

Trauma-informed ministry for these times

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(in association with Sarum College)

Inspirations for the project

- Work in the US following shooting incidents etc
- The challenge of the horrific event in the UK and Europe, whether it be the vehicle driven through pedestrians, or the disclosure of serial abuse
- Recognition of the character of trauma and the particular theological response it requires - see in particular Serene Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, and Shelly Rambo's *Spirit and Trauma*. Rambo: 'the language of resurrection is, in many senses, the language of the oppressor' (*Spirit and Trauma* 129). Rather 'resurrection is not guaranteed life, but life that must be witnessed into being.' (168)

Group covenant

- ✚ This is a kind, listening space.
- ✚ We speak for ourselves, and not on behalf of others.
- ✚ What is said in the groups stays there. Afterwards we can share the learning, not the stories.
- ✚ We will take responsibility for what we say: if you feel uncomfortable to share something personal, please don't do it.

Trauma

- origin - Greek word
- physical injury or wound to the body
- deeply distressing or disturbing experience
- emotional shock following a stressful event or injury
- soul wound

Trauma

- Is not the event itself but in the brain-body of the person
- Is an entirely normal, life-saving response to threat
- Is unique to the individual

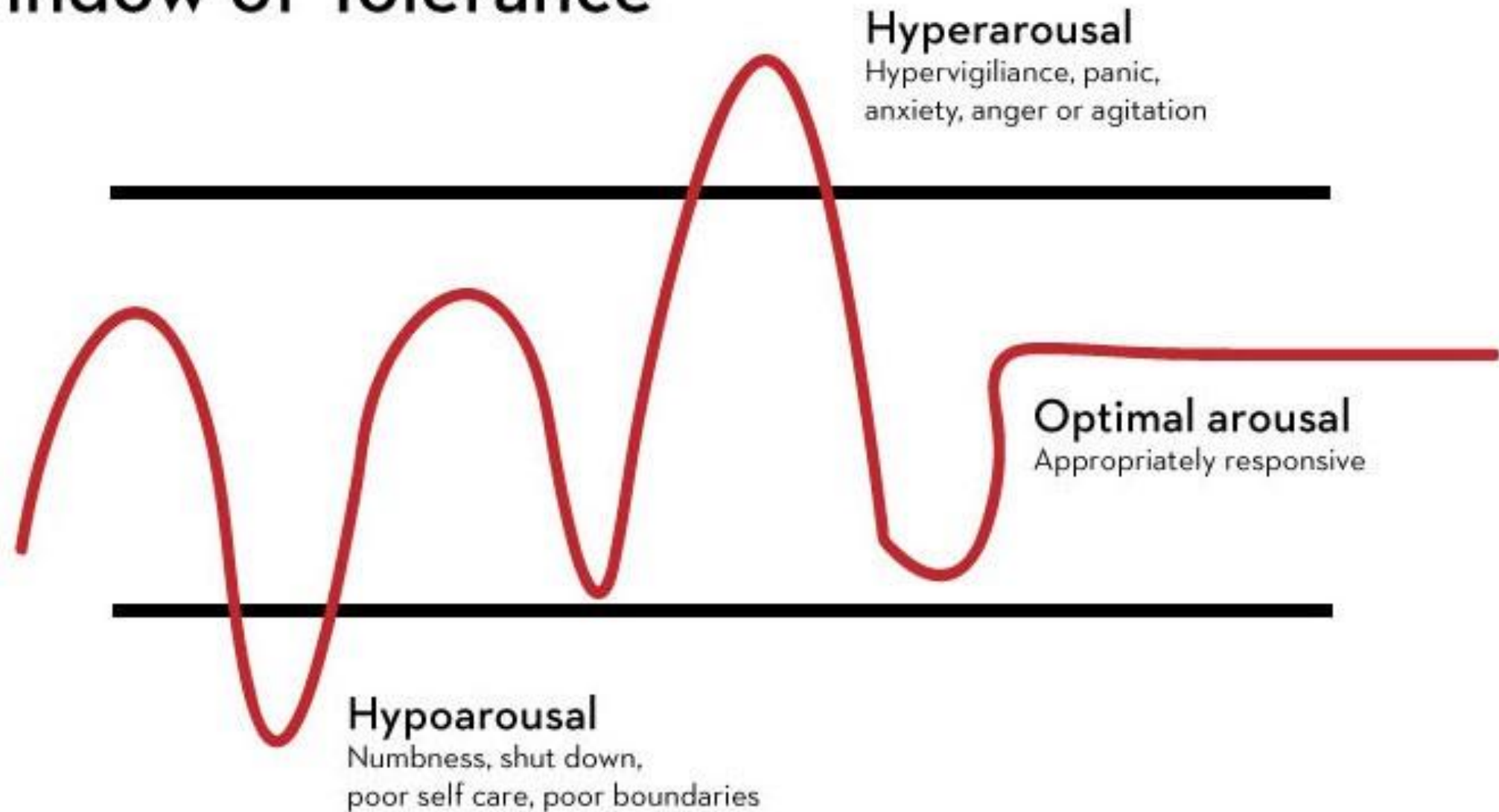
The Felt Sense

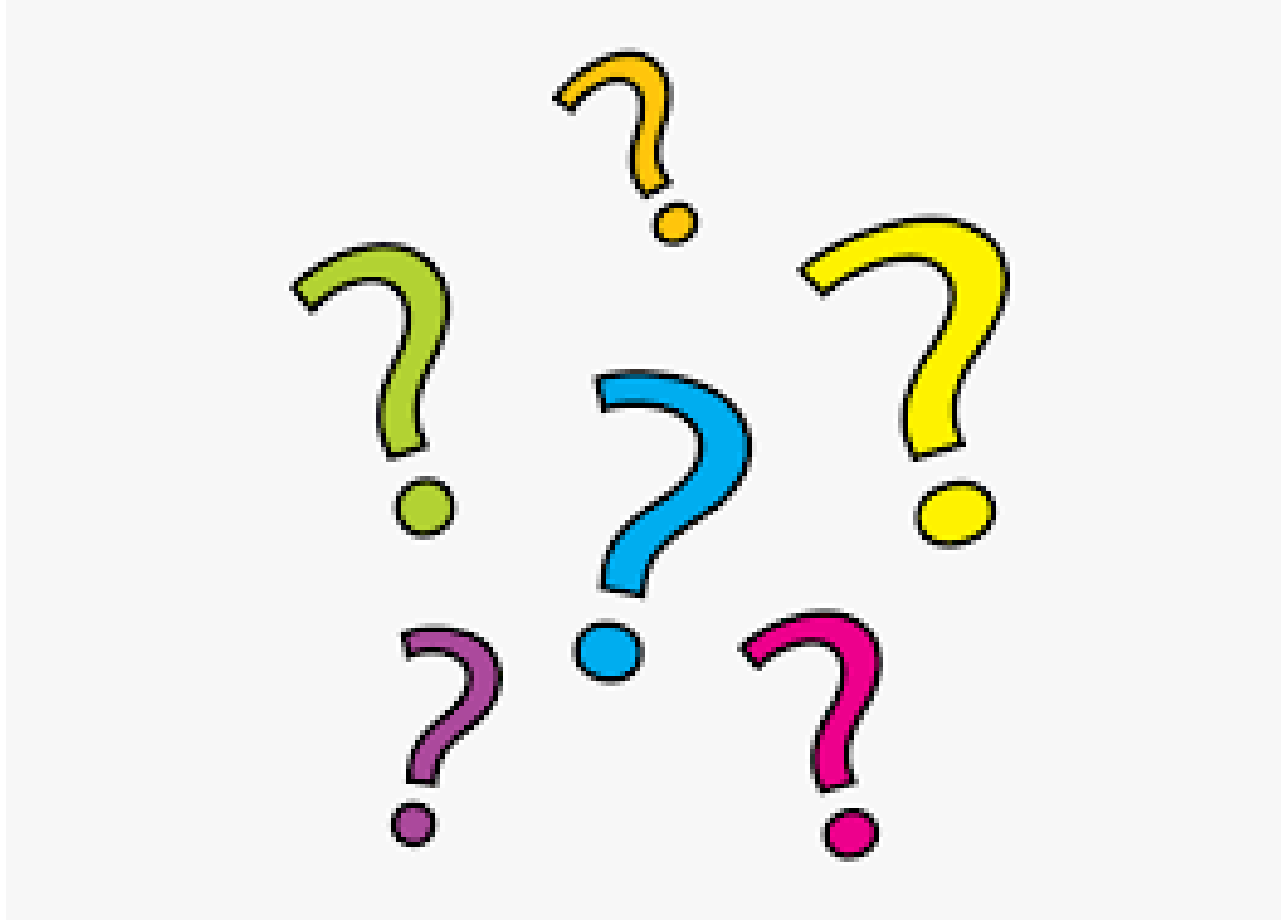
- The Vagus Nerve - our autonomic nervous system
- 80% of fibres convey information from gut up to brain
- 20% of fibres run back down from brain to gut
- Sympathetic nervous system (SNS)-speeds us up for action
- Parasympathetic nervous system (PNS)-slows us down for rest and digest
- Breath in, breath out

- **Overwhelm - Cuts us off from our resources**
- **Disconnects us from sense of self and safety**
- **Shatters our assumptions**
- **Powerless**



Window of Tolerance





How does this information on the impact of trauma help in understanding yourself, and those you minister with?

Working with the “felt sense”

- Sense: Notice and accept what you are feeling without judgment
- Name: Name what you are feeling
- Ask: What do I need?
- Breathing

Working with trauma

- Accompaniment - *“you’re not on your own”*
- Acknowledgement - *“I get it....”*
- Normalisation - *“it’s not surprising....”*
- Connecting with resource - *“what? who?”*
- Hope - *“it won’t always be like this”*

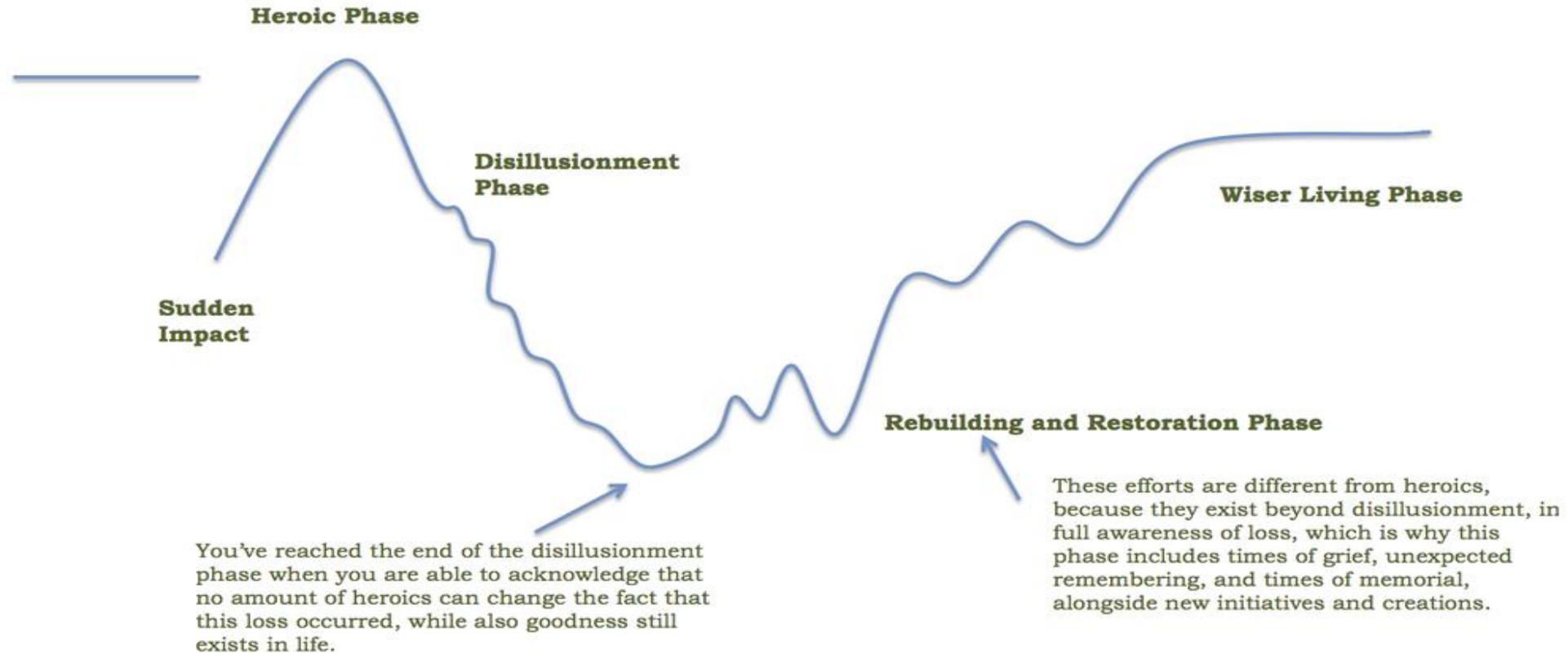
Fundamental assumptions by which humans tend to live

- That the world is benevolent – both in terms of the overall reliability of the natural world, and other people being generally well-disposed towards you.
- That the world makes sense – that it seems as though it has a ‘plan’ - typically good and prudent living is rewarded, children have a chance to grow up, etc.
- That your life has worth.
 - Ronnie Janoff-Bulman, *Shattered Assumptions* (New York: Free Press, 1992)

Collective Trauma

- significant individuals in a group may be traumatised and their pain radiates out
- a whole group is impacted by an event and their way of relating and understanding the world are damaged in a life-threatening way
- a group may be traumatised by the response of those responsible/in authority when it is inadequate and causes further harm; or they may be required to act against their conscience/sense of safety for self and others (Moral Injury)

Phases of Collective Trauma Response

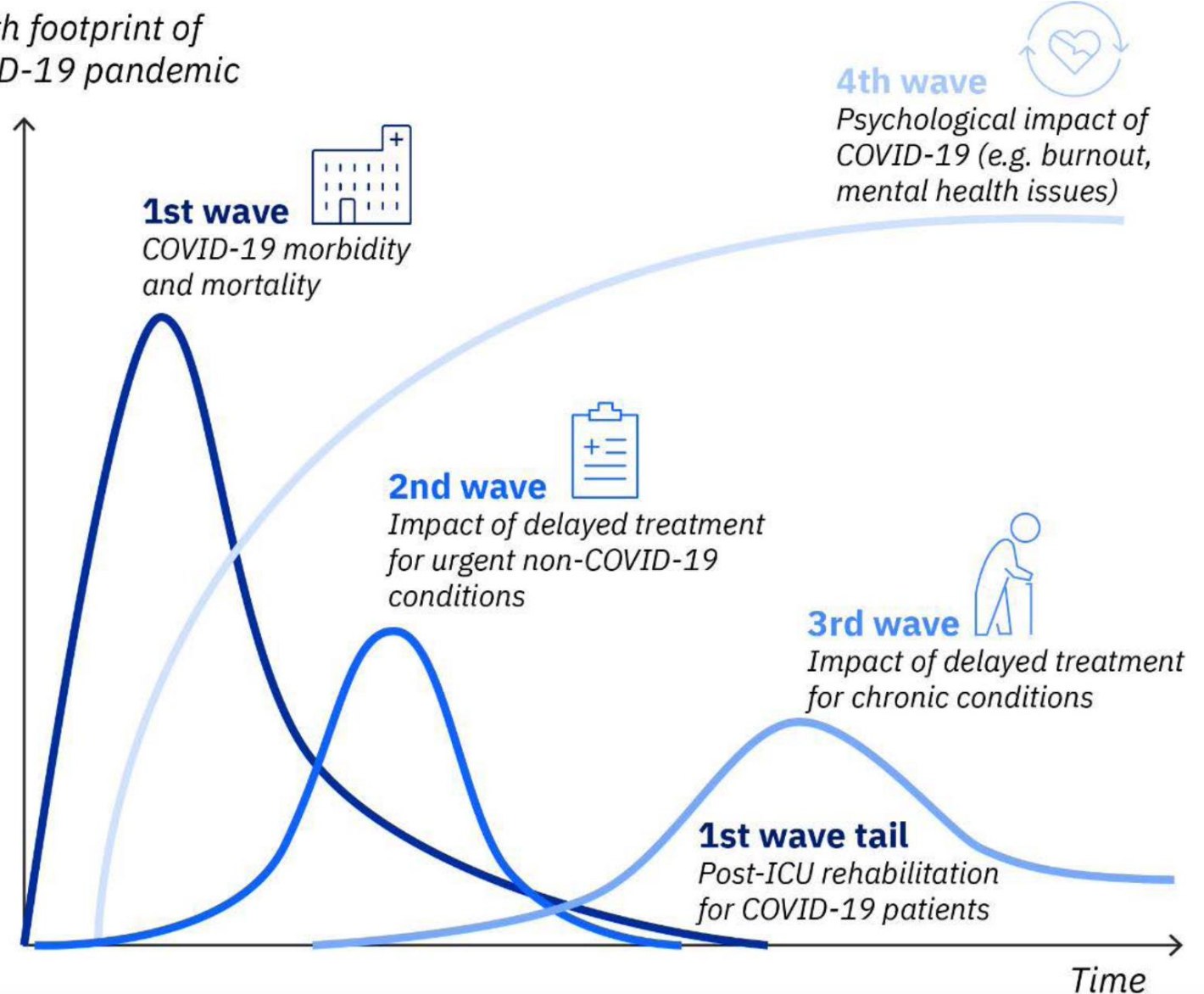


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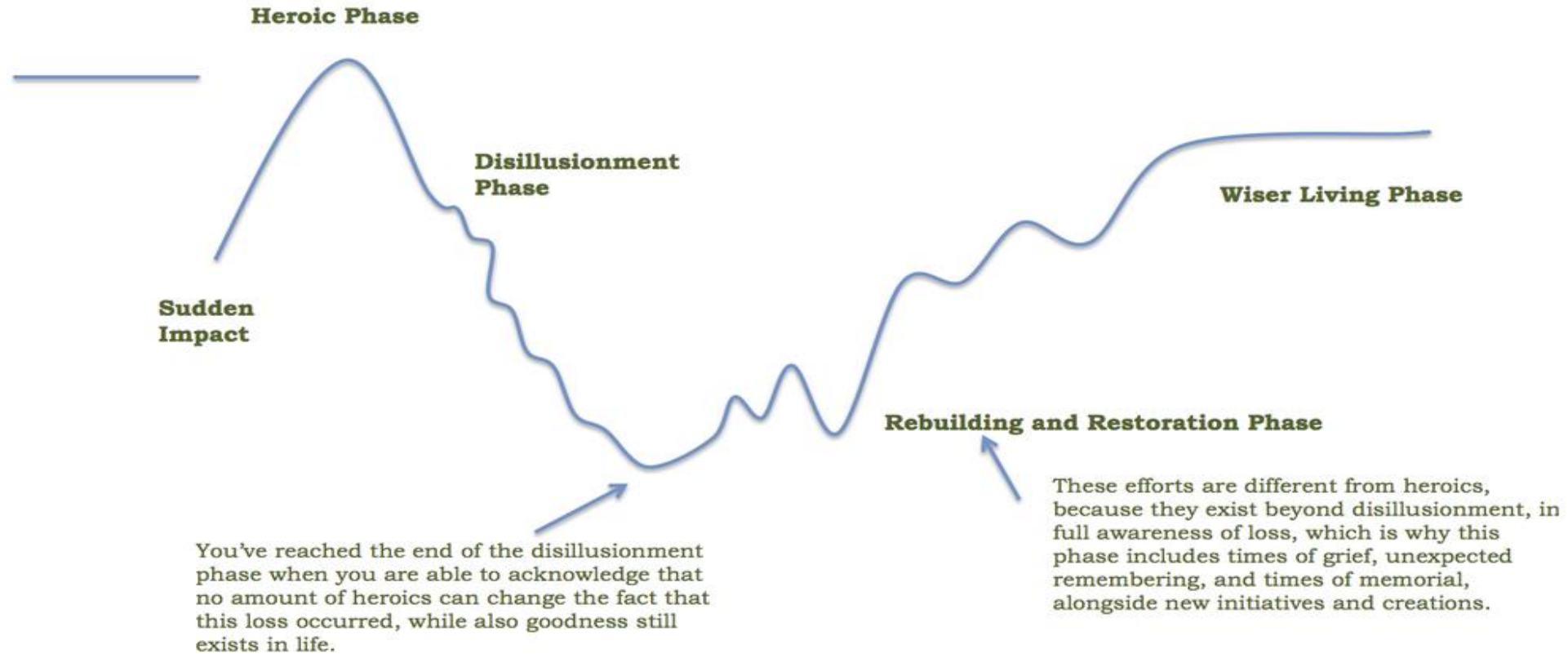
Wait...
Syndemic
what?

See Singer, 2009

Health footprint of
COVID-19 pandemic



Phases of Collective Trauma Response



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Disillusionment Phase

Exhaustion

Low energy

Great variability and unpredictability of emotions and mood

Depression

Blame

Denial

Fragmentation

Conflict

Survival and adaptation

Realisation of impacts

Finding firm enough ground to stand on

Revelation of other traumatising realities

Triggered physiological trauma reactions

Increased dysfunctional coping behaviours

Increased vulnerability

Reduced capacity

Potential increased safeguarding issues



Restoration and rebuilding

Shift to general positive outlook

*Increased energy and ability to manifest
new initiatives*

Still grieving losses

Triggers and anniversaries

Congregations live by narratives

- Implicit story-lines of how life really is....
- See J. Hopewell, *Congregation* (London: SCM Press, 1987)
- Also C. Southgate, 'Trauma and the Narrative Life of Congregations' in *Tragedies and Christian Congregations* ed. M. Warner et al (London: Routledge, 2020)

One set of expectations..

- ¹⁷ And these signs will accompany those who believe: by using my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; ¹⁸ they will pick up snakes in their hands, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover.' (Mk 16)
- Dozens of pastors across the Bible Belt have succumbed to [coronavirus](#) after churches and televangelists played down the pandemic and actively encouraged churchgoers to flout self-distancing guidelines.
- As many as 30 church leaders from the nation's largest African American Pentecostal denomination have now been confirmed to have died in the outbreak, as members defied public health warnings to avoid large gatherings to prevent transmitting the virus.
- (Independent, April 24 2020)

Hence the attraction of an 'ironic' approach...

- A congregation that lives in ironic mode, in the world of Ecclesiastes, with no hope that anything can ever be better, is most insulated against communal trauma.

Hence the attraction of an 'ironic' approach...

- A congregation that lives in ironic mode, in the world of Ecclesiastes 3, with no hope that anything can ever be better, is most insulated against communal trauma.
- But it's also most insulated against the Gospel's message of hope, reconciliation and transformation.

Psalms 13

Prayer for Deliverance from Enemies

- ¹ How long, O Lord? Will you forget me for ever?
How long will you hide your face from me?
- ² How long must I bear pain in my soul,
and have sorrow in my heart all day long?
How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?
- ³ Consider and answer me, O Lord my God!
Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep the sleep of death,
- ⁴ and my enemy will say, 'I have prevailed';
my foes will rejoice because I am shaken.
- ⁵ But I trusted in your steadfast love;
my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.
- ⁶ I will sing to the Lord,
because he has dealt bountifully with me.

- I did not defeat negative feelings of anguish and despair because I saw something more lovely and good. Rather I became able to feel more. My feeling broadened. Pain, sadness and despair were not eliminated or overcome. I embraced them with a larger heart.

(Rita Nakashima Brock and Rebecca Ann Parker, *Proverbs of Ashes: Violence, Redemptive Suffering, and the Search for What Saves Us* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001), 115.)

The power of lamentation

The content of the Psalms chart the realities of human experience:

**orientation → disorientation →
new orientation,**
with lamentation playing a crucial role.

This three part movement mirrors the three-stage healing process after trauma:

**safety → remembrance and mourning →
reconnection with ordinary life.**

Judith Herman: Trauma and Recovery, 2015

Reasons to resist lament in the present day

- Maybe it feeds our culture of complaint?
- Maybe it traps victims in their victimhood?
- Maybe it shows a lack of faith in God's goodness
- Maybe it asserts too much self-righteousness and insufficient awareness of our own sin
- Maybe it fails to trust in the reality of resurrection and Christ's victory over evil

Reasons lament is resisted in the tradition

- Augustine and the piety of detachment
- Luther and the piety of the Cross
- Calvin and the piety of patience
- Barth and the piety of God's victory at the Cross

Brueggemann on two movements that silence the Christian heart

- A yearning for relations in which there is no sacrifice, durability or responsibility. We just want therapy...
 - A celebration of God as beyond reach, beyond question, beyond risk, beyond transformation. We just want stability...
- Finally Comes the Poet (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1989)

Brueggemann on two movements that silence the Christian heart

- A yearning for relations in which there is no sacrifice, durability or responsibility. We just want therapy...
- A celebration of God as beyond reach, beyond question, beyond risk, beyond transformation. We just want stability...
 - But 'such worship is destructive because it requires persons to engage in enormous denial and pretense about how life really is. Such little islands of happiness characteristically fail to take into account the reality of evil and the depth of the crisis of theodicy'
 - Finally Comes the Poet p47.

Psalms of Lament

W. Brueggemann, <i>Message of the Psalms</i> , pp. 54-6	B. Anderson with S. Bishop, <i>Out of the Depths</i> , pp. 61-62
Address to God	Address to God
Complaint	Complaint
	Confession of Trust
Petition	Petition
Motivations	
	Words of Assurance
Imprecation	
	Vow of Praise
Assurance	
Payment of vows	
Doxology of Praise	Vow of Praise and Thanksgiving

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What prompts the move to praise?

Liturgical

After the lament is recited the petitioner receives an oracle and responds with praise

Editorial

Different psalm elements were stored together and combined editorially

Psychological

The petitioner receives relief in the experience of making the petition and comes to trust in God's deliverance

Write a lament

- **Address God** –using any names or titles that speak to you or express qualities of God that you want to call upon. You can use many names.
- **Make your complaints** – be detailed. What has happened? Who is hurting and why? Whose fault, if anyone's, is it? Give God the full blast of your anger, hurt and fear.
- **Express trust in or relationship with God.** This can be one sentence. See, e.g., Lamentations 3: 4 '*The Lord is my portion, says my soul, therefore I will hope in God.*'
- **Make an appeal** or petitions...a request for God's intervention and why it is needed.
- **Vow your praise** [optional if not ready]. Terrible things have happened, *and yet* I will praise You.

The Book of Job

- J. Richard Middleton's *Abraham's Silence* (2021)
- Seeing Job not as theodicy but as the search for appropriate speech towards God in time of great suffering
- Phases of Job's speaking:
 - blessing the name of God in the face of calamity (1.20-1)
 - responding with acceptance not blessing (2.10)
 - rejecting the goodness of creation (3.1-10)
 - rejecting defences of the goodness of God (dialogues w friends)
 - admission of insignificance (40.3-5)
 - 'repentance' but of what? (42.1-6)

Three thoughts

- Bear as much as possible of reality (cf. 1. Cor 13.7)
- Perform the scriptures in full, including Lam., Job., Ecc., and esp. Pss.
- Cultivate 'three-lensed seeing', the capacity to contemplate events in the light of the creation, the Cross, and the promise of a life from which every tear has been wiped away.

Three-lensed Contemplation

- Cultivate 'three-lensed seeing', the capacity to contemplate events in the light of the creation, the Cross, and the promise of a life from which every tear has been wiped away.
- All three lenses can be sources of hope..

- But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. ⁸ We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; ⁹ persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; ¹⁰ always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies. ¹¹ For while we live, we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh. ¹² So death is at work in us, but life in you.

- Ἐχομεν δὲ τὸν θησαυρὸν τοῦτον ἐν ὀστράκinois σκεύεσιν, ἵνα ἡ ὑπερβολὴ τῆς δυνάμεως ἡ τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ μὴ ἐξ ἡμῶν. ⁸ ἐν παντὶ θλιβόμενοι ἀλλ' οὐ στενοχωρούμενοι, **ἀπορούμενοι ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐξαπορούμενοι**, ⁹ διωκόμενοι ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐγκαταλείπόμενοι, καταβαλλόμενοι ἀλλ' οὐκ ἀπολλύμενοι, ¹⁰ πάντοτε **τὴν νέκρωσιν τοῦ Ἰησοῦ** ἐν τῷ σώματι περιφέροντες, ἵνα καὶ ἡ ζωὴ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἐν τῷ σώματι ἡμῶν φανερωθῇ. ¹¹ ἀεὶ γὰρ ἡμεῖς οἱ ζῶντες εἰς θάνατον **παραδιδόμεθα** διὰ Ἰησοῦν, ἵνα καὶ ἡ ζωὴ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ φανερωθῇ ἐν τῇ θνητῇ σαρκὶ ἡμῶν. ¹² ὥστε ¹ὁ θάνατος ἐν ἡμῖν ἐνεργεῖται, ἡ δὲ ζωὴ ἐν ὑμῖν.

Self-care: not an optional extra

Self-care is never a selfish act - it is simply good stewardship of the only gift I have, the gift I was put on earth to offer others. Anytime we can listen to true self and give the care it requires, we do it not only for ourselves, but for the many others whose lives we touch.

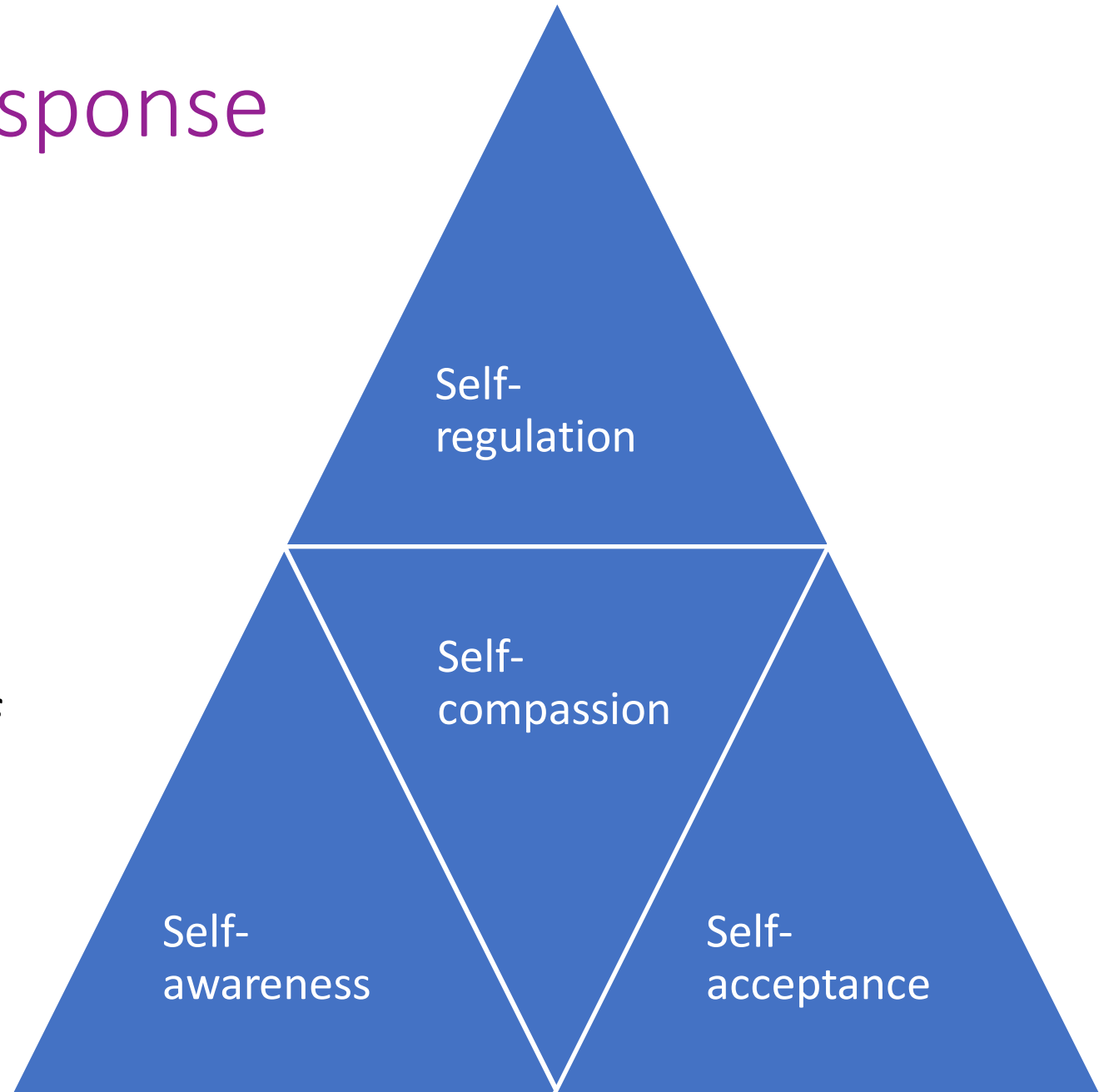
Parker Palmer, *Let your life speak: Listening for the voice of vocation* (2000)

Resilience:



From reactivity to response

Self-compassion is the heart
and
self-regulation is the muscle of
resilience.



Resources Exercise

On a blank piece of paper, draw a figure to represent you.

Now add to the diagram

- ◆ the things that keep you connected to yourself, others and God;
- ◆ the things that give you resilience and strength;
- ◆ the things that keep you healthy in mind and body.

List caring relationships that sustain you – the wisdom is that six is a good number of those.

Name what most helped you stay connected and balanced during the time of lockdown.

Canary in a coalmine: How will you know (what are the clues) that you are not 100% OK?

Once you have completed the exercise, share it with someone you are close to so that they can support you and remind you to draw on your resources.



- 1 All my hope on God is founded;
he doth still my trust renew.
Me through change and chance he guideth,
only good and only true.
God unknown,
he alone
calls my heart to be his own.
- 2 Human pride and earthly glory,
sword and crown betray his trust;
what with care and toil he buildeth,
tower and temple, fall to dust.
But God's power,
hour by hour,
is my temple and my tower.
- 3 God's great goodness aye endureth,
deep his wisdom, passing thought:
splendour, light, and life attend him,
beauty springeth out of naught.
Evermore
from his store
new-born worlds rise and adore.

- 4 Daily doth th' Almighty giver
bounteous gifts on us bestow;
his desire our soul delighteth,
pleasure leads us where we go.
Love doth stand
at his hand;
joy doth wait on his command.
- 5 Still from earth to God eternal
sacrifice of praise be done,
high above all praises praising
for the gift of Christ his Son.
Christ doth call
one and all:
ye who follow shall not fall.

- We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; ⁹ persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; ¹⁰ always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies. ¹¹ For while we live, we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh. ¹² So death is at work in us, but life in you.

- Creator of a cosmos of mourning and wonder
- **Have mercy upon us and hear our prayer**
- Word made flesh, traumatised as our servant
- **Have mercy upon us and hear our prayer**
- Spirit, companion of lives that carry death within them
- **Come close in time of pain.**
-
- Empower us to bear reality
- **What has happened to us has happened**

- Help us to see even disaster
- **As part of the fabric of God's creation**
- Help us to bring even the rawest tragedy
- **To the foot of Christ's Cross.**
- Help us to be authentic bearers of the hope
- **That one day there will be no more crying**
- **For God will be all in all.**
-
-
- Enfold us in love that is strong as death
- **Enfold us in the grace that sin can never exhaust**
- Enfold us in the fellowship that will never let us go.
-
- And the Grace...