

# 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

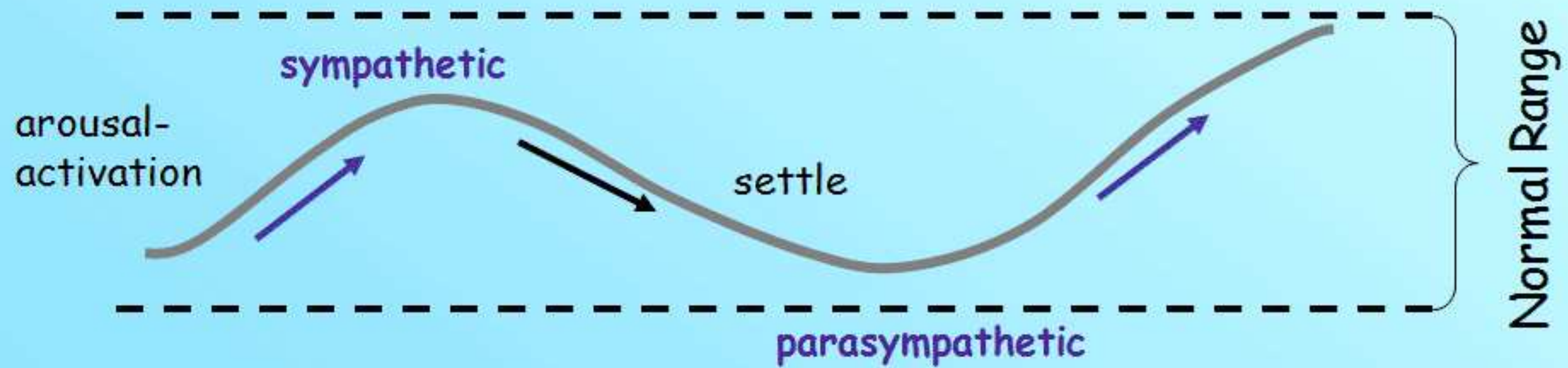


**Humans are not zebras**

**“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.”**

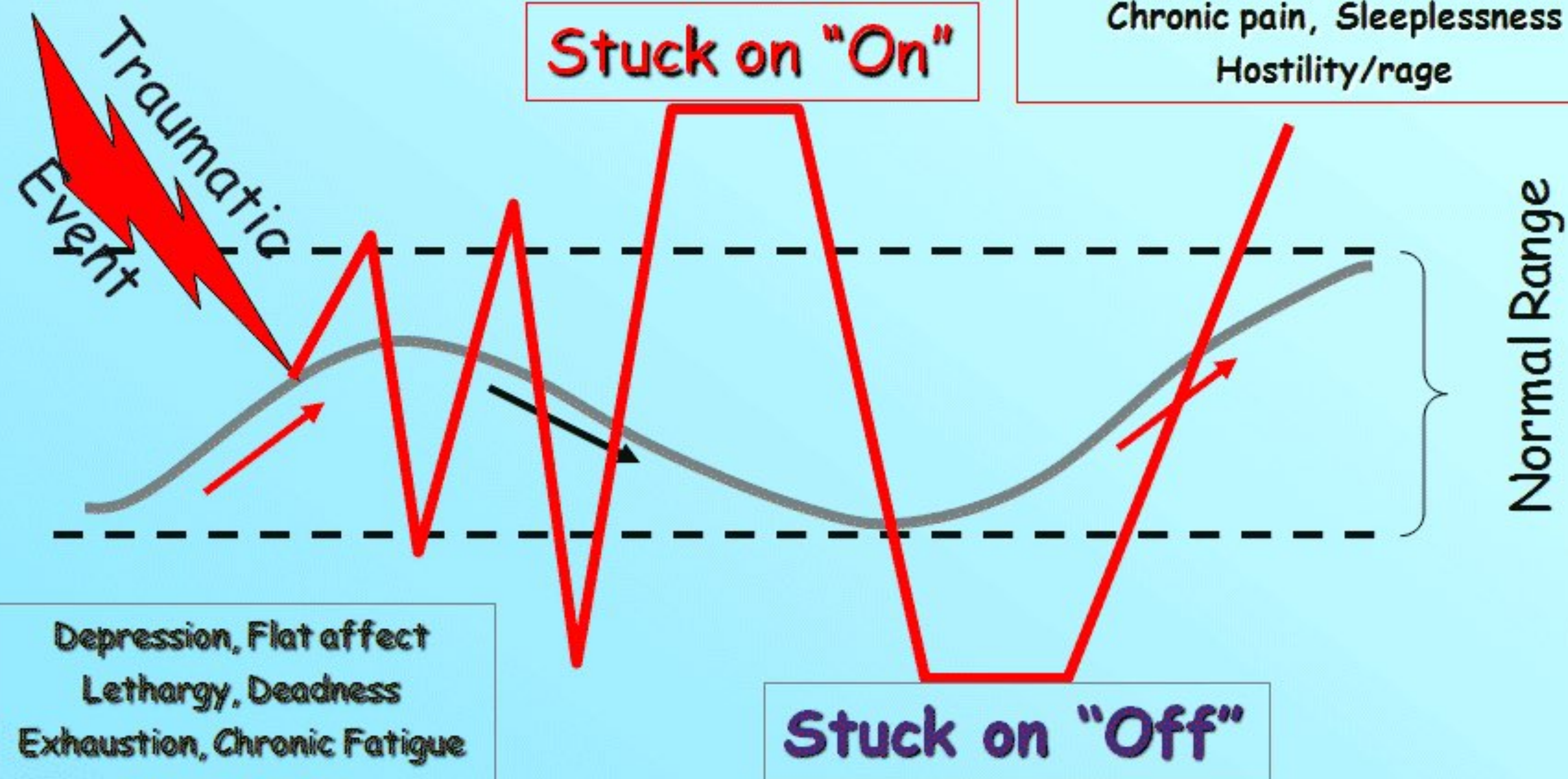
*– Dr. Peter Levine*

# 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

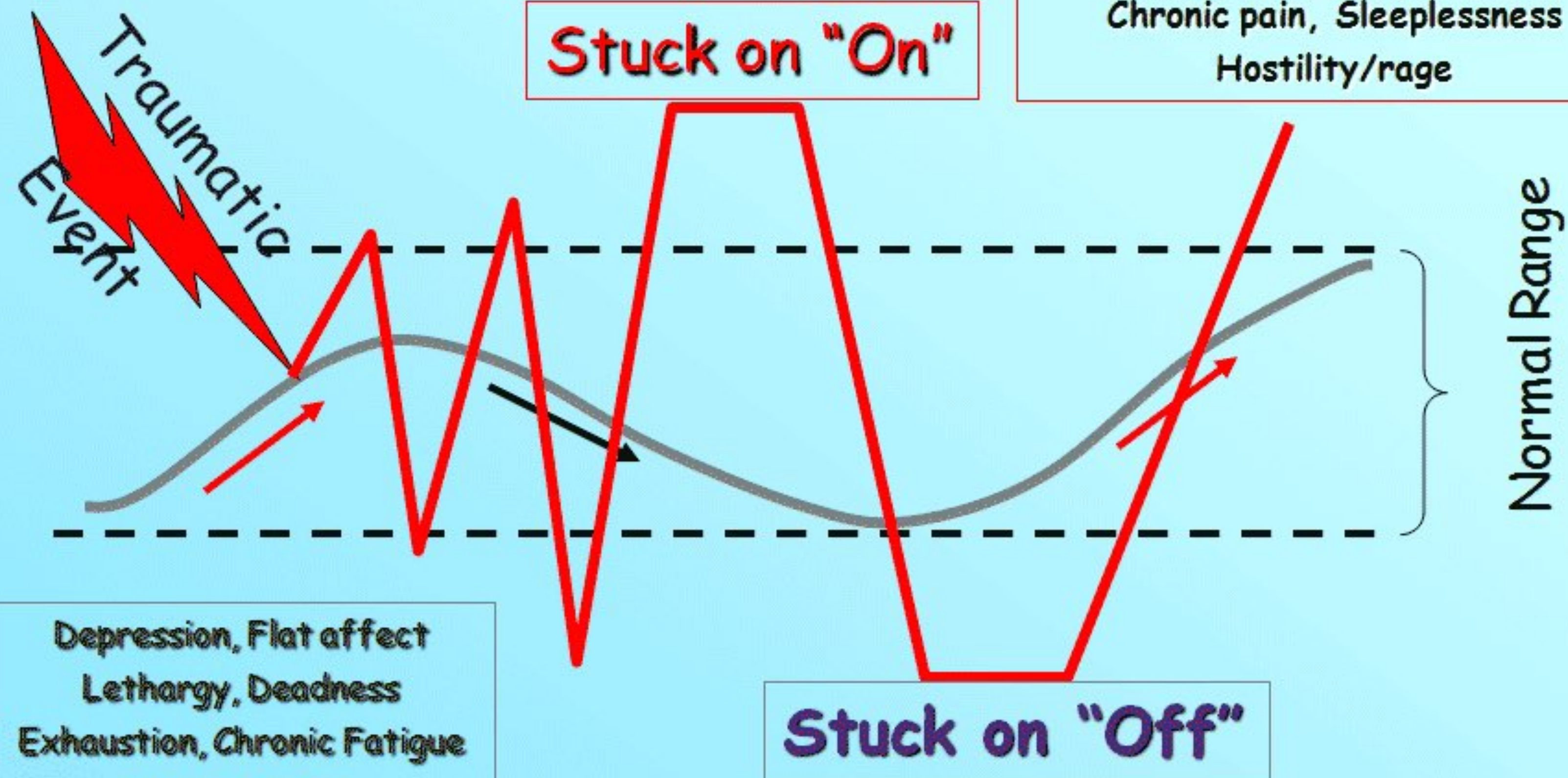
# Nuanced

- 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

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# Process failure



# A word about somatic experiencing

**“Resilient strength is the opposite of helplessness.”**

*–Dr. Peter Levine*

# Cognitive distortions

# Polarized thinking

# Overgeneralization

# Fortune telling

# Control fallacies

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