

# 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

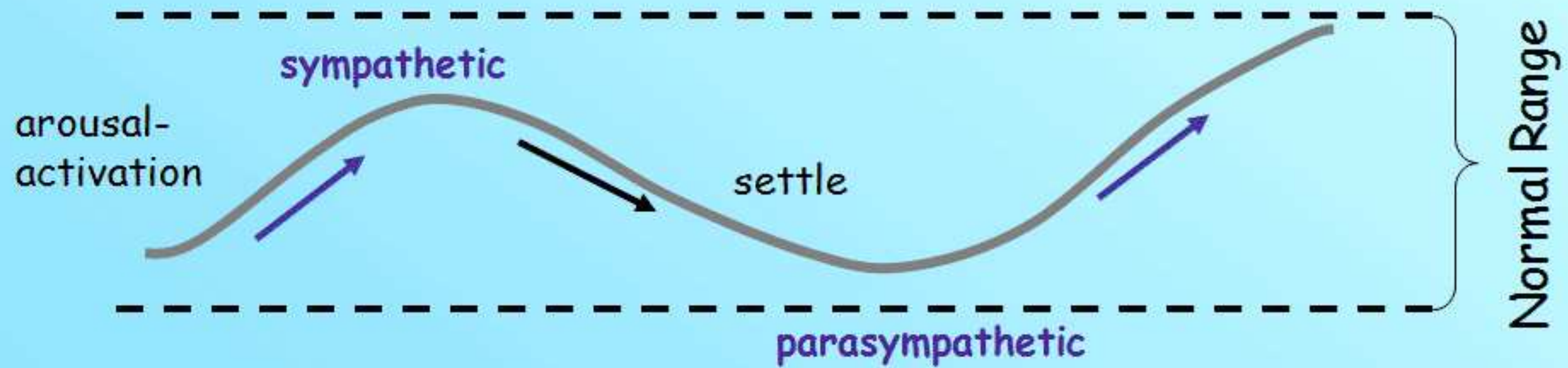


**Humans are not zebras**

**“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.”**

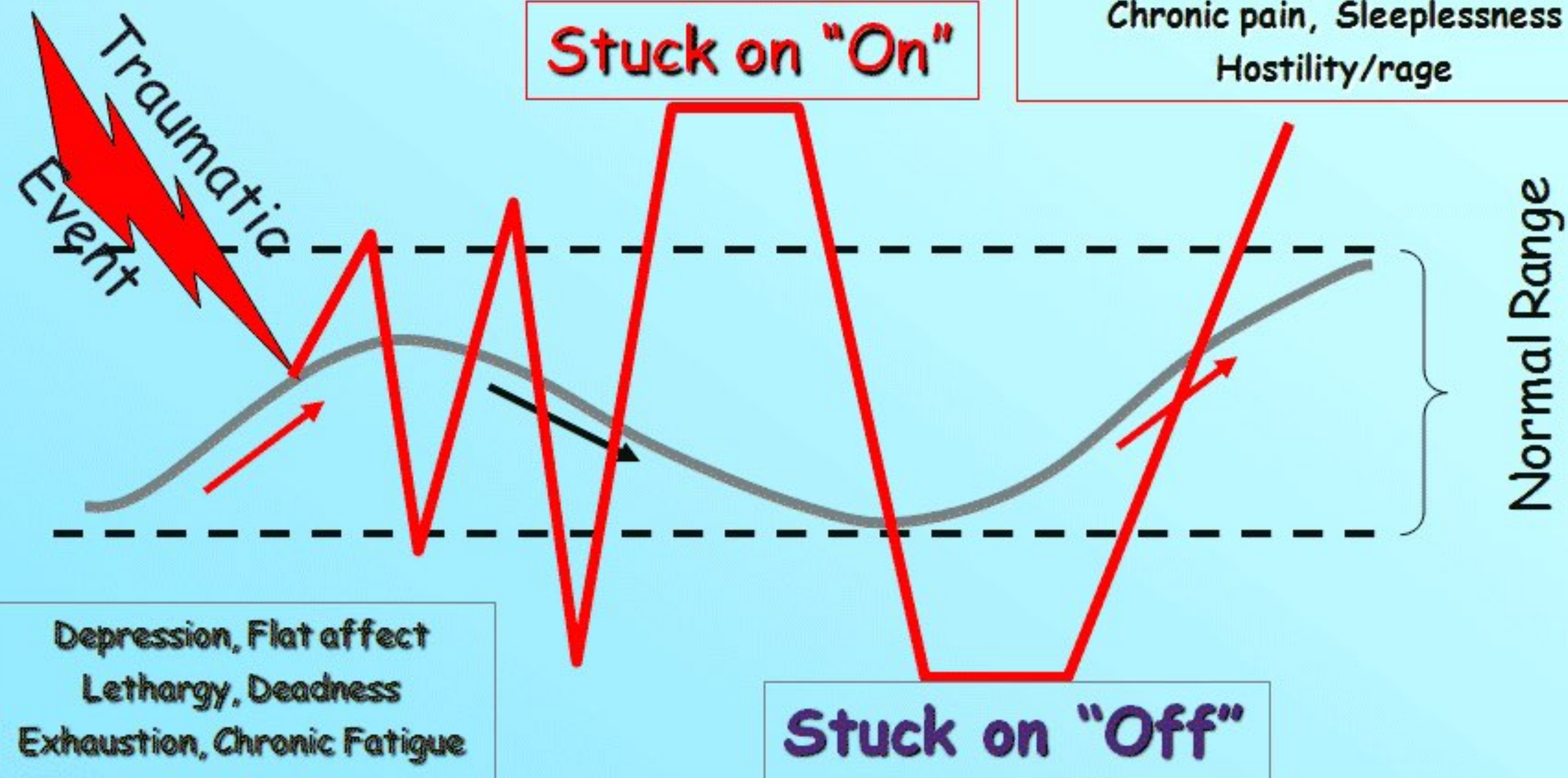
*– Dr. Peter Levine*

# 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

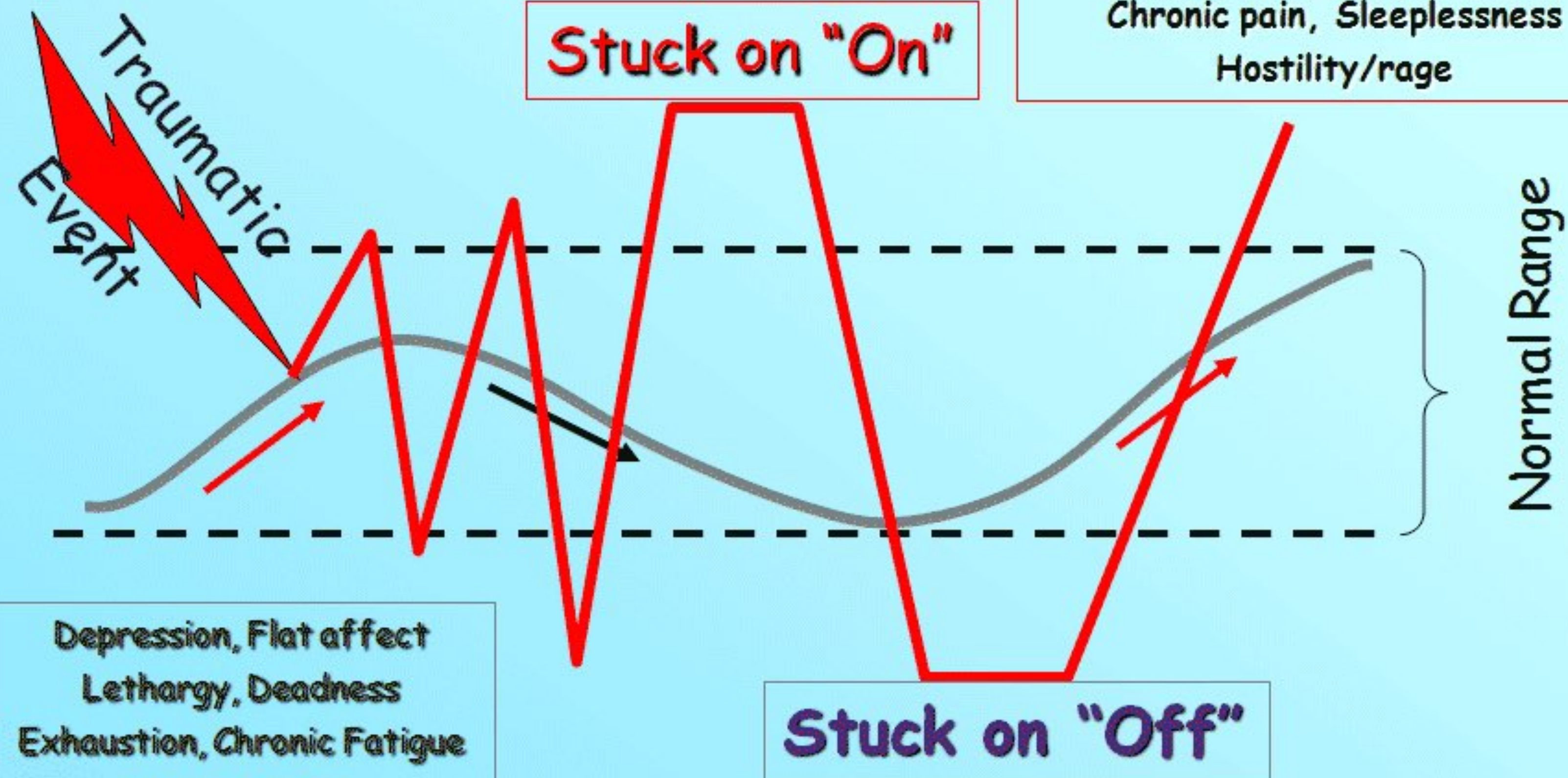
# Nuanced

- 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?**

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# 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**

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MACO TAG & LABEL

**KEEP  
THIS  
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# 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>