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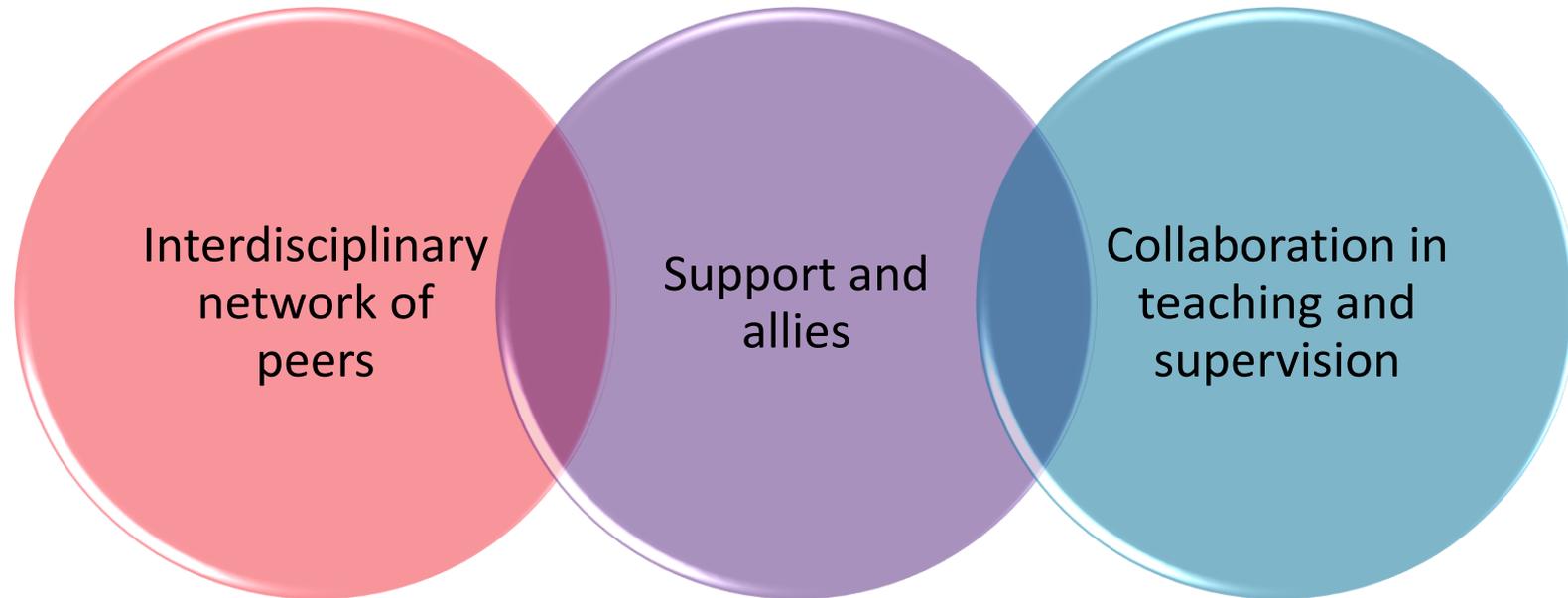
TRAUMATIC STRESS: AN INTRODUCTION

THRI: Trauma and Resilience Research Group

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Trauma and Resilience Research Group



We live in a world where collaboration is no longer a luxury
- W. John Kao (Chair Professor, Translational Medical Engineering, The University of Hong Kong, SAR, PRC)



What is Traumatic Stress?

A. Exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence in one (or more) of the following ways:

1. Directly experiencing the traumatic event(s).
2. Witnessing, in person, the event(s) as it occurred to others.
3. Learning that the traumatic event(s) occurred to a close family member or close friend. In cases of actual or threatened death of a family member or friend, the event(s) must have been violent or accidental.
4. Experiencing repeated or extreme exposure to aversive details of the traumatic event(s) (e.g., first responders collecting human remains; police officers repeatedly exposed to details of child abuse).

Note: Criterion A4 does not apply to exposure through electronic media, television, movies, or pictures, unless this exposure is work related.

Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5), Criterion A

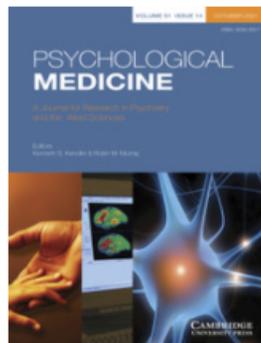


What is Traumatic Stress?

Who is affected by trauma?

- 2016 study (n=68,894) conducted in 24 countries across 6 continents found that 70% of participants endorsed having experienced at least one traumatic event in their life time (Benjet et al, 2016)
- 57–75% of Australians will experience a potentially traumatic event at some point in their lives (Mills et al. 2011; Rosenman 2002)
- **However**, not all people exposed to a traumatic event develop PTSD. In the Australian population, between 5-10% (Phoenix Australia n.d.)

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[Psychological Medicine](#)

The epidemiology of traumatic event exposure worldwide: results from the World Mental Health Survey Consortium

Published online by Cambridge University Press: 29 October 2015

C. Benjet, E. Bromet, E. G. Karam, R. C. Kessler, K. A. McLaughlin, A. M. Ruscio, V. Shahly, D. J. Stein, M. Petukhova and E. Hill ...[Show all authors](#) ▾

[Show au](#)

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2020). Stress and trauma
<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-health/stress-and-trauma>

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What is Traumatic Stress?

What is a traumatic event, and how is it defined?

Stressful event:

- Experiences that are undesirable, unplanned, abnormal, and/or uncontrollable, and which threaten day-to-day functioning.
- Stressful events are common and may impact overall quality of life.

Traumatic event:

- Exposure to actual or possible death, serious injury, or sexual violence.
- Experienced directly, or by witnessing it, or learning that it has happened to a close family member or friend, or experience repeated exposure to aversive details of it.
- Trauma can also be chronic (i.e. events occur multiple times over a long period of time).

International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies (2021). COVID-19: Traumatic Stressor or Stress? <https://istss.org/public-resources/trauma-basics/covid-19-traumatic-stressor-or-stress>

Phoenix Australia. (n.d.). What are traumatic events?

<https://www.phoenixaustralia.org/recovery/what-are-traumatic-events/>



What is Traumatic Stress?

What are common responses/outcomes following exposure to traumatic event/s?

1. Resistance
2. Symptoms similar to acute stress disorder (ASD) followed by natural recovery.
3. Ongoing: Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD); Mood disorders, Dissociative disorders, other anxiety disorders. But **ongoing issues do not need to be diagnosable.**
4. Delayed Impact: PTSD with delayed onset, Personality Traits/Disorders, Memory Repression (and recovery)
5. Resilience and Post Traumatic Growth

(Terr 1991; Solomon & Heide 1999)

What is Traumatic Stress?

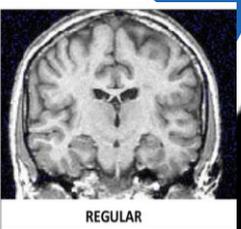
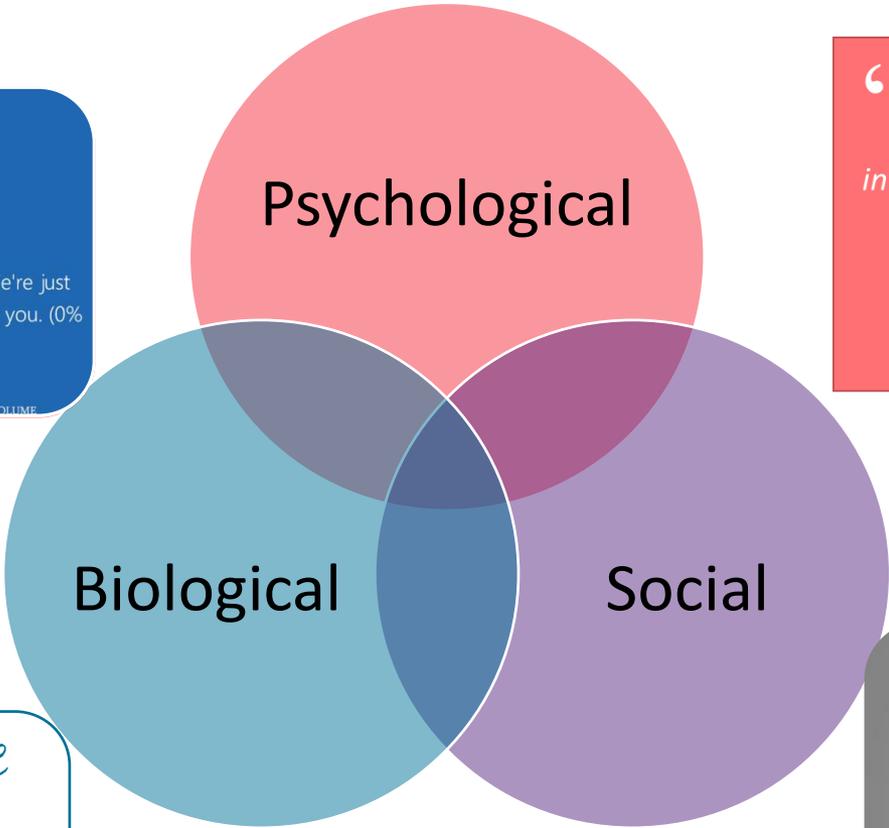
Why do traumatic events have such significant impacts on individuals?



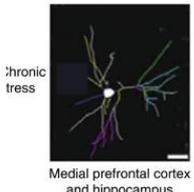
:(
Your PC ran into a problem and needs to restart. We're just collecting some error info, and then we'll restart for you. (0% complete)

If you'd like to know more, you can search online later for this error: UNMOUNTABLE_BOOT_VOLUME

“
Is a whole-body tragedy, an integral human event of enormous proportions with massive repercussions
”
Susan Pease Banitt



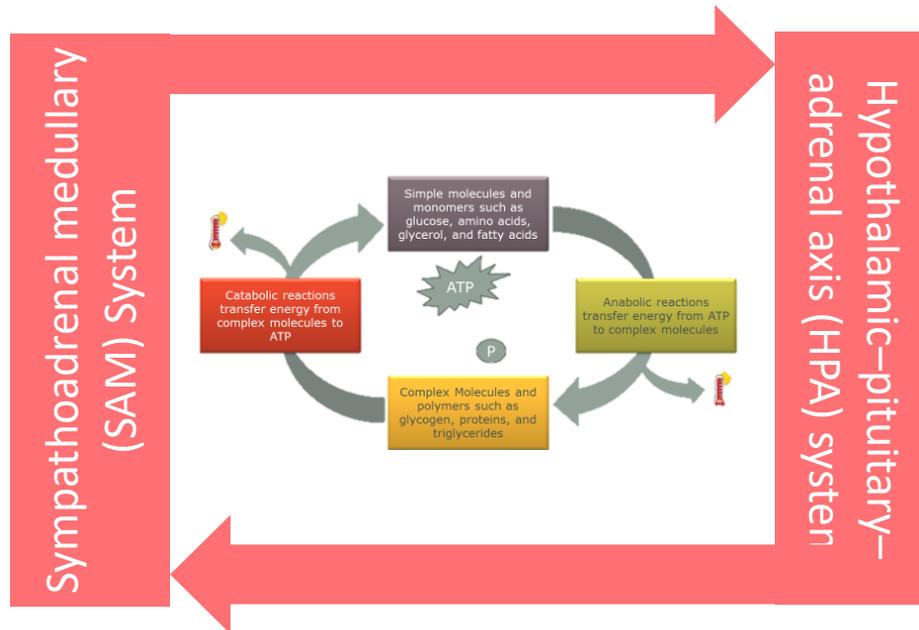
It causes damage to our most basic bodily systems and structures





What is Traumatic Stress?

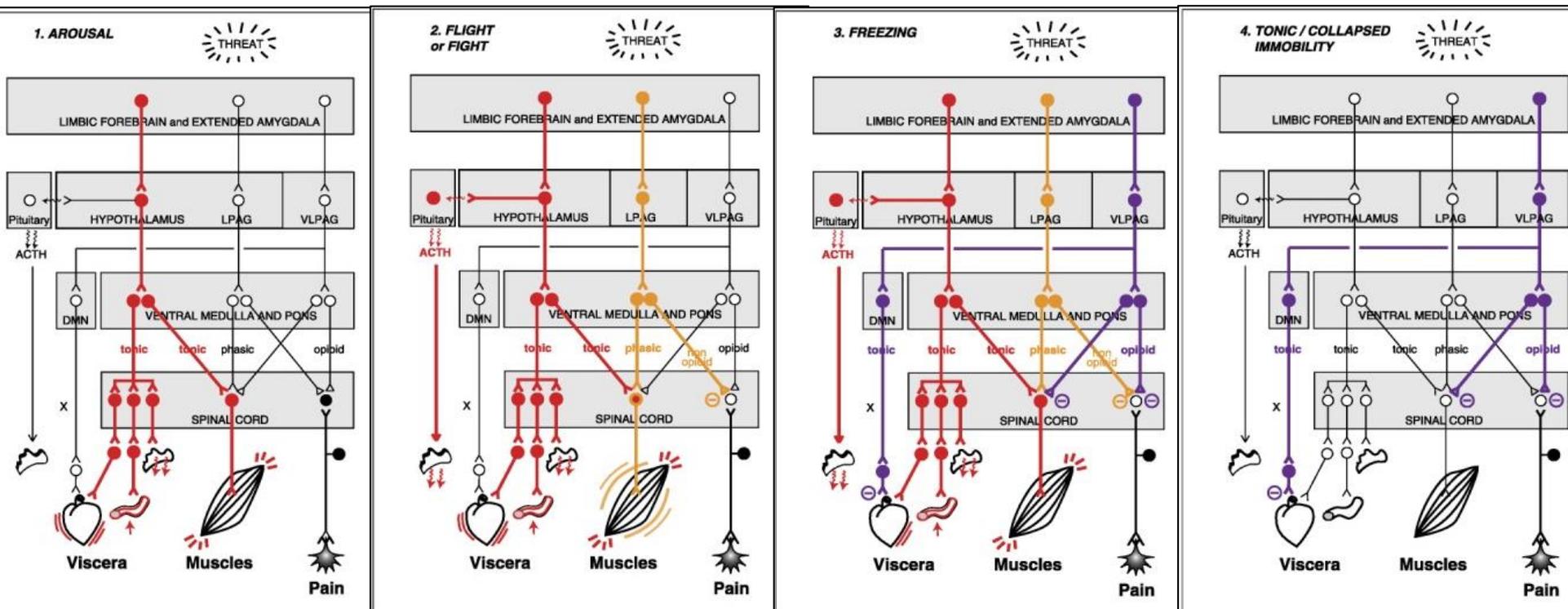
What are the mechanisms of traumatic stress?



What is Traumatic Stress?

What are the mechanisms of traumatic stress?

States of the Defence Cascade (Kozłowska et al, 2015):



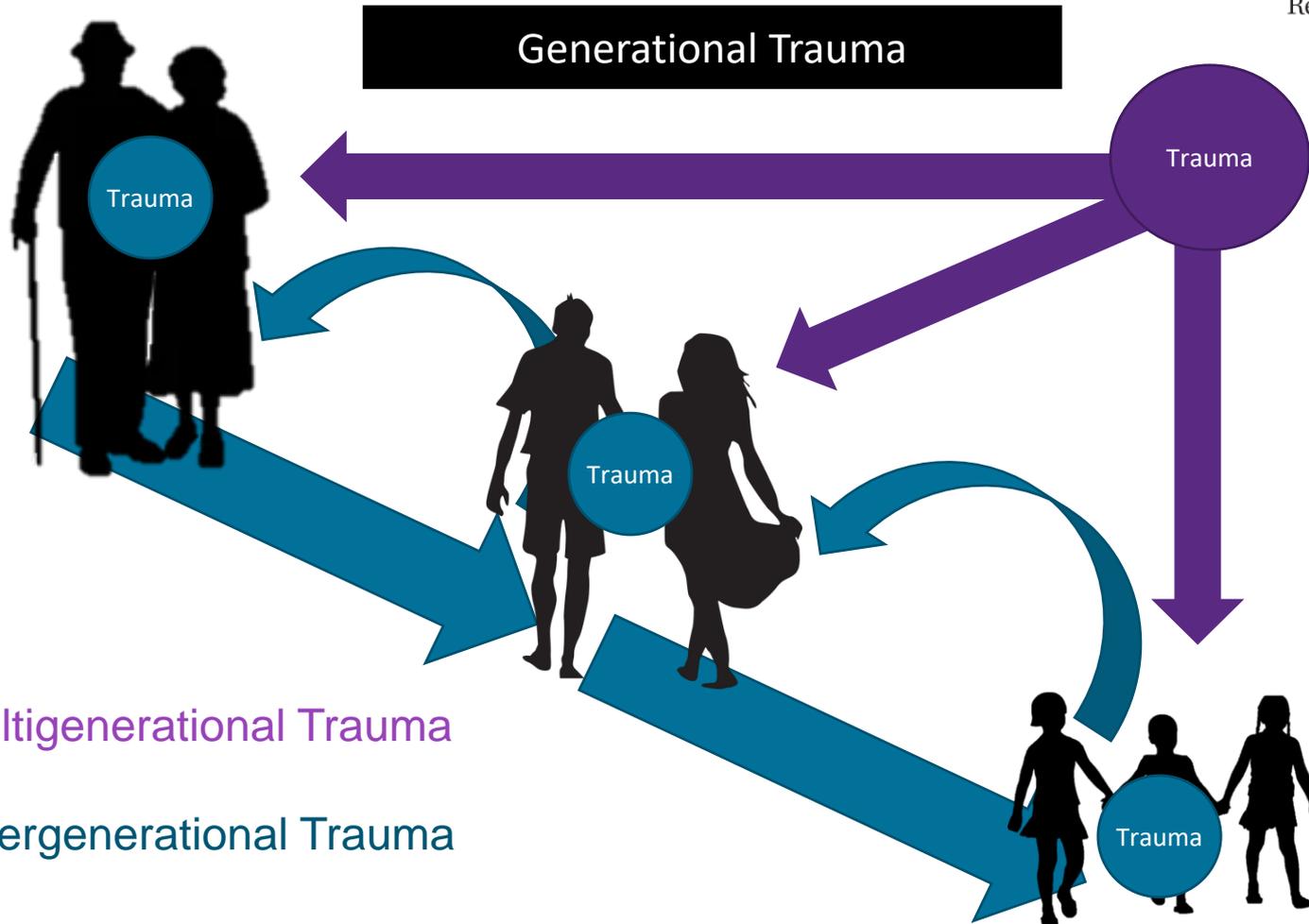
Defence cascade = automatically activated defence behaviours, innate and hard-wired.

Kozłowska, K., Walker, P., McLean, L., & Carrive, P. (2015). Fear and the Defense Cascade: Clinical Implications and Management. *Harvard review of psychiatry*, 23(4), 263–287.

<https://doi.org/10.1097/HRP.0000000000000065>

What is Traumatic Stress?

What are the mechanisms of traumatic stress?



1. Multigenerational Trauma
2. Intergenerational Trauma



Traumatic Stress Research

Focus: Intergenerational and Transgenerational Trauma Transmission

- “Integral part of human history” (Danieli 1998, p.2); conveyed in writing, oral histories, body language, and in silence. In one word: **endemic**.
- Children of parents PTSD may be vulnerable. This includes offspring of war veterans, survivors of war-related trauma, survivors of sexual abuse during childhood, refugees, victims of torture, and others (Kellermann 2013, p.33).

Approaches to understanding transmission of trauma:

1. sociocultural and socialisation model
2. psychodynamic relational model
3. family systems and familial communication
4. biological or genetic model

All show how trauma and its impact may be passed down “even to children born after the trauma” (Danieli 1998, p.9)

- Intergenerational = from F0 to F1
- Transgenerational = from F0 to F3 or F4
(Yehuda & Lehrner 2018)

Case Study:

Impact of intergenerational trauma transmission on the first post-Soviet generation
(Denejkina 2019)



Hot Topic Issues in Traumatic Stress Research

Focus: Epigenetic Transmission of Trauma

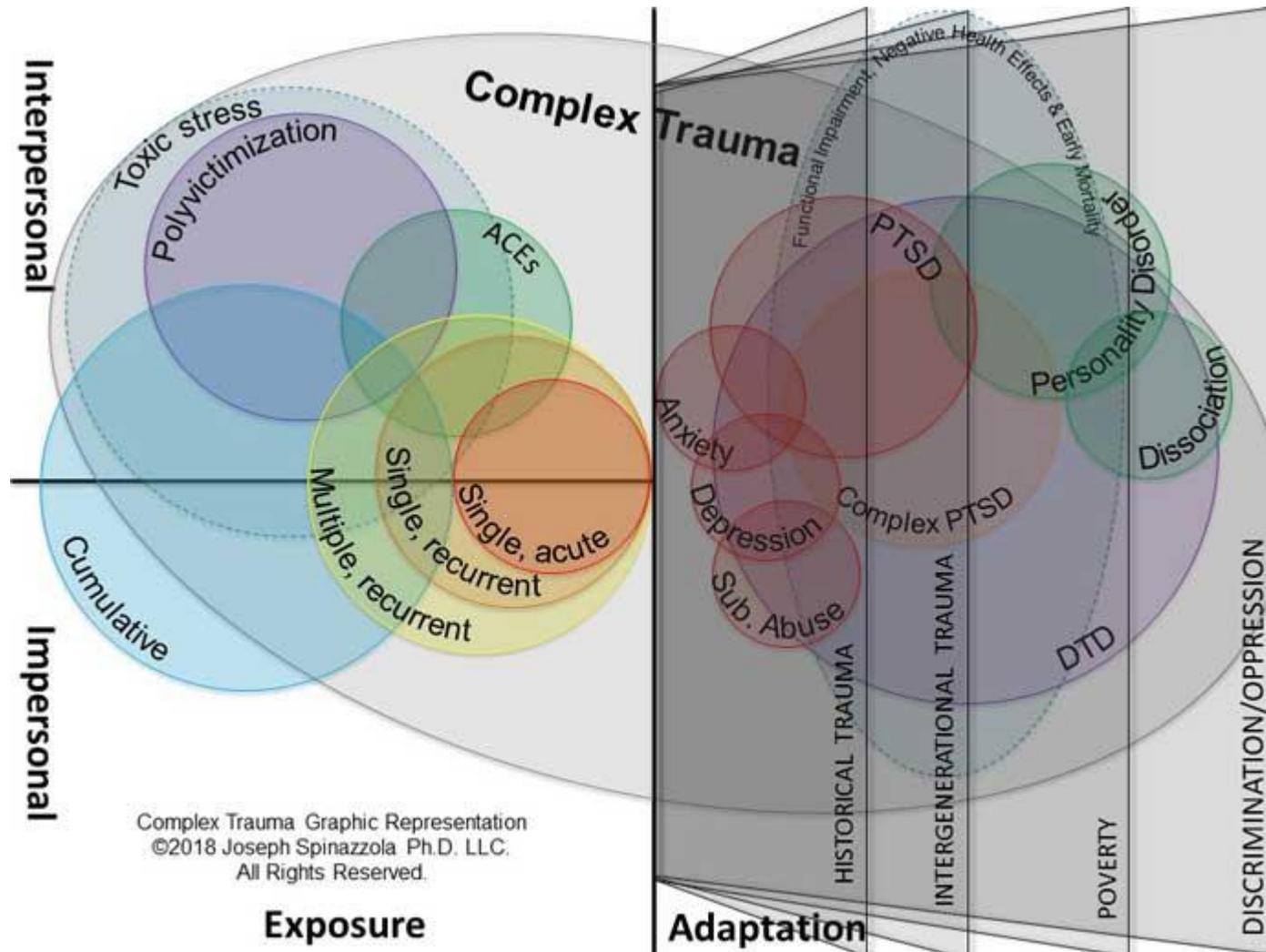
“If there’s a transmitted effect of trauma, it would be in a stress-related gene that shapes the way we cope with our environment” (Yehuda 2015)





Traumatic Stress Research

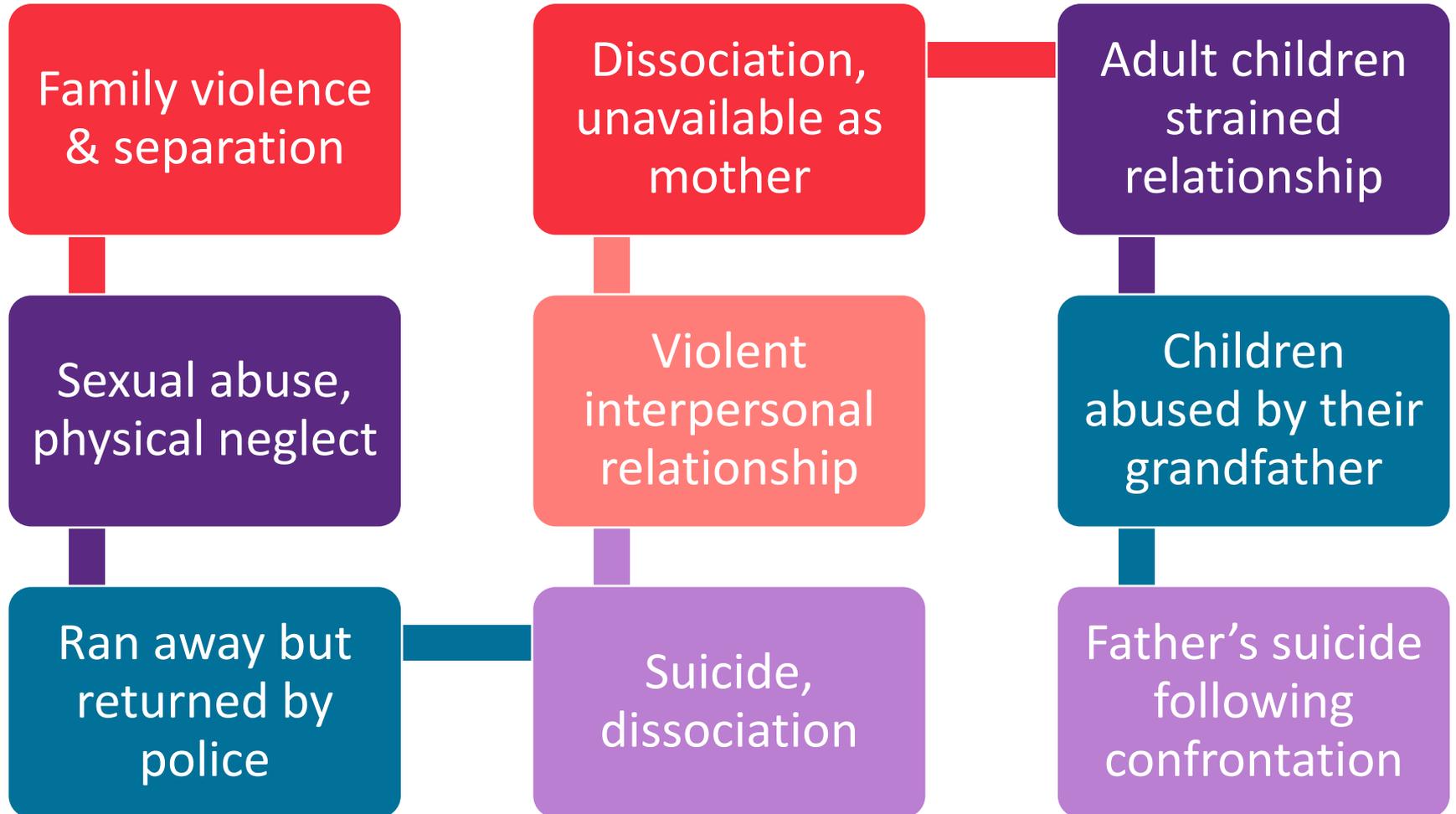
Focus: The complexity of trauma – Dr Spinazzola





Traumatic Stress Research

Focus: The complexity of trauma – “Kylie”





Traumatic Stress Research

Focus: The complexity of trauma

Constructions of Complex Trauma (Salter et al 2020)

<https://www.anrows.org.au>

Women's experiences of trauma went beyond 'normal' constructions of single incident trauma, often dismissed as implausible

Women's experiences of psychological responses to trauma e.g. dissociation and self-harm, often invalidated as 'attention seeking'

Biomedical model of trauma inadequate to describe and respond to the traumatic stress of women like Kylie.

Not just women Indigenous Australians, people seeking asylum, with disability, who are homeless or incarcerated



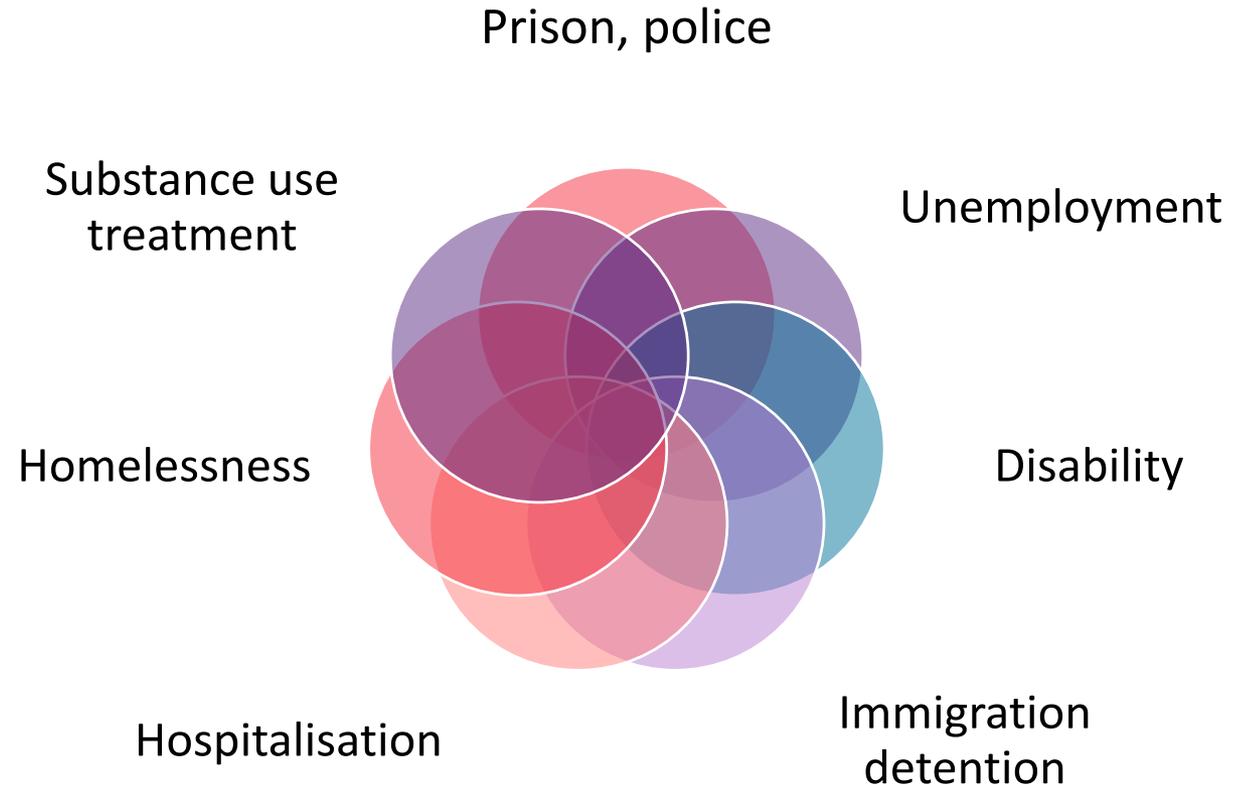
Traumatic Stress Research

**Focus: The complexity of trauma “Institutional betrayal”
Freyd 2014, 2018**

Family-based
trauma →
institutional
involvement

Institution-based
trauma → ignored,
protected

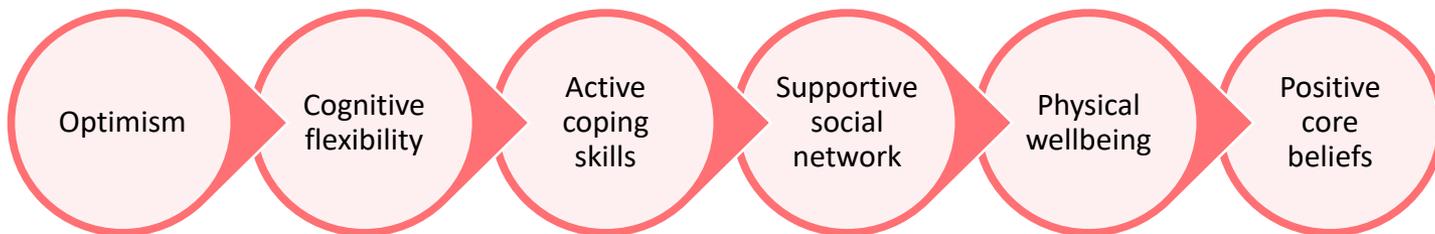
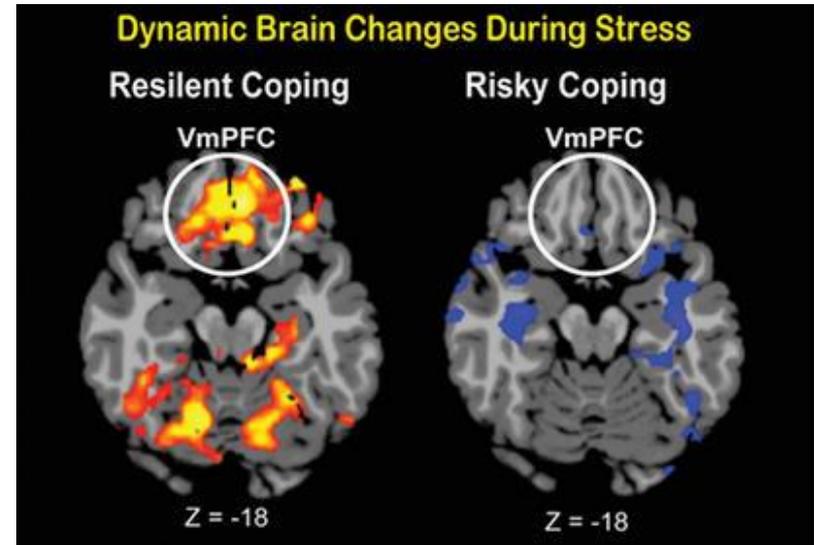
Systemic action &
inaction
contributes to
complex trauma
reactions



Hot Topic Issues in Traumatic Stress Research

Focus: Resilience

- Complex, multidimensional, hard to define
- Domain, context, culture specific
- Can exist alongside distress
- Not simply an individual trait
- 6 factors that promote resilience (Iacoviello & Charney, 2014)

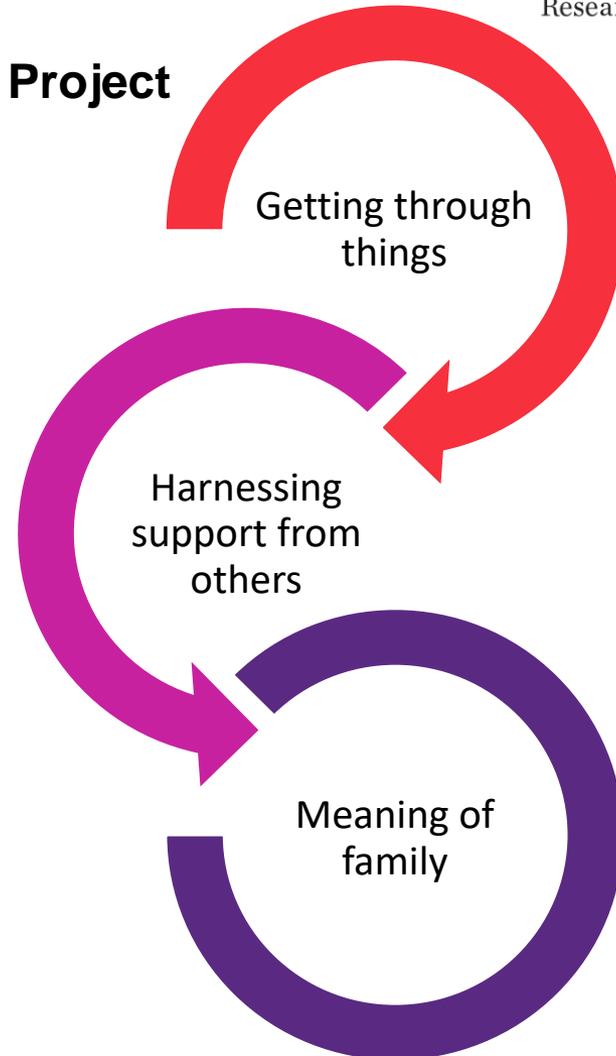




Hot Topic Issues in Traumatic Stress Research

Focus: Resilience – Family Homelessness Project

- Low income families
- Resilience, social problem solving, adverse life events
- Similar process of adapting and responding to life events
 - Struggling vs doing better
 - Housed versus homeless





Next Webinar

February, 2022, online webinar:

Traumatic stress and research ethics:

1. Ethics overview
2. Ethics guidelines, Australian and international
3. Working with marginalised communities
4. Ethical considerations: issues with applying Western research ethical standards in all communities
5. Indigeneity and traumatic stress research ethics
6. What does trauma look like, feel like etc. – background knowledge to safeguard against pathologization
7. Ethics of care: for participants and for self as researcher (including vicarious trauma)
8. Supervising research students/assistants/teams in conducting traumatic stress research

Traumatic stress and research methods:

1. Methods of enquiry (qual/quant/mixed-methods)
2. Working with research participants
3. Community engagement
4. Co-design
5. Working as an insider vs outsider to a community/event/experience you are conducting research in

Traumatic stress and policy:

1. Real-world applications
2. Approaching organisations to work with – how, why, what not to do
3. Policy implications of research

DETAILS WILL BE EMAILED OUT TO ALL ATTENDEES FOLLOWING THIS WEBINAR

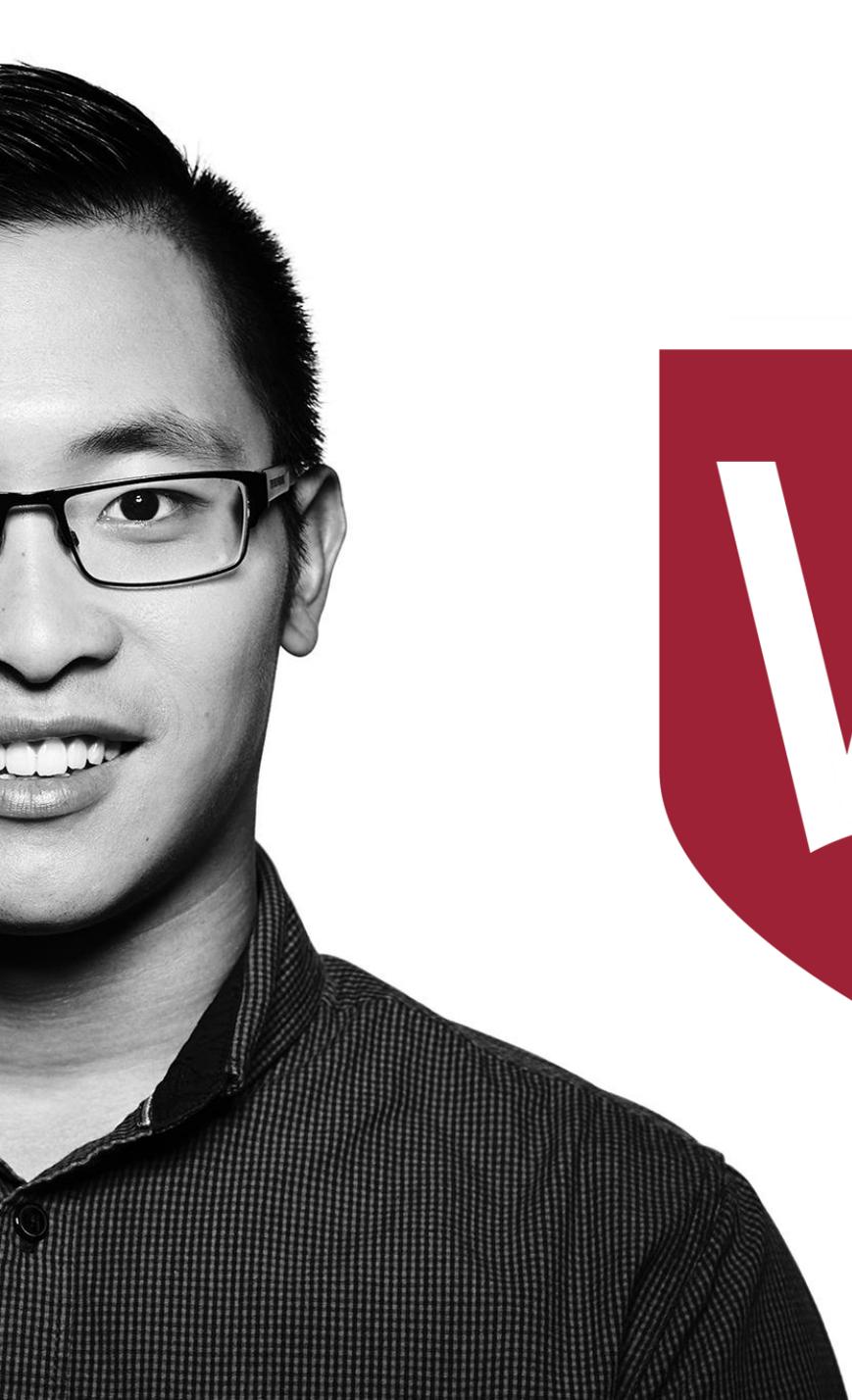


Q&A



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