

# Psychological First Aid: A Toolkit

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Psychological First Aid Toolkit, WRMC 2015, Portland, OR

# Workshop Objectives

**Define Psychological First Aid (PSA).**

**Better understand basic brain science.**

**Identify the five principles of PSA.**

**Gain practical and usable PSA tools.**

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Really, we want TWO things...

# Paradigm Shift

# Real Life Tools

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# Industry Trends

## Critical Incident Stress Debriefing

- Organized for rescuers after traumatic incidents.
- Participants are often required to participate.
- Participants are asked to re-live the stressor, the event, and thoughts and emotions during and after the event

**Research shows this may be detrimental to healing process**

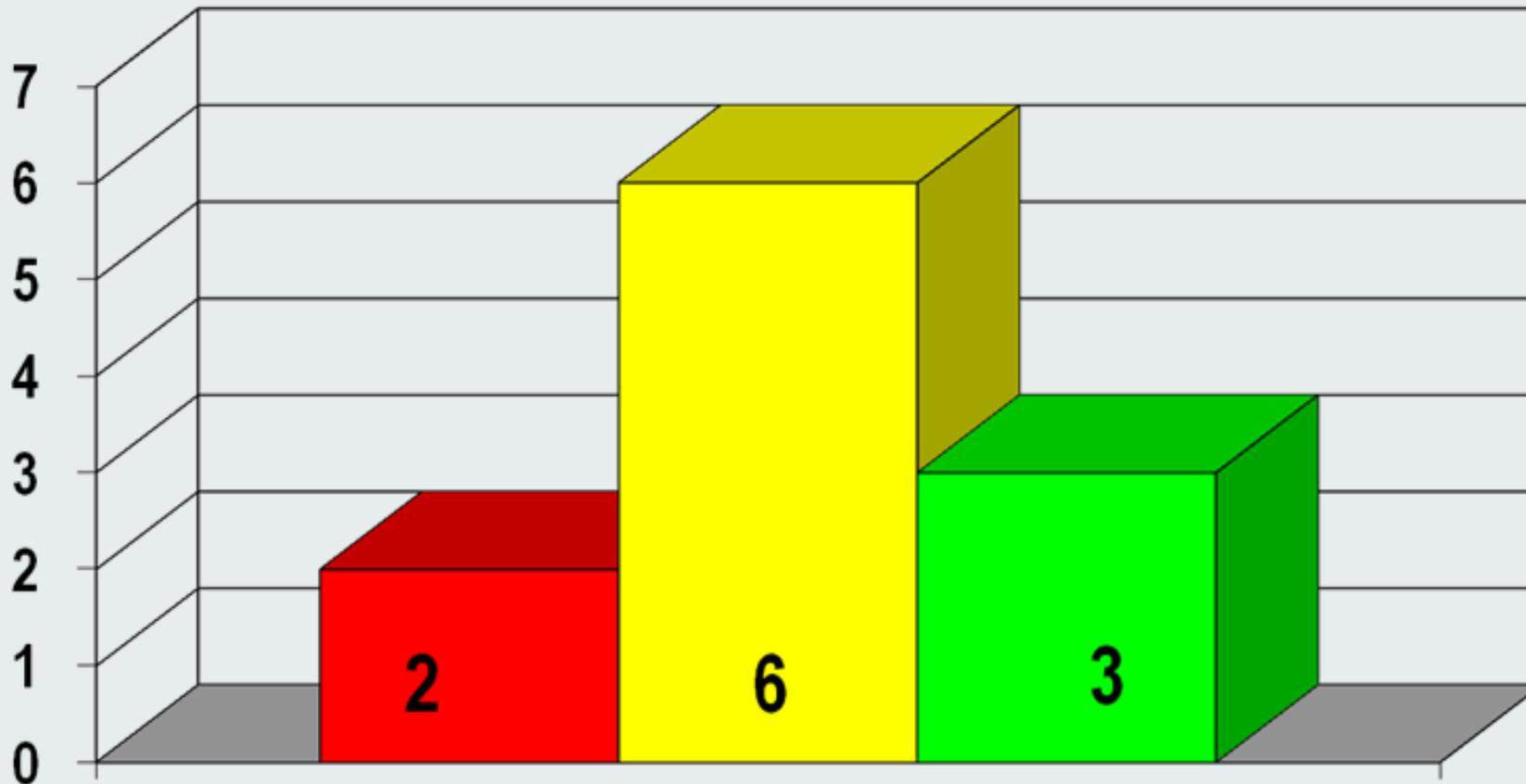


# 2002 Cochrane Review of Psychological Debriefing (PD)

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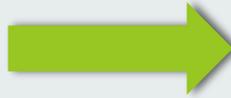
Rose, Bisson, & Wessely, 2003

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# Industry Trends

## Critical Incident Stress Debriefing



## Psychological First Aid (PSA)

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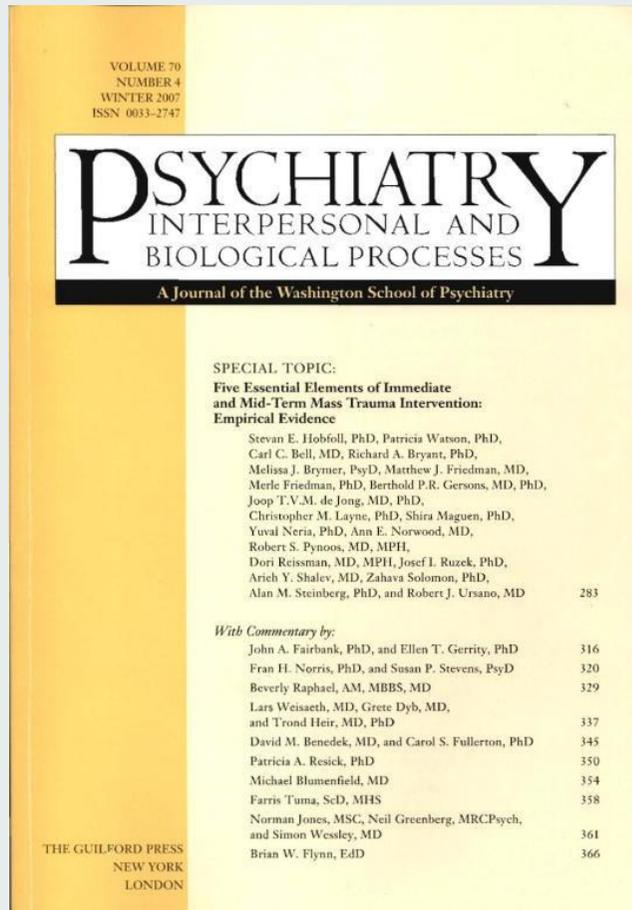
**Research shows this may be detrimental to healing process**

- Developed by multiple agencies.
- Attempts to address the initial physiologic response to trauma and need for safety.
- Goal of mitigating long term stress injuries.

**Informed and supported by recent research**



# Psychological First Aid: Current Research



Hobfoll et al Psychiatry 70:2007

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# Stress Injuries

## Objectives of first aid:

- Assess LIFE THREATS and preserve life
- Do no harm
- **Treatment to mitigate future complications**
- Decide on evac/referral to higher care

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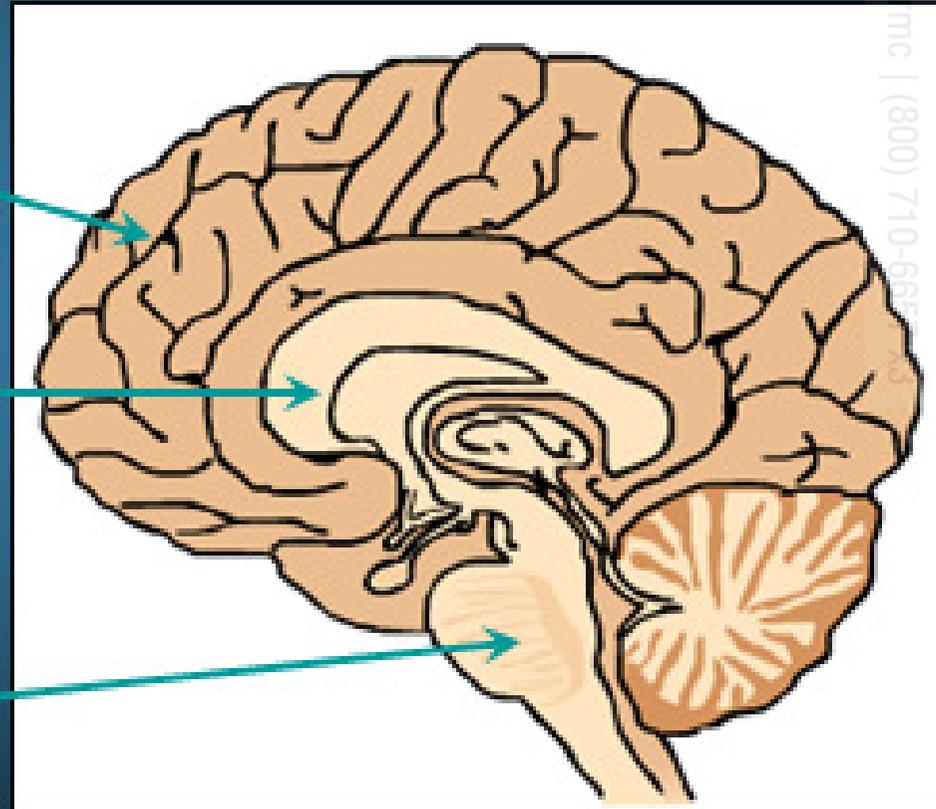


# Basic Brain Science

Neo-Cortical Brain

Limbic (Mammalian)  
Brain

Reptilian (Lower)  
Brain



LaDue\_2012

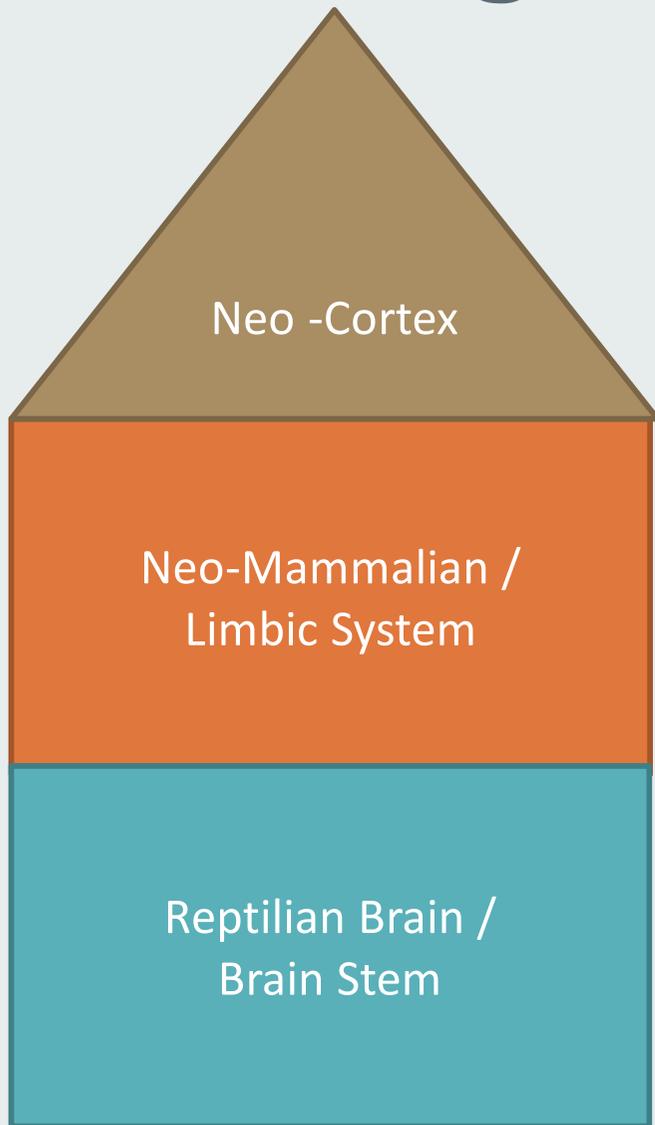
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# Building the House



## Basic Functions:

Vital Organs' Control Center

Heart Rate

Breathing Rate

Visual Tracking

Sympathetic and Parasympathetic Systems

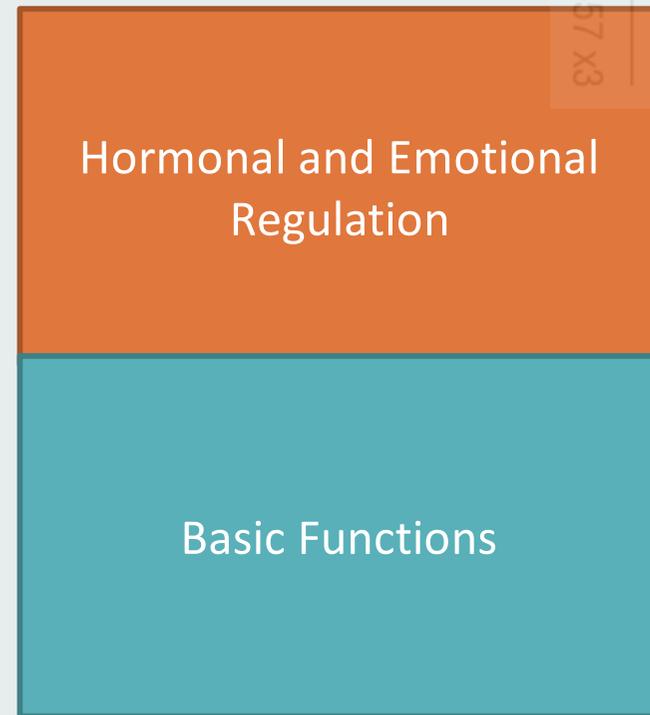
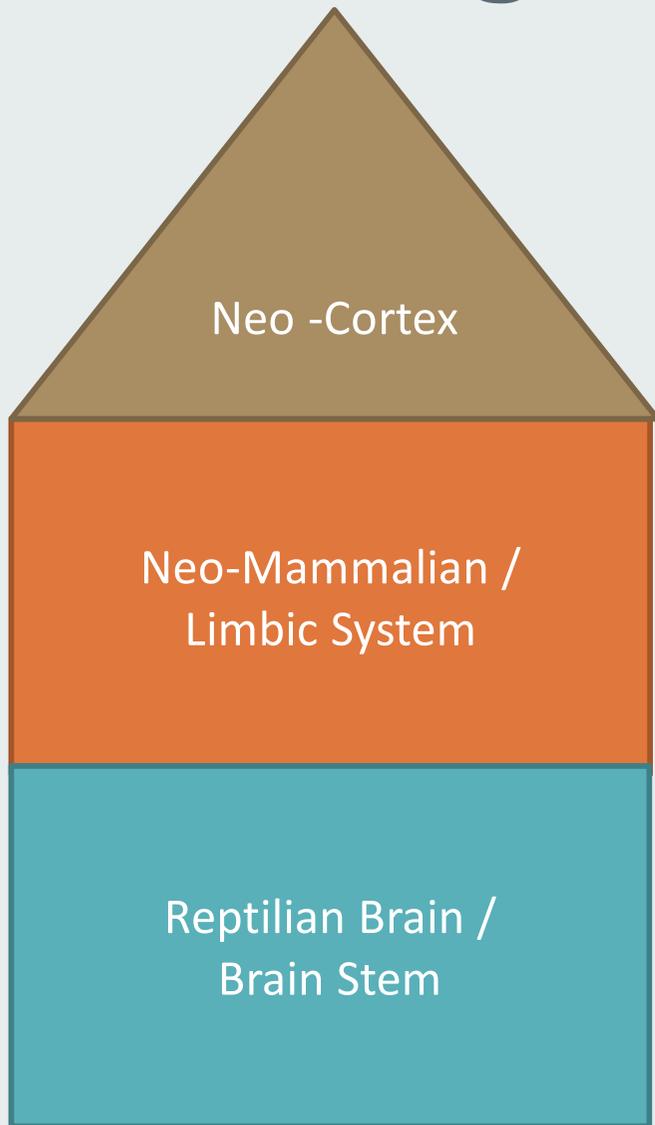
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# Hormonal and Emotional Regulation:

Pain and Pleasure  
Intrinsic Memory  
Hormone Regulation  
Anger  
Panic  
Fear

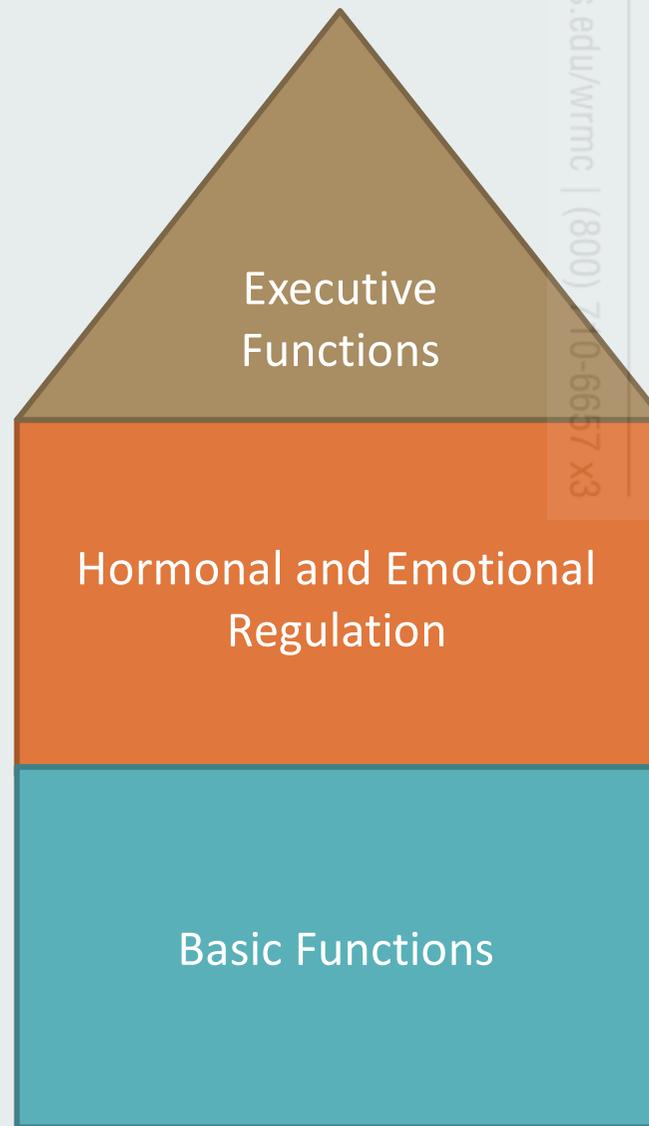
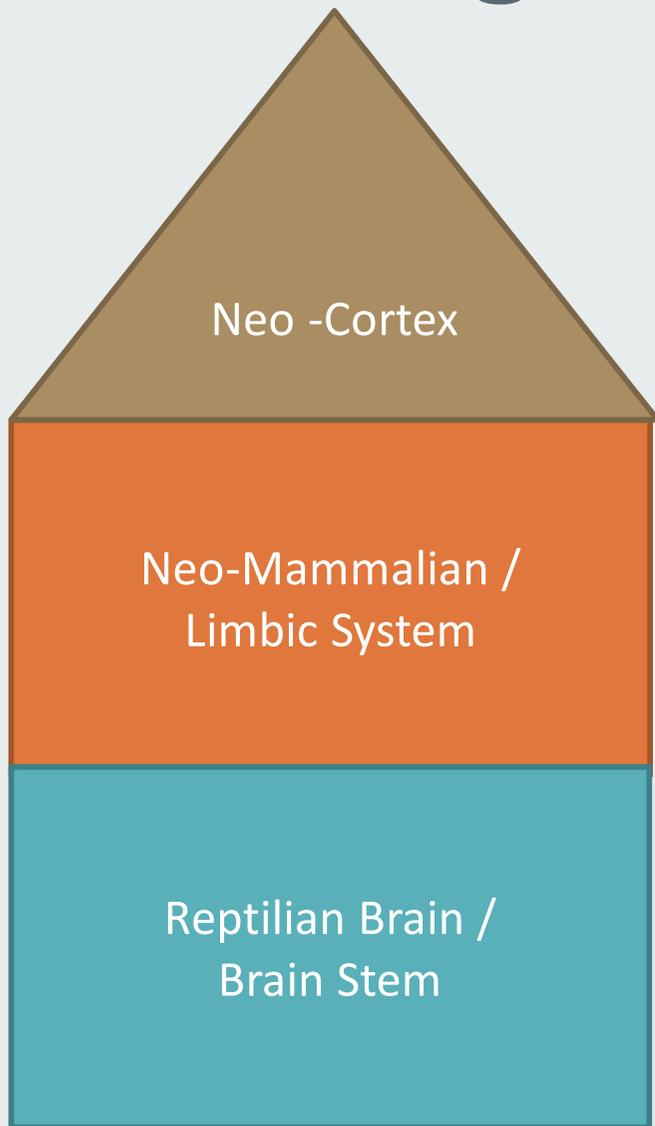
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Executive Functions:

Speech

Attention

Problem-Solving

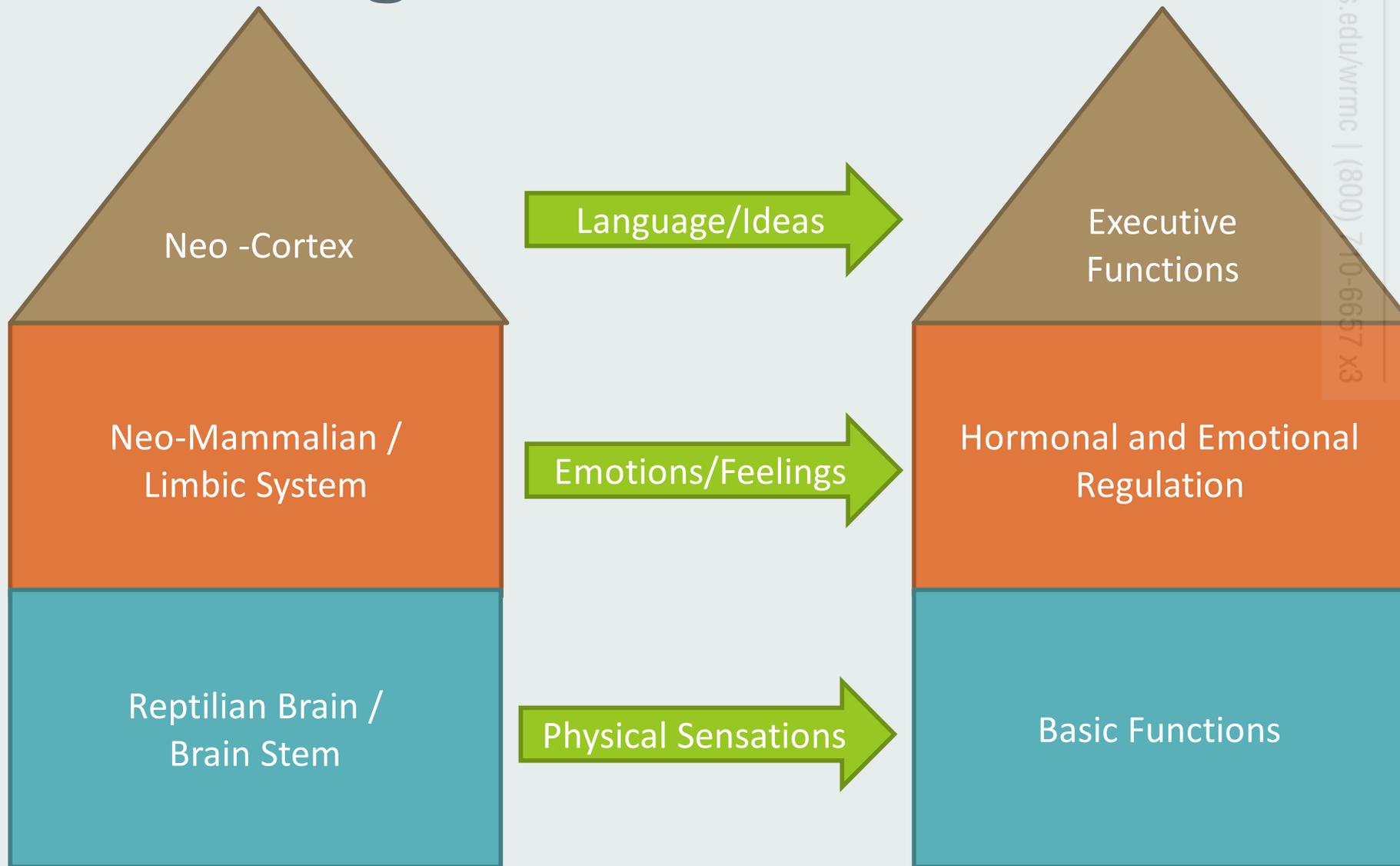
Creativity

Working Memory

Learning



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# A Normal, Adaptive Response to an Abnormal Situation



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# A Normal, Adaptive Response to an Abnormal Situation



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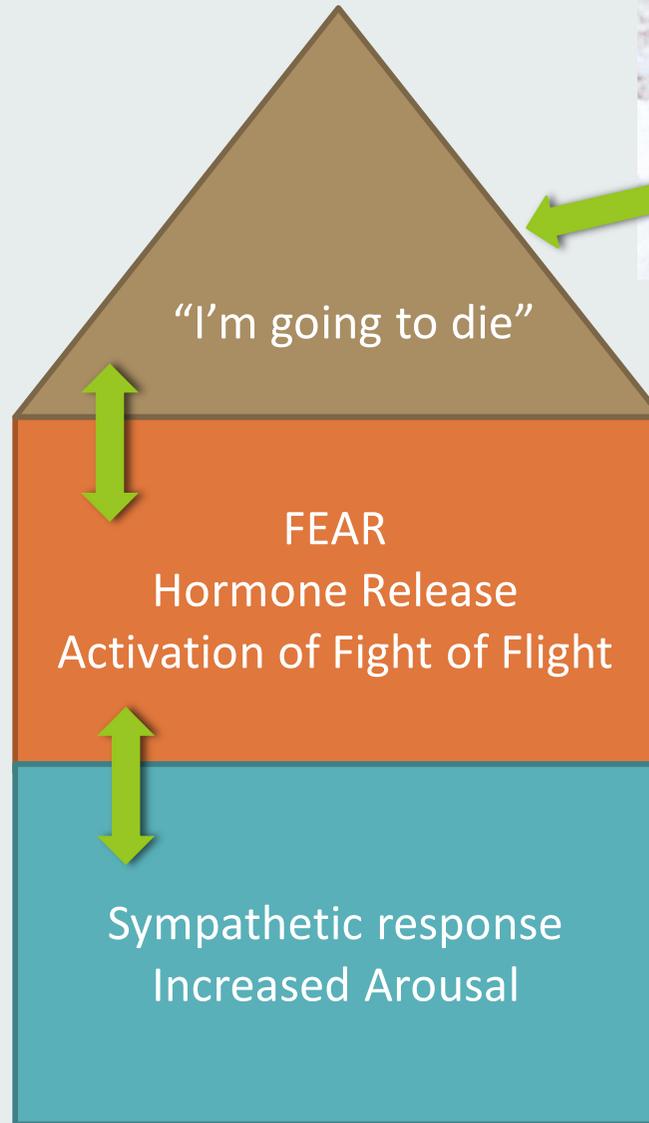
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# Stress Injury Formation



Response system overwhelmed

Emotional Connection

Helplessness

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Sights

Sounds

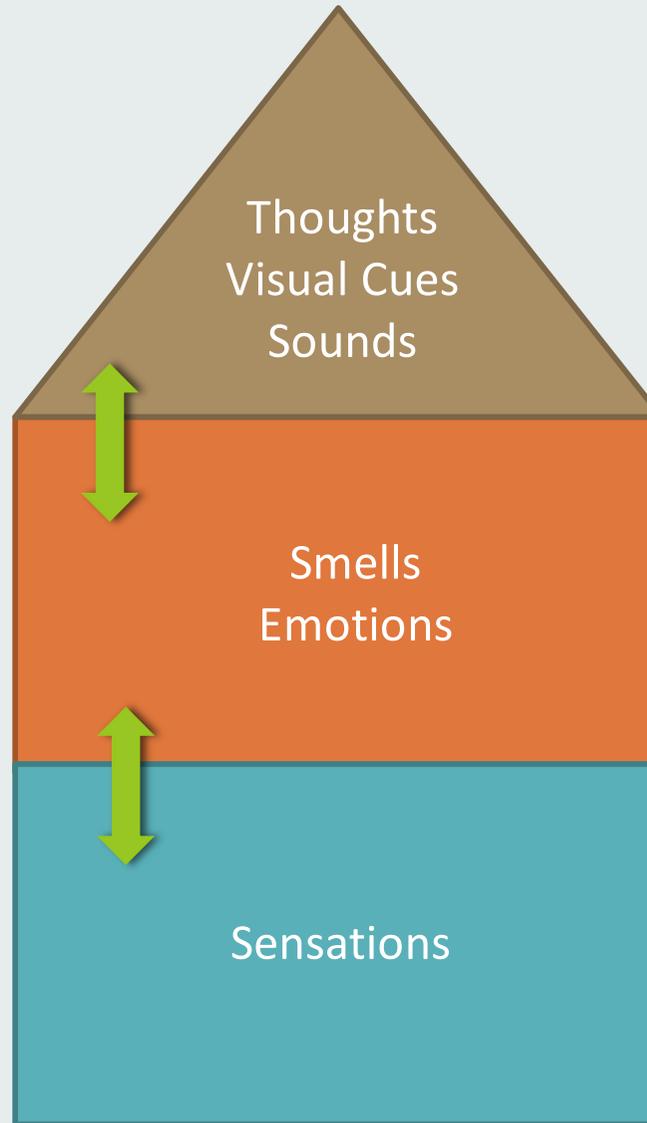
Smells

Sensations

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# Post-Traumatic Stress Response



**Hyper-arousal**

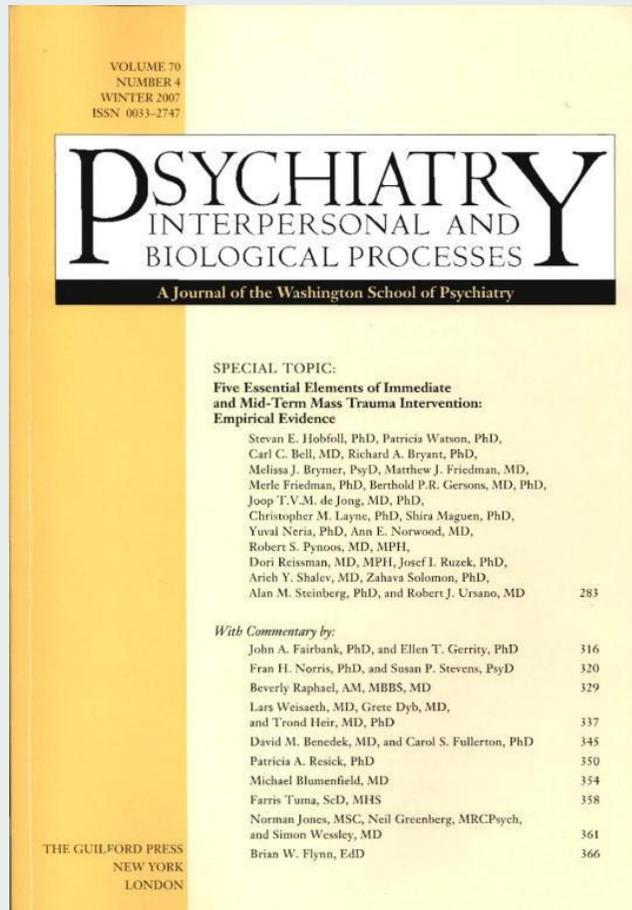
**Avoidance**

**Negative Mood  
& Cognitions**

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# Psychological First Aid: Current Research



Hobfoll et al Psychiatry 70:2007

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# PSA Defined

**Psychological First Aid (PSA)** is an evidence-formed modular approach to help in the immediate aftermath of disaster, terrorism or other significant trauma event.

## Goals:

- To reduce initial distress, and thus long-term morbidity
- To foster short- and long-term adaptive functioning and coping



# The 5 Principles



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# SAFETY

## CREATE A SAFE ENVIRONMENT BY:

- Mitigating the scene as much as possible by reducing chaos and removing patients from perceived threats.
- Reflecting evidence of safety.



# SAFETY

- Mitigating the scene as much as possible by reducing chaos and removing patients from perceived threats.
- Reflecting evidence of safety.

## DEMO

- Watch this short demonstration.
- Note where you see “Safety.”



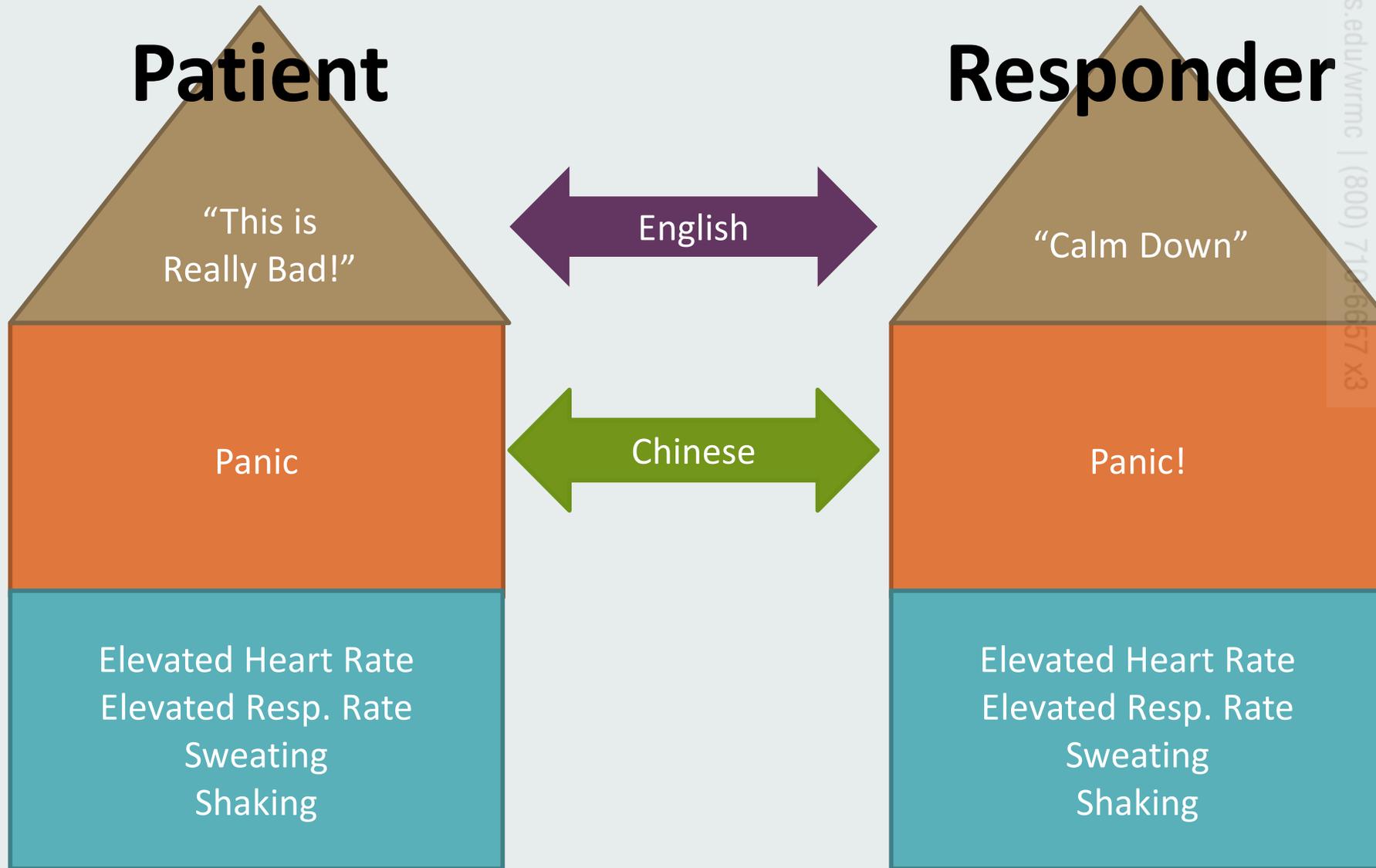
# CALM

## CREATE CALM BY:

- Calming yourself first - being the dominant nervous system.
- Emphasizing the present, the practical, and the possible.



# Communication



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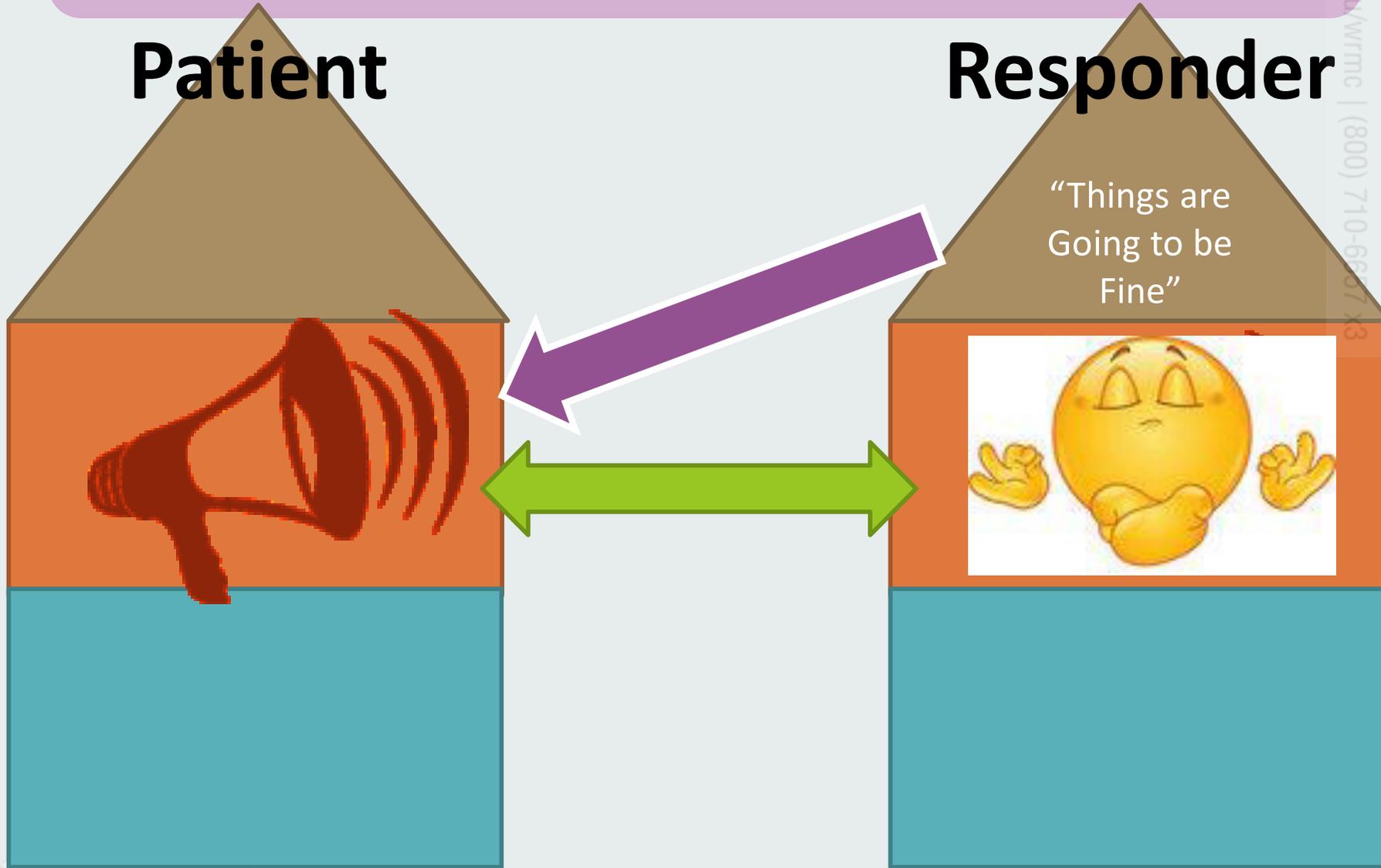
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# Communicating CALM

**Patient**

**Responder**



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# Communicating CALM

**Patient**

**Responder**

“Things are  
Going to be  
Fine”



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# Self- and Collective Efficacy

Find a Partner close by to you.

One Person: Share a Story

The Other Person: Listen



# Self- and Collective Efficacy

## CREATE SELF AND COLLECTIVE EFFICACY BY :

- Involving the person in problem-solving, self-care, and rescue - Asking people what else they can do and what they should not do.
- Recognizing and reminding people of existing strengths and past experiences .



# CONNECTION

## CREATE CONNECTION BY:

- Building an on-scene relationship.
- Prioritizing and helping people. contact friends, family, loved ones (including pets) as soon as possible.

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# HOPE

## CREATE HOPE BY:

- Reflecting specific, accurate, positive facts and predictable, realistic steps.
- Personally maintaining and communicating hope.



# The 5 Principles



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**PFA ONLINE Training**

NCTSN The National Child Traumatic Stress Network National Center for PTSD NACCHO

**Enroll in PFA Online**



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*6 hour free certificate online course*

*<http://learn.nctsn.org>*



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- Disaster Distress Helpline: Call 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746.
- Disasterdistress.sahmsa.gov
- “Managing Intense Emotions,” Psychological First Aid at <http://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content/NMH05-0210/NMH05-0210.pdf>
- National Center for PTSD at <http://www.ptsd.va.gov/>
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