

What are trauma reactions?

Aim. To explain and understand how people react in traumatic situations.

Trainer. Human beings (and animals) developed very early on an alarm system that assisted them to survive. These basic physical responses to danger occur below consciousness and are controlled by an ancient part of the brain called the amygdala. They enable the body to react to danger before you have even started to think about what is happening. They can respond in as little as 1/100 of a second.

These physical responses, that we can also call survival strategies, are:

- Fight.
- Flight.
- Freeze.
- 'Playing dead'/submission.

[The Trainer posts the drawing below on the board.]

Do you recognise these responses or have you seen them in others?

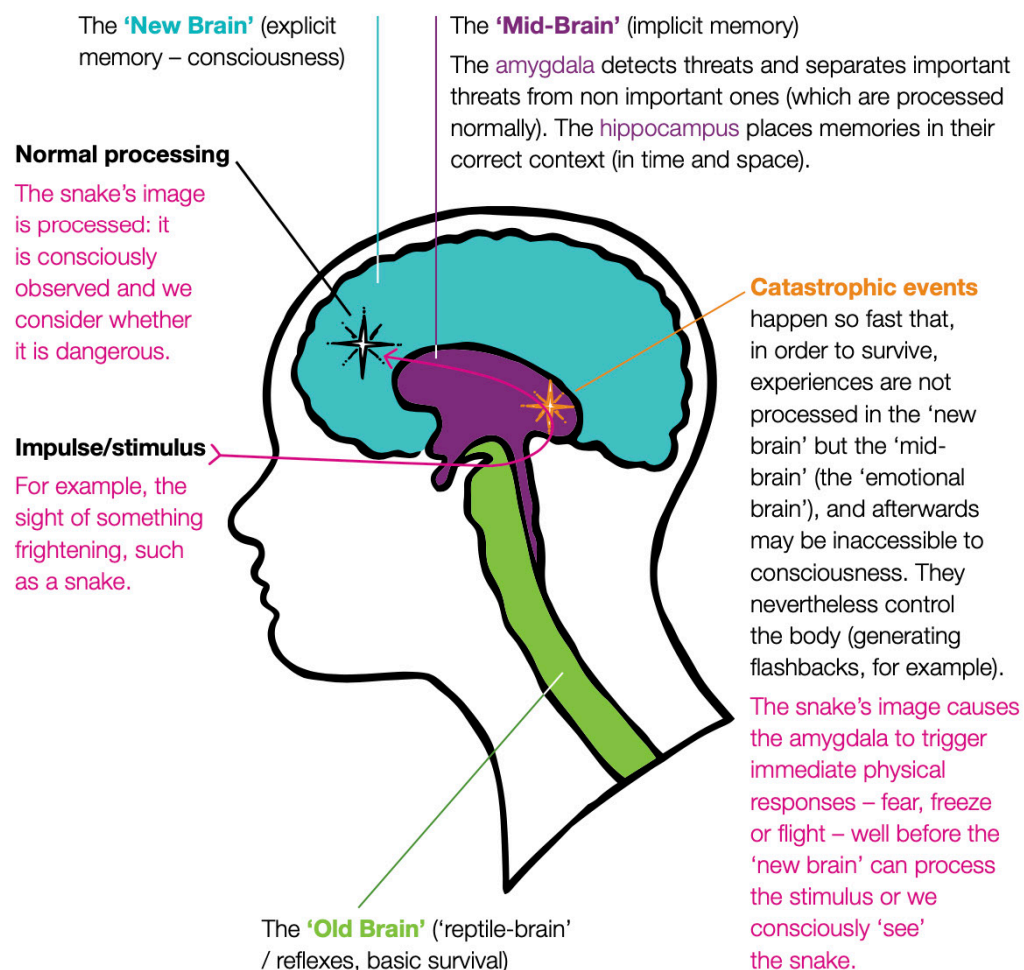


Figure 2. The Butterfly Woman in the beginning, capable and in good health.

What does she feel in her body, heart, feelings, breathing and thoughts?

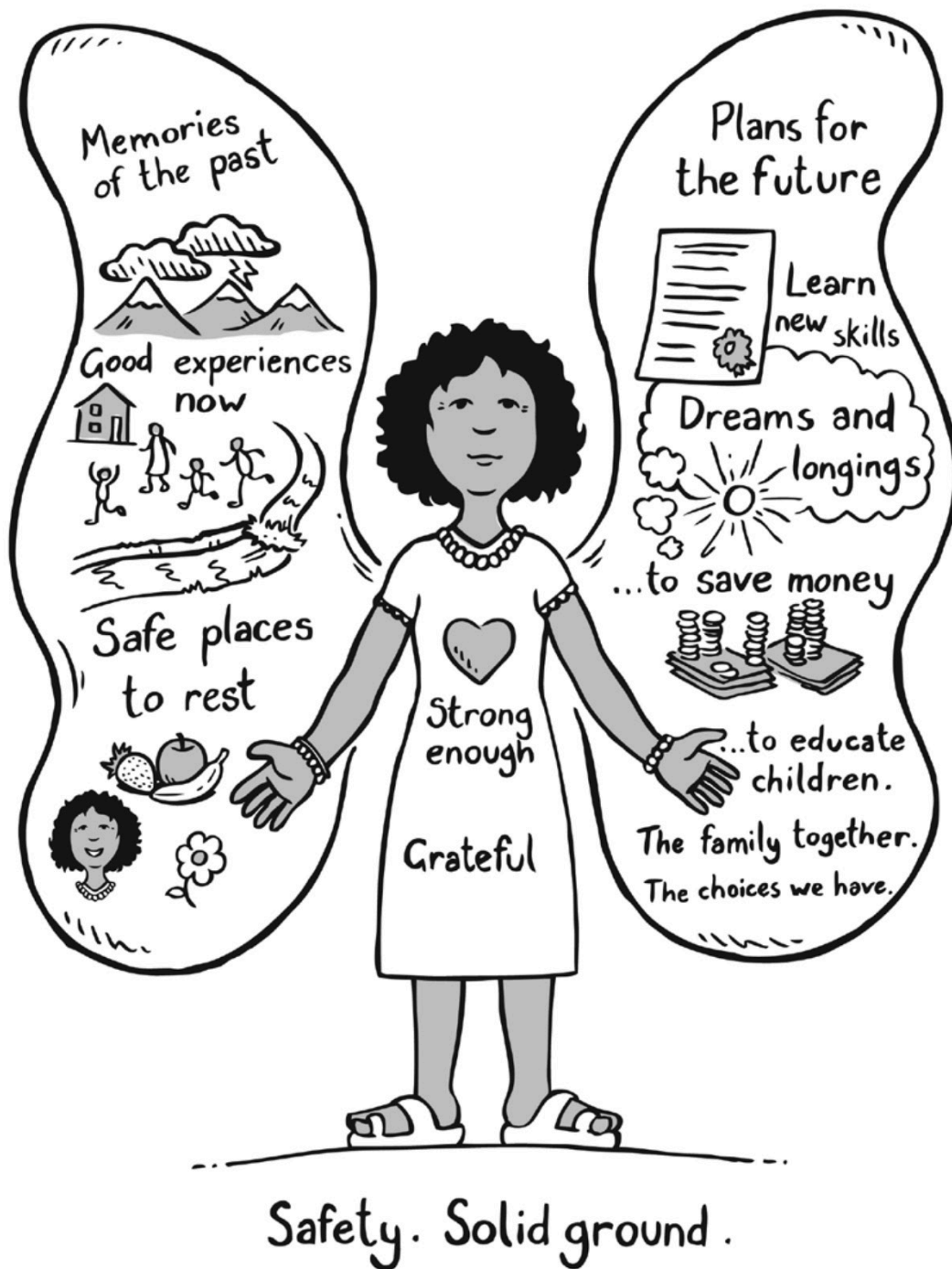


Figure 3. The Butterfly Woman immediately after the trauma.

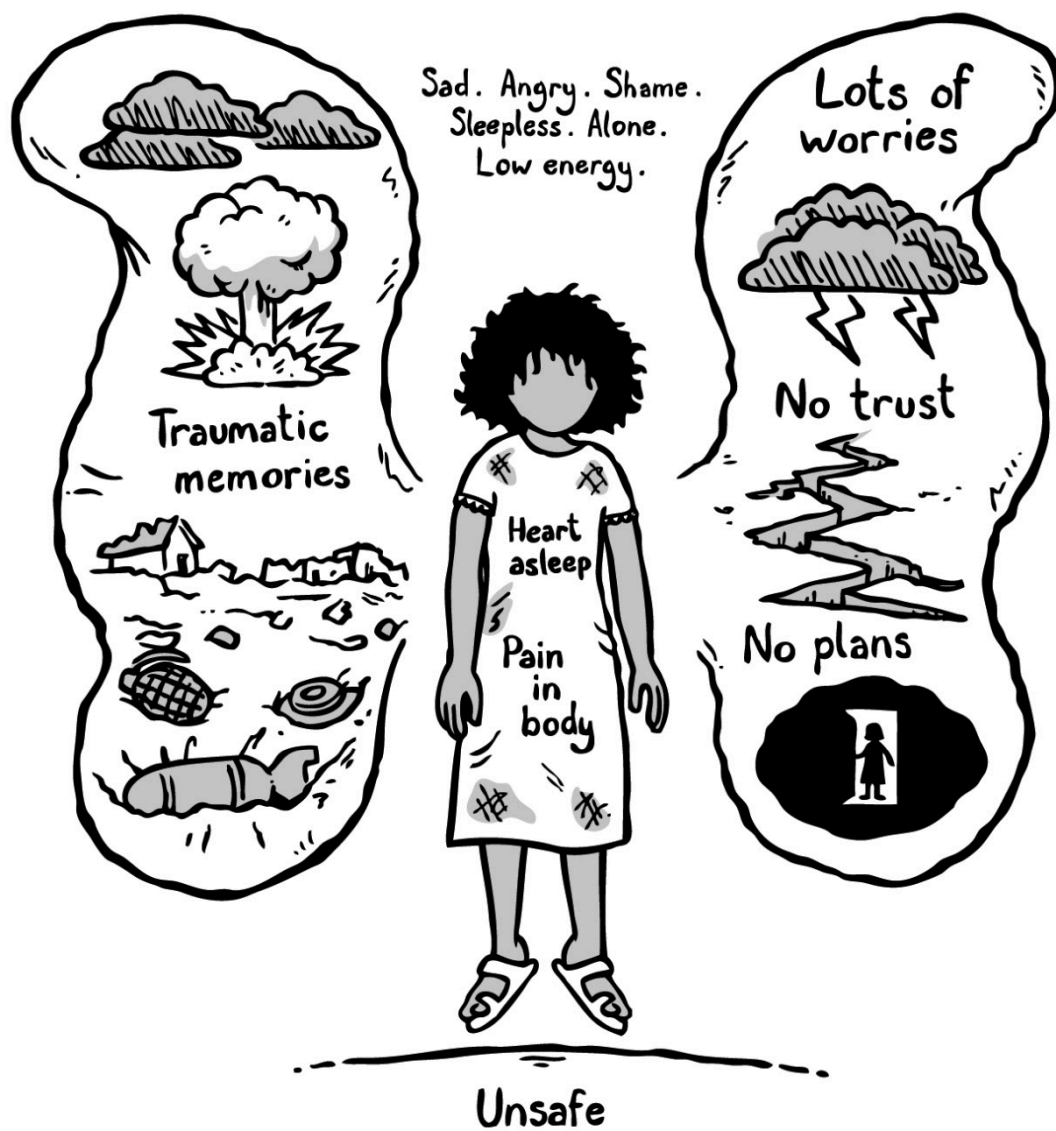


Figure 4. The Butterfly Woman experiences triggers and flashbacks some time after the trauma.

What happens to her body, heart, feelings, breathing and thoughts when she experiences triggers and flashbacks?

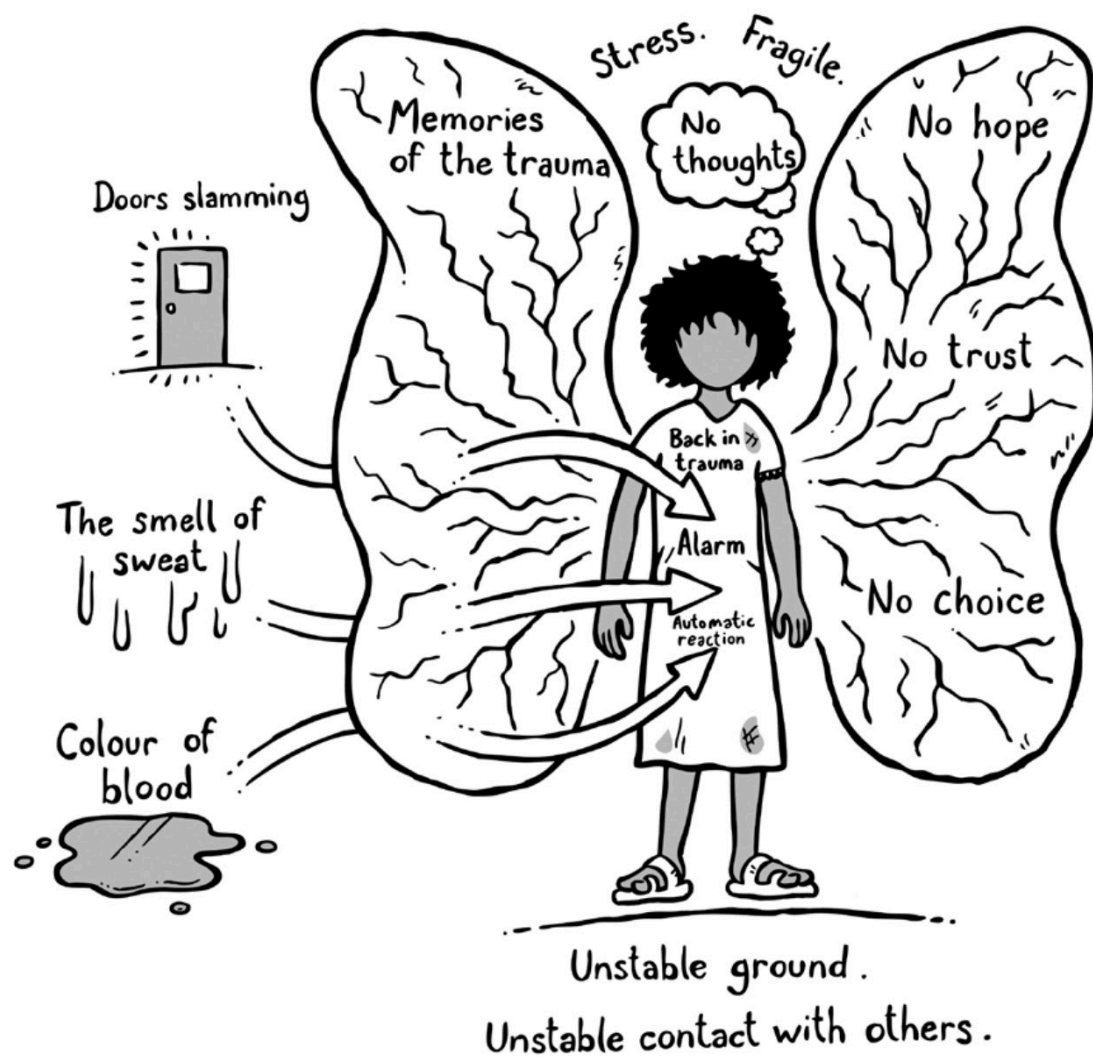


Figure 5. The Butterfly Woman gradually healing.

The Butterfly Woman wakes up good memories and old resources. Good new experiences waken her dreams and longings.

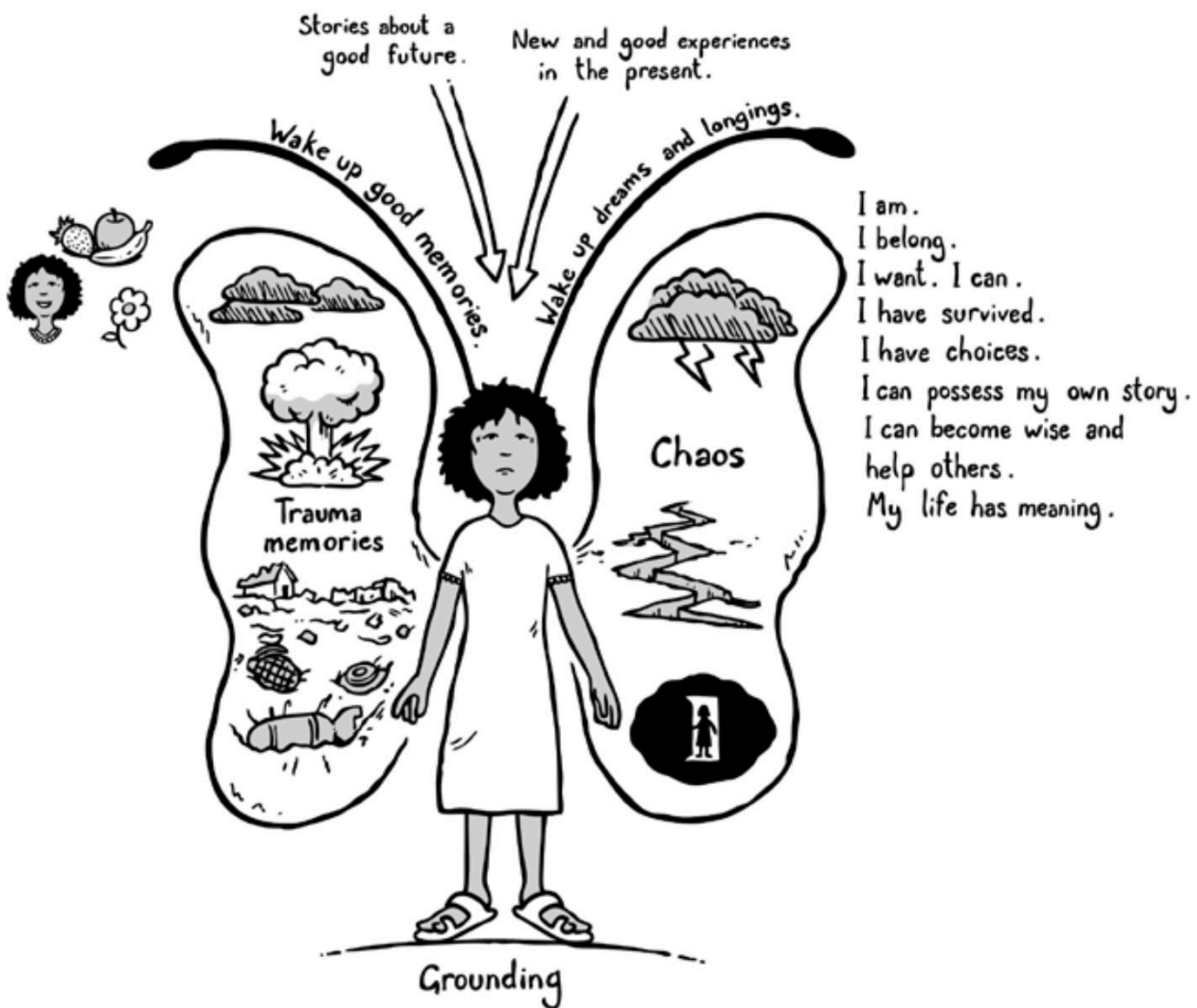
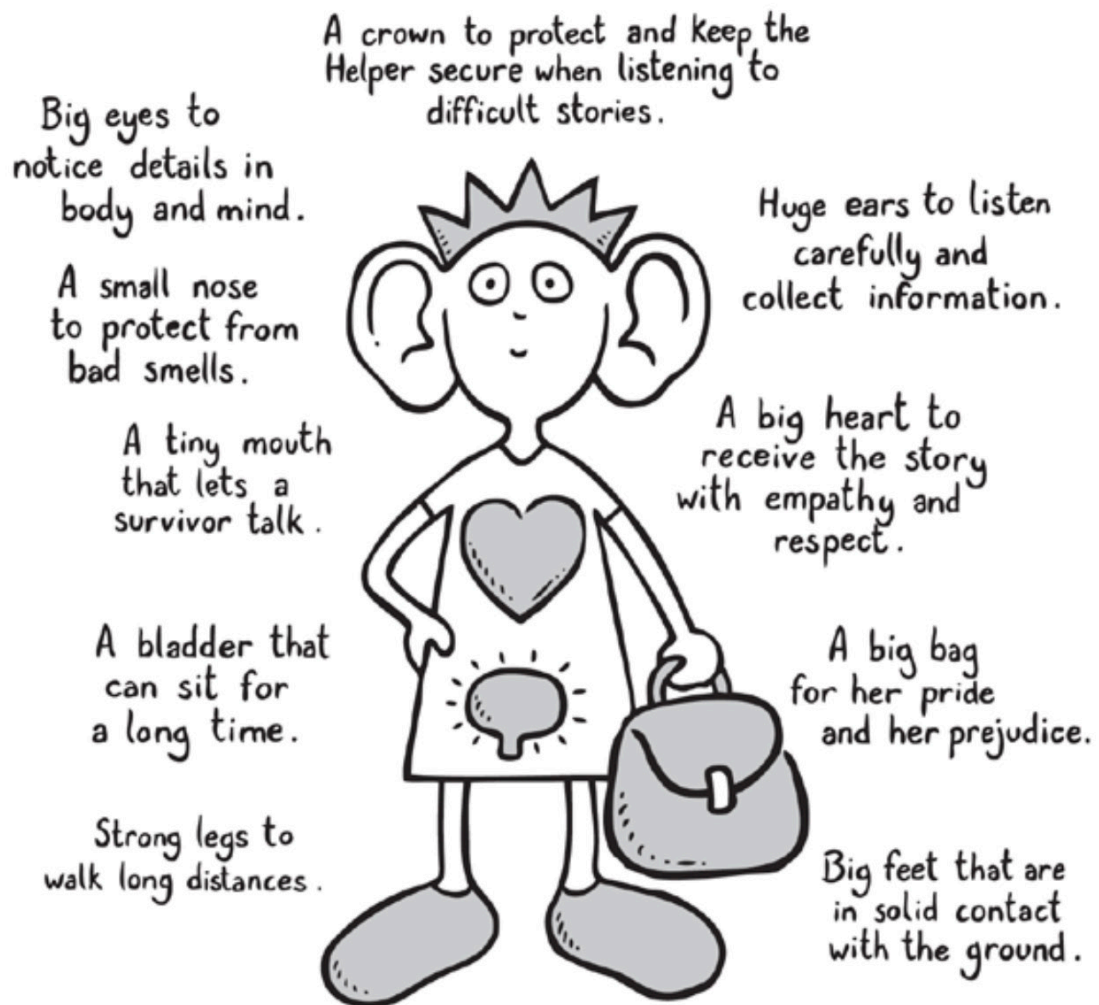


Figure 6. The qualities of a good helper (II).

This image was shared by counsellors working in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.



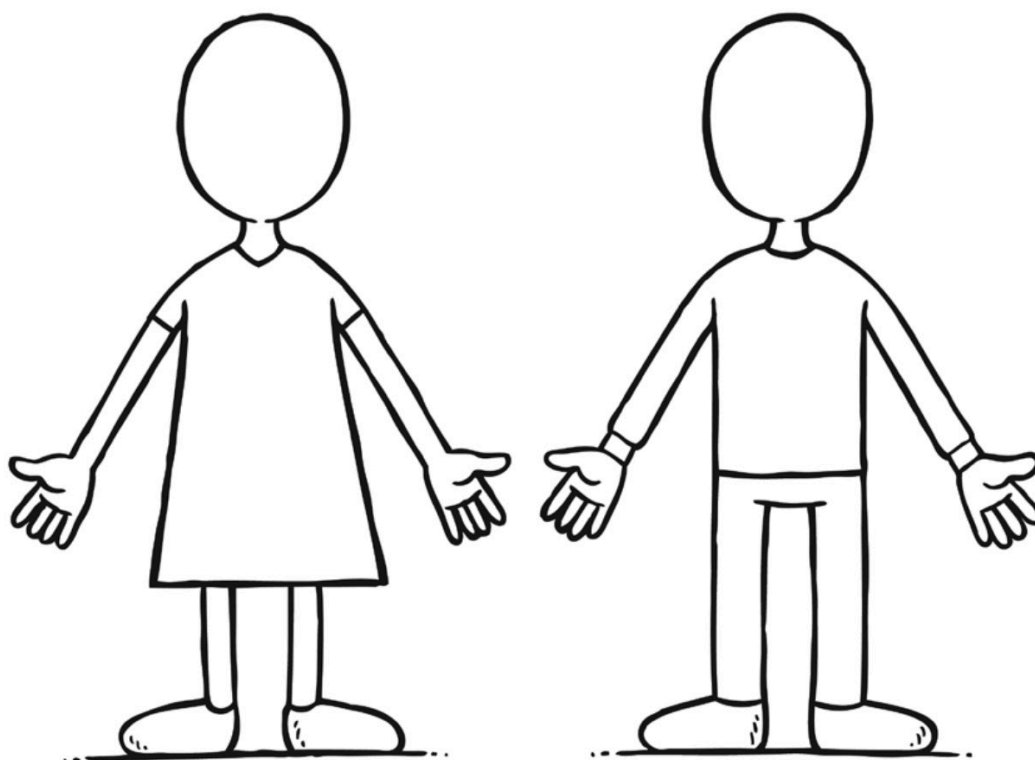
What else is needed in your culture and in your circumstances?

Add to the drawing...

Appendix 4. Illustrations

Figure 1. The qualities of a good helper in your society and context.

Fill in the resources and the qualities you have as a helper.



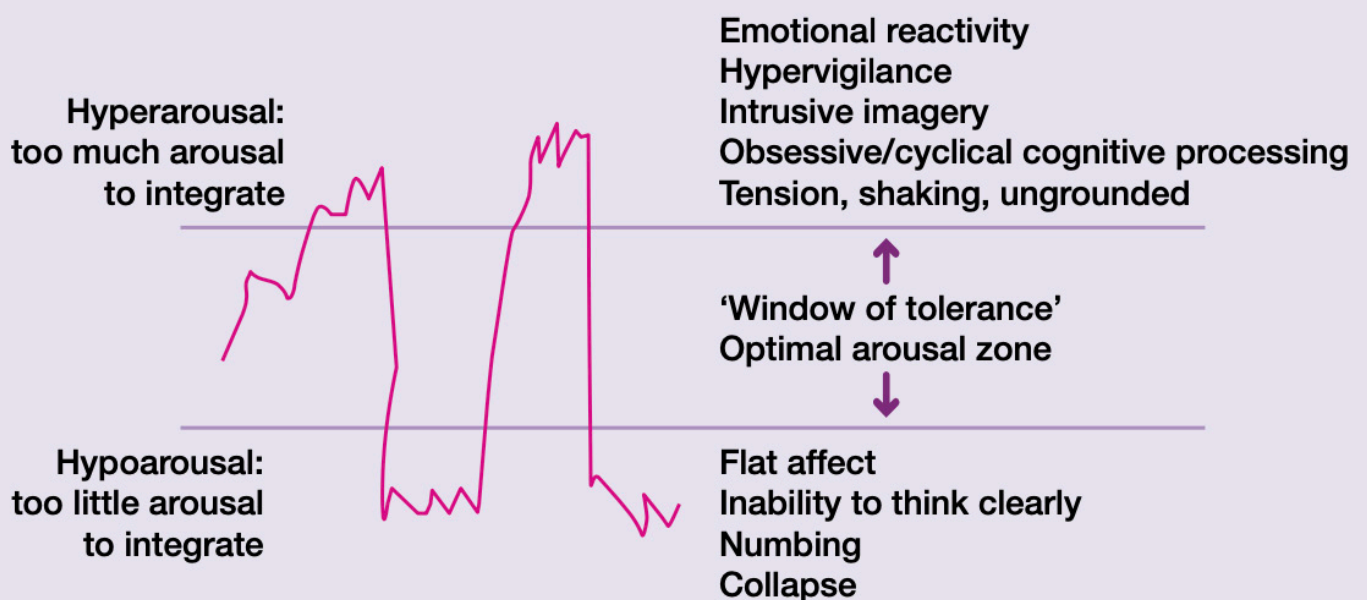
List

Things you need

Things you lack

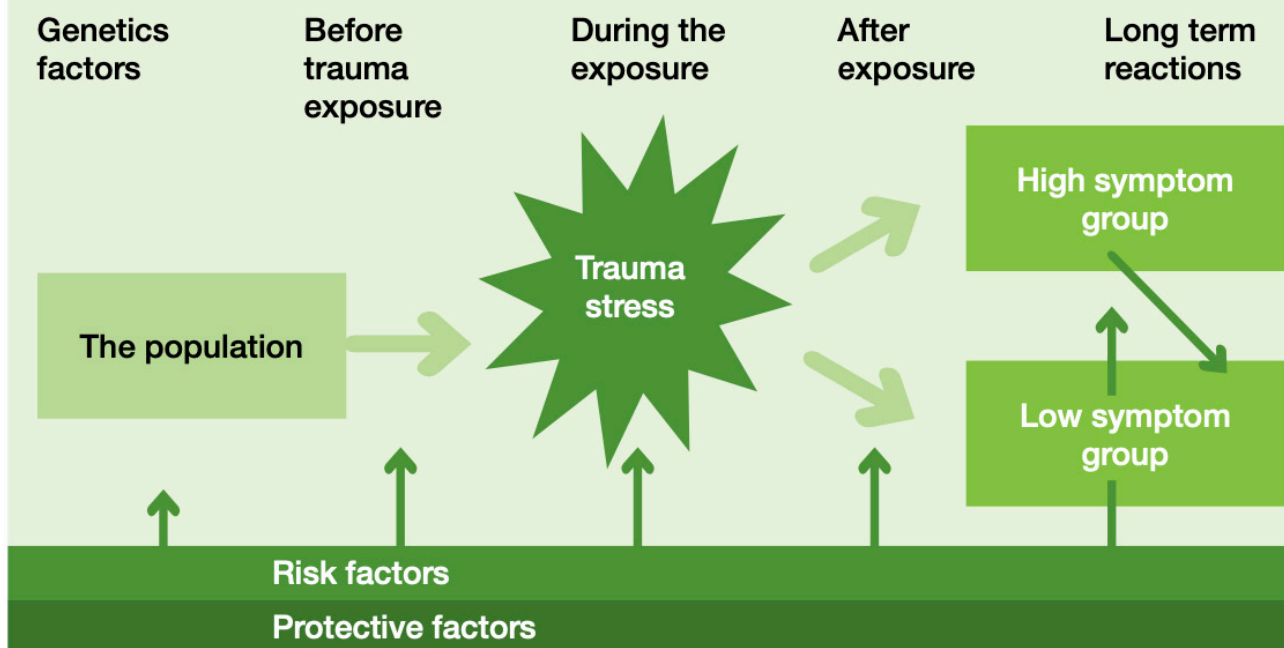
Things you want to learn...

The 'window of tolerance': maintaining optimal arousal



Adapted from Ogden and Minton 2000, at www.sciencedirect.com.

Resilience consists of a variety of factors that have an impact before, during and after a trauma exposure



Christie and Waaktaar (2000) inspired by Dickstein, Suvak, Litz, and Adler (2010).