



## SESSION 3

# Recognizing Traumatic Stress Responses in Self & Others

- 1** Stress/adversity triggers resilience in response (*most likely outcome*),
  - Most people exposed to intense emotional challenges will demonstrate resilience.
  - Does not negatively impact ability to cope with future challenges.
- 2** Trauma triggers psychopathology\* (*use this word sparingly*) in response
  - 75-80% of people will be exposed to severely emotional challenge in their lifetime (*combat, natural disasters, assault, rape*).
  - 10-20% of people exposed to severely emotional challenges will have traumatic responses.
  - Cannot define trauma from stressor alone, also involves existential, physiological and emotional makeup of the person; differentiate stress response from stressor/be person-focused.
  - Has long-term impacts on how people cope and respond to future situations.
- 3** Stress response is physiological first (*neuroendocrine – sympathetic nervous system*) and evolutionarily crucial
  - Intended to mobilize resources to cope with a current stressor.
  - Long-term activation of stress response negatively impacts hormone and neurotransmitter levels, immune system, cardiovascular, metabolic functioning (*allostatic load*).

*Traumatic responses*

*Fight, flight, freeze, fawn (each adaptive/maladaptive)*

## Traumatic response symptoms

Anxiety/fear, re-experiencing, hypervigilance, avoidance, anger, guilt/shame, grief and depression, changed views of self/world/others, changed relationship to sex, drugs, alcohol, spending, gambling, etc.

## Window of Tolerance *(Dan Siegel)*

- The zone in which life's challenges are arousing or stressful, but not overwhelming or traumatic
- Generally able to function effectively, tolerate feelings, feel in control
- Dysregulation occurs when you start to get out of your window of tolerance – agitated, anxious but not out of control

## What Helps!

### Widening Window of Tolerance

Visit website: [mindmypeelings.com/blog/window-of-tolerance](https://mindmypeelings.com/blog/window-of-tolerance)

1. Mindfulness (*awareness, openness, acceptance, presence*)
2. Increase happiness. Read this blog about self care and joy:  
[katekenfield.com/articles/5-self-care-strategies-that-arent-mani-pedis](https://katekenfield.com/articles/5-self-care-strategies-that-arent-mani-pedis)
3. Reduce shame
4. Build resilience (*connections, wellness, purpose*)

### Self-Regulating

Hyperarousal: work on releasing emotions, breathing, meditating

Listen to this podcast on releasing emotions:

[brenebrown.com/podcast/brene-with-emily-and-amelia-nagoski-on-burnout-and-how-to-complete-the-stress-cycle/](https://brenebrown.com/podcast/brene-with-emily-and-amelia-nagoski-on-burnout-and-how-to-complete-the-stress-cycle/)

Hypoarousal: stimulate the senses, grounding techniques, breathing, meditating

*These trainings and handouts were developed and facilitated by Dr. Abigail Nathanson, DSW, LCSW, APHSW-C, ACS. [www.abigailnathanson.com](http://www.abigailnathanson.com) This program was made possible by a grant from The JFNA Center on Holocaust Survivor Care and Institute on Aging and Trauma. © 2022 DOROT, Inc.*