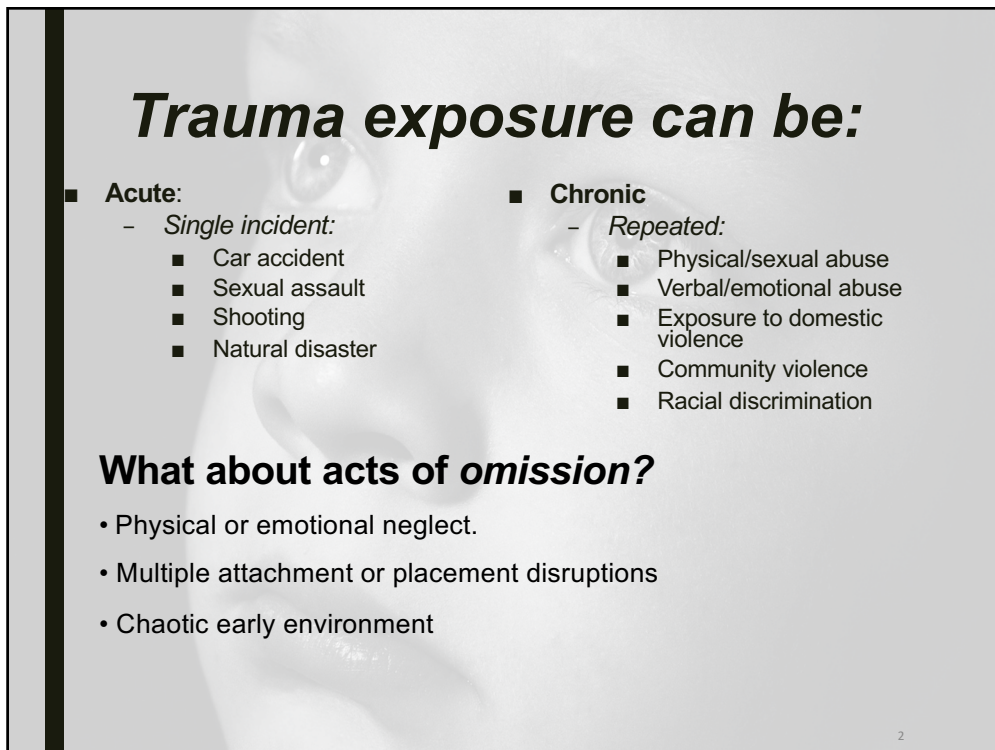


THE IMPACT OF TRAUMA ON MENTAL & PHYSICAL HEALTH

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Trauma exposure can be:

- **Acute:**
 - *Single incident:*
 - Car accident
 - Sexual assault
 - Shooting
 - Natural disaster
- **Chronic**
 - *Repeated:*
 - Physical/sexual abuse
 - Verbal/emotional abuse
 - Exposure to domestic violence
 - Community violence
 - Racial discrimination

What about acts of *omission*?

- Physical or emotional neglect.
- Multiple attachment or placement disruptions
- Chaotic early environment

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Structural violence

“The term ‘structural violence’ is one way of describing social arrangements that put individuals and populations in harm’s way. The arrangements are *structural* because they are embedded in the political and economic organization of our social world; they are *violent* because they cause injury to people.”

-Paul Farmer, 2006

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Complex Trauma

Resulting from exposure to severe stressors that (1) are *repetitive* or *prolonged*, (2) involve the *caregiving system...*, and (3) begin in childhood as a *developmentally vulnerable times* in the individual’s life.

Resulting in “ongoing distress in our thoughts, emotions, body, and relationships.”



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Racial trauma

Racial trauma involves the experience of danger related to both past and ongoing prejudicial treatment, including physical violence, threat of harm, shaming interactions, and ongoing **vicarious trauma** due to witnessing harm to other Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC).

As such, *racial trauma can be conceptualized as a specific form of complex trauma*

<https://www.complext trauma.org/complex-trauma/the-complexity-of-racial-trauma/>

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Complex PTSD

- **PTSD symptoms including:**
 - *Re-experiencing*
 - *Avoiding/numbing*
 - *Hyperarousal*
- **Disturbances in relationships** (*includes my view of myself and others*)
- **Emotional Regulation difficulties** (*e.g. impulsivity, self-destructive behaviors, aggression, extreme sadness*)
- **Alterations in Attention or Consciousness** (*"zoning out"*)
- **Physical illness & distress** (*e.g. chronic pain*)
- **Adversely affected belief systems** (*e.g. hard to believe in a benevolent God or universe*)

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The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study

The largest study ever done to examine the health and social effects of adverse childhood experiences

■ (18,000 participants)



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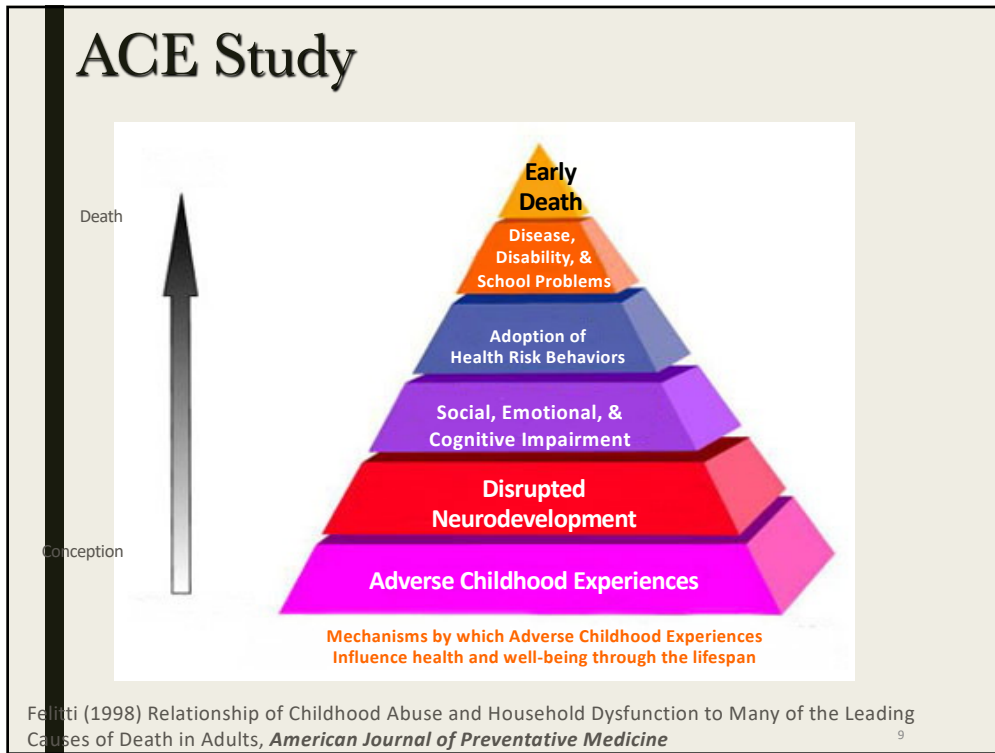
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Categories of Adverse Childhood Experiences

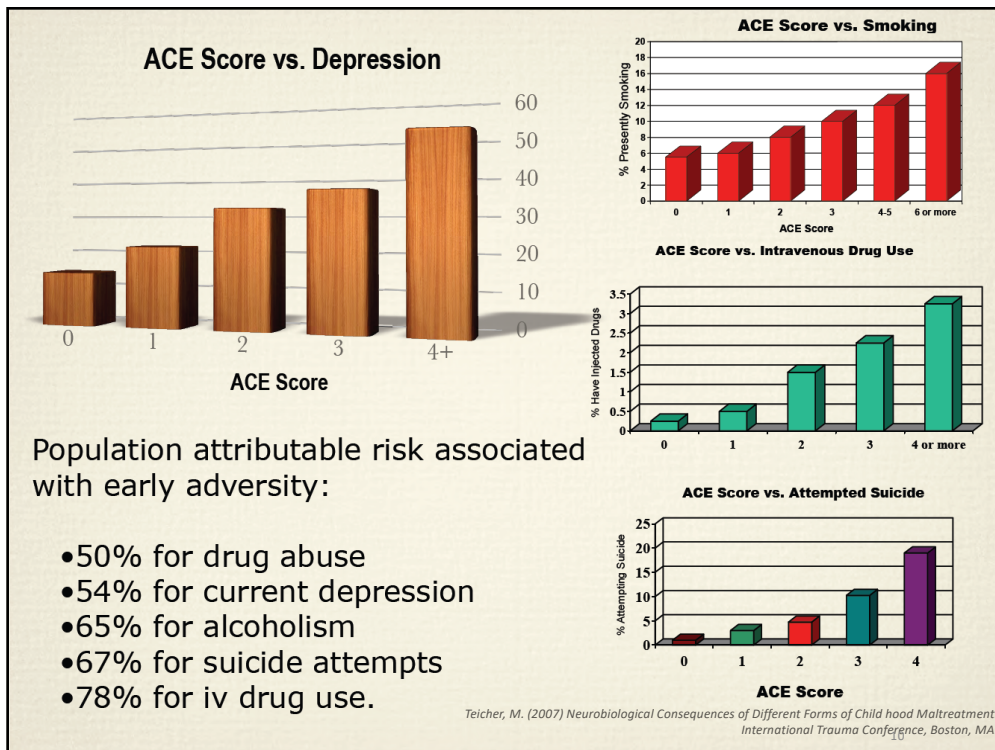
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|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| ■ <u>Child Maltreatment</u> | <u>Trauma in Household</u> |
| ■ Physical abuse | • Substance abuse |
| ■ Emotional abuse | • Mental illness |
| ■ Sexual abuse | • Mother Treated Violently |
| ■ Emotional neglect | • Imprisoned household member |
| ■ Physical neglect | • Loss of parent / abandonment |

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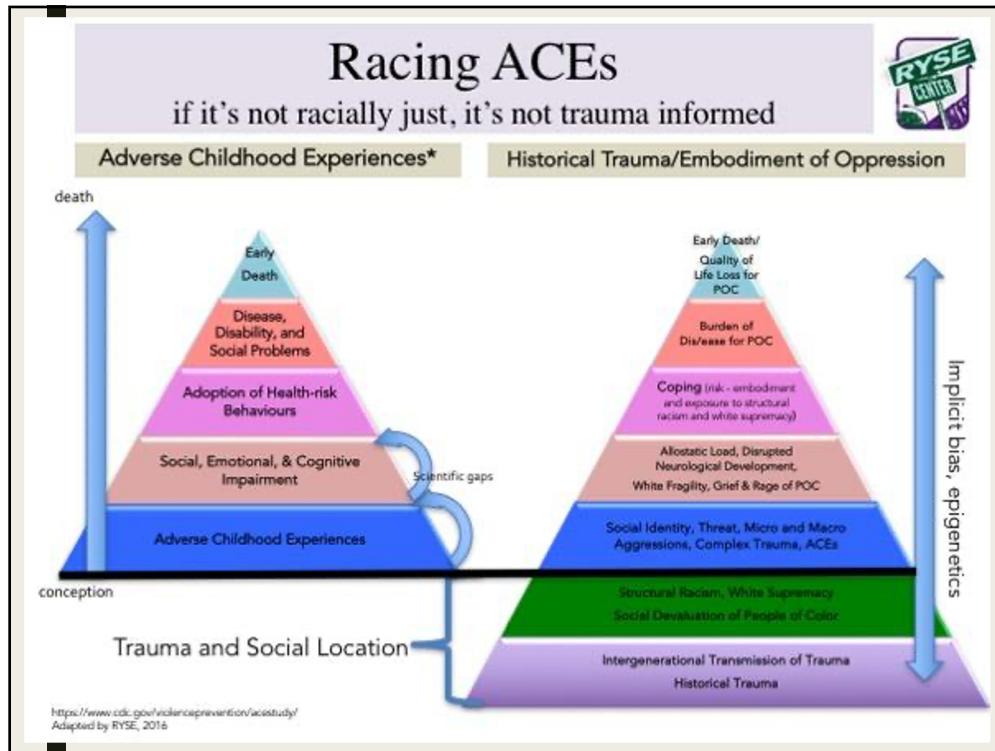
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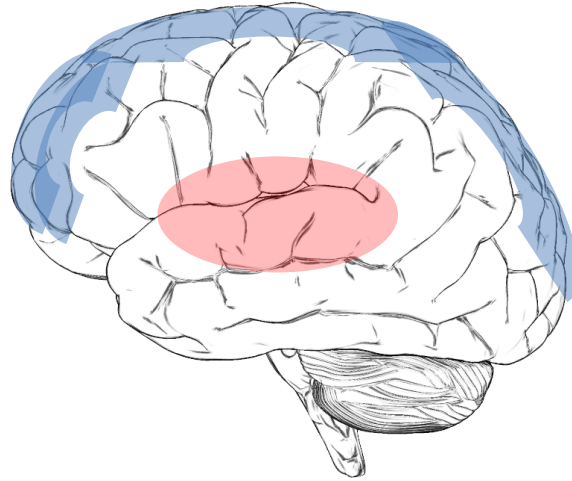
Chronic trauma and the brain/body

- ◆ Early environmental events \trauma can lead to lasting effects on brain structure and function:
 - ◆ Underdevelopment of frontal lobe (executive functioning) abilities
- ◆ Chronic stress (esp. with the threat of or actual revictimization) is thought to impair the functioning of the body's stress-response systems
 - Excess cortisol (stress hormone) in bloodstream (often beginning in early childhood): toxic to brain development
 - Breakdown of stress hormone regulation over time: inadequate sympathetic nervous system response (down-regulation; calming) by adulthood
- ◆ Trauma exposure as a “gateway illness” and contributor to multiple physical illnesses, psychological diagnoses, and risky health behaviors (ACE study)

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Stress Response

- All psychic energy mobilized in the limbic system (red).
- Higher Cortical areas less active (blue).



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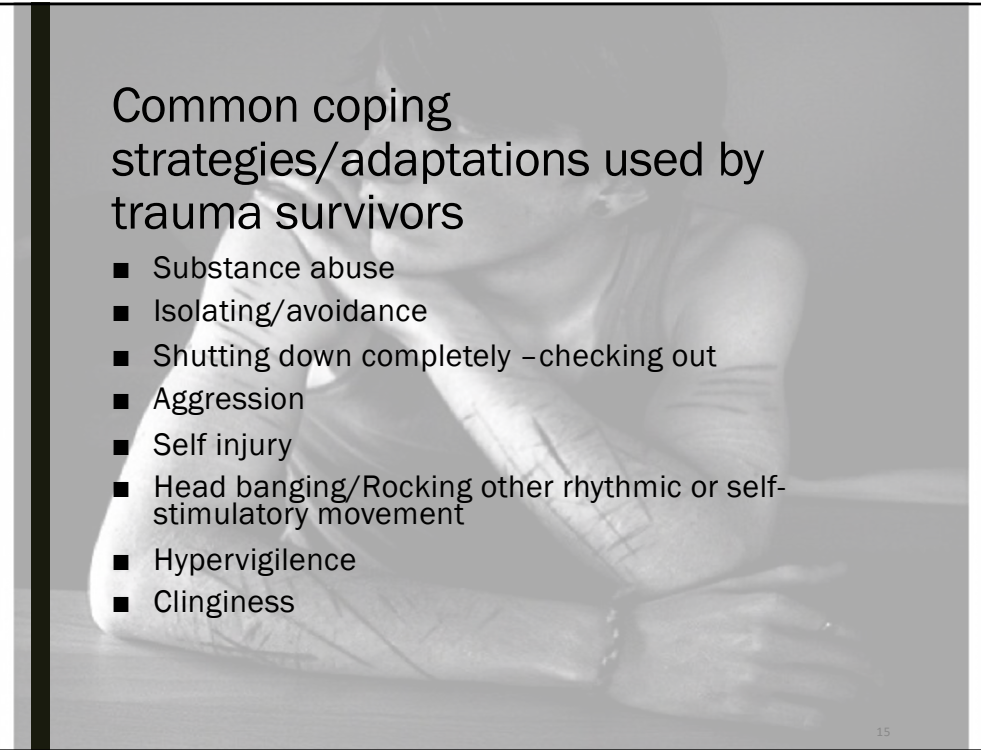
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Living in a chronically dysregulated body

Common to live with a chronic stress response of persistent bodily **high alert** activation that occurs even in the absence of current danger and can kick in when the individual is in a relaxed state or circumstance

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Common coping strategies/adaptations used by trauma survivors

- Substance abuse
- Isolating/avoidance
- Shutting down completely –checking out
- Aggression
- Self injury
- Head banging/Rocking other rhythmic or self-stimulatory movement
- Hypervigilance
- Clinginess

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*Trauma wounds the mind,
emotions, body, and spirit, and
therefore recovery needs to
address holistic healing*

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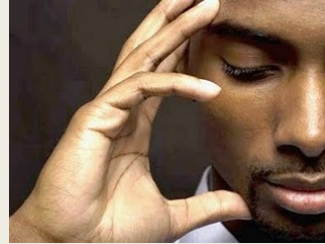
Complex Trauma 6 core components of healing



Safety



Self-Regulation



Self-reflective Information
Processing



Traumatic Experiences
Integration



Relational Engagement



Positive Affect Enhancement

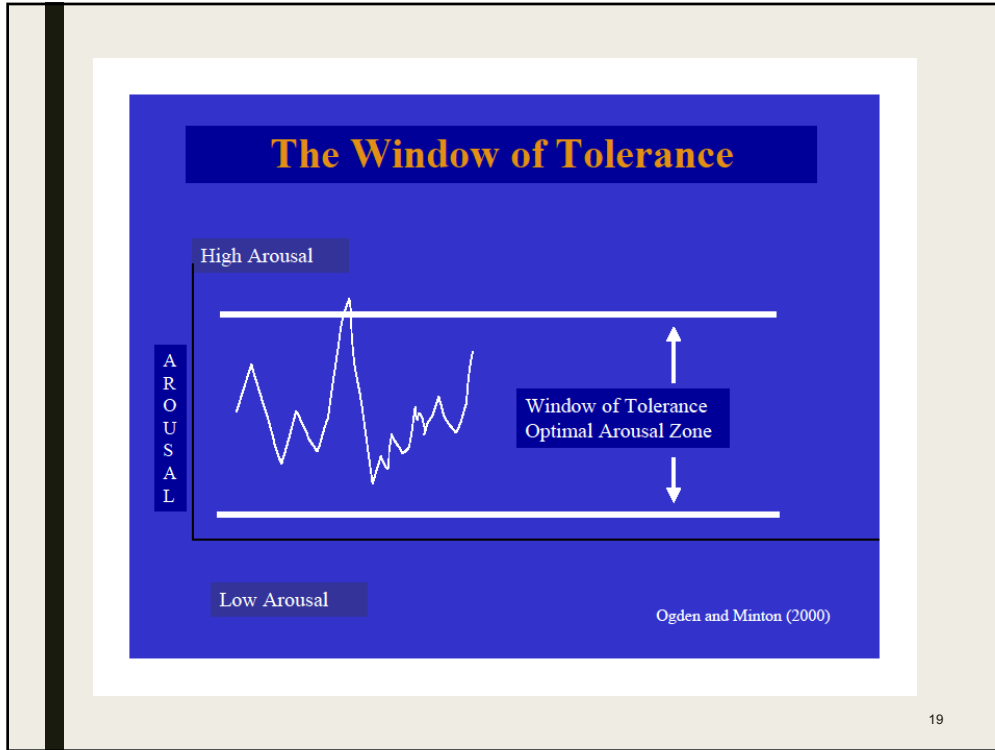
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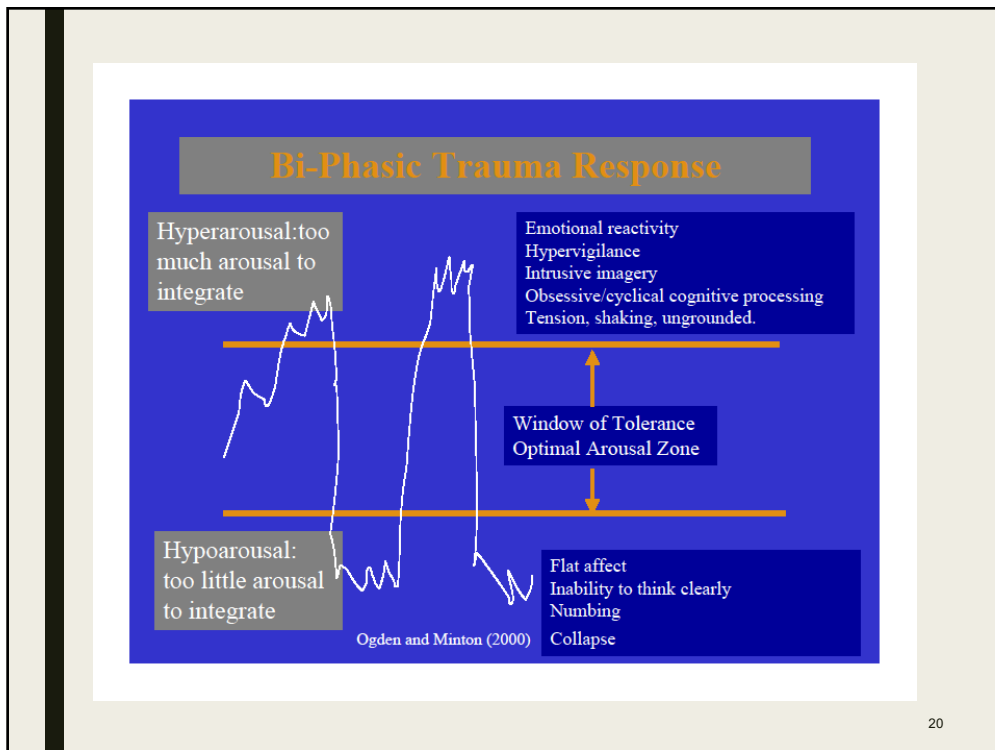
Self Regulation

Our emotional
system that
manages what
we feel and how
we express it.

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Self-regulation goals

- Identify and understand my danger triggers
- Identify my own emotional & behavioral reactions to trauma
- Learn to manage and express feelings/reactions in healthy ways
- Develop ability to experience emotions without judging or rejecting them (mindfulness)
- Understanding & becoming attuned to my bodily arousal states - learning to soothe/empower my body
- Grounding (staying present)
- Increase frequency of positive emotional experiences

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Spiritually attuned trauma recovery

- Practicing *acceptance of* and *compassion for* self: with past (and present) adaptive coping behaviors
- Noticing the sacred in daily life (*awe & wonder*)
- Participating in cultural traditions, rituals, or activities that encourage spiritual connectedness
 - *Music, spoken word*
 - *Rhythm, dance*
 - *Art - visual, written*

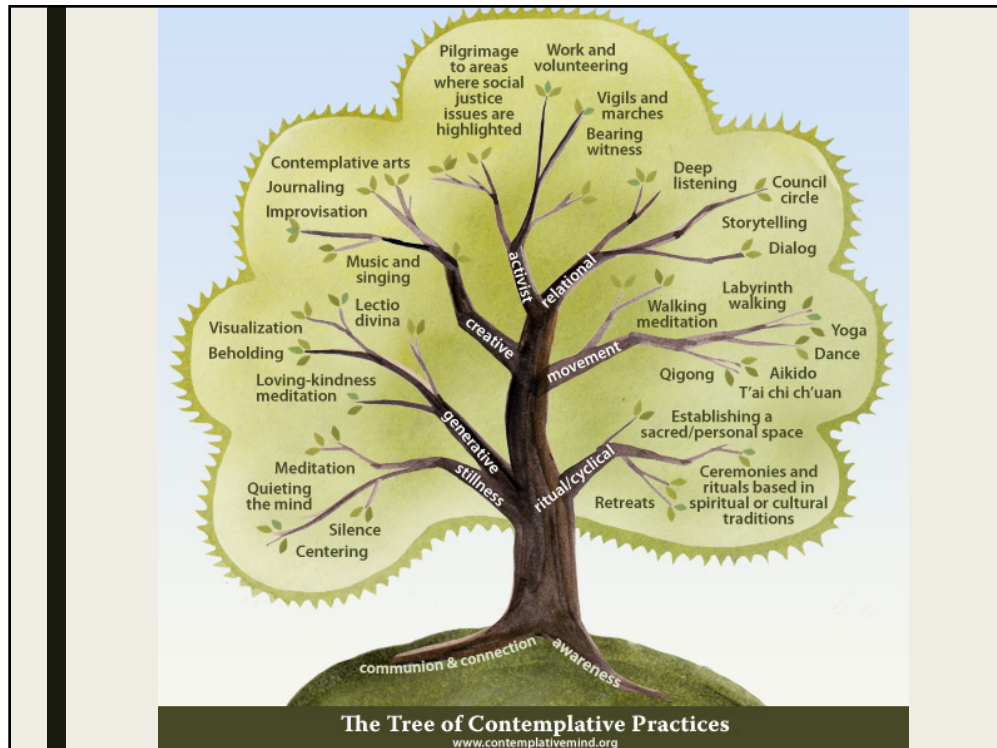
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spiritually attuned trauma recovery meaning making



- Making meaning through finding purpose in life
- Learning to live with presence to the moment.
- Through seeking social justice
- Through being part of a larger community or feeling connected to something larger than oneself

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For More Info About Complex Trauma Treatment Resources

Visit www.complext trauma.org

- ❖ COVID Coping Resources for Youth & Adults with Histories of Complex Trauma
- ❖ What is Complex Trauma: A Resource Guide for Youth
- ❖ Never Give Up: A Complex Trauma Film by Youth for Youth
- ❖ Downloadable scholarly research articles on complex trauma
- ❖ Psychoeducational resources for clients, consumers, caregivers, families, loved ones and service providers