



Physiology of Trauma Study Guide

This study guide will help you keep track of the key teachings

What is trauma?

One way to understand what is and is not trauma is that trauma is something overwhelming to our nervous system or “too much too fast.”

When we have the experience that there is ‘too much’ for me to handle - it's coming too fast, the support I need is not there, and I have no way of metabolizing, digesting, or integrating the experience.

To heal trauma, this integration must occur somatically and emotionally and, for many, spiritually.

TYPES OF TRAUMA

TRAUMA IS OFTEN ORGANIZED INTO TWO, THREE, OR SIX CATEGORIES. THERE MAY BE OVERLAP BETWEEN THESE GROUPINGS.

THESE EXAMPLES OF THE TYPES OF TRAUMATIC EVENTS ARE NOT COMPREHENSIVE.

2 Types

"Big T" & "Little T"

6 Types

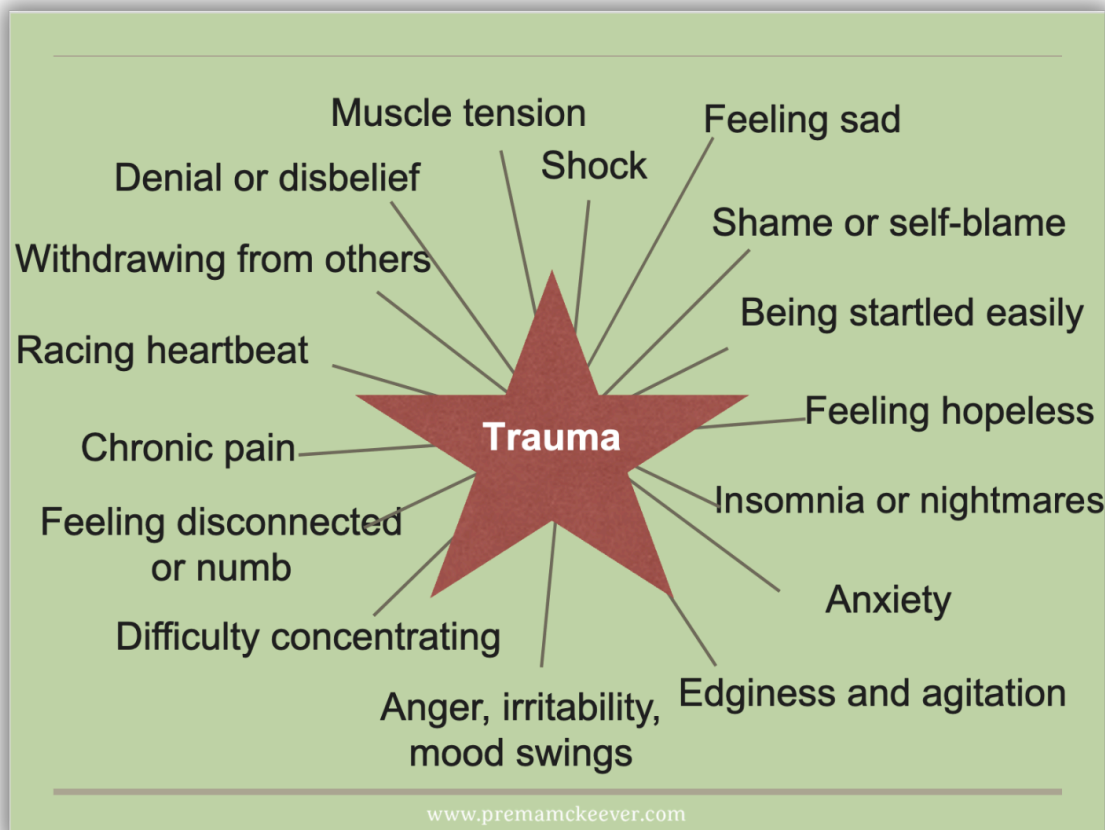
Vicarious trauma, Complex trauma, Historical trauma, Intergeneration Trauma, Acute Trauma, Collective Trauma

3 Types

Acute, Chronic, Complex

But no matter what the event(s), trauma is not what happened to us but the effect left within us by our experiences....

And there are many ways the signs and symptoms can manifest:

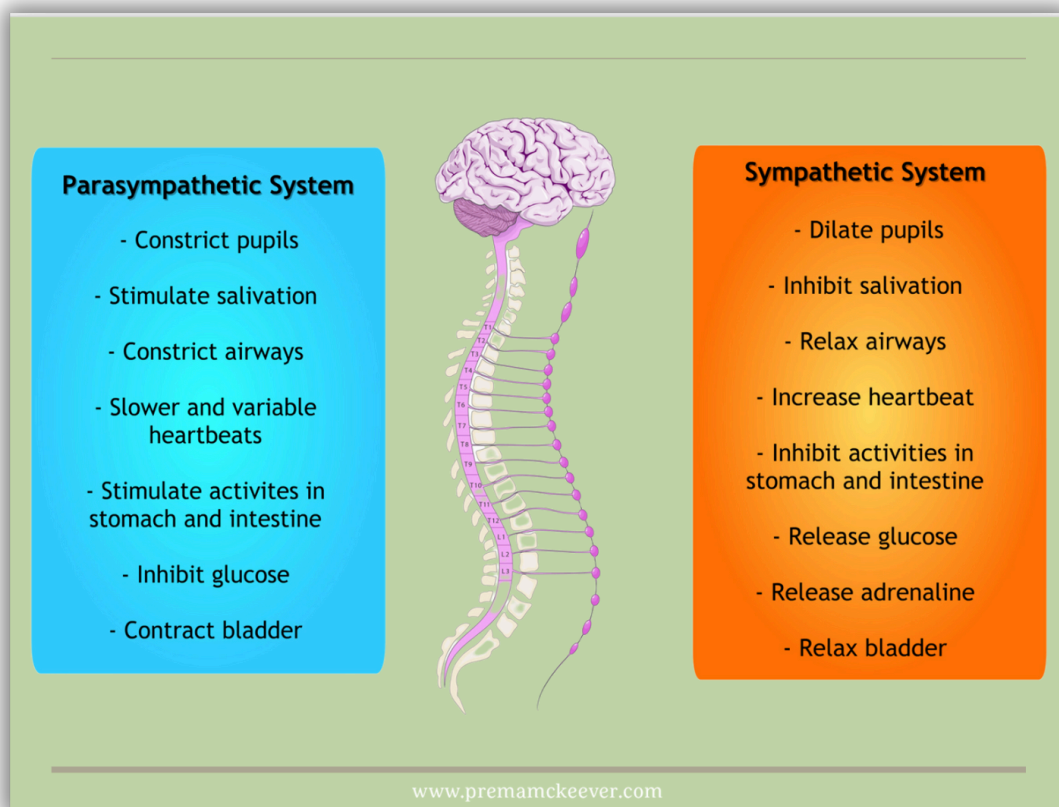


Our physiology reacts to traumatic and stressful events through the autonomic nervous system and our adrenal system.

Our autonomic nervous system has two divisions:

The sympathetic branch is like the gas pedal of our nervous system. It gives us the energy to take action and defend ourselves.

The parasympathetic branch acts like the brake pedal for our nervous system. It controls both the freeze response as well as helps us to relax, settle, and ultimately discharge the arousal of sympathetic activation and stress.



Together, they create the survival responses:

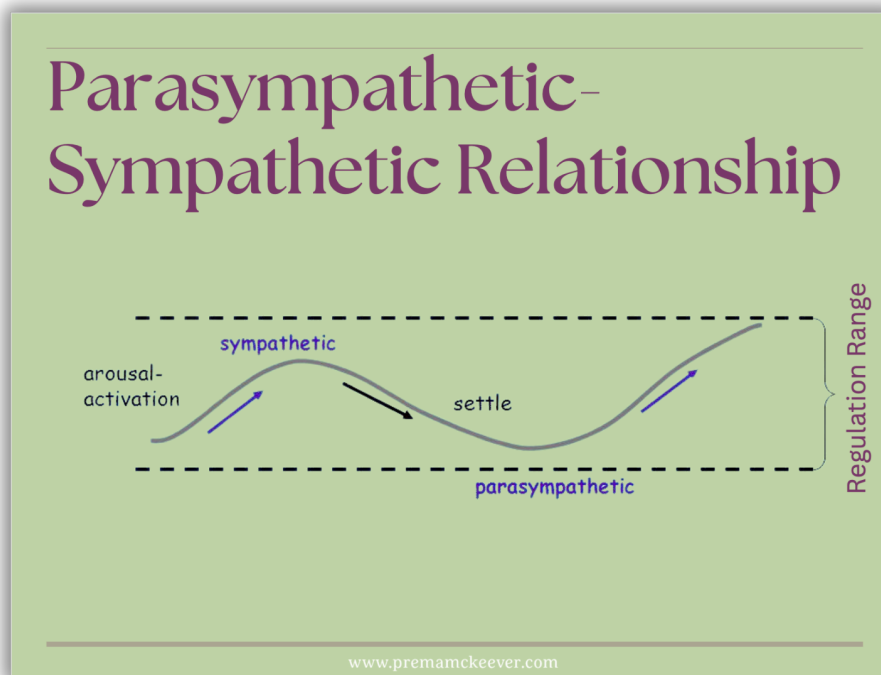
Fight: facing any perceived threat aggressively.

Flight: running away from danger.

Freeze: unable to move or act against a threat.

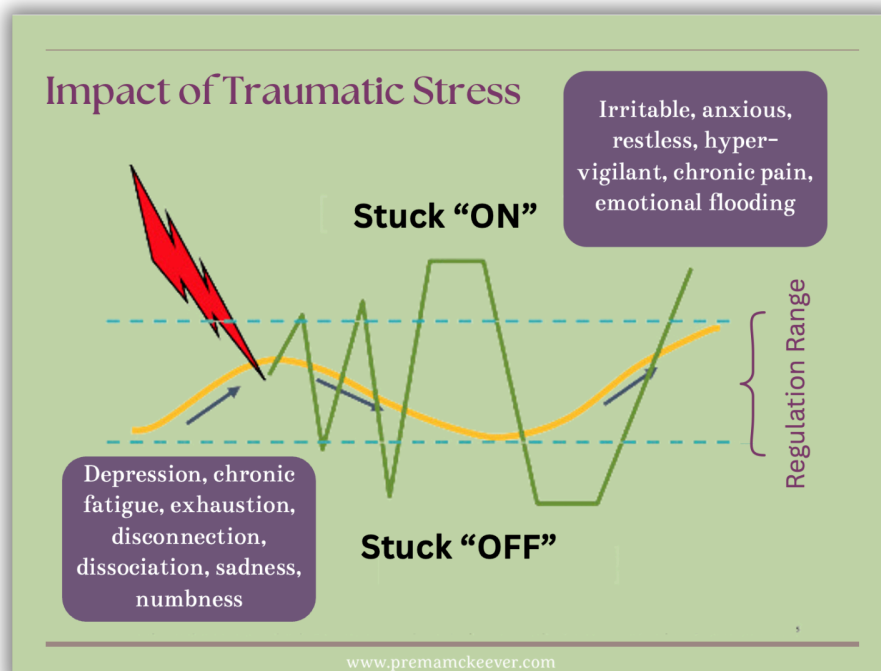
Fawn: immediately acting to try to please in order to avoid conflict.

A regulated nervous system can flow into sympathetic when needed and then return to parasympathetic when the stress or threat has passed:



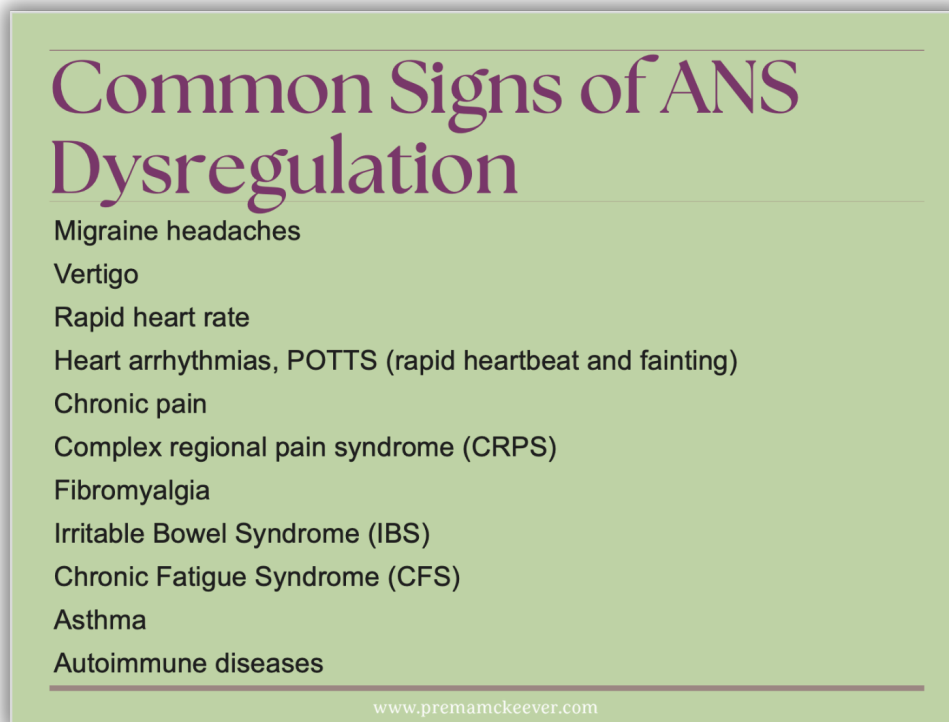
Trauma symptoms arise when the normal regulatory flow between our nervous system's parasympathetic and sympathetic branches (brake/gas pedal) is interrupted.

Our nervous system loses its ability to regulate and instead becomes dysregulated due to the undischarged traumatic stress.



The above graphic shows many of the common symptoms when our nervous system is stuck "on" with too much sympathetic activation and stuck "off" with too much dorsal vagal influence.

This dysregulation of our autonomic nervous system and accumulation of traumatic stress can have a range of effects on our health:



Understanding how trauma affects us is an essential step in the healing journey. Recognizing the automatic survival patterns in ourselves helps us understand how our bodies and minds react in challenging situations. This increased self-awareness can help us have more compassion and be kinder towards ourselves. With knowledge and care, we can awaken, activate, and fully embrace our potential together!

Be well,

Prema

p.s. Be sure to tune into my 3-part training on the Vagus Nerve and Healing Trauma, where you will learn more about what is needed to release traumatic stress and support a return to nervous system regulation.