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Trauma-Informed Pedagogy: Teaching in Uncertain Times

Presented by:

Mays Imad, PhD

Professor and Coordinator, Pima Community College

Mays Imad is the coordinator of the Teaching & Learning Center at Pima Community College. She also teaches pathophysiology and biomedical ethics. She received her undergraduate training in philosophy from the University of Michigan and her graduate training in cellular and clinical neurobiology from Wayne State University-School of Medicine. Her current research focuses on stress, self-awareness, advocacy, and community & belonging, and how these relate to cognition, metacognition, and, ultimately, student learning.

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Trauma-Informed Pedagogy: Teaching in Uncertain Times

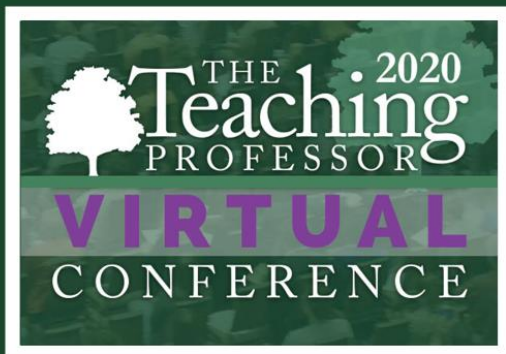
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The Presenter

Mays Imad

Professor of Pathophysiology &
Biomedical Ethics

Founding Coordinator of the Teaching
& Learning Center

Pima Community College, Tucson, AZ

Email: mimad@pima.edu

Twitter: [@lrngsanctuary](https://twitter.com/lrngsanctuary)



You Will Develop an Understanding of:

1. The physiological impact of traumatic experiences.
2. The impact of trauma on the brain and learning.
3. Strategies to mitigate this impact and improve student learning.

**By the End
of Today's
Seminar**





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What Is Trauma?



“Trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is **experienced** by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or **threatening** and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual’s functioning and physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.”

– Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration, 2019

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Important to Note



Trauma is centered in the **individual experience**.

Trauma can have **conscious** or **unconscious** manifestations.

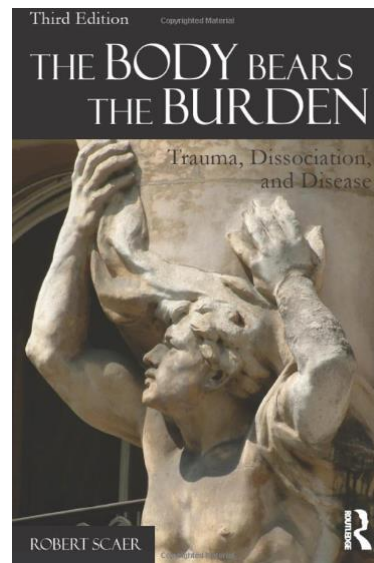
Origin of trauma **does not** have to be violent or abusive.

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What Is Trauma?



“Any **negative** life event that occurs in a position of relative **helplessness**”



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Pandemic



Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) update

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<https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/from-our-experts/the-unequal-cost-of-social-distancing>

FROM OUR EXPERTS

The Unequal Cost of Social Distancing

Stefanie DeLuca, *James Coleman Professor of Sociology & Social Policy*

Nick Papageorge, *Broadus Mitchell Associate Professor of Economics*

Emma Kalish, *PhD student in Economics*

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<https://www.psychiatry.org/newsroom/news-releases/apa-statement-on-covid-19-and-health-disparities>

APA Statement on COVID-19 and Health Disparities

WASHINGTON, D.C. April 11, 2020 – Reports are emerging that the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) is disproportionately impacting the African-American community in areas across the United States. In Chicago, for instance, half of those diagnosed with COVID-19 have been black, while African Americans only make up one third of the total population. Seventy percent of the fatalities linked to COVID-19 in Louisiana have been among black people, while this community makes up about a third of the overall population.

Media Contacts

Glenn O'Neal, 202-459-9732
press@psych.org

Erin Connors, 202-609-7113
econnors@psych.org



**How Are
YOU
Doing?**



Are You Stressed?



Perceived Stress Scale

A more precise measure of personal stress can be determined by using a variety of instruments that have been designed to help measure individual stress levels. The first of these is called the **Perceived Stress Scale**.

The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) is a classic stress assessment instrument. The tool, while originally developed in 1983, remains a popular choice for helping us understand how different situations affect our feelings and our perceived stress. The questions in this scale ask about your feelings and thoughts during the last month. In each case, you will be asked to indicate how often you felt or thought a certain way. Although some of the questions are similar, there are differences between them and you should treat each one as a separate question. The best approach is to answer fairly quickly. That is, don't try to count up the number of times you felt a particular way; rather indicate the alternative that seems like a reasonable estimate.

For each question choose from the following alternatives:

0 - never 1 - almost never 2 - sometimes 3 - fairly often 4 - very often

- _____ 1. In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?
- _____ 2. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?


Are You Stressed?



- ▶ Scores ranging from 0-13 would be considered low stress.
- ▶ Scores ranging from 14-26 would be considered moderate stress.
- ▶ Scores ranging from 27-40 would be considered high perceived stress.

Participant Average =

27.1 ± 6.6 (N = 823)




The Key to Defining Trauma



Our **instinct to survive** defines our
reaction to trauma regardless of
our conscious awareness.

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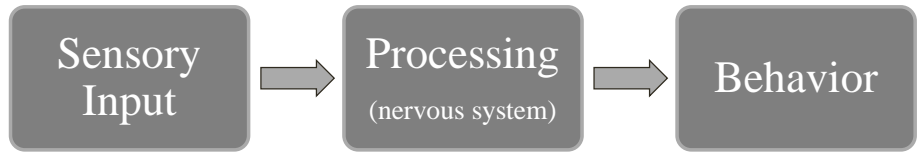


How the Body Experiences Trauma



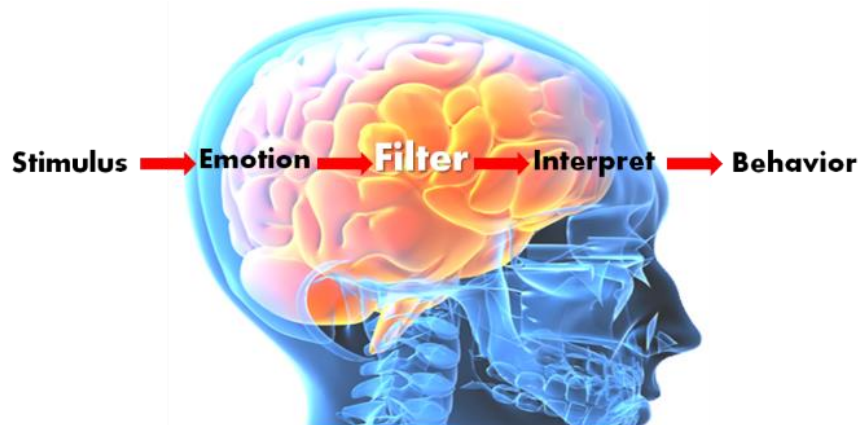
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How does the Body Process Information?




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We Feel, Then We Assign Meaning, Then We Act



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<https://pamstanton.wordpress.com/2011/04/08/what-is-emotional-intelligence/>



**The Key to
Defining Any
Experience
(including
Trauma)**



Lies in the **nervous system**
not the event itself

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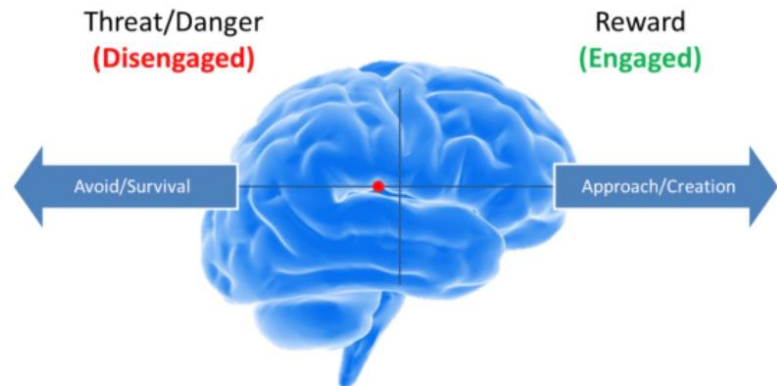
**Staying
Alive**



Our **instinct to survive** plays a
critical role in how we interpret
sensory information, assign
meaning, and act.

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Our Instinct to Survive



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<http://www.thebrainsavvyadvantage.com/article/brain-savvy-engagement-leading-your-team-through-change-with-the-brain-in-mind>

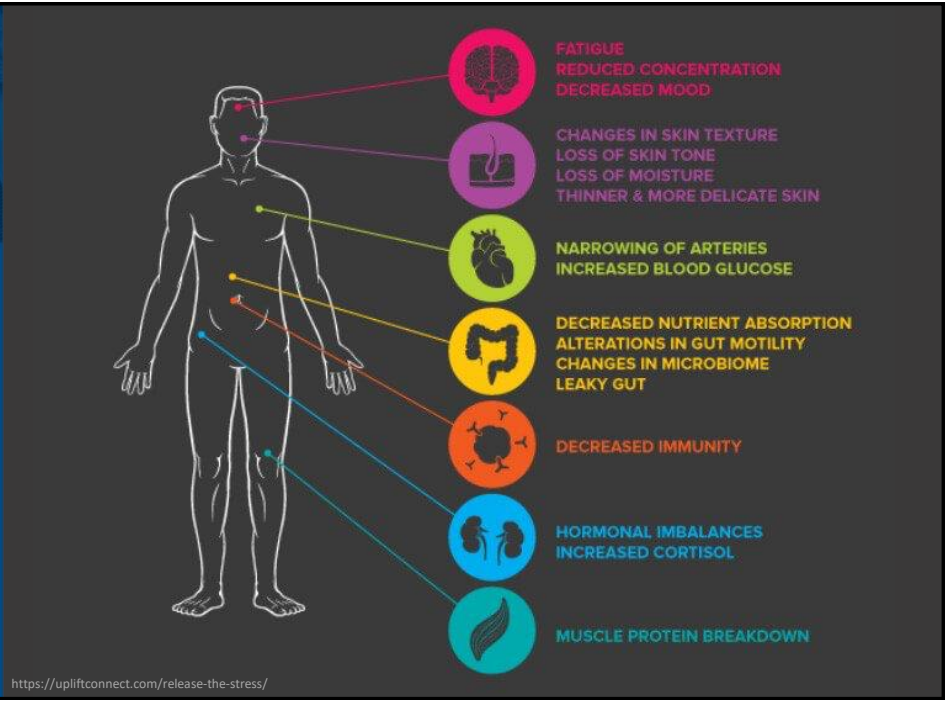
When We Sense a Threat ...



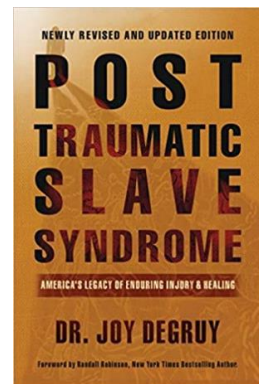
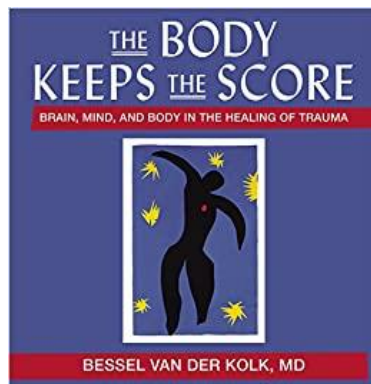
We go into survival mode to conserve energy and stay alive

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Physiological Impact of Trauma



Why We Have to Recognize and Heal Trauma



By the End of Today's Seminar

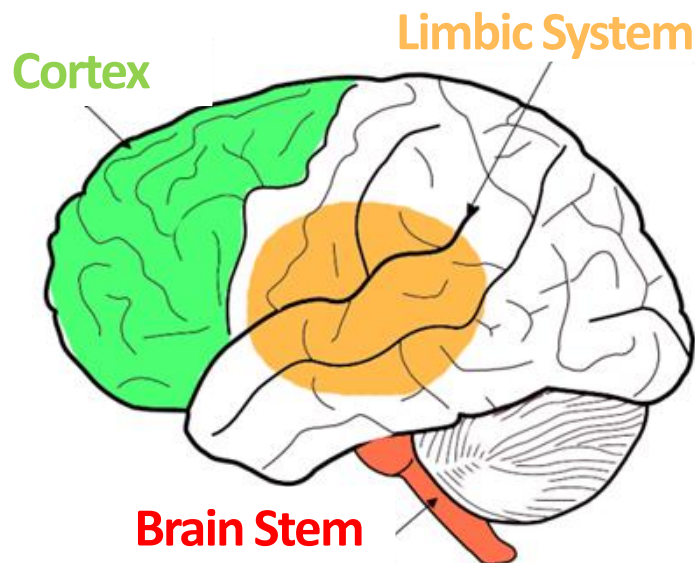


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Our Triune Brain



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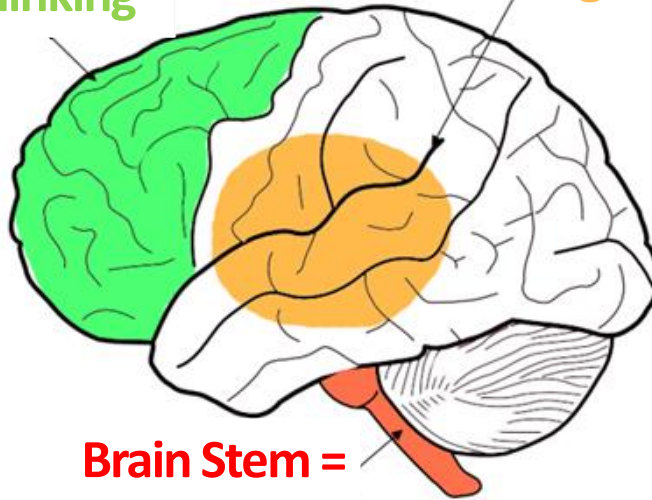
<https://www.artius.com.au/news/understanding-your-brain/>

Our Triune Brain



Cortex =
Thinking

Limbic System =
Feeling



Brain Stem =
Breathing

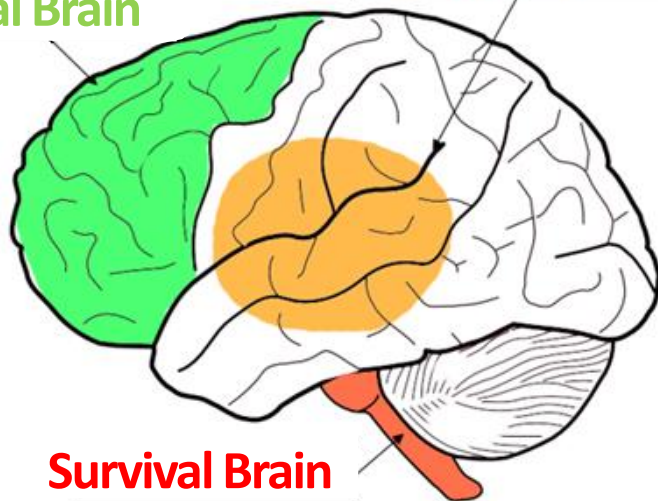
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Our Triune Brain



Rational Brain

Emotional Brain



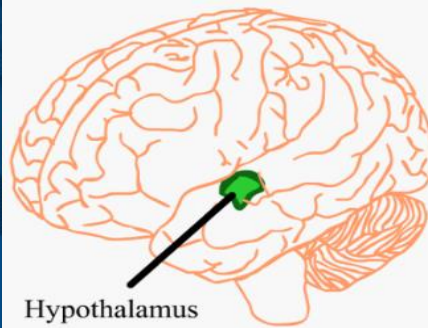
Survival Brain

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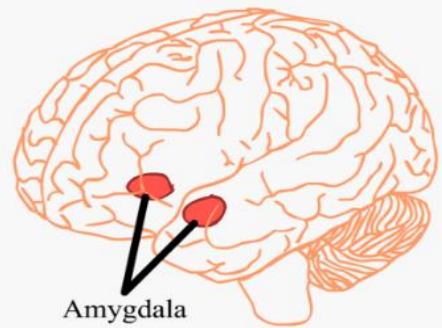
<https://www.artius.com.au/news/understanding-your-brain/>

Four Key Structures

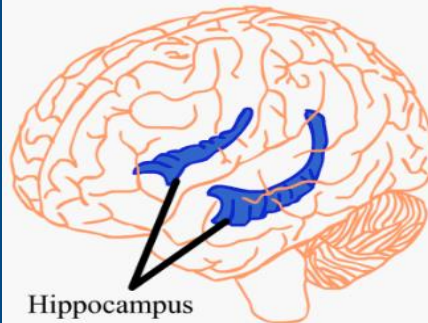
(for today's discussion)



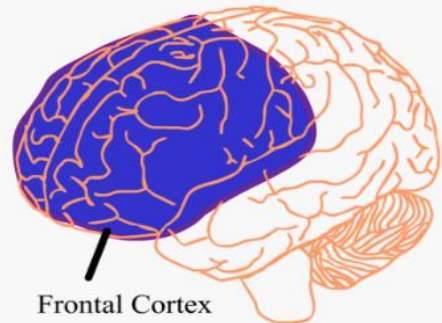
Hypothalamus



Amygdala



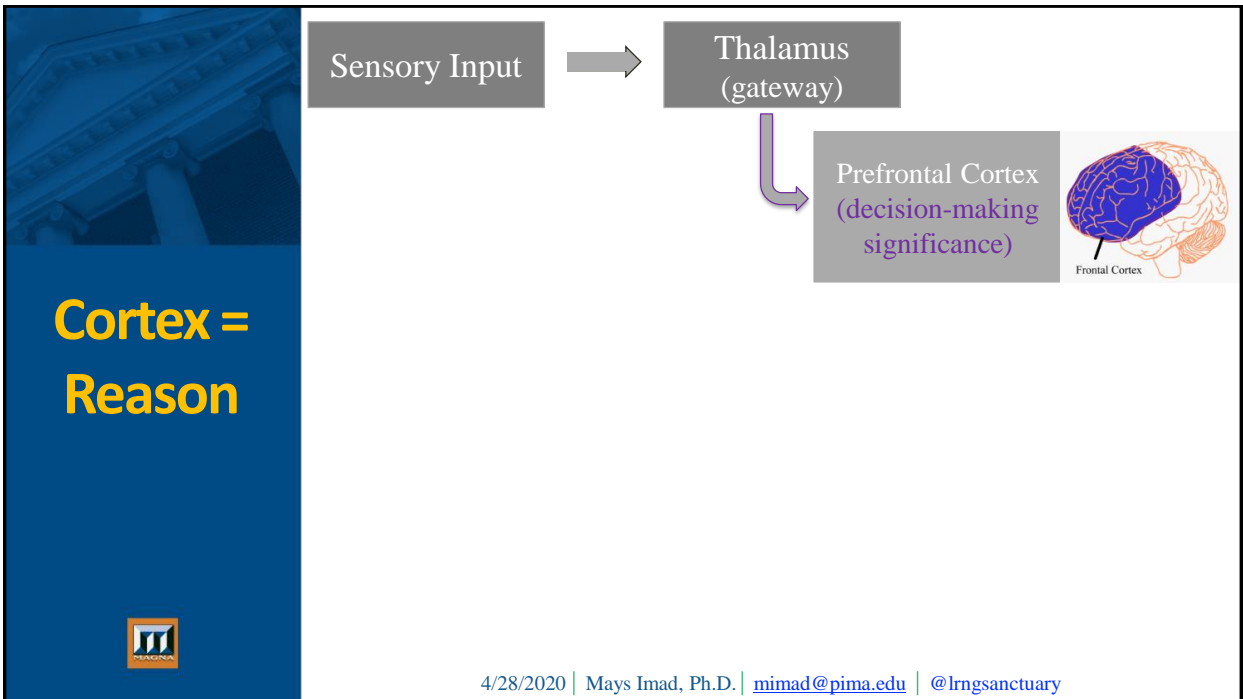
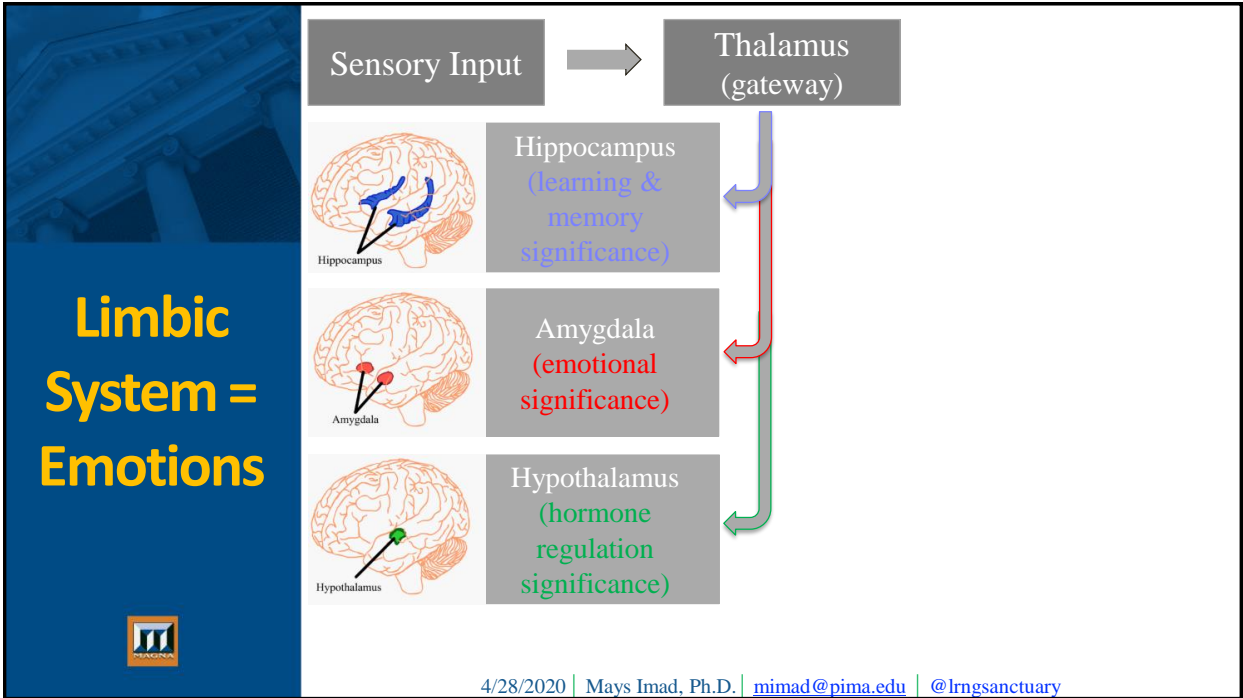
Hippocampus

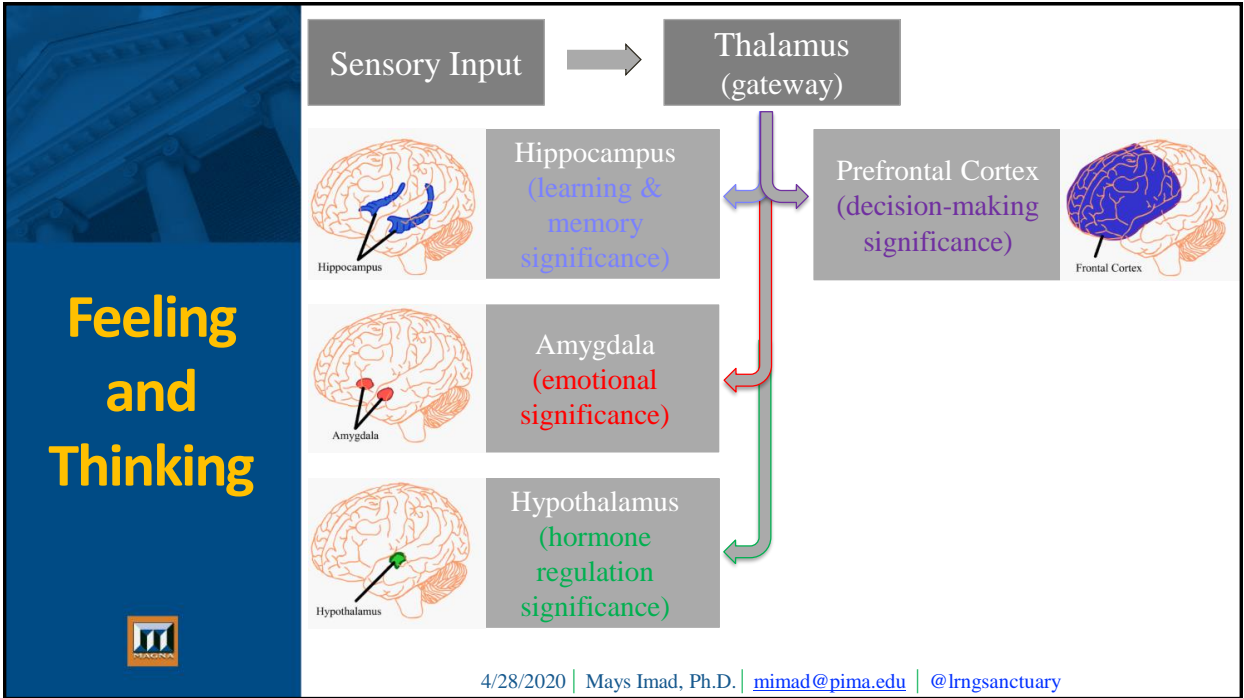


Frontal Cortex

Processing Information







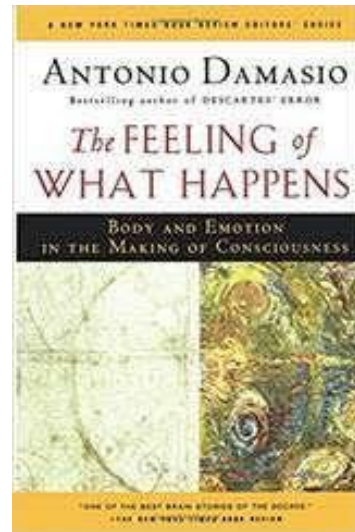
Reasoning & decision-making depend on conscious (prefrontal cortex) as well as **subconscious** (limbic system) support processes such as attention, working memory, & **emotion**.

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Feeling and Thinking



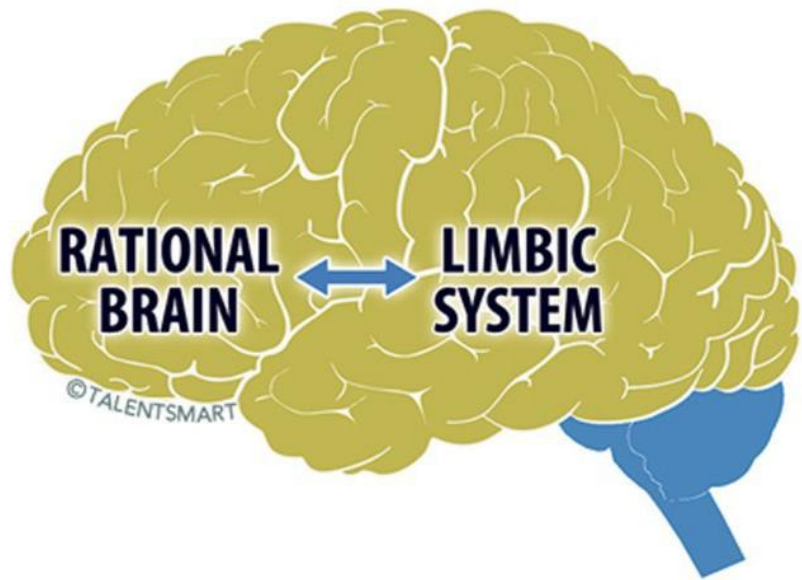
“We are not thinking machines that feel; rather, we are feeling machines that think.”

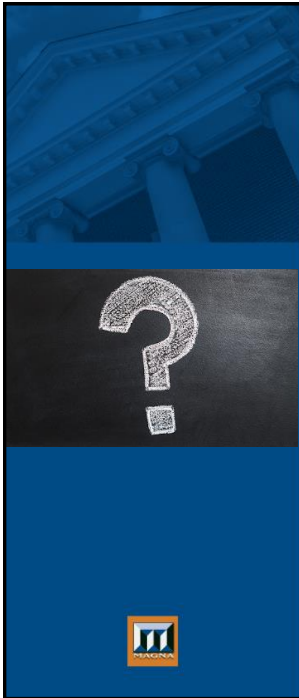


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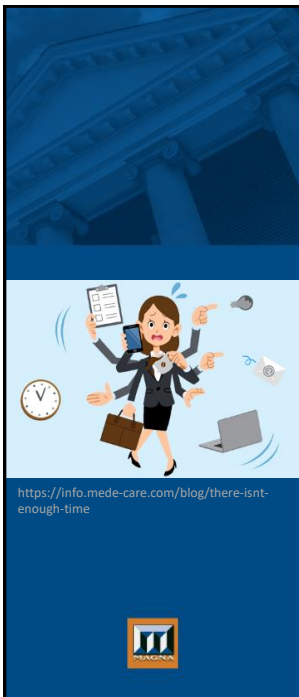


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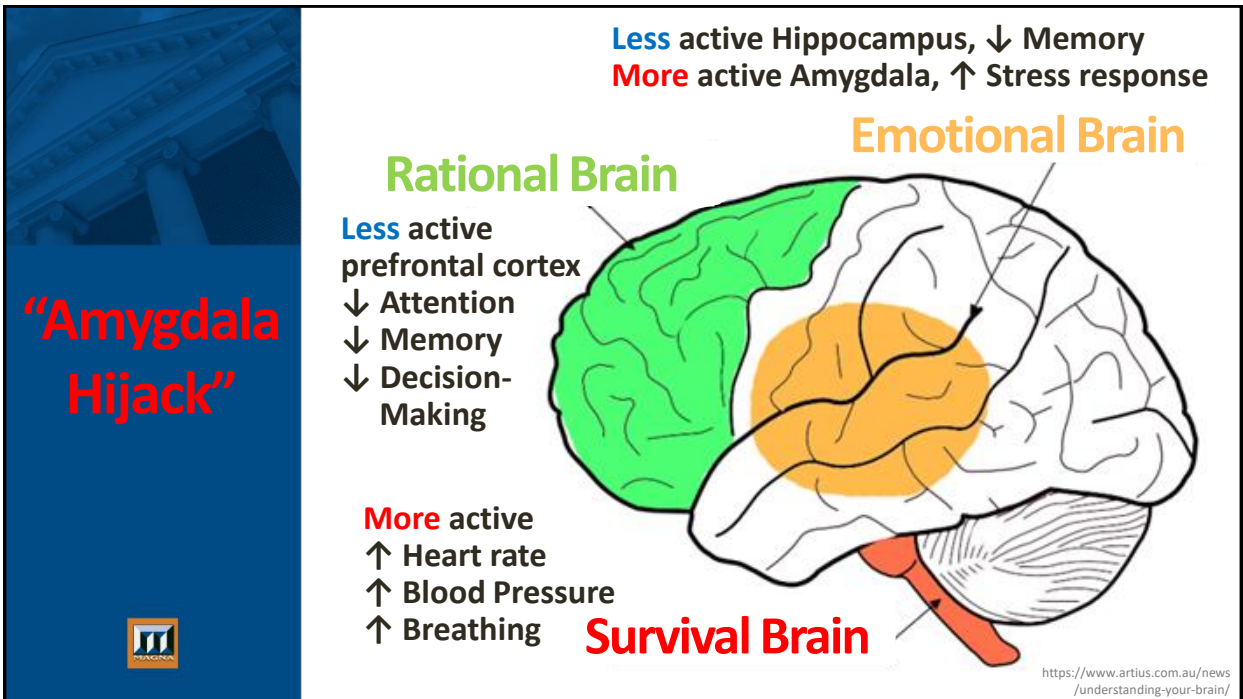
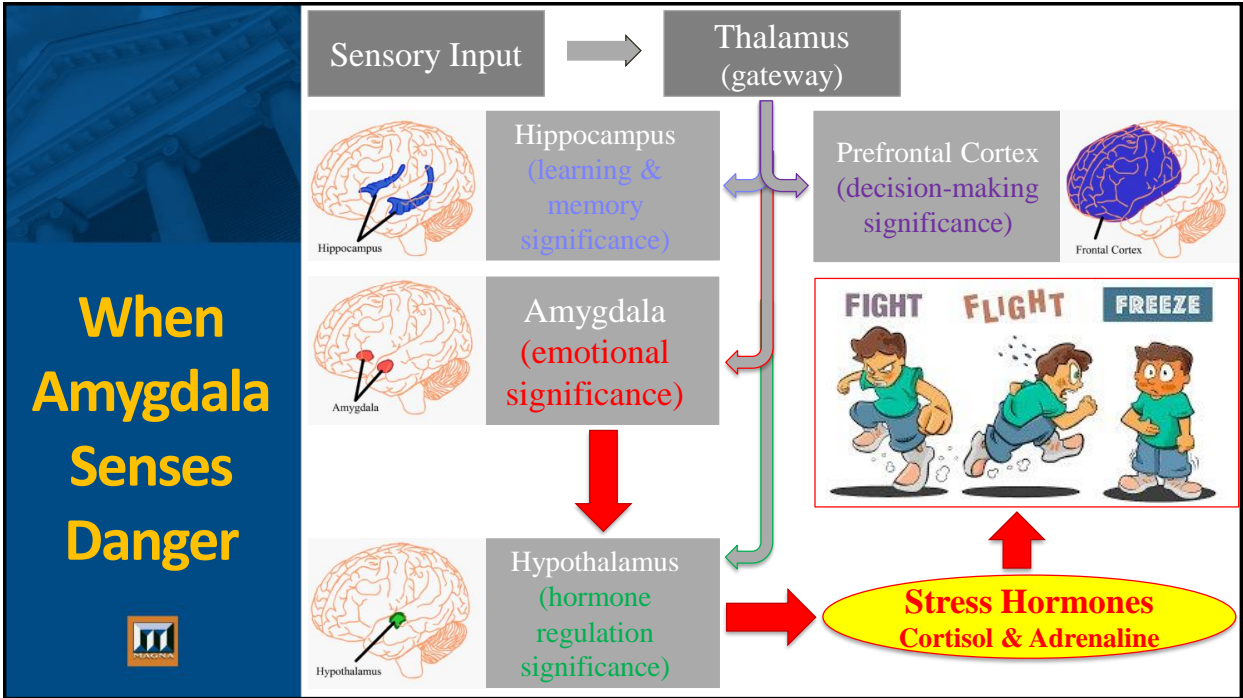




When we **lack information** and are **uncertain**, our brains shift control over to the **limbic system** and **autonomic nervous system**.



When there is **no time** to think (when facing a threat), our brains shift control over to the **limbic system** and **autonomic nervous system**.



“Amygdala Hijack”



Hyperactive amygdala →

Stress Hormones →

Fight or Flight Response →

Impairs Our Ability to Pay Attention,
Make Decisions, Learn, & Remember

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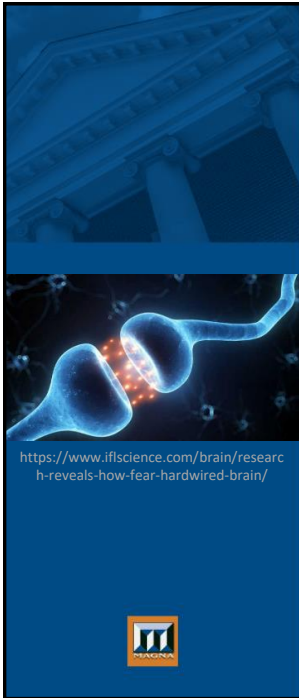


<http://www.renfrewsupport.org/blog/the-three-fs-fight-flight-or-freeze/>

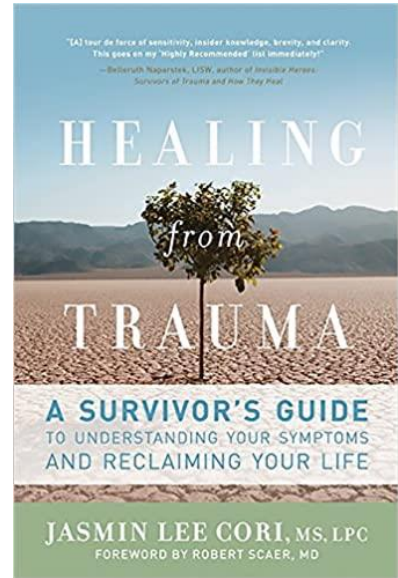


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<https://fampsy.org/psychological-trauma/>



“When the brain is 'under the influence' of an emotion, it habitually makes connections to past events that triggered the same emotion.”



PROFESSIONAL JOBS EVENTS RANKINGS STUDENT AB

<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/blog/how-universities-can-support-students-mental-health-amid-covid-19-crisis>



How universities can support students' mental health amid Covid-19 crisis

Identifying high-risk students early and communicating what support is available will be essential, says Toby Chelms


March 23, 2020

By [Toby Chelms](#)

The recent closure of [Leeds Trinity University's](#) campus because of the coronavirus has meant that we're having to rethink our approaches to supporting the mental health and well-being of our students. Thankfully, I have been



How Do We Teach to the Lonely, the Fearful, the Broken?



Trauma- Informed Practice



Trauma-Informed Pedagogy encompasses all the teaching practices we engage in with a keen awareness of our students' traumatic experiences and their effects on students well-being. We are intentional to promote environments of healing, empowerment, and recovery rather than practices that may hinder and re-traumatize.

– [Institute on Trauma and Trauma Informed Care \(ITTIC\), \(2015\). *What is trauma-informed care?*](#)



Students may have a hard time:

1. Keeping track of changes in your class.
2. Making decisions about learning.
3. Being motivated to study.
4. Prioritizing assignments.
5. Engaging with classmates or subject.
6. Managing your time.
7. Not quitting.



<https://collegeinfo geek.com/brain-fog/>



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**By the End
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6 GUIDING PRINCIPLES TO A TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH

The CDC's Office of Public Health Preparedness and Response (OPHPR), in collaboration with SAMHSA's National Center for Trauma-Informed Care (NCTIC), developed and led a new training for OPHPR employees about the role of trauma-informed care during public health emergencies. The training aimed to increase responder awareness of the impact that trauma can have in the communities where they work. Participants learned SAMHSA'S six principles that guide a trauma-informed approach, including:



Adopting a trauma-informed approach is not accomplished through any single particular technique or checklist. It requires constant attention, caring awareness, sensitivity, and possibly a cultural change at an organizational level. On-going internal organizational assessment and quality improvement, as well as engagement with community stakeholders, will help to imbed this approach which can be augmented with organizational development and practice improvement. The training provided by OPHPR and NCTIC was the first step for CDC to view emergency preparedness and response through a trauma-informed lens.

Guiding Principles

Trauma-Informed Pedagogy:

1. Foster emotional, intellectual, physical, and interpersonal **safety**.
2. Build **trustworthiness** and **transparency**.
3. Facilitate **peer support**.
4. Promote **collaboration**.
5. Empower **voice** and **choice**.
6. Pay attention to **cultural, historical, and gender** issues.

—[SAMHSA's Trauma and Justice Strategic Initiative](#)





1. Safety



Foster Emotional, Intellectual, Physical, and Interpersonal Safety:

1. Communicate often and invite conversation.
2. Ask your students what “safety” means to them.
3. Address students using their names. Ask them: “How they are doing?” Doing so will reinforce to them that you “see” them and that they matter.
4. Offer “radical hospitality” → “All of the student is welcomed in the space.”

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2. Trustworthiness and Transparency



Build trustworthiness and transparency through connection and communication:

1. Wear your heart on your sleeve and share your own experiences.
2. Believe your students and their experiences.
3. Offer flexible structure and ongoing feedback.
4. Say “I don’t know” when you don’t.
5. Add a section to each assignment explaining how it relates to the objectives of the course.
6. Spell out the steps required to complete each assignment and how it will be evaluated.

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3. Peer Support



Intentionally facilitate peer support:

1. Facilitate **relationship** building among your students. Encourage them to check up on each other if appropriate and they are comfortable doing so.
2. Encourage **storytelling** and testimonial to help students progress socially and academically.
3. Utilize the “check in” method by inviting students each week to share recent challenges or experiences. Students can “check out” if they do not feel comfortable discussing hardship.

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4. Collaboration



Promote collaboration and mutuality:

1. Ask students what matters to them now, what they want to learn, and what interests them. Take notes and incorporate their ideas into your communications and instructions.
2. Create a setting conducive to collaboration and **sharing of power** between students and instructor. For example, by inviting them to co-create assignments.
3. Invite them to make the class their “**home.**”

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5. Voice and Choice



Empower voice and choice:

1. Identify and build on **student strengths**.
2. Validate and normalize student's concerns.
3. Empower students who have lost a sense of control or agency to have a voice and to advocate for themselves. For example, create a short survey and **ask your students**: "How can I help you feel empowered during these difficult times?"

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6. Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues



Pay attention to cultural, historical, and gender issues:

1. Use an **intersectional** lens when considering the challenges your students are facing.
2. Work towards understanding your own default framework and biases related to teaching and learning.
3. Learn about excluded information and practices that have been disregarded historically in your discipline.
4. Make a commitment to learn about and implement **accessible** and **equitable** teaching & learning strategies. For example, consider an assessment framework that is less focused on grading and more on learning.

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And there is
more ...



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I've learned that people
will forget what you
said, people will forget
what you did, but
people will never forget
how you made them
feel.

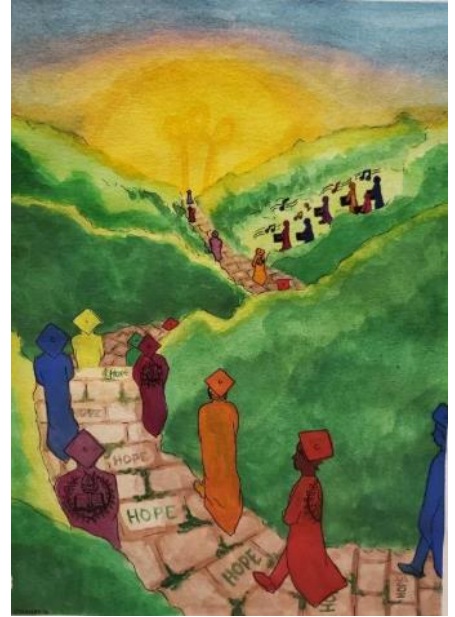
Maya Angelou



HOPE



COME, COME,
WHOEVER YOU ARE.
WANDERER, WORSHIPER,
LOVER OF LEAVING.
IT DOESN'T MATTER.
OURS IS NOT A CARAVAN OF
DESPAIR.
COME, EVEN IF YOU HAVE
BROKEN YOUR VOWS
A THOUSAND TIMES.
COME, YET AGAIN,
COME, COME.

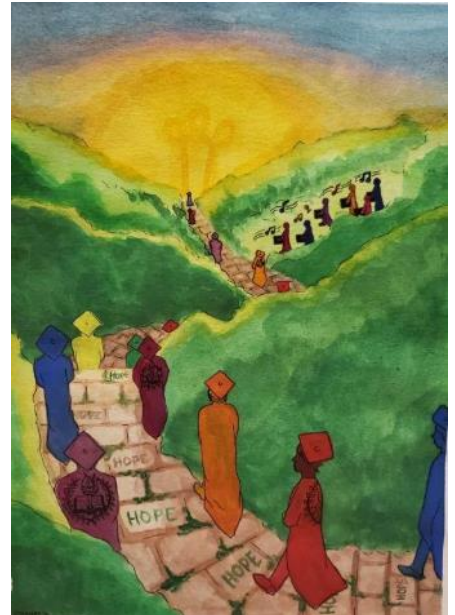


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Learning Sanctuary



Our caravan is our
HOME, cloaked
with radical
HOSPITALITY... we
journey on the
HOPE-paved road
to **HEAL** and we
sing to the tune of
humanity's **HEART**.



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Additional Resources



[The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma](#)

By Bessel van der Kolk, MD

[Guiding Adolescents to Use Healthy Strategies to Manage Stress](#)

By Kenneth R Ginsburg, MD, MS Ed

[Creating a Resilient Community](#)

By the Peace and Justice Institute at Valencia College

[Employing Equity-Minded & Culturally-Affirming Teaching Practices](#)

By Center for Organizational Responsibility and Advancement (CORA)

[Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury and Healing](#)

By Joy DeGruy, PhD, MS, MSW

[How to Recognize & Mitigate Stress & Trauma](#) (for students)

By Teaching & Learning Center, Pima Community College

[Hope Matters: 10 teaching strategies to support students and help them continue to learn during this time of uncertainty.](#)

By Mays Imad, PhD

THANK YOU

Mays Imad received her undergraduate training in Philosophy from the University of Michigan and her graduate training in Cellular & Clinical Neurobiology from Wayne State University-School of Medicine. Mays's current research focuses on stress, self-awareness, advocacy, and classroom community, and how these relate to cognition, metacognition, and, ultimately, student learning.

Email: mimad@pima.edu Twitter: [@lmgsanctuary](https://twitter.com/lmgsanctuary)



Tell us what you think

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/pedagogy042820>

Thank you!

