

Fight, Flight, or Freeze

Releasing Organizational Trauma

Content Warning:
**Discussion of trauma and post-
traumatic stress**

I am a trauma survivor

I am *not* a mental health
professional

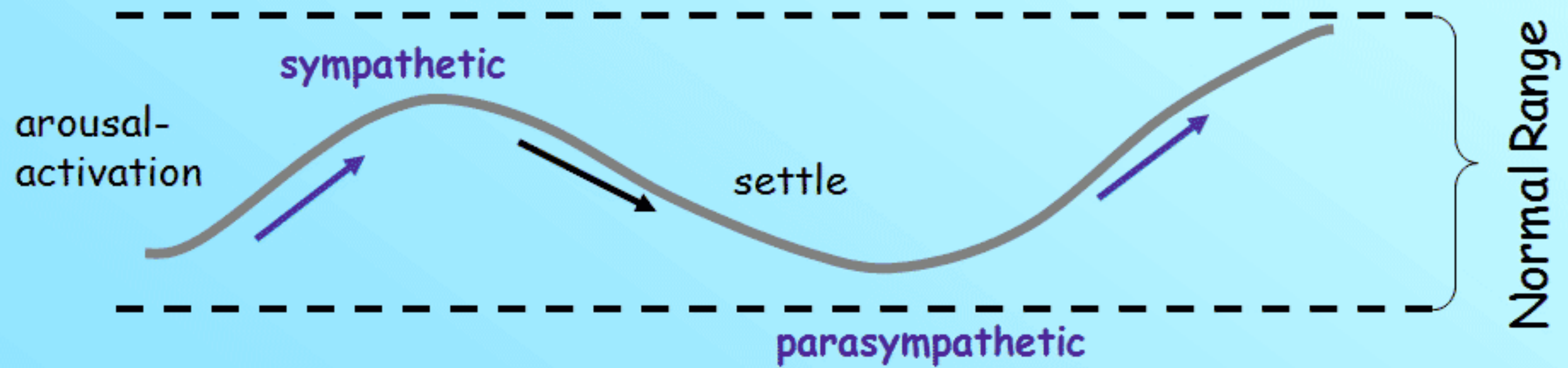


Humans are not zebras

“Animals in the wild are not traumatized by routine threats to their lives, while humans, on the other hand, are readily overwhelmed and often subject to the traumatic symptoms of hyper arousal, shutdown and dysregulation.”

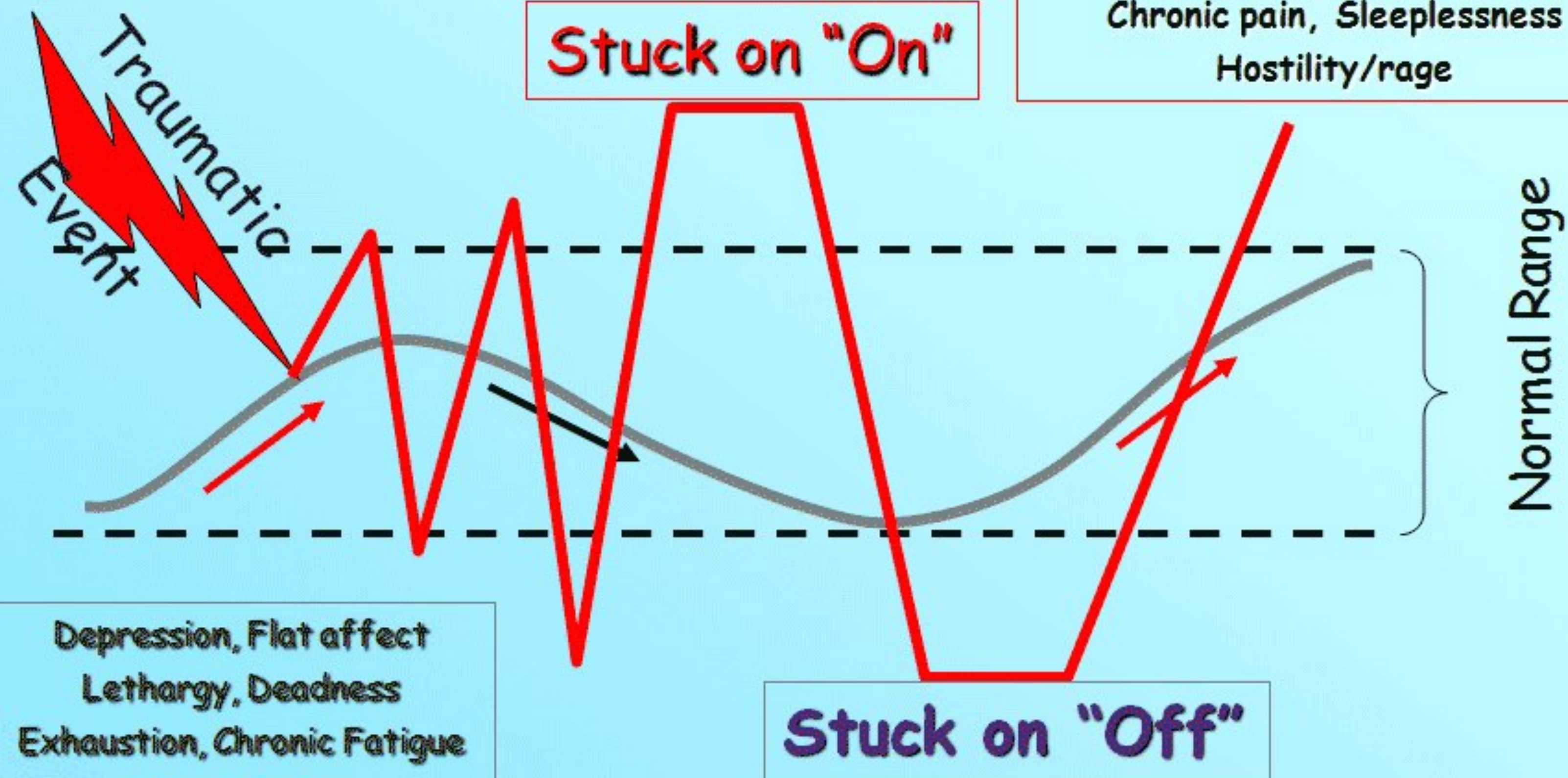
– Dr. Peter Levine

A Healthy Nervous System



Symptoms of Un-Discharged Traumatic Stress

Anxiety, Panic, Hyperactivity
Exaggerated Startle
Inability to relax, Restlessness
Hyper-vigilance, Digestive problems
Emotional flooding
Chronic pain, Sleeplessness
Hostility/rage



Depression, Flat affect
Lethargy, Deadness
Exhaustion, Chronic Fatigue
Disorientation
Disconnection, Dissociation
Complex syndromes, Pain
Low Blood Pressure
Poor digestion

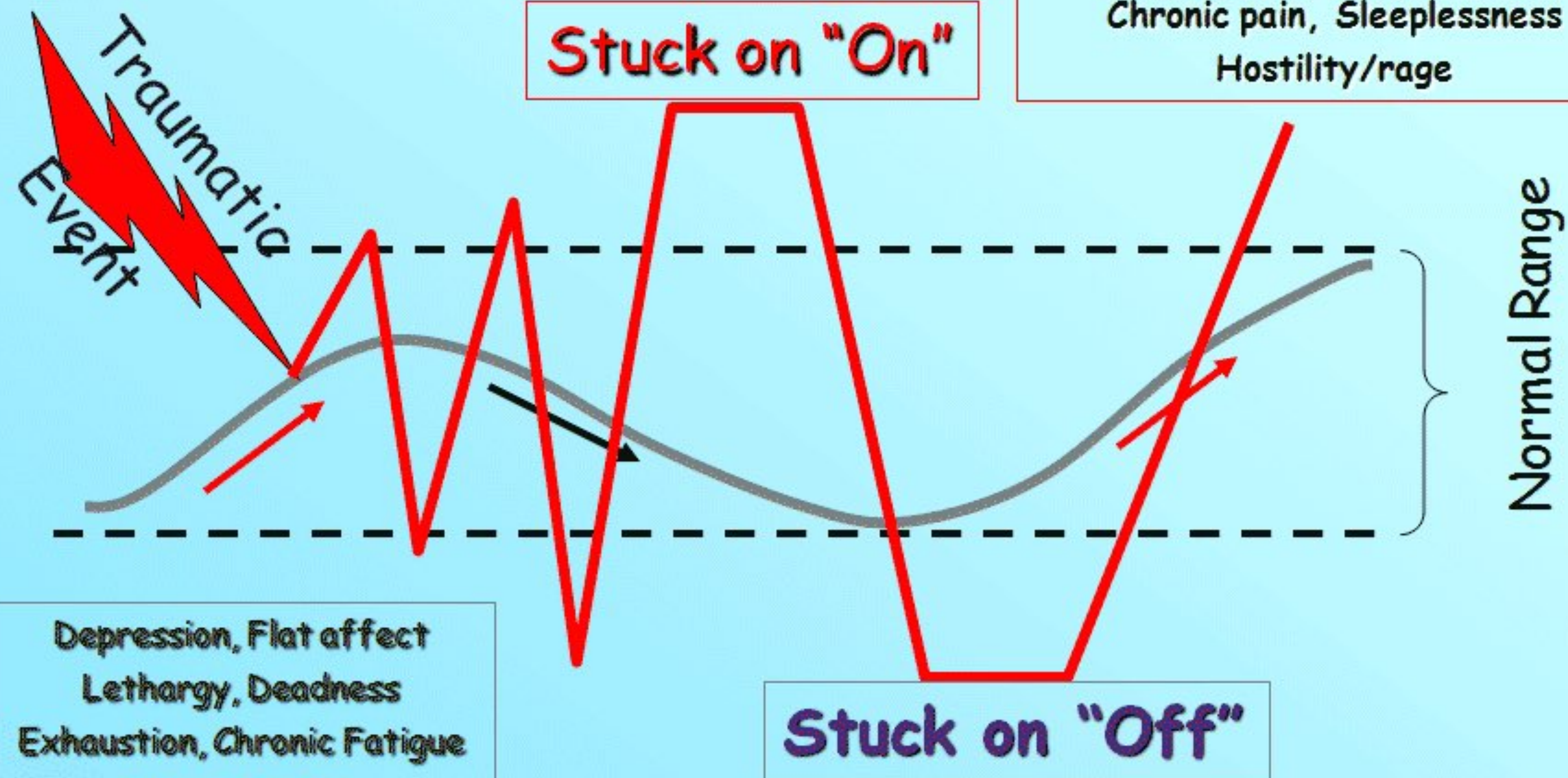
Nuanced

- Trauma occurs when one's solution (active response to threat) does not work
- Trauma can result from real or perceived threats
- Trauma is subjective and relative

**How does this apply to an
organization?**

Symptoms of Un-Discharged Traumatic Stress

Anxiety, Panic, Hyperactivity
Exaggerated Startle
Inability to relax, Restlessness
Hyper-vigilance, Digestive problems
Emotional flooding
Chronic pain, Sleeplessness
Hostility/rage



Depression, Flat affect
Lethargy, Deadness
Exhaustion, Chronic Fatigue
Disorientation
Disconnection, Dissociation
Complex syndromes, Pain
Low Blood Pressure
Poor digestion

Hyperarousal

fight or flight

Hypoarousal *freeze*

Inappropriate response





Jennifer Brea ✓

@jenbrea



"We have a saying in medicine that when you hear hoofbeats, the first thing that should come to mind is a horse, not a zebra." This too cute by half phrase has killed so many zebras. [@raf_ideas](#) [#Afflicted](#)

10:35 PM · Aug 13, 2018

**Identify your organization's
window of tolerance**

“Resilient organizations are not traumatized by routine threats to their mission or business. Non-resilient organizations are readily overwhelmed and often subject to the symptoms of overreaction, shutdown and lack of regulated effort.”

*– Matty Stratton
(Not a doctor)*

Regulate



Organizational EMDR

Game days



Planned failure injection

TICKET

8177205

MACO TAG & LABEL

**KEEP
THIS
COUPON**

8177205

MACO TAG & LABEL

TICKET

8177215

MACO TAG & LABEL

**KEEP
THIS
COUPON**

8177215

TICKET

8177205

8177205

81

TICKET

8177215

8177215

Process failure



A word about somatic experiencing

Cognitive distortions

Polarized thinking

Overgeneralization

Fortune telling

Control fallacies

Self-care



Context switch

Allocate mental bandwidth

Treat yourself

“The weeks that I am on-call, I schedule wine with my girlfriends or plan to go out for my favorite dinner...this can be a really rough week, but I have something to look forward to”

–Ana Medina, Gremlin

Stay healthy

Tips from the twittererverse



Cole Furfaro-Strode

@colestrode

Follow



Replying to [@mattstratton](#)

Rest whenever possible, maybe that means sleep, but any activity that is restorative. I like knitting or reading. Getting outside when I can. Moving my body, it's hard to get outside for a while, but YouTube yoga is great. Saying "no" to other obligations.

4:03 PM - 4 Mar 2019



Tammy "buttons" Bütow 🧠❤️

@tammybutow

Following



Replying to [@mattstratton](#)

during really bad rotations: curl up with throw rugs & tea on the couch, naps between pages, delivery food and gym in my building.

during rotations / teams with no pages: be eternally grateful

3:05 PM - 4 Mar 2019 from [San Francisco, CA](#)



Matt Simmons

@standaloneSA

Following



Replying to [@mattstratton](#)

Try to get a massage a week. Run on the treadmill each time I get adequate sleep. Paint.

2:58 PM - 4 Mar 2019



jeremy derr

@jcderr

Follow



Replying to [@mattstratton](#)

I binge watch Netflix shows my wife isn't interested in and eat so, so many cans of Pringle's. Or potato chips and joppie sauce. Or. Uh. Both.

6:54 AM - 3 Mar 2019

And if all else fails...



Jeremy 🥑
@IAmJerdog

Following



Replying to [@mattstratton](#)

Sleep in, forget to put phone on charger,
accidentally have phone on quiet mode
instead of ringer...
now that I put that down it may make sense
as to why they no longer wanted me on-call

4:11 PM - 4 Mar 2019

“Resilient strength is the opposite of helplessness.”

–Dr. Peter Levine

<https://speaking.mattstratton.com>