

Working with young children impacted by complex trauma

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Childhood Trauma and Anxiety

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“Any situation or event that leaves a child feeling overwhelmed and alone needs to be considered as trauma.”



Shaped by experiences – Cozolino 2013

Early experiences shape structures in ways that have a lifelong impact on three of our most vital areas of learning:



Developmental trauma is....

- ❖ Early
- ❖ Ongoing
- ❖ From caregivers
- ❖ Fear without safety
- ❖ Toxic stress
- ❖ No escape
- ❖ Physical & emotional overwhelm

Dripping tap of trauma – with no escape



BIG & SMALL TRAUMAS

BIG T

- BEREAVEMENT
- SERIOUS ILLNESS:
CHILD/PARENT/SIBLING
- ACCIDENT
- DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
- SEXUAL ABUSE
- NEGLECT/EMOTIONAL ABUSE
- HOMELESSNESS
- SUBSTANCE DEPENDENT PARENTS

SMALL T

- LACK OF EMOTIONAL
CONNECTION
- CONTROLLED CRYING
- DIFFICULT BIRTH
- MULTIPLE HOME MOVES
- HIGHLY ANXIOUS PARENTS
- HARSH PARENTING
- PARENTS DISTRACTED:
SCREENS/TRAUMA/
- FAMILY BREAKDOWN

Trauma stored in the body – sensory



You don't HAVE to know

- What has happened to them
- What their 'triggers' are
- What to say



You do need to

- Be in a place of ‘compassionate curiosity’
- Well regulated in body and emotions
- Prepared to go slowly
- Willing to ‘hold a safe space’
- Able to repeat, repeat, repeat
- Full of aspiration and hope



When does the 'Trauma Thermostat' get set?





Need:
Cold
Lonely
Hungry



Response



No response
Scary response



Stress goes away
Relax



I matter
I feel safe

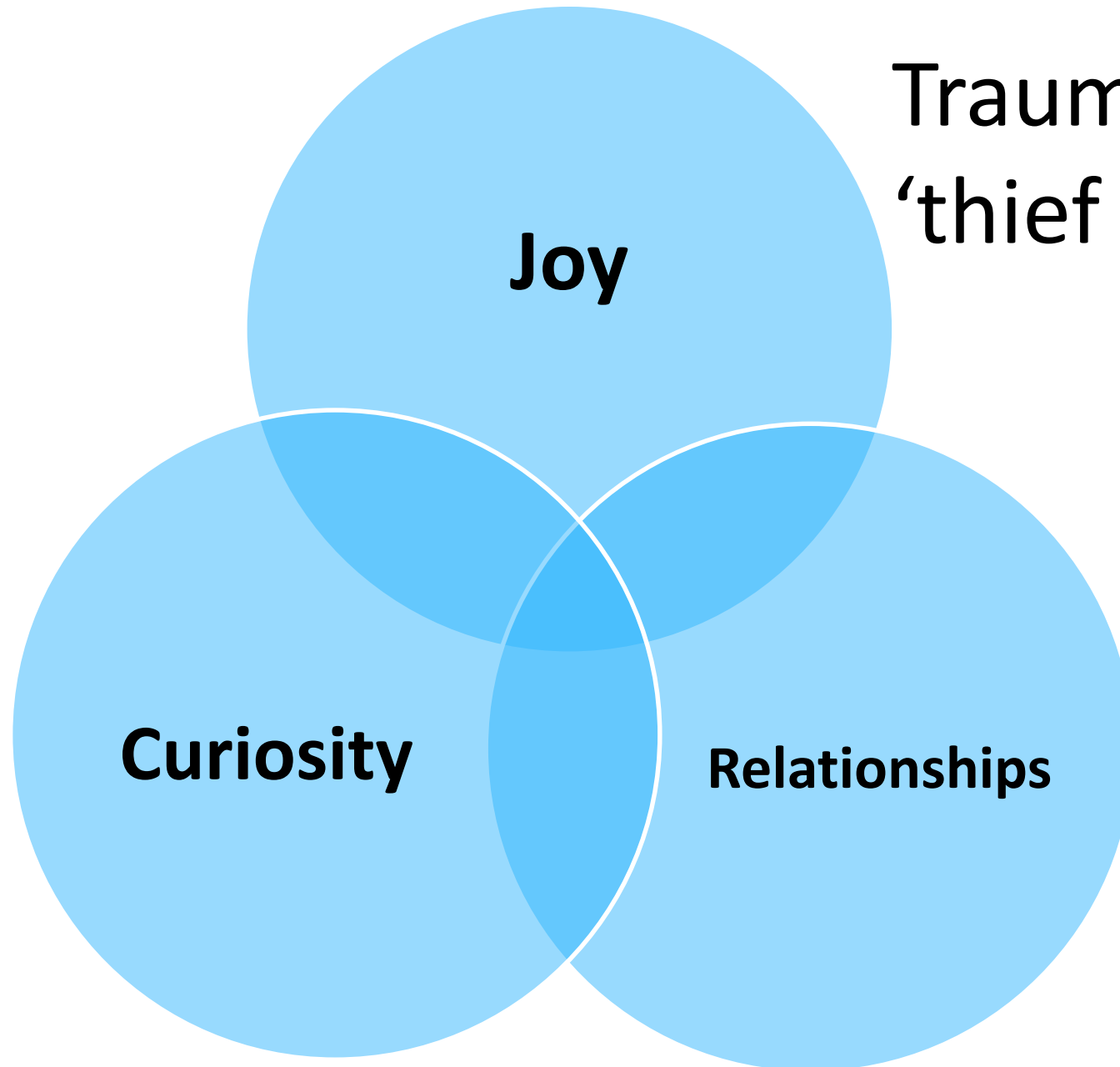


Ongoing stress
Sets stress response level

Lack of **MATTERING** activates **SURVIVAL**



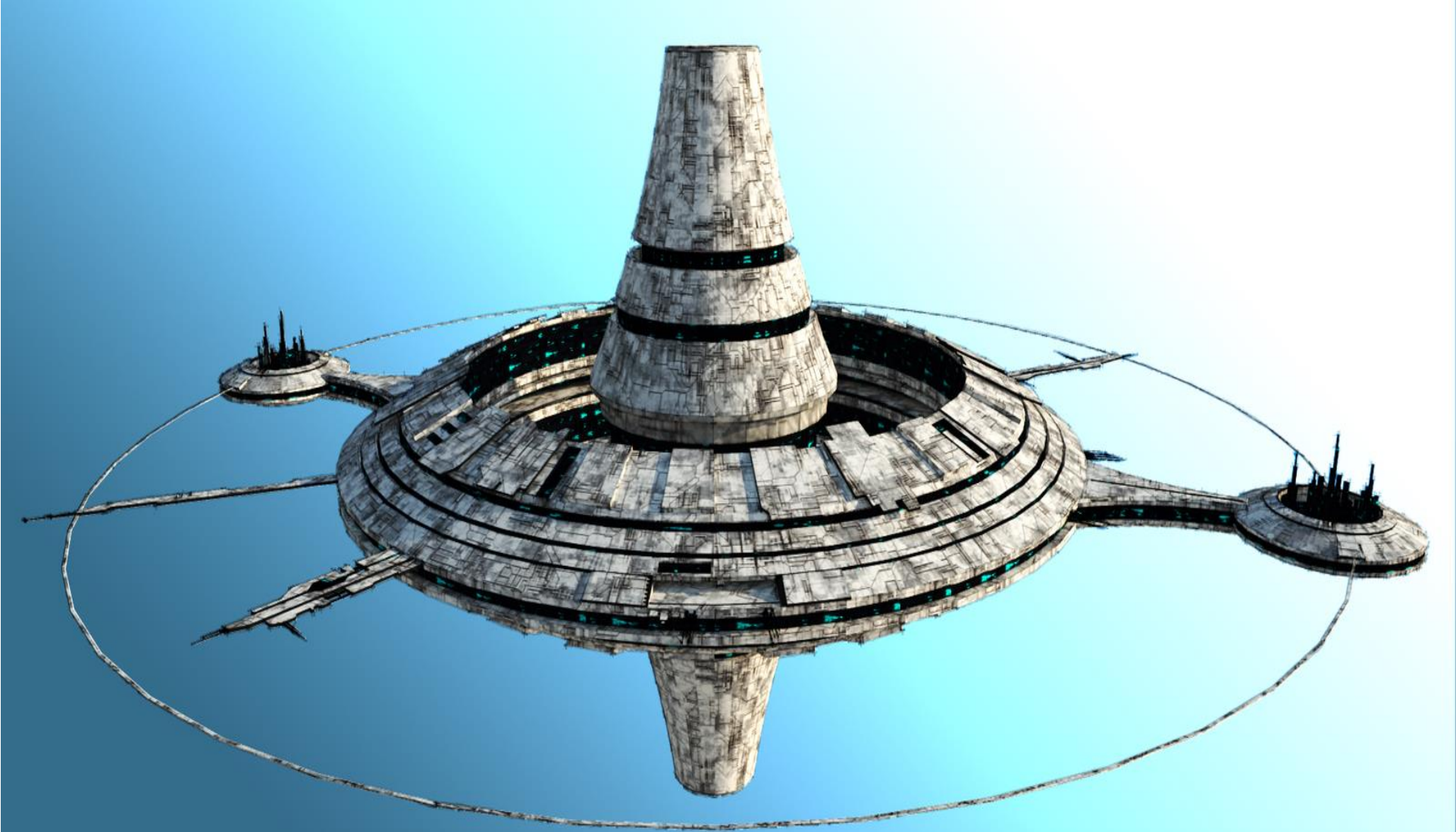
Trauma is like the
'thief in the night'



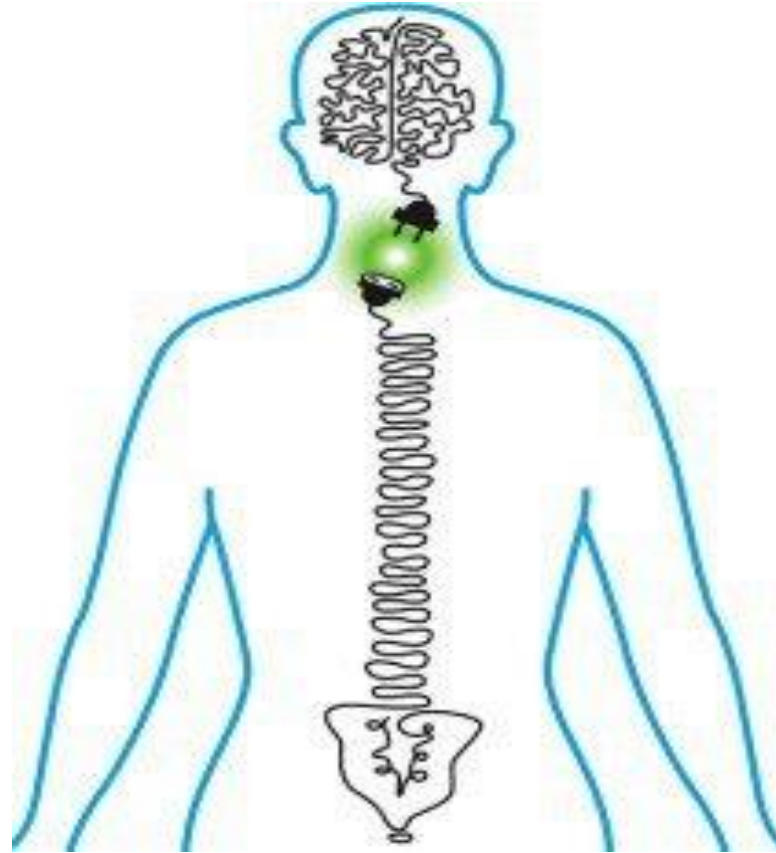
The Good News!



Connection = Regulation



Resources within



NEUROPLASTICITY

The brain's ability to make new neural connections in response to changes in behavior, environment, or injury.



BEGOS!

- **B**reathe
- **E**mootional state
- **G**round
- **O**pen heart
- **S**mile

Smile



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