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HEALING THE MEDICAL SOUL: HELPING HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS WHO SERVE CROSS-CULTURALLY TO FLOURISH

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Course Content

- ◎ Primary and secondary trauma experienced by medical missionaries
- ◎ Aspects of mission and medical culture that contribute to emotional distress, e.g. Mutated Values.
- ◎ Moral Injury/Grief

Course Objectives

- ① Identify particular issues and forces that threaten the wellbeing of healthcare missionaries
- ① Understand the mechanisms by which these issues and forces create distress
- ① Contribute expertise in crafting optimal therapeutic approaches
- ① Explore a model for addressing these challenges in restorative community

Medical paradigm

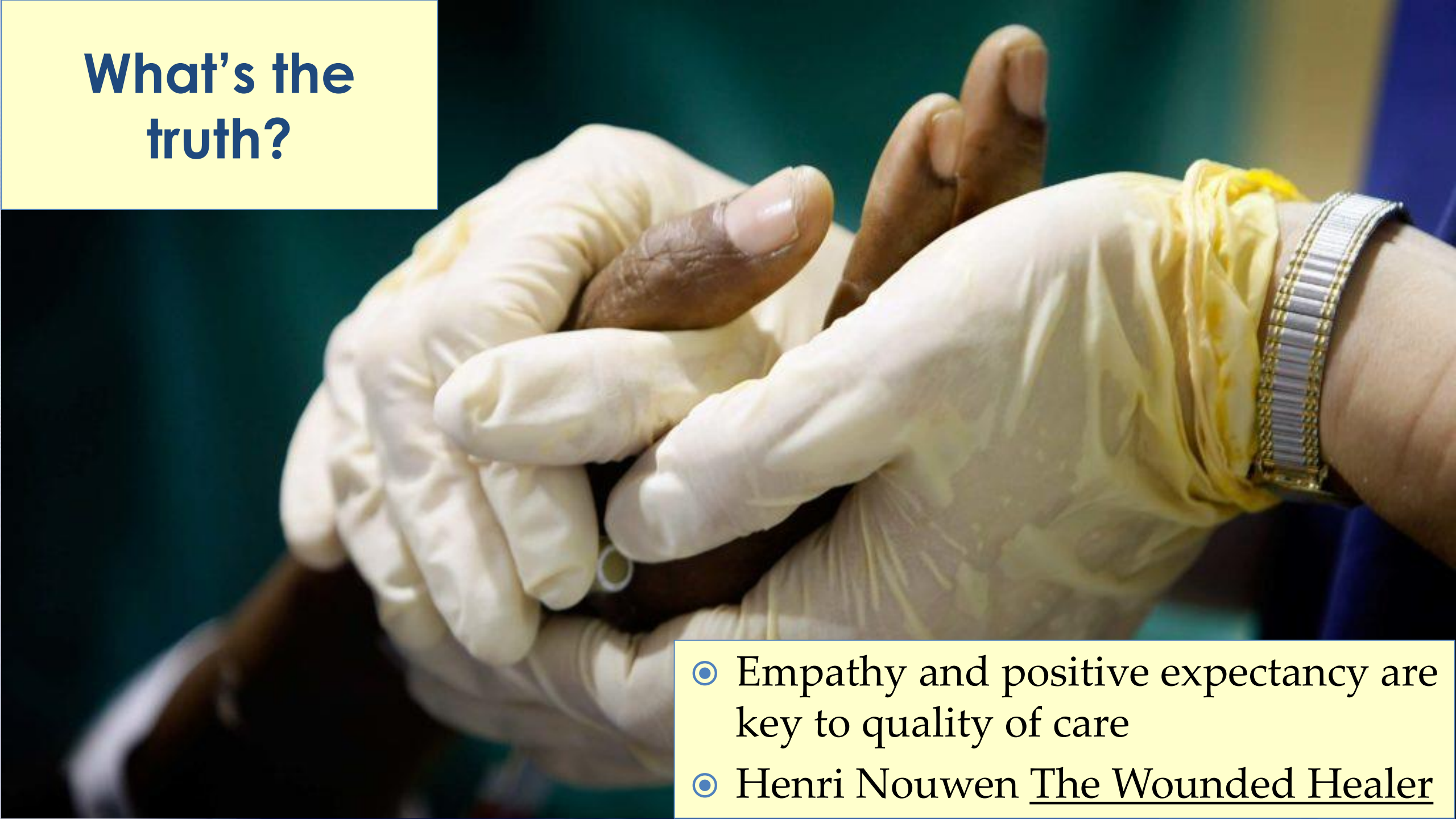


Stay healthy

Avoid infection by your patients

- Be objective
- Standoffish
- Stoic

What's the truth?

- 
- ⦿ Empathy and positive expectancy are key to quality of care
 - ⦿ Henri Nouwen The Wounded Healer



A new medical paradigm....

“That which is to give light must endure
burning.” Victor Frankl

Realization – Work as a caregiver involves
enduring chronic pain, which can be done in a
manner that lessens unnecessary ongoing suffering

“Let your light so shine before men”

Mt 5:16

Role play #1

- ◎ Stan is a first term medical missionary physician (trained in family medicine) serving in a remote rural hospital in West Africa contacts his therapist after experiencing a trauma related to a patient death
- ◎ Stan is the only physician serving a population of around 30,000 people. He has other missionaries helping but he feels ultimately responsible for everything that happens medically
- ◎ The missionary team is engaged in a pioneer church planting effort in a Muslim country

How was the doctor affected?

- ⦿ By this episode?
- ⦿ Prior to this episode?

The background is a seascape at sunset or sunrise. The sky is a mix of teal, blue, and purple, with soft clouds. The water is dark blue with a bright white reflection of the sun on the horizon. A white diagonal line runs from the top left towards the bottom center. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

**HELPING HEALTHCARE
MISSIONARIES FLOURISH:
ADDRESSING TRAUMA**

Primary and secondary trauma

Primary



What is trauma? Exposure to death, serious injury, or sexual violation due to:

- ⦿ directly experiencing or
- ⦿ witnessing the event in person,
- ⦿ learning that the event occurred to a close family member or close friend, **or (a patient you care about)**, or
- ⦿ experiencing first-hand repeated exposure to distressing details about the event

Secondary

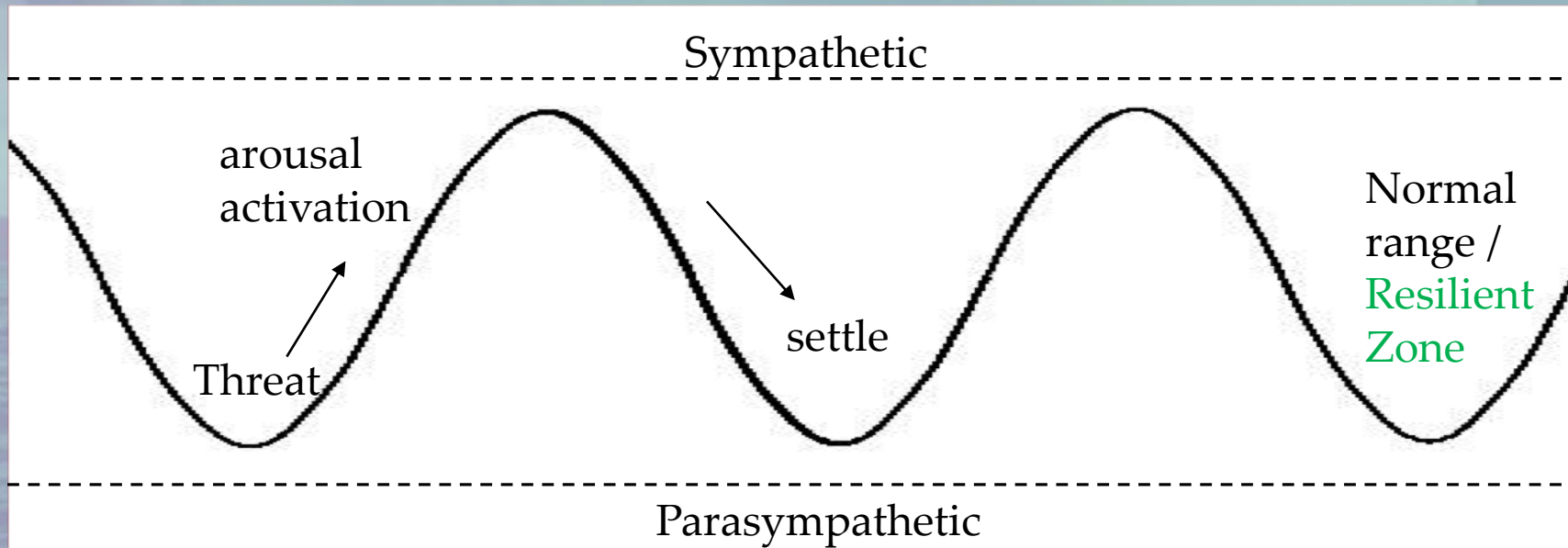


An aerial photograph showing a flooded area. A road runs along the left side, partially submerged. The water is murky and filled with debris, including branches and logs. The surrounding landscape is overgrown with tall grasses and shrubs.

Prevention

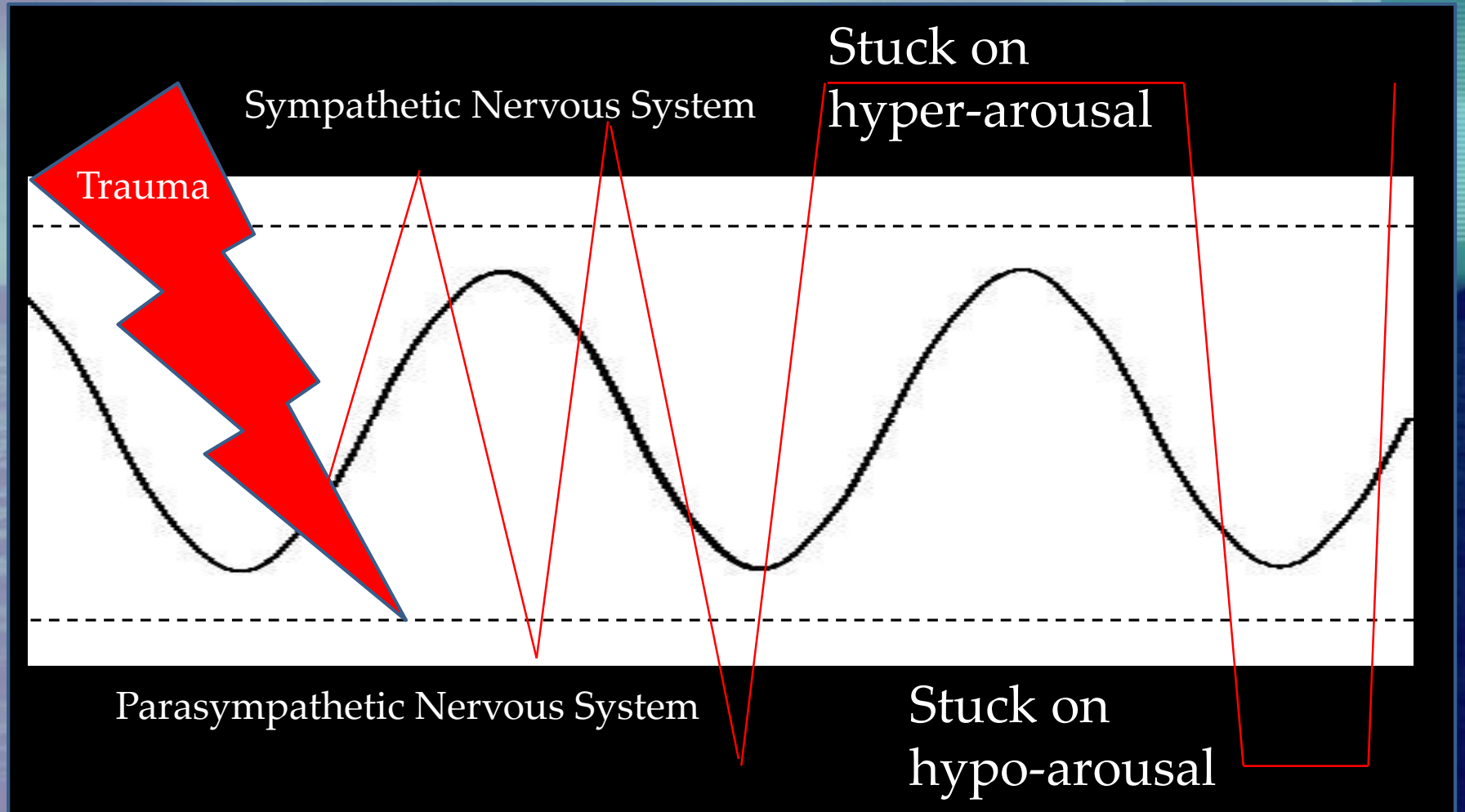
- ◎ Early recognition and awareness is key (ProQOL)
- ◎ Understanding the stress response mechanism
- ◎ Restoring healthy balance
- ◎ Enhanced self-care skills

Understanding the stress-response in a healthy nervous system – resilient living



Dysregulated nervous system

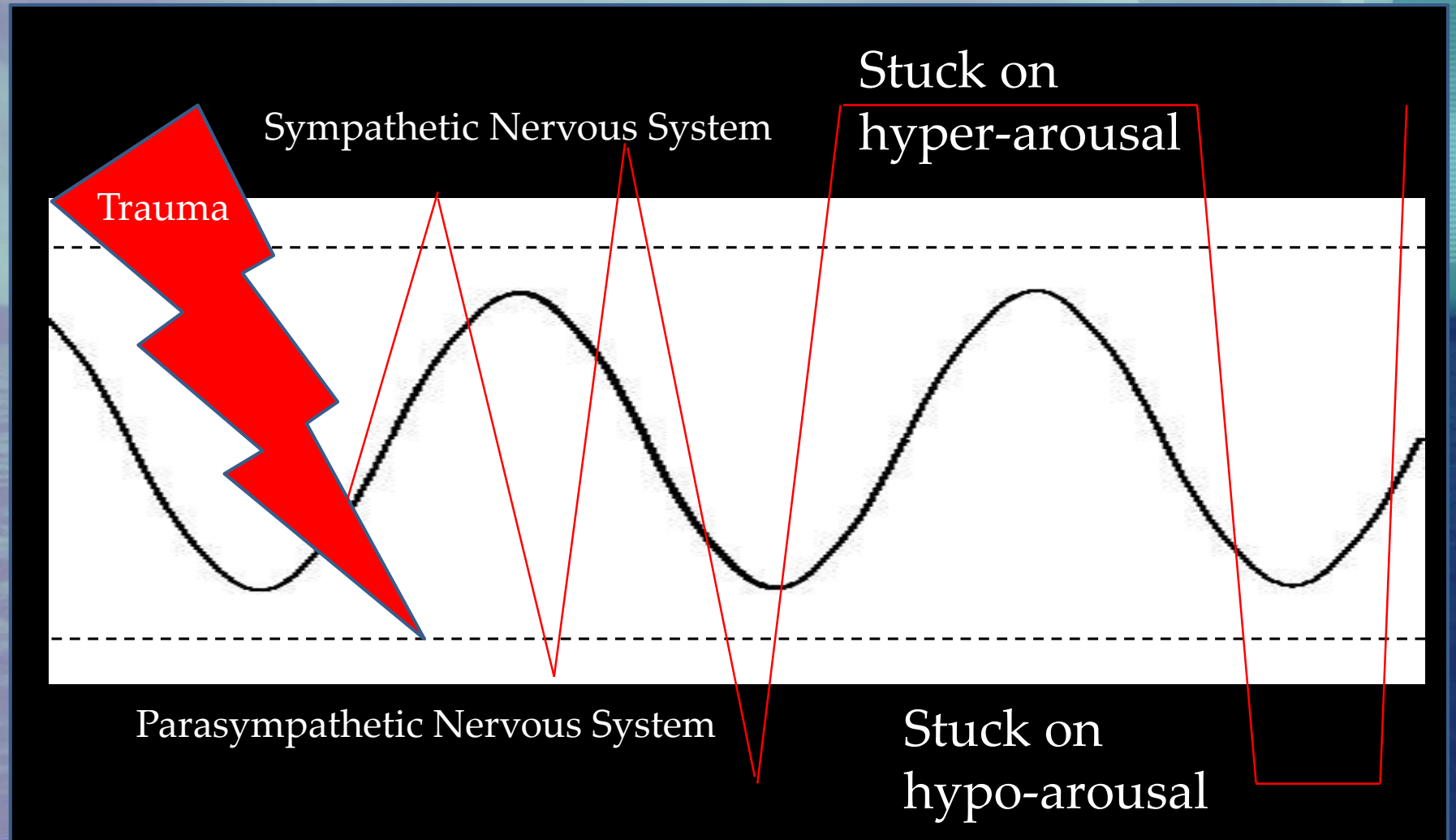
Trauma Resource Institute (www.traumaresourceinstitute.com)



Dysregulated nervous system

Hyper-arousal:

- Reducing arousal is the key through:
 - Mindful breathing
 - Tracking or focusing
 - Grounding, resourcing



Enhanced self-care skills for decreasing the level of trauma while caring empathically

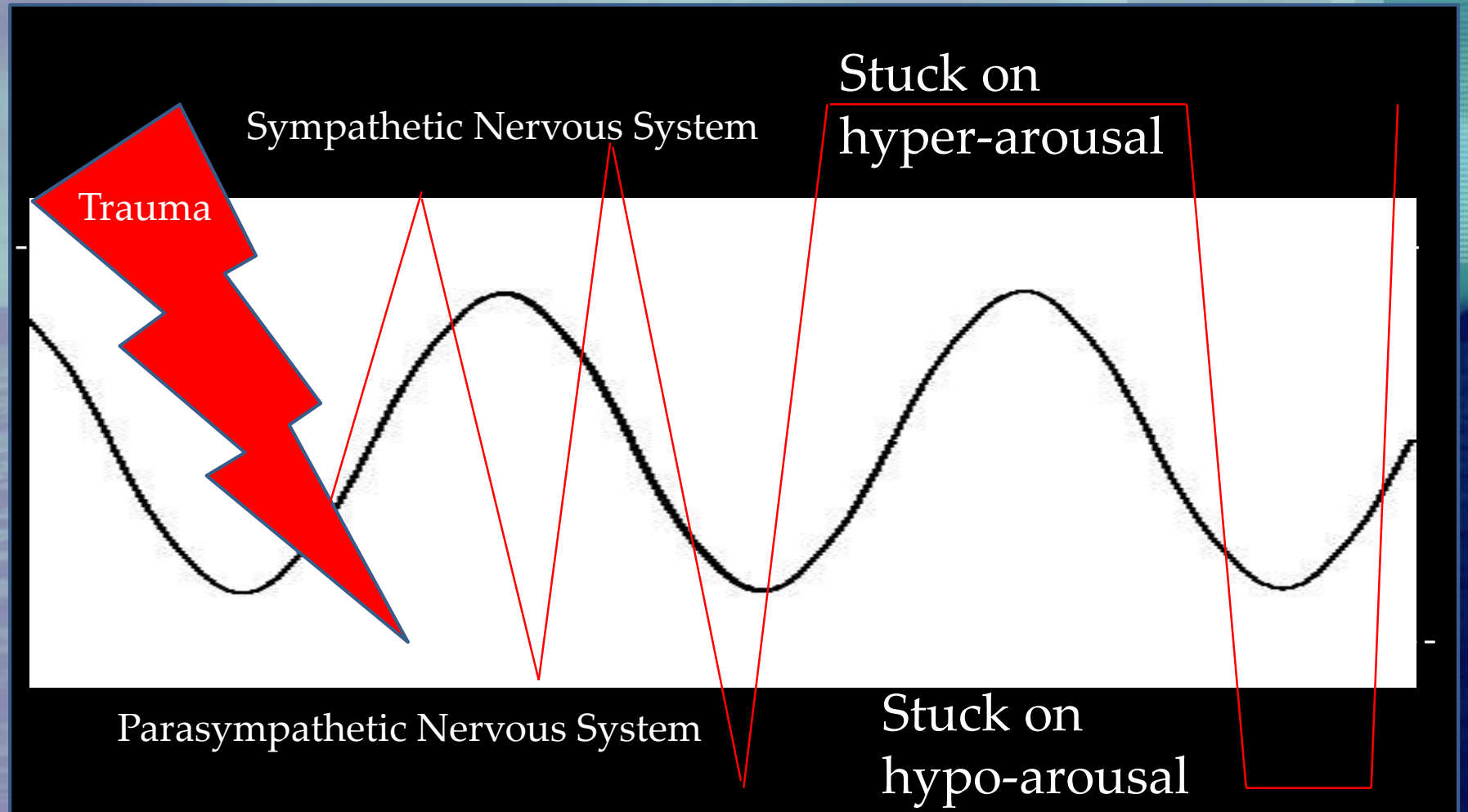
⦿ While working:

- Intermittently lessen or **interrupt focus** on the patient
 - Use **self-relaxation skills** to **self-regulate** the level of arousal
 - Intentionally take time to notice **pleasant sensorial cues**
- ## ⦿ Increase awareness of the **broader picture** (spiritual, God's control/love/power, searching for meaning)

Dysregulated nervous system

Hypo-arousal:

- Movement is the key!
 - Exercise
 - Action
 - Talking



Transforming process of building resilience

◎ Help caregivers build resilience

(not only will-power and more grit)

- Spiritual life
- Social support
- Efficacy
- Meaning and purpose
- Emotional health
- Physical health and fitness

Agency support for traumatic and tragic cases and situations

- Case supervision and mentoring
- Administrative support to lessen stress
- Raise awareness of and encourage good self-care practices
- Encourage teamwork and collegial support

A dramatic seascape at sunset or sunrise. The sky is a mix of deep blues and purples, with a bright light source on the horizon creating a shimmering reflection on the dark blue water. A white diagonal line cuts across the image from the top left towards the bottom right. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

**HELPING HEALTHCARE
MISSIONARIES FLOURISH:
ADDRESSING SELF-PERCEPTIONS**

Malignant Transformations

- Feigned Omniscience
- Feigned Omnipotence



Malignant Transformations

- Feigned Omniscience
- Feigned Omnipotence
- Feigned Invincibility
- Feigned Omnipresence





**HELPING HEALTHCARE
MISSIONARIES FLOURISH:
ADDRESSING MORAL INJURY**

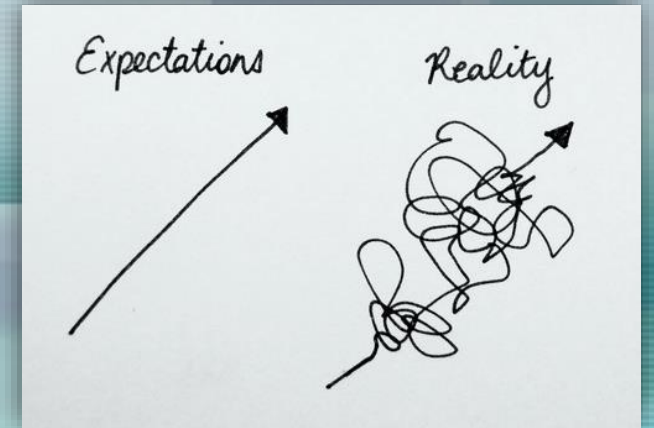
Role play #2

- ◎ Stan is now serving his second four-year term in a remote rural hospital in West Africa. He reaches out to his therapist following the death of a newborn.
- ◎ The medical team has diminished. Stan has responded to this decrease in resources by choosing to work harder. He isn't sleeping well, is having terrifying nightmares, and is increasingly withdrawing from social involvement with others. He dreads going to the clinic each day.

What is a Moral Injury?

Injury to an individual's moral conscience

- “perpetrating, failing to prevent, bearing witness to, or learning about **acts that transgress deeply held moral beliefs**” (Litz et al., 2009)
- “a disruption in an individual's confidence and **expectations about his or her own moral behavior** or **others' capacity** to behave in a just and ethical manner” (Drescher et al., 2011)



Examples

- ◎ Bearing witness, learning about acts...
 - A healthcare missionary who needed to observe unethical decision making in a government hospital
- ◎ Perpetrating, failing to prevent
 - A missionary with a role to prevent abortions, but to maintain her role, she also failed to prevent it in certain instances, and needed to refer for abortions.

Why is MI important?

◎ Strong association with

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Irritability
- Relational Issues
- Suicidality

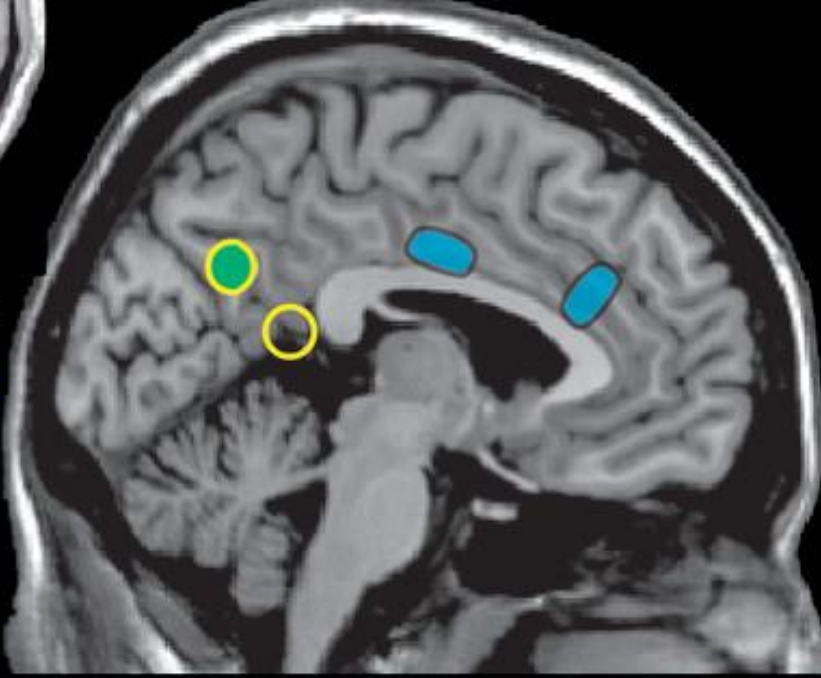
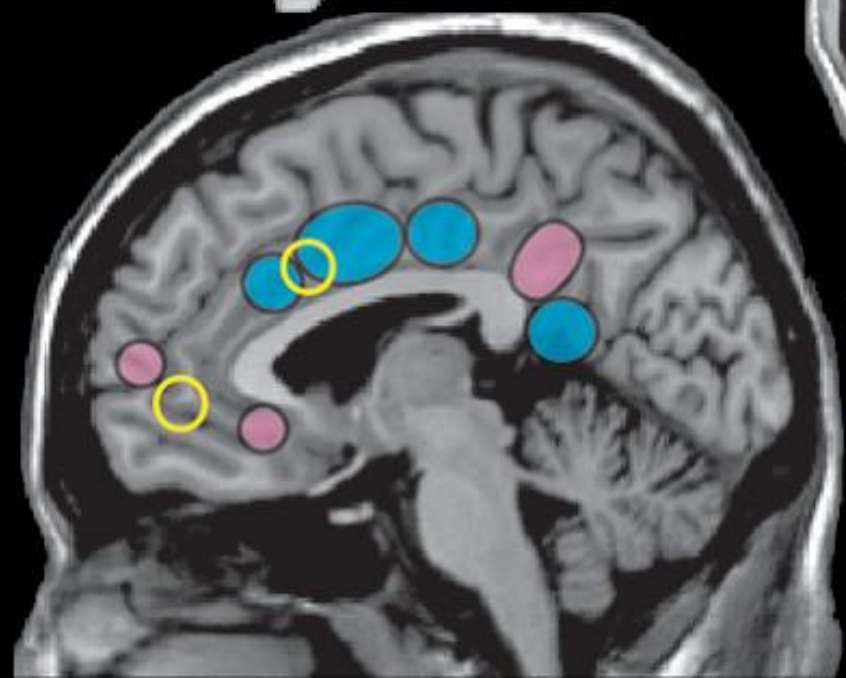
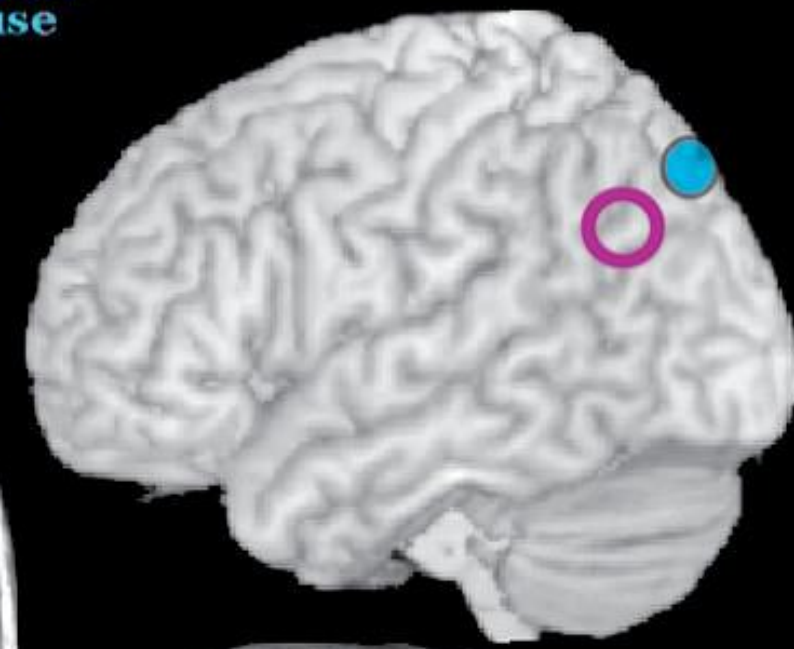
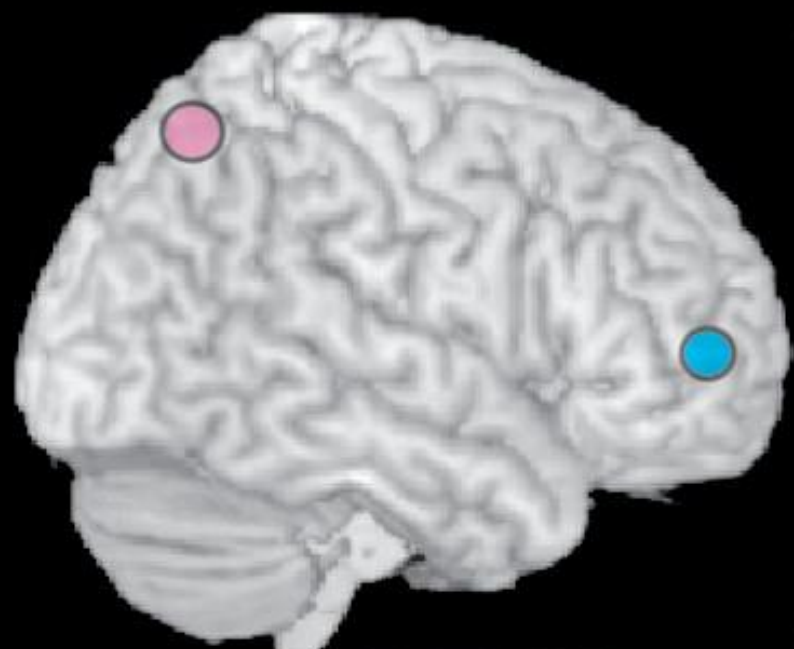


R

PTSD

L

trauma activated
 sexual/physical abuse
 combat-related
resting state
 danger
 non-danger



Moral Injury
 resting state
 moral injury

Moral Injury Consequences

- ⦿ Guilt
- ⦿ Shame, self-condemnation, self-doubts
- ⦿ Feeling of betrayal, loss of trust
- ⦿ Religious/spiritual struggles;
confusion about God and suffering
- ⦿ Loss of faith, loss of hope
- ⦿ Loss of meaning and purpose
- ⦿ Difficulties forgiving self and others



What helps to overcome MI?

- ⦿ Attend to **grief and sorrow** about unmet expectations of what HPs would like to be able to do; work towards **accepting limitations** (their own as well as in their contexts)
- ⦿ Address **shame, growth in grace** (self-compassion); challenging performance orientation
- ⦿ Work towards **forgiveness**; if indicated, confession
- ⦿ Address **spiritual struggles about God**; Pastoral Care
- ⦿ If appropriate, consider working with the **organization** towards realistic HP work expectations





**HELPING HEALTHCARE
MISSIONARIES FLOURISH:
ADDRESSING GRIEF**

Added Grief in Healthcare M's

Sources

- ⦿ High frequency of work related deaths
- ⦿ Infant and child deaths
- ⦿ Being medically involved in severe illness and death of colleagues, close friends, or relatives of them
- ⦿ Proximity to grieving relatives of the deceased



Added Grieving Resources

- ⦿ Develop grieving rituals
- ⦿ Identify regular practice of processing loss
- ⦿ Grounding strategies, lament, spiritual imagery/connection
- ⦿ Regular intentional downtimes for processing
- ⦿ Watch for emotional numbing



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MedRetreat

Alongside's MedRetreat Program

July 19-29, 2020

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