



Trauma Responses
And
Attachment Theory

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Hello!



Who am I?

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SOCIAL MEDIA

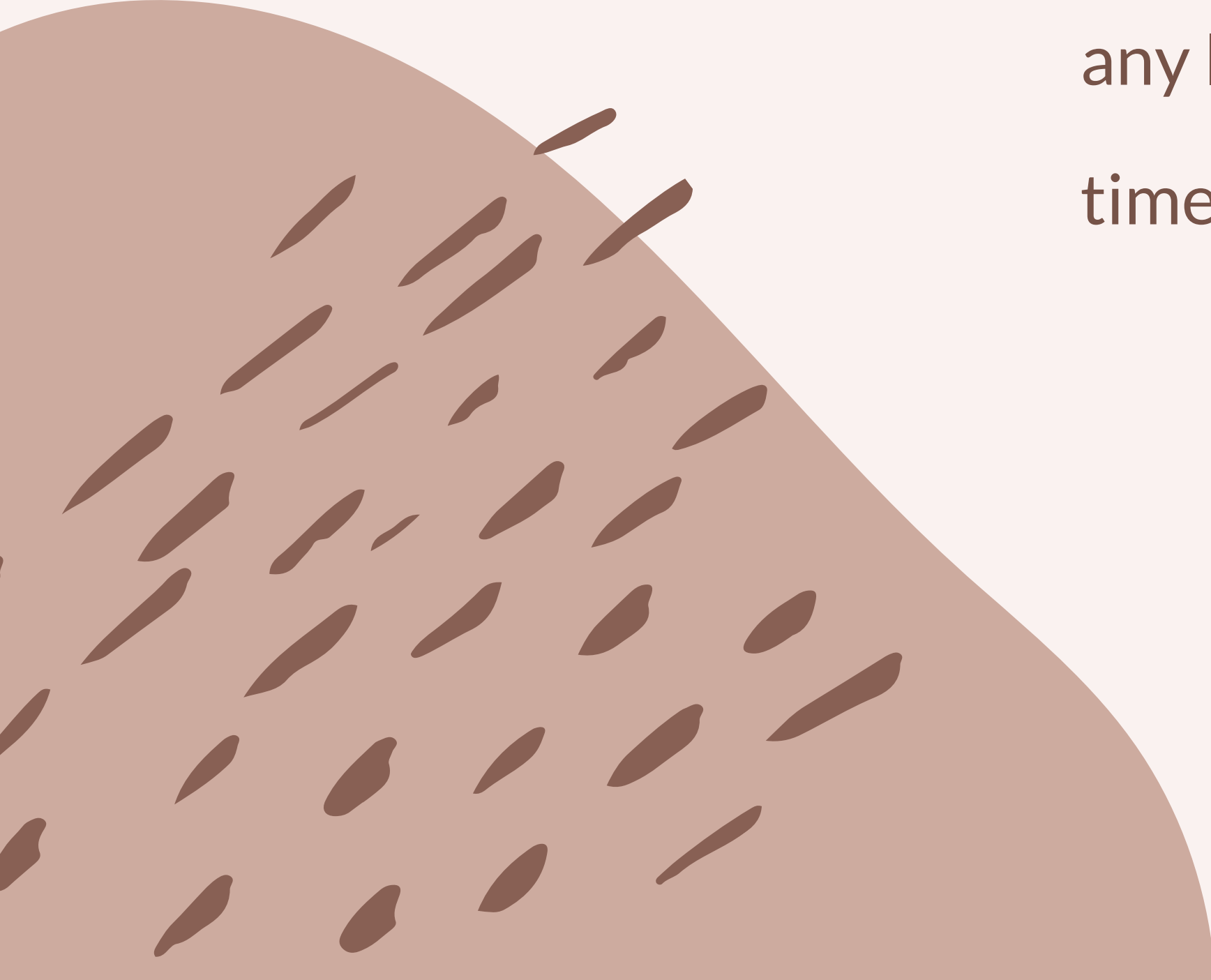
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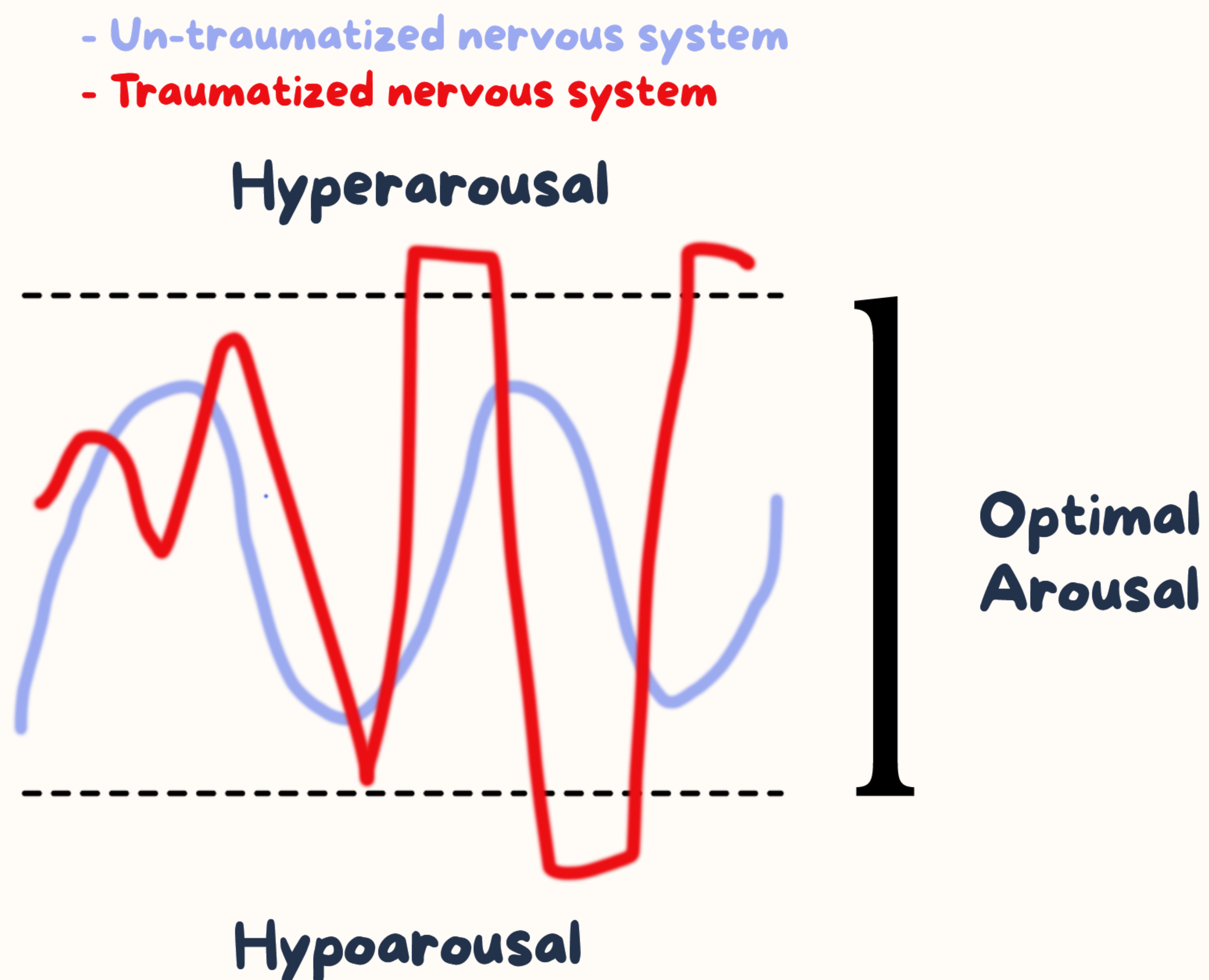




WHAT ARE *Trauma Responses?*

Here's what you need to know first about a trauma response: it is when you are reacting more towards what has happened to you in the past, than the situation you are currently in. This is why we trauma survivors often self-sabotage and feel confused and ashamed afterwards.

Here's an important model called the Window of Tolerance model:



In this model, hyperarousal essentially refers to when your nervous system is over-engaged (leading to panic, stress, irritability, aggression and more), and hypoarousal refers to when your nervous system is under-engaged as a defense mechanism (shutting down, disconnection, dissociation). Optimal arousal is the ideal state.

With that preliminary understanding, let's now discuss the trauma responses.

As you may already know, there are four types of trauma responses and they all describe a category of response to the stimuli that you are currently encountering, be it people, events or situations. These four responses are fight, flight, freeze and fawn.

Before we talk about each one, however, remember that not all the actions in the fight, flight, freeze and fawn categories are necessarily trauma responses. What differentiates a trauma response from a normal, expected reaction is essentially what we mentioned before: is the action a legitimate, helpful response in the current situation, or are you reacting to something that has already happened?

If an action is helpful and deserved in the situation, then it is probably not a trauma response. However, if you self-sabotage and hurt others or yourself because of what happened to you in the past, then it could be a trauma response.

The next page gives the definition of, and shows some examples of trauma responses together with their healthier, expected counterpart actions.

Examples of Trauma Responses

Reasonable Response:

- Resisting against a violent act such as being robbed, assaulted or hijacked

Trauma Response (Fight):

- Treating constructive/fair criticism as insults, shouting at people aggressively

Reasonable Response:

- Running away from danger such as a natural disaster, explosive or criminal

Trauma Response (Flight):

- Not taking any risks at all, withdrawing from opportunities and people

Reasonable Response:

- Slowing down and stopping your car when confused in order to avoid an accident

Trauma Response (Freeze):

- Shutting down during a high-pressure situation or when being judged/criticized

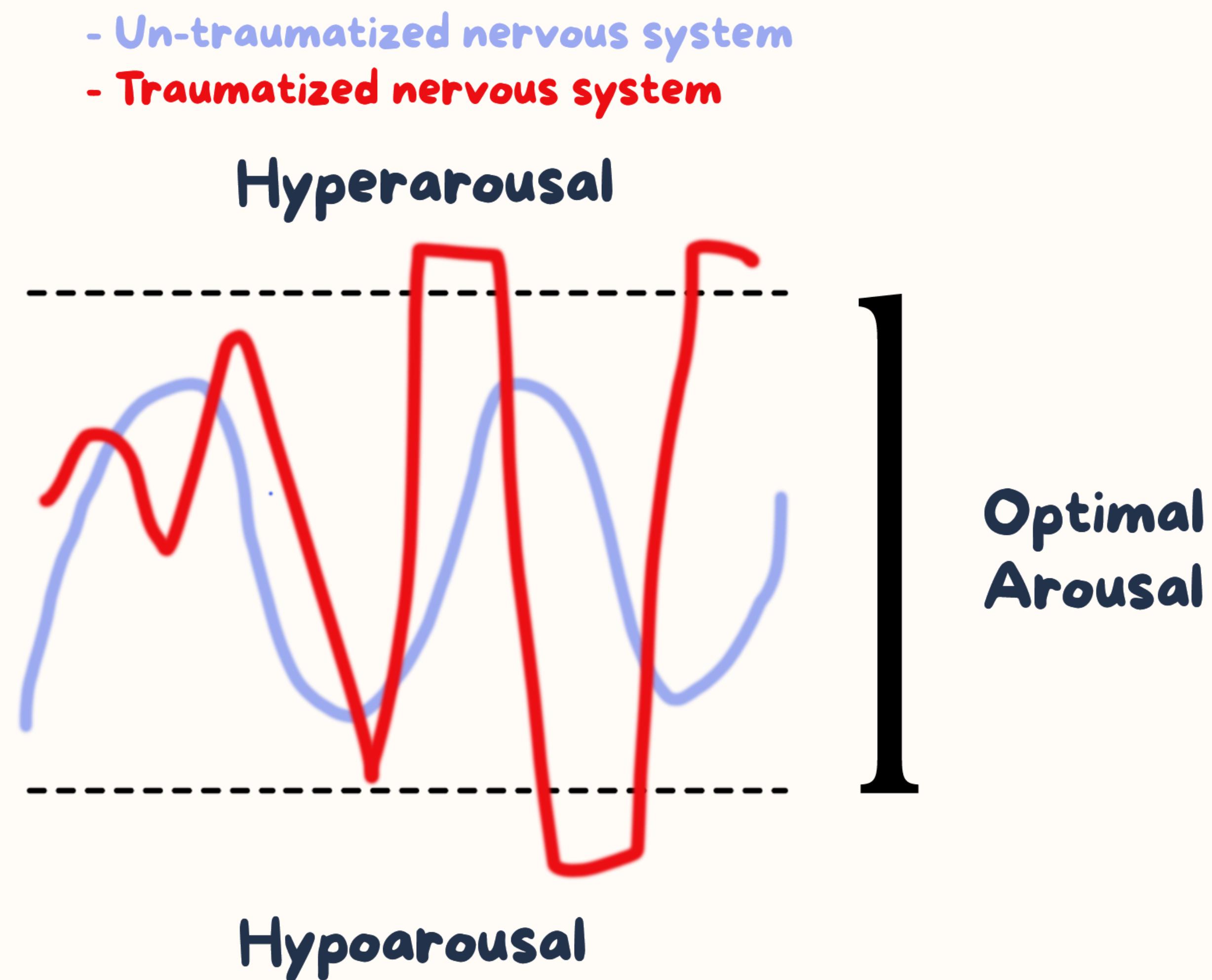
Reasonable Response:

- Being submissive to a police officer, teacher or other authority figure so they won't escalate the situation

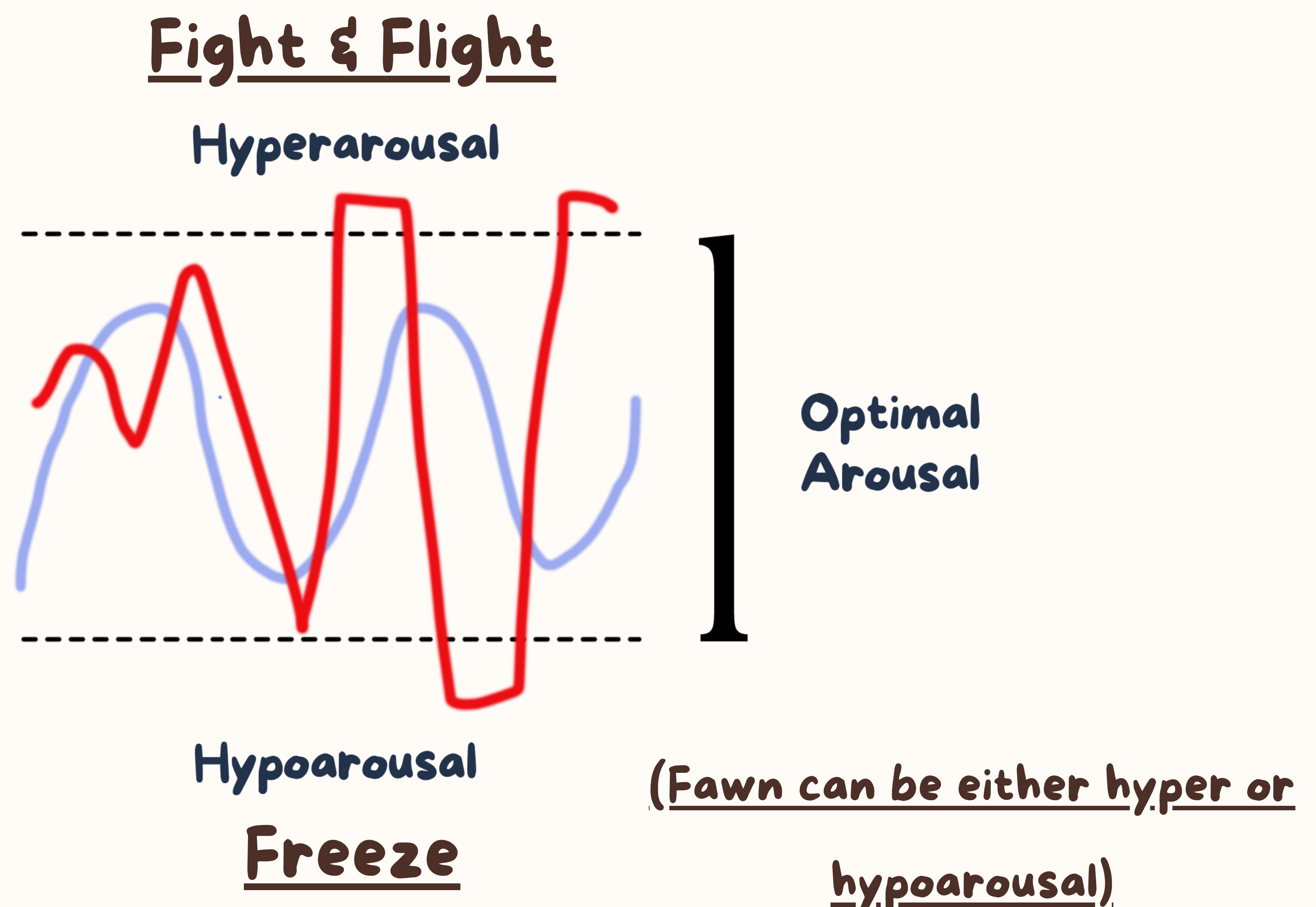
Trauma Response (Fawn):

- Sacrificing your needs just to please your partner so they won't hurt or leave you

Now that we have a better idea of trauma responses, let us talk bring our attention back to the Window of Tolerance model and see how these two concepts relate:



Here's the interesting part: the fight and flight response are generally associated with the hyperarousal state, while the freeze response aligns with the hypoarousal state. The fawn response is a little bit more nebulous, and, both in my own experience and talking to traumatized clients, can occur in both hyperarousal and hypoarousal states.



Then, you might ask: “Okay, this is all good to know. But how does this relate to me personally and how can I use this knowledge to help me heal my trauma?” To answer that question, we will need to take a dive into attachment theory.

The Link To Attachment Theory

Pioneered by John Bowlby and later furthered by Mary Ainsworth, you probably know attachment theory via the different attachment styles. However, though that component of attachment theory is probably the most popular and widespread, most people don't know the actual theory and history behind it.

Specifically, attachment theory posits that how your caretaker (parent or guardian) treated you in the past, would predict how you act in your personal relationships. A caretaker with high availability and responsiveness would encourage exploration and curiosity of the world on the part of the child, as you are more likely to take risks and delve into new opportunities when you know that your caretaker has got your back. This leads to what is known as a secure attachment style, where you feel generally content in your relationships, are okay with yourself, can identify and communicate your expressions safely and clearly but also assert your boundaries when need be.

Unfortunately, I would wager that most people who would identify with having trauma do not fall into the secure attachment style. This is because, when your caretaker isn't as high in availability and responsiveness as it should be, it leads to attachment injuries -- when you, as the child, aren't as explorative and curious because the world does not feel safe to you, or your caretaker is an inconsistent source of affection.

This does not mean that the child has to be coddled and over-protected all the time. It means that threats, fears and stresses are inevitable, but the presence of a safe, consistent and caring caretaker allows the child (or the adult) to feel that they are capable of handling the challenges and obstacles in their life.

Before we go into the different insecure attachment styles, we need to understand one crucial aspect of attachment theory which I feel is not talked about enough in the popular psychology conversation -- the attachment behavioral system. That is, when a child feels scared or stressed out, they would seek their caretaker figure for comfort -- this is known as an activation of the attachment behavioral system, and is perfectly normal especially for a child.

However, when the caretaker does not respond or is not present, the child cries and screams even louder to seek any bit of attention or care -- this is known as hyperactivation of the attachment behavioral system and involves increasingly persistent and louder cries for help. Have this behavior long enough, and the child picks up the habit of hyperactivating for others' attention, reducing their independence and causing them to people-please.

Yet, other children in this predicament, upon realizing that their caretaker just isn't there and that crying for help just doesn't work, can go in the opposite direction -- instead of crying for help, they just simply shut off, suppress their emotions and try and deal with things themselves. This is known as deactivation of the attachment behavioral system, and leads to issues like self-isolation, hyper-independence and not knowing how to express their emotions.

Together, hyperactivation and deactivation of the attachment behavioral system are known as attachment injuries due to attachment insecurity. They are a product of either a single period of intense trauma, or a long period of low consistency and responsibility from their caretakers and the adults around them.

In the long term, a child eventually develops an insecure attachment style due to these attachment injuries. Different sources use different names and even have a different number of attachment styles, but for simplicity's sake, here are the main ones:

- Insecure anxious-attachment: when a person is always seeking reassurance and attention from others because they are not okay with themselves (associated with hyperactivation)
- Insecure avoidant-attachment: when a person avoids closeness and intimacy with others and tries to do everything by themselves, finding vulnerability very uncomfortable (associated with deactivation)
- Disorganized attachment: when a person tends to be 'hot and cold', looking for others' approval and attention but self-isolating at the same time as they don't trust people (associated with a mixture of hyper AND de-activation)

At this point, you might identify with being hyperactivated or deactivated, or even both at different points in time. You might even know your specific attachment style. But the key thing is how the attachment behavioral system is related to our trauma response.

Do you notice how hyperactivation and an anxious attachment style is associated with the fawn trauma response? And how the insecure avoidant is associated with the flight response? An avoidant and disorganized attachment style does have a relationship with the fight response too, as distrust towards others means you are more likely to have conflict with them.

This all goes to mean one thing: in our trauma healing journey, it is also wise to identify how it is possible to move into a secure attachment style from an insecure one in order to truly heal our attachment injuries.

How To Move From Insecure Attachment Into Secure Attachment

Here are a few ways to move into secure attachment:

- Identify and combat unhelpful thinking styles: this is when you are able to realize when you are having unhelpful thinking styles much as mind-reading, fortune-telling and black-and-white thinking and modifying it to a healthier, more realistic thought. My [Trauma-Focused CBT Worksheet Package](#) can help with that.
- Heal your inner child wounds: Allow your inner child to be unburdened from the roles it has taken on and from being stuck in that specific time where they were traumatized. One of the ways you can do this is by using Internal Family Systems which is discussed extensively in my [Healing Trauma eBook](#).

Identify and communicate your expressions using emotionally-oriented therapeutic tools: One way you can do this is by using tools from Emotionally-Focused Therapy (EFT), an attachment-informed therapeutic modality that uses tools such as the emotional wheel to help you communicate with your past self and the people around you. Check out my [course on healing social anxiety/general anxiety with EFT!](#)

Build up your self-esteem and self-worth: This is really tough for traumatized people, but what I like to do is keep a log of the achievements I have achieved and good things others have said about me that I turn to whenever I feel down about myself.

Construct meaning for yourself through other life purposes: Goals such as to become the best version of yourself, to build a legacy and to help others create meaning outside of relationships so that you can feel okay with yourself, and know that you are capable of doing hard things.

Ask for help from others: As mentioned, vulnerability is strength and no person is an island. Being able to ask for help is a sign of courage, not a weakness, and allows you to realize that you can seek assistance without being afraid.

Thank you for reading this resource and I hope you found it helpful!

The Next Step On Your Journey To Recovery

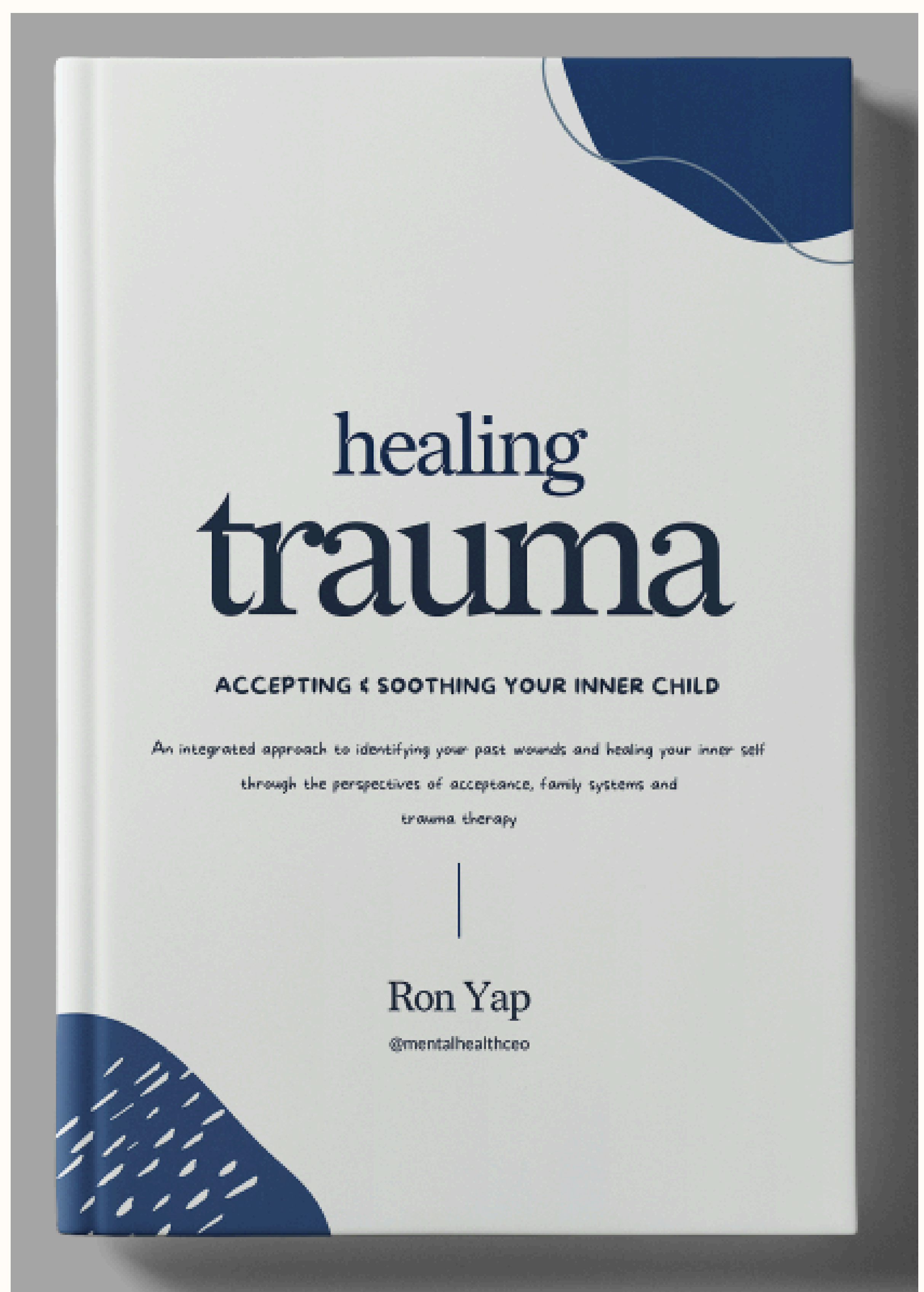
Through this journal, I hope you've become more aware of some the tools that will help you along your journey to healing trauma and your inner child wounds. However, I would also like to give you a snapshot to other methods to accelerate your journey. In this journal we mentioned that you have an Adult, Child and Parent part that may be damaged or healthy. However, what if I told you that you, as a person, are full of parts, including multiple inner Children?

That is the main thesis behind the therapeutic modality of Internal Family Systems (IFS), a trauma-informed approach that takes into account every part of you, including your multiple inner Children all stuck in time at different traumatic periods of your life.

My ebook, Healing Trauma: Accepting & Soothing Your Inner Child, is a step-by-step manual that brings you through IFS and how to apply it in your own life through self-therapy.

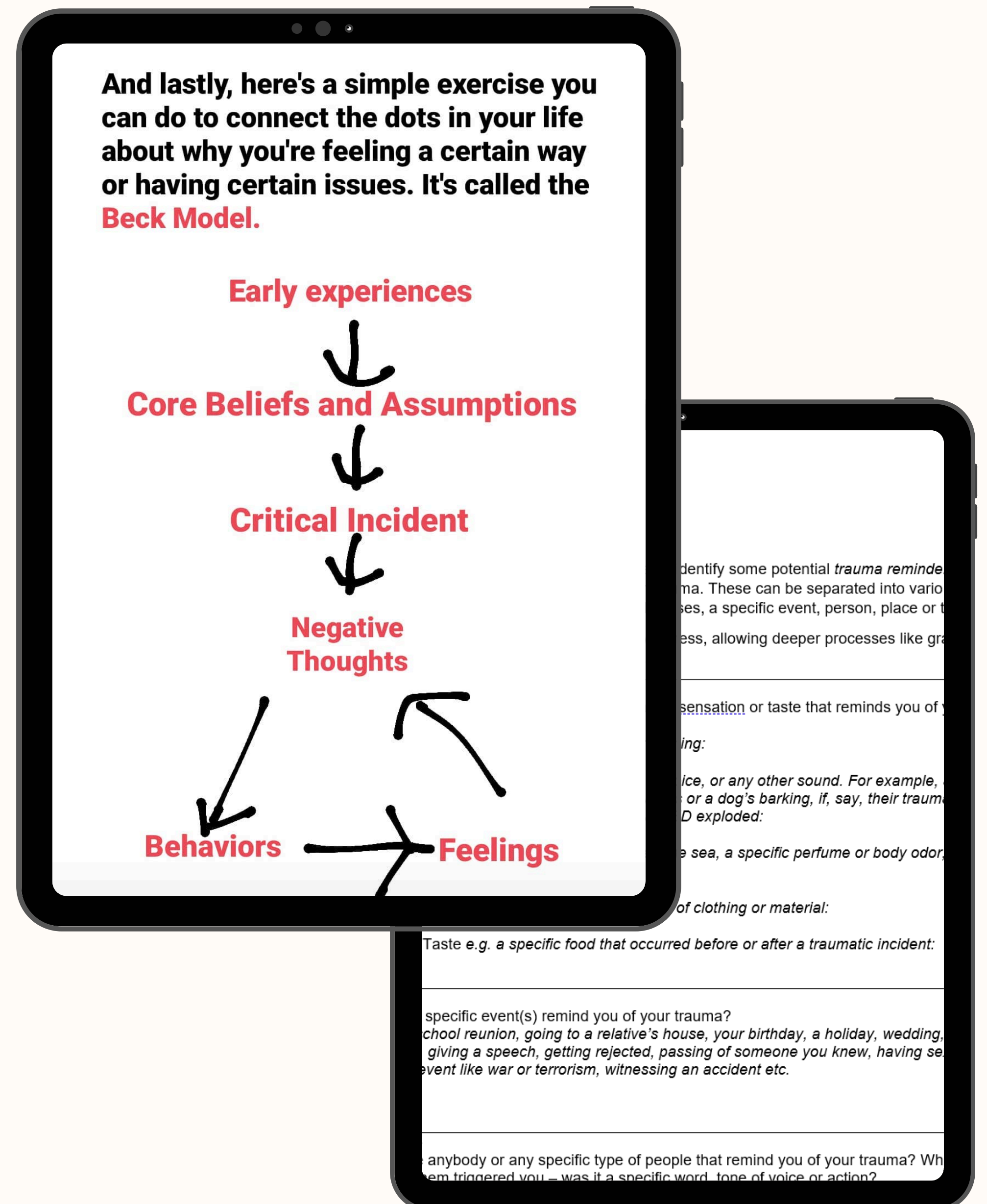
Furthermore, it also contains additional exercises on ACT (Acceptance and Commitment Therapy) that will build on the foundations you have learnt from this journal.

Personally, it was a combination of ACT and IFS that gave me hope and inspiration to heal from my own inner child wounds. This ebook is a testament to that journey.



Furthermore, you will also get a 40% discount for the eBook and 2 free bonuses if you purchase now:

- Trauma-Focused CBT Worksheet Package (worth \$25)

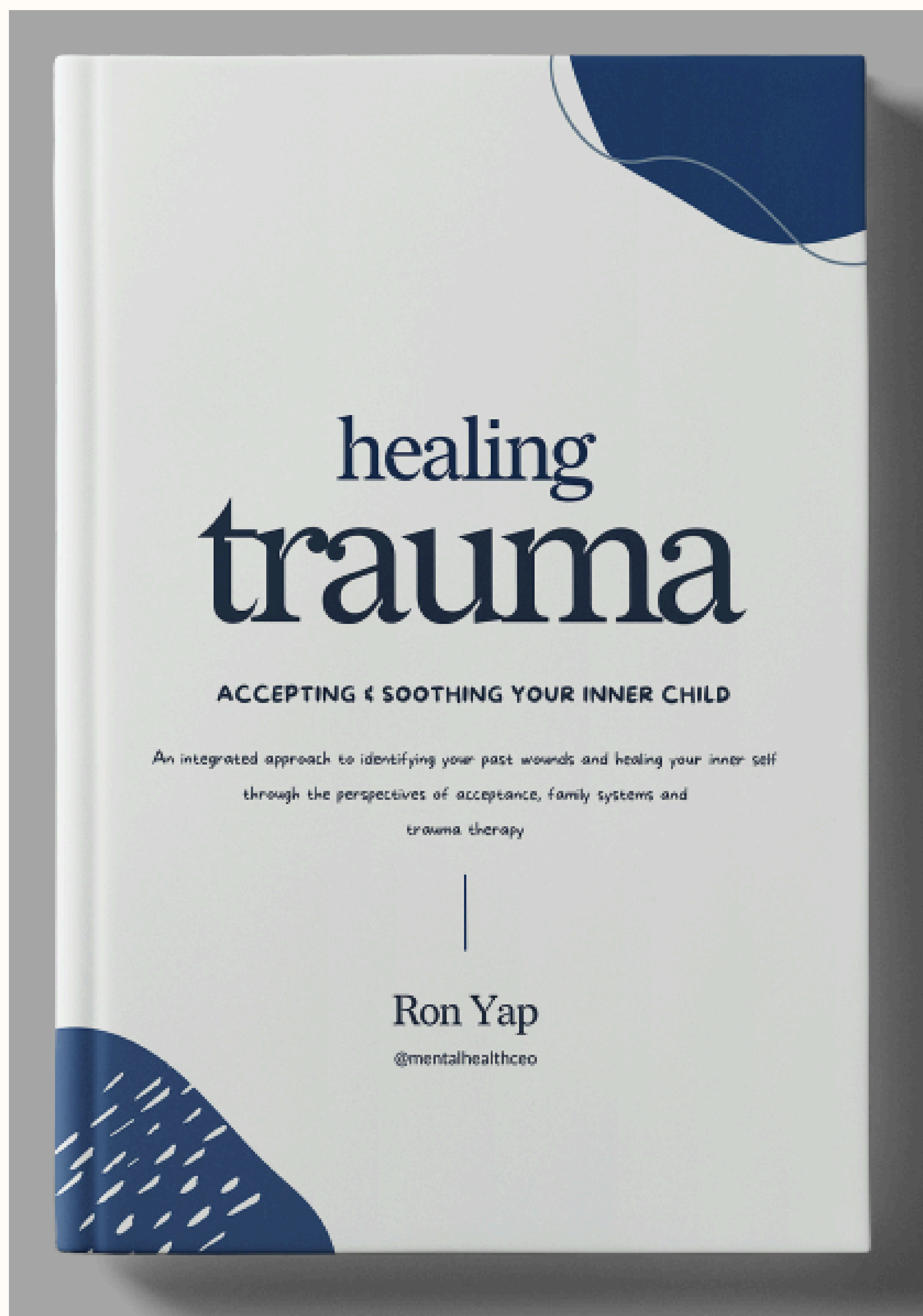


- Somatic Exercises For Trauma Audio Guide (worth \$25)



So, what are you waiting for?

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& 2 FREE Bonuses NOW!

Would You Like Some Additional Help?



As you've hopefully seen by now, taking the time to learn and implement these core therapy skills for trauma and inner child wounds can lead to huge transformations in your mindset, behavior and relationships.

However, if you're having trouble applying the concepts or would like to speed up the process, a guiding voice and listening ear can help.

Hence, I'd like to invite you to sign up for my Mental Wellness Coaching Program to apply what you've learnt in this resource and others to truly improve your life.

Book Your Session

Today!