Cultivating Beloved Quaker Community

An exploration through the lens of the science of stress and safety

Jeanne Elberfeld
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First, let's breathe & ground
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Neurodevelopment: the brain is a use dependent organ.

- Children's brains develop from the bottom up.

3 essential questions
Humans are Social Creatures

Executive State
Prefrontal Lobes
What can I learn from this?

Emotional State
Limbic System
Am I loved?

Survival State
Brain Stem
Am I safe?
Humans are social beings:

"For the vast majority of the last 200,000 years, humans have lived in multigenerational, multifamily hunter-gatherer bands characterized by a rich and continuous relational milieu.

...there were roughly four developmentally more mature potential caregivers for each child under the age of 6.

This enriched relational ratio helped the group protect, nurture, educate, and enrich the lives of each developing child."
"Individuals who have few positive relational interactions—a child without a healthy family/clan—during or after trauma have a much more difficult time decreasing the trauma-induced activation of the stress response systems...

Positive relational interactions regulate the brain’s stress response systems and help create positive and healing neuroendocrine and neurophysiological states that promote healing and healthy development both for the normal and the maltreated child."

Resilience
Resilience - built upon a foundation of safe, consistent relationships

5 key elements (from The Search Institute) to nurture others:
- Express care
  - be consistent, listen to learn, encourage others
- Challenge growth
  - expect our best, reflect on failures and successes
- Provide support
  - set boundaries, advocate, help navigate
- Share power
  - include, collaborate, let others lead
- Expand possibilities
  - inspire, connect, believe in our strengths

https://info.searchinstitute.org/developmental-relationships-help-young-people-thrive
Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

- Ah-Ha!
- Self-Actualization
- Esteem Needs
  - Belongingness & Love Needs
- Safety Needs
  - Stability
  - Biological & Psychosocial Needs
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Again, let's breathe.

Stress

Our response to stress is a predictable cascade of reactions...
chemical, physical, cognitive, and emotional.

- **Positive (eustress)**
  Brief increases in heart rate, mild elevations in stress hormone levels; offering opportunities to adapt, learn and grow flexibly.

- **Tolerable (distress)**
  Significant, temporary stress responses, buffered by supportive relationships. Temporarily overwhelmed.

- **Toxic (trauma)**
  Prolonged activation of stress response systems in the absence of protective relationships. May see gaps in neurodevelopment and dis-ease.
THREAT-BASED MINDSET
RESPONSE TO CHALLENGING INFORMATION

FIGHT
- You are wrong!
- I am right!

FLIGHT
- "Let's talk about something else"

FREEZE
- Uh...
- (doesn't talk or listen/learn)

FAWN
- Performative surface-level engagement

Flop...
- Play dead or dissociation

90 seconds

Flock is the first step...
There's safety in numbers!
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What is an ACE?

Adverse childhood experiences are stressful (toxic stress) events that occur in childhood (0-17 years).

Silver lining! ACEs can be prevented.
The ACE Pyramid

Epigenetics

1. Generational Embodiment / Historical Trauma
2. Social Conditions / Local Context
3. Adverse Childhood Experiences
4. Disrupted Neurodevelopment
5. Disease, Disability, & Social Problems
6. Early Death
7. Death
ACEs are:
- Common
  - 2:3 with 1 ACE
  - 1:8 with 4 ACE
  - 1:11 with 6+ ACE
- Clustered, & costly
  - $112 Billion/yr for US

ACE Outcomes:
- 33% report no ACEs
- 51% report 1-3 ACEs
- 16% report 4-8 ACEs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>With 0 ACEs</th>
<th>With 3 ACEs</th>
<th>With 7+ ACEs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 in 16 smokes</td>
<td>1 in 9 smokes</td>
<td>1 in 6 smokes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 in 69 is alcoholic</td>
<td>1 in 9 is alcoholic</td>
<td>1 in 6 is alcoholic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 in 480 uses IV drugs</td>
<td>1 in 43 uses IV drugs</td>
<td>1 in 30 uses IV drugs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 in 96 attempts suicide</td>
<td>1 in 10 attempts suicide</td>
<td>1 in 5 attempts suicide</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
OLDER CHILDREN - High School Sophomores and Seniors

Washington School Classroom (30 Students)
Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

- 6 students with no ACE
- 5 students with 1 ACE
- 6 students with 2 ACEs
- 3 students with 3 ACEs
- 7 students with 4 or 5 ACEs
- 3 students with 6 or more ACEs

58% (17) students with no exposure to physical abuse or adult to adult violence
29% (9) of students exposed to physical abuse or adult to adult violence
13% (4) of students exposed to physical abuse and adult to adult violence

Population Average
An exercise...
Listen and note the trauma impacts
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Again, let's breathe and move.

**Left**

**Right**

exploring multiple perspectives...

- 4 characters of the brain - Jill Bolte Taylor, PhD
- NeuroSequential theory - Bruce Perry, MD, PhD
- Polyvagal theory - Stephen Porges, PhD
Whole brain living
by Jill Bolte Taylor, PhD

Can you nurture a Mary heart in a Martha world?
-Luke 10:38

Past & Future; thinks in words

Character 1
Left Brain Thinking
In charge of the to-do list
Gets things done
Productive
Goal-driven
Organized
Judgmental
Hierarchical

Right Brain Thinking

Character 4
Goal is to love and be loved unconditionally
Grateful
Connected to all that is
Open-hearted
Connected
Expansive
Generous

Present; thinks in images

Character 2
Left Brain Emotional
Protects you from getting hurt
Perceives threats based on past
Cautious
Anxious
Egotistical
Suspicious
Deceptive
If unhappy, wants everyone to be unhappy

Character 3
Right Brain Emotional
Moves toward anything juicy in the here and now
Adrenaline Junkie
Playful
Creative
Empathic
Forgiving
Curious
Awe-inspired

Be as children...
When you feel out of control...B.R.A.I.N.

Breathe - stop, center, get curious
Recognize - what character is running the thought process?
Appreciate - appreciate all 4 characters' roles and value to us
Inquire - ask questions about the response (next move)
Navigate - flexibly respond to the dynamic demands of life
“Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”
- Matthew 18:3

Consider this...children are right brain dominant until approximately 18 months of age. Brain hemispheres aren't fully connected until approximately 7 years.

The right brain is focused on the present moment, relationally connected, peaceful, grateful, mindful, and has the capacity to soothe and regulate the left brain.
What does it look like to "be as children"?
Brain regions

Brain states

NeuroSequential Model of the Brain

-Crue Perry
Brain States of Arousal

- **Calm/Alert** - engaged concern for universal and broad community, responsible
- **Alarm** - flock concern for family friends, reactive
- **Fear** - fight/flight/flight/freeze concern for self, reactive
- **Terror** - flop concern for bodily integrity, reflexive
Self-regulation: putting time and space between the stimulus and the reaction

Co-regulation: an interactive process of regulation within the context of caring relationships

So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God.

- Isaiah 41:10
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cortex: Engaged, Effective Communication, Curious, Listening, Processing, Imagination, Creative, Explicit Memories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Limbic: Lack of Focus, Distracting, Attention Seeking, Short Term Memory Issues, Emotional Lability, Implicit Memories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midbrain: Movement (Fine and Gross), Sensory Seeking, Eating Issues, Fight-Flight-Freeze</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brainstem: Infantile Behaviors—Sucking, Rocking, Swaddling, Skin Sensitivity, Eye Movements, Dissociation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This is where we want to be</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer-to-Peer Partnering, Singing, Music and Movement, Mirroring, Animal Assisted Activity, Empathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walking, Running, Fidgets, Bilateral Movement, Doodling, Alternative Seating, Balance Poses, Drumming, Music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rocking, Breathing, Swinging, Chewing, Sucking, Sips, Humming, Music at 60-80 BPM, Somatosensory Stimulation</td>
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How do we support people's self-regulation needs, in real time, during Meeting for Worship?

For those with early adversity this may be challenging.
Autonomic states

Cues

STRESS SYMPATHETIC
- PUPILS EXPAND
- FAST & SHALLOW BREATHS
- HEART PUMPS FASTER
- GUT INACTIVE

CALM PARASYMPATHETIC
- PUPILS SHRINK
- SLOW, DEEP BREATHS
- HEART SLOWS
- GUT ACTIVE

Autonomic Nervous System

Polyvagal Theory by Stephen Porges, PhD
Autonomic states:
Connect - social engagement
Protect - mobilize
Disconnect - immobilize

Blended states

Neuroception

Be still and cool in thine own mind and spirit.
- George Fox
What autonomic state are we in when 'gathered' in Worship?

Be still and know that I am God. Psalm 46:10
Why body language matters!

**Threatening body language**
- Shallow, fast breathing
- Tense face, body, and muscles
- Threatening gestures (hands on hips, arms crossed, fingers pointed, leaning forward, arms up in the air)
- Fast, frequent, & impulsive movements
- Large, closed-off body
- Eyebrows arched downward
- Mouth tightly closed or in a frown, pursed lips
- Fading eye contact
- Clenched jaw & teeth
- Monotone voice
- Loud volume
- High or low pitch
- Sarcastic
- Hostile or grumpy
- Fast rate
- Tense
- Intensifying
- Interrupting

**Nonthreatening body language**
- Normal breathing rate
- Relaxed muscles
- Inviting gestures
- Arms at sides/open, welcoming, gentle handshakes
- Smooth, predictable movements
- Open, welcoming body
- Below or at eye level
- Neutral face
- Smiles
- Eye contact that is sustained, breaks away, then returns

Cues of Safety versus Cues of Threat

The way your face & body looks and sounds will literally change someone’s brain!

Based on the work of Dr. Stephen Zugha
What cues of safety do we send/receive in Quaker Meeting?

What cues of threat do we send/receive in Quaker Meeting?

What else might we offer to support safety and belonging in Quaker Meeting?
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Community-
Individuals (left brain) working together (right brain)

We all need...
Light

You are the body of Christ. Each one of you is a part of it.

1 Corinthians 12 - 27
Safety (physical, psychological, financial, spiritual)
&
Belonging (relational safety)

to be in community

We need to be seen, heard, and valued, as individuals by our community.

Where 2 or 3 are gathered in my name, there I am.
- Matthew 18:12

The Ark of Peace is entered two-by-two...
- A Course in Miracles
LIGHT... dual properties

The Light is one and the same, which enlightens every one that comes into the world, believers and unbelievers.

-George Fox

Refraction
Tower of babel story...
From there the Lord scattered them over the face of the whole earth.

Genesis 11
Re-member who you are...

The first step of peace is to stand still in the Light.

George Fox
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• Creating sanctuary: Toward the evolution of sane societies by Sandra Bloom
• My grandmother’s hands: Racialized trauma and the pathways to mending our hearts and bodies by Resmaa Menakem
• What happened to you: Conversations of trauma, resilience, and healing by Bruce Perry and Oprah Winfrey
• Born for Love by Bruce Perry and Maia Szalavitz
• The boy who was raised as a dog: And other stories from a child psychiatrist’s notebook by Bruce Perry and Maia Szalavitz
• Why zebras don’t get ulcers by Robert Sapolsky
• The deepest well: Healing the long-term effects of childhood trauma by Nadine Burke Harris
• The body keeps the score by Bessel van der Kolk
• My stroke of insight by Jill Bolte Taylor
• Whole brain Living by Jill Bolte Taylor
• In an unspoken voice: How the body releases trauma and restores goodness by Peter Levine
• Intentional Neuroplasticity by Lori Desautels
• The Myth of Normal by Gabor Mate'
• The Polyvagal Theory by Stephen Porges
• The pocket guide to the Polyvagal theory by Stephen Porges
• The polyvagal path to joyful learning by Debra Em Wilson
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a bit more science
entropy

The degree of disorder or uncertainty in a system.

negative entropy: organizing a system...requires energy and focus.
Has the pandemic placed our Quaker Community at rest?

LAW OF INERTIA

Newton’s First Law of Motion, also known as the Law of Inertia, states that an object at rest will remain at rest until it is acted upon by an unbalanced force.
How do we overcome inertia and entropy to build the beloved community of PYM?
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