

When One or Both Spouses Have Experienced Trauma: *Cultivating Rhythms of Grace and Healing*

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Run the Race Together



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Dear Bright Tomorrows Friends,

As a “thank you” for joining us today, please use this QR code or link to access a free resource.

[7 Tips for a Healthier Trauma Response](#)



Whether you or someone you walk alongside has experienced unfaithfulness within marriage, witnessed or experienced trauma, or has lived during a worldwide pandemic, learn about hypervigilance (a common trauma response) and 7 steps toward hope and healing.

Running with Aim,

Ron and Halee Wood

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Today we will learn:

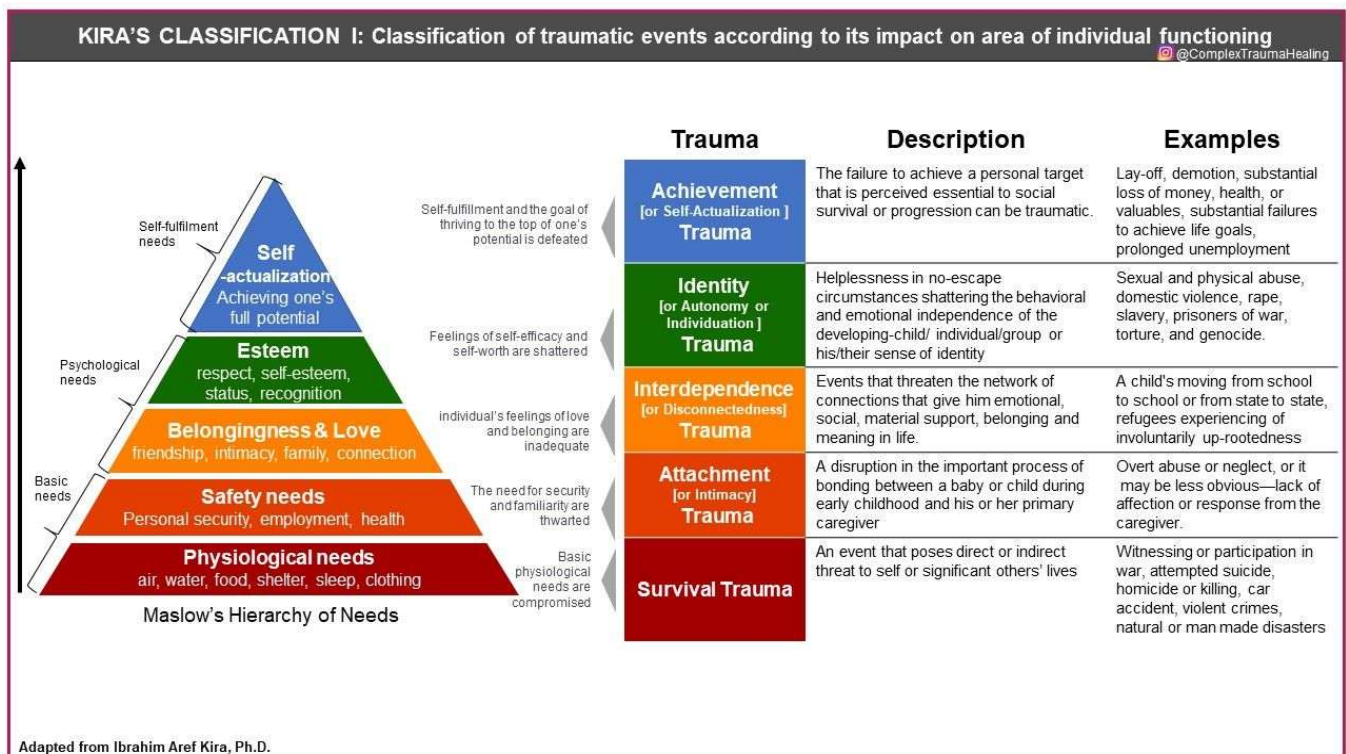
- How to recognize trauma
- Common responses to trauma in a marriage
- Practical strategies to navigate trauma responses as a couple
- Practical guidance for each individual spouse
- **OVERALL: HEALTHY TRAUMA RESPONSES**

So that...

- We can respond to the trauma not the behavior
- Create space for responsibility, empathy, and spiritual wholeness for the individual and the couple
- The trauma doesn't get the control or the last word
- **OVERALL: THE PAIN CAN BECOME A CATALYST FOR TRUST AND INTIMACY!**

Recognizing Trauma

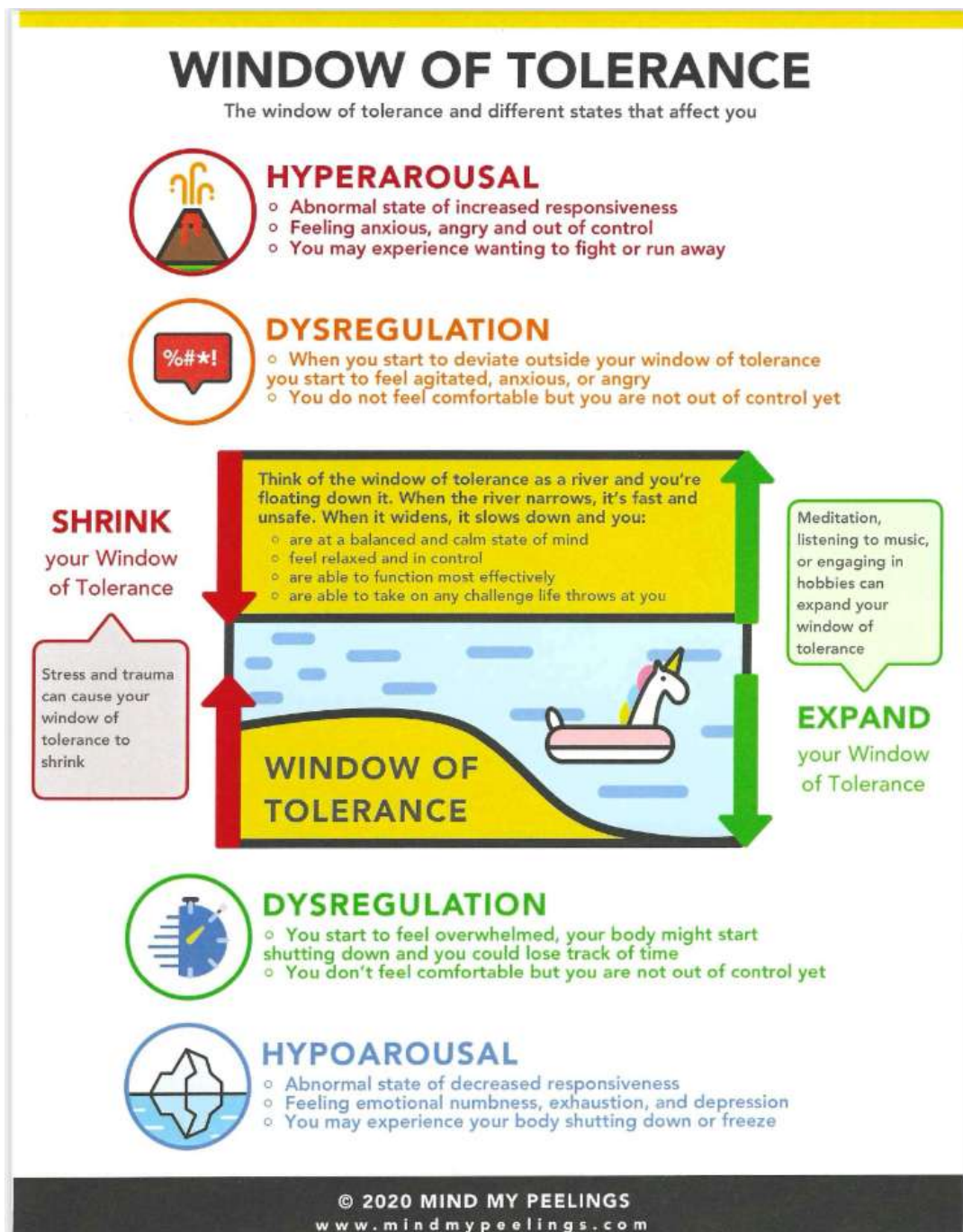
- Trauma is a normal reaction to an abnormal event
- Kira's Taxonomy/Classification
 - First Taxonomy – Impacts on 5 areas of individual functioning (Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs)



- Second Taxonomy – Based on objects or external characteristics
 - “Trauma-like” events: accumulation of multiple, non-traumatic stressors over time
 - Real traumatic events: Direct, Indirect/Vicarious, Cross-Generational (via family or Collective Transmission)

Common Trauma Responses

- “Unnecessary” Survival Skills - woven deeply into the fabric of the individual; often seen as strength... until it's not.
- Triggers – conscious or unconscious reliving of the trauma
 - Flipping the lid
 - Dissociation



Practical Strategies for Couples

Increase the Window of Tolerance. Increase trust and intimacy!

1. Tips for Time-Outs - Make a Plan

- Learn to recognize when a time-out is needed
- Agree on a signal to begin a time-out
- Determine the length of time (no more than 24 hours)
- Discuss ideas for a healthy way to spend the time-out

2. Listen Well – REAP

- **R** - Reflect
- **E** - Empathize
- **A** - Affirm
- **P** – Problem Solve (if necessary) or Pause for a Time-Out

Tips for Each Partner

This list is not at all comprehensive, but it is a good starting point. Above all, we encourage you to ground yourselves fully in the Word of God and lean into Him for all things – for your individual needs, healing, and growth. This is where the greatest hope, peace, and possibilities lie.

As the Regulated Partner, you can...

1. Protect your marriage and support your spouse.
 - Allow them to get back “online”. Wait for his/her thinking to come back online before asking lots of clarifying questions.
 - Try not to take what is happening personally. When the time is right, ask clarifying questions, show gentle curiosity about their thoughts and feelings, and give space.
 - Be compassionate (“Love me until I’m me again.”) and prayerful.
 - Create new rhythms (new ways of living with each other that minimize triggers and create safety).
2. Care for yourself while your spouse is healing.
 - Try to remain calm and maintain any necessary boundaries. You don’t have to allow yourself to be emotionally or physically assaulted.
 - REMEMBER! You matter. Continually pursue health and wholeness – spiritually, emotionally, physically.
 - Create personal support systems – close friends, a counselor, and Celebrate Recovery.

As the Trauma Survivor, you can...

1. Take responsibility for your trauma response.
 - Continually pursue health and wholeness – spiritually, emotionally, physically
 - Learn how trauma affects the brain and body.
 - Create a village/army (friends, counselor, Celebrate Recovery). Your spouse cannot be your only support system.
 - Make amends often and quickly.
 - Have grace for yourself and learn to love yourself well.
2. Don’t shame or deny your partner’s reality.
 - We are rarely the only victims.
 - Encourage your partner to have a village/army, and permit them to share with a trusted person what is happening because they may try to protect your privacy.
 - Ask how they are doing, how it’s affecting them – they may be unwilling to talk about this unsolicited because of your pain. Pray together.
3. Be transparent and communicate clearly.
 - Use timeouts frivolously while in a triggered state, and wait until you’re brain is back “online” before problem-solving or setting expectations for your partner.
 - If you think something might be helpful, let them know you’d like to TRY it. It will be trial and error.
4. Remember your value/worth.

Additional Resources

To learn more about trauma:

- Kira, I. A. (2001). Taxonomy of trauma and trauma assessment. *Traumatology*, 7(2), 73–86. <https://doi.org/10.1177/153476560100700202>
- The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, mind, and body in the healing of trauma - by Bessel Van der Kolk, M.D.
- Try Softer: A fresh approach to move us out of anxiety, stress, and survival mode – and into a life of connection and joy - by Aundi Kolber, MA, LPC
- Strong Like Water: Finding freedom, safety and compassion to move through hard things – and experience true flourishing – by Aundi Kolber, MA, LPC
- **FOR ADOPTEEES!** The Primal Wound – by Nanci Newton Verrier

To grow the relationship:

- The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work by John M. Gottman, Ph.D. and Nan Silver

To build the village/find support:

- Celebrate Recovery – Christ-centered recovery and support for those with hurts, habits, hangups, and addictions – FREE! One every night of the week in the Tulsa area - www.celebraterecovery.com
- Hope Restored – Christ-centered retreat for marriages in crisis – <https://hoperestored.focusonthefamily.com/>
- Come see Ron and Halee Wood about the 10-week personalized program, where we teach all the practical skills and walk alongside the couple as they heal and grow! The first session is free so they can decide if what we offer is a good fit for their needs. – www.RunTheRaceTogether.com