

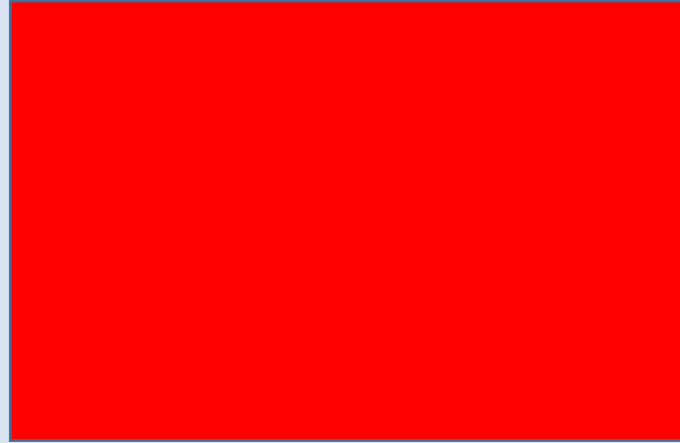
Well-being in lawyering: Using a biopsychosocial frame to address your experience

Katherine Porterfield, Ph.D.

Bellevue Program for Survivors of Torture

This happened to me

This is how it affected me



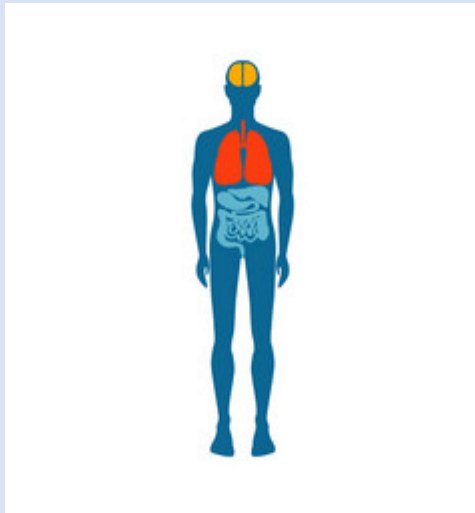
This is how I grew from it

This is what helped me

Trauma is a biopsychosocial experience

With biopsychosocial consequences

BIO



PSYCHO

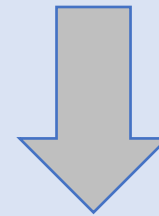
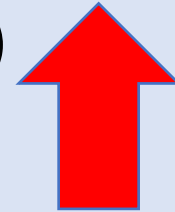


SOCIAL



Traumatic stress overwhelms the organism

- “Normal coping” stops working or doesn’t work as well
- Our nervous system activates to protect us:
 - UPROAR REACTIONS (Sympathetic nervous system)
 - SHUTDOWN REACTIONS (Parasympathetic nervous system)



Secondary Traumatic Stress

- Symptoms
 - Nightmares
 - Irritability
 - Anger
 - Intrusive imagery
 - Fatigue
 - Attention/Concentration problems
 - Social Isolation
- Changed meanings about the world: Moral Injury
- Increase in self-medication (alcohol, drugs, compulsive overworking, etc.)
- Decreased pleasure in life

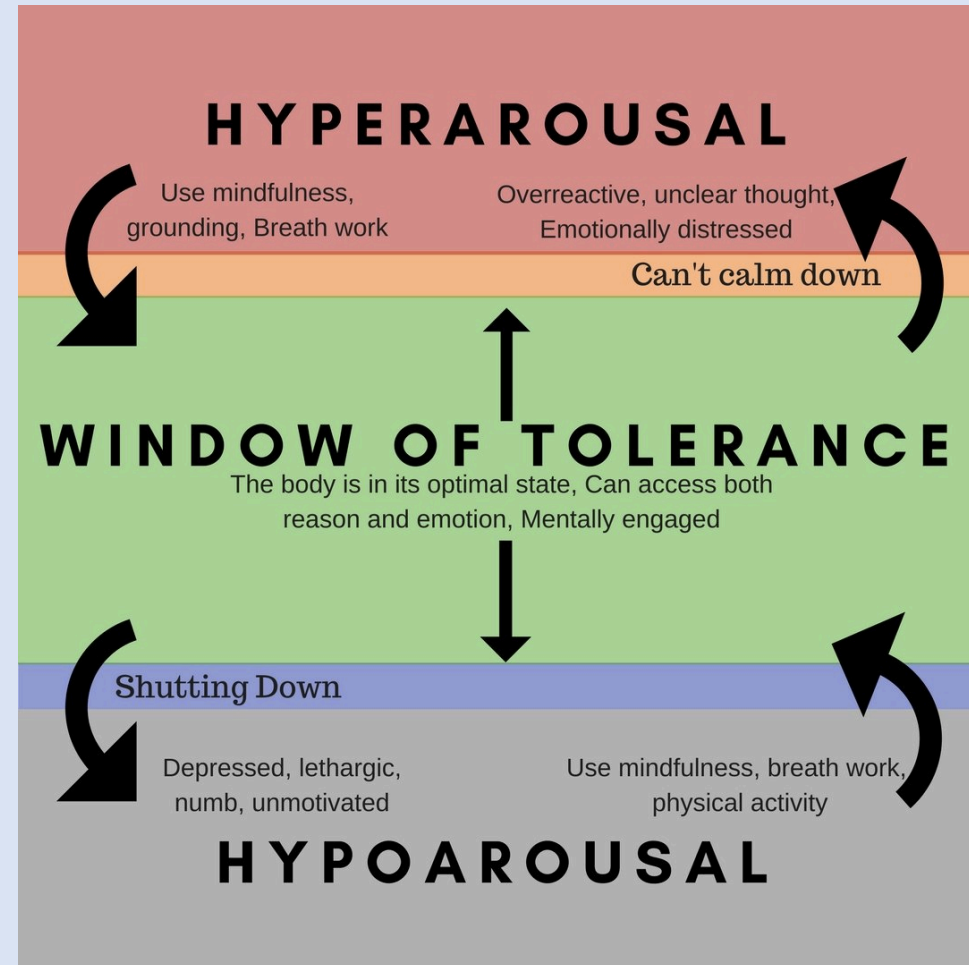
Using self-assessment to notice
and address the impact of
secondary trauma

The first step in self-
assessment:

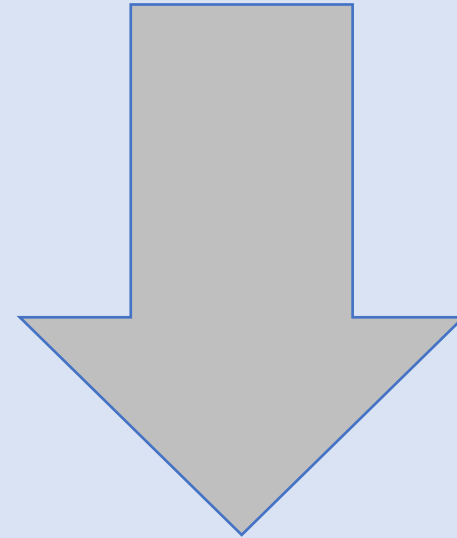
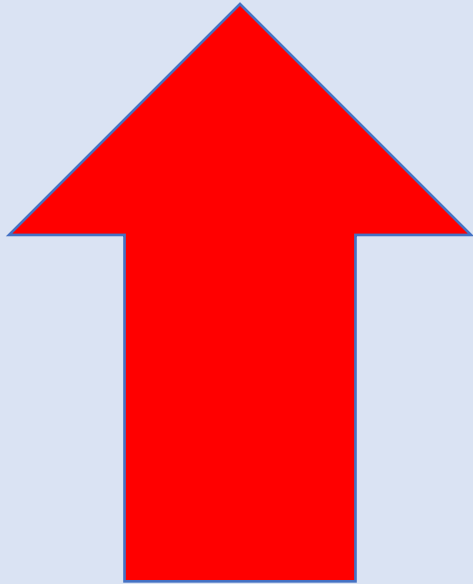
PAUSE

NOTICE

Recognizing where you are in your “window of tolerance”



Are you amping up or shutting down?
(AKA: How is my body helping me right now?)



Self-assessment

| BIO | PSYCHO | SOCIAL |
|---|---|---|
| How am I feeling physically? | What am I feeling emotionally? NAME feelings | Who am I talking to? Am I asking for anything? |
| Do I have pain? Do I have uneasiness in my body? | What are the thoughts I am having? OBSERVE thoughts | What am I feeling in relation to other people? |
| Am I rested and fed? | Am I thinking in an overly global way? (eg. Everything is bad.) | Am I giving anyone else support? |
| Am I feeling pleasure? | Am I experiencing pleasurable feelings? | Am I having any positive experiences with people? |

Risk Factors for Secondary Traumatic Stress

- Personal history of trauma
- A particular identification with a story or a person
- Lack of social support
- Concurrent life stressors (divorce, job insecurity, family illness, physical illness, etc.)

Protective factors for Secondary Trauma

- Age/experience
- Team spirit/cohesion
- Sense of accomplishment
- Training
- Balance in life outside of work
- Connection to others
- Self-care

Hensel, J, et al. (2015). Meta-Analysis of Risk Factors for Secondary Traumatic Stress in Therapeutic Work with Trauma Victims. *Journal of Traumatic Stress* April 28, 83-91.

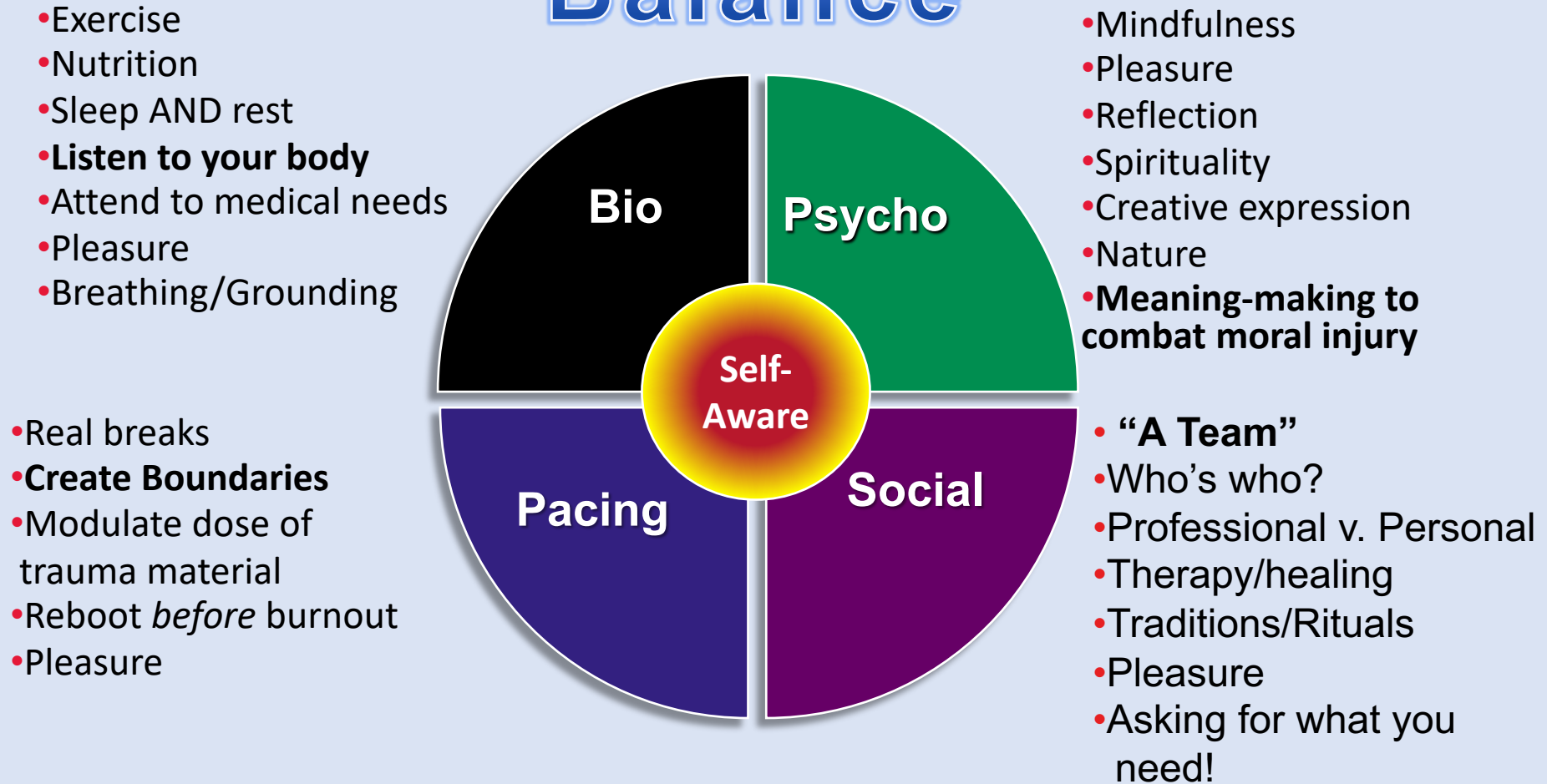
Recognizing where I do and don't have control

- EXAMPLE: I feel bad about X

| What part of X did I have control over? | What part of X did I not have control over? |
|---|---|
| | |

Building a Self-Care Practice

Balance



My labor was valuable...



BREATHING: 4 /4/ 4

- A simple and very effective breathing technique is the following pattern:
 - Breathe in through your nostrils with your mouth closed for a slow count of 4
 - Hold the breath you have just inhaled for a count of 4
 - Exhale slowly through your mouth for a count of 4

Practicing this in unstressed moments makes it easier to use when stressed

GROUNDING

- Place your feet flat on the floor with your legs about 6-8 inches apart.
 - Place your hands, flat and palms down, on the top of your thighs.
 - Focus your thoughts on the sensation of your feet on the ground
 - Feel how your hands feel against the fabric of your clothing
 - Feel how your feet feel against the ground
- As you focus on your feet securely on the ground, breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. Continue this breathing with a conscious awareness of how your feet are securely and strongly on the ground.
- You can say a simple meditation, such as:

I am feeling my feet on the ground in this moment. I am here and I am in the present moment, safe and secure with my feet on the ground. The ground is strong beneath me and I am strong as I sit here.

Must reads....

