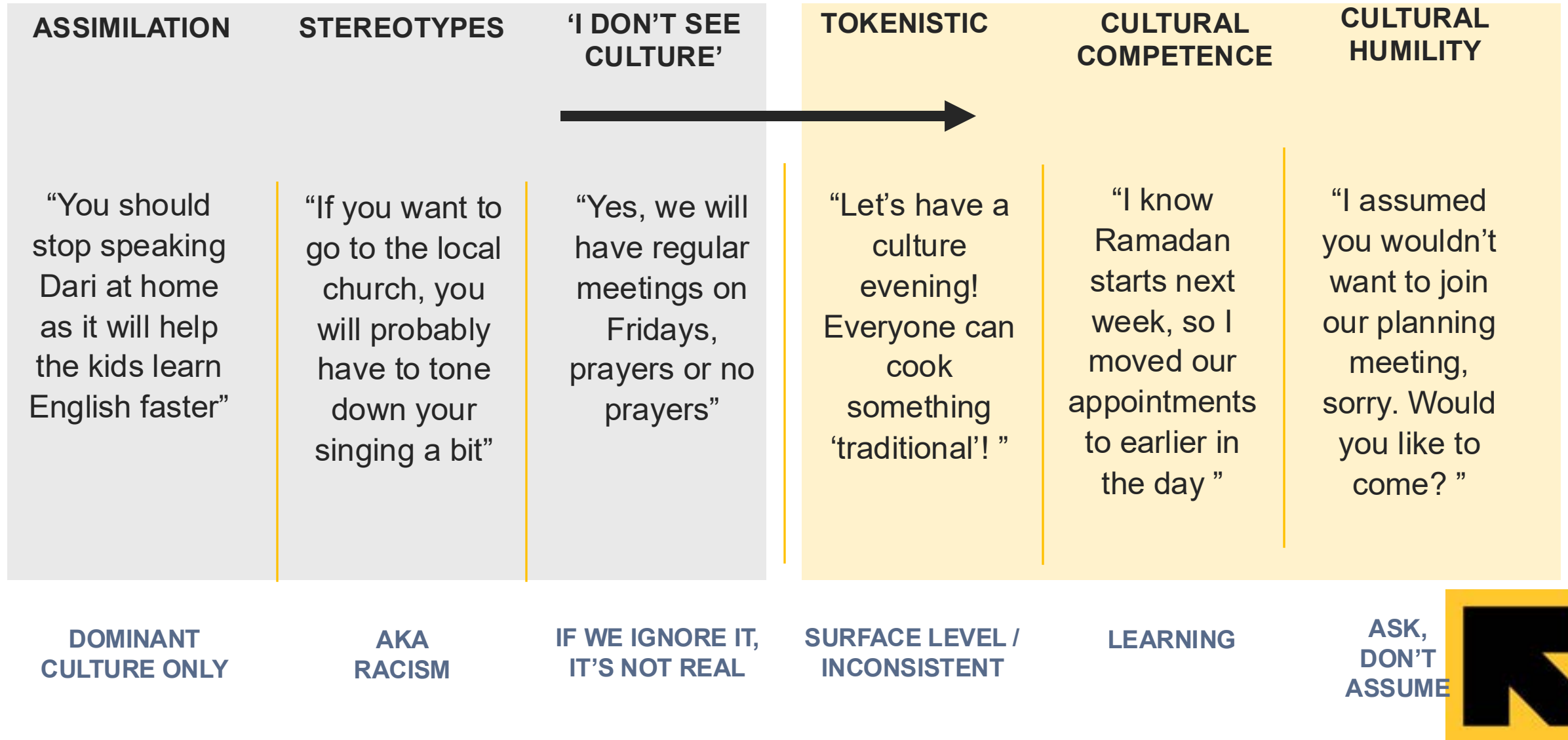
4. Resist re-traumatisation for yourself and others by shifting from cultural competence to cultural humility



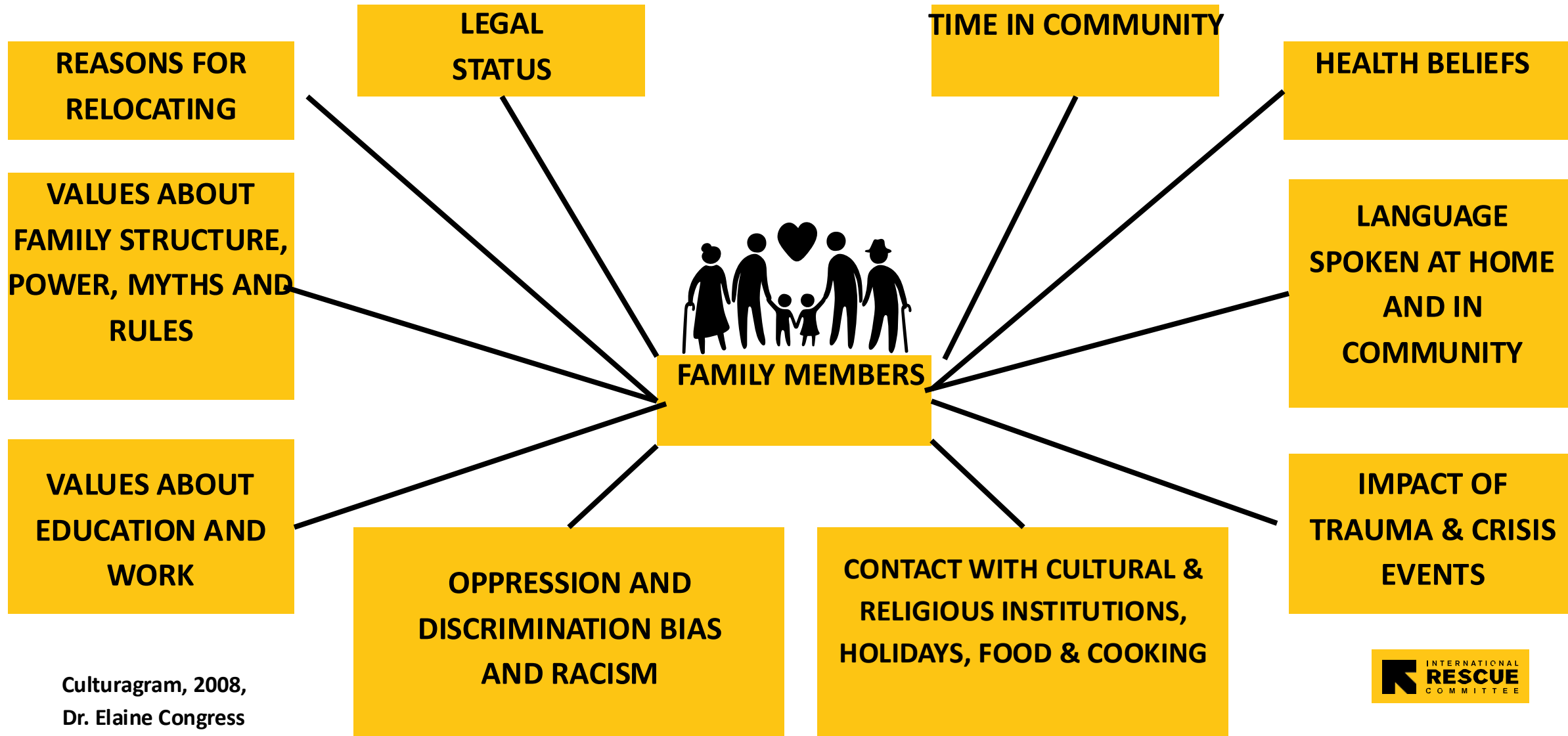
What is culture?



4. Resist re-traumatisation for yourself and others by shifting from cultural competence to cultural humility



4. Resist re-traumatisation for yourself and others by shifting from cultural competence to cultural humility



Culturagram, 2008,
Dr. Elaine Congress



STAY IN TOUCH!

jude.darwich@rescue.org