

# Cultivating Beloved Quaker Community

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

ACEs

Stress

Focus on the  
brain

Community

Development

breathe

Shalom  
and  
Namaste

Jeanne Elberfeld  
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**First, let's breathe & ground**



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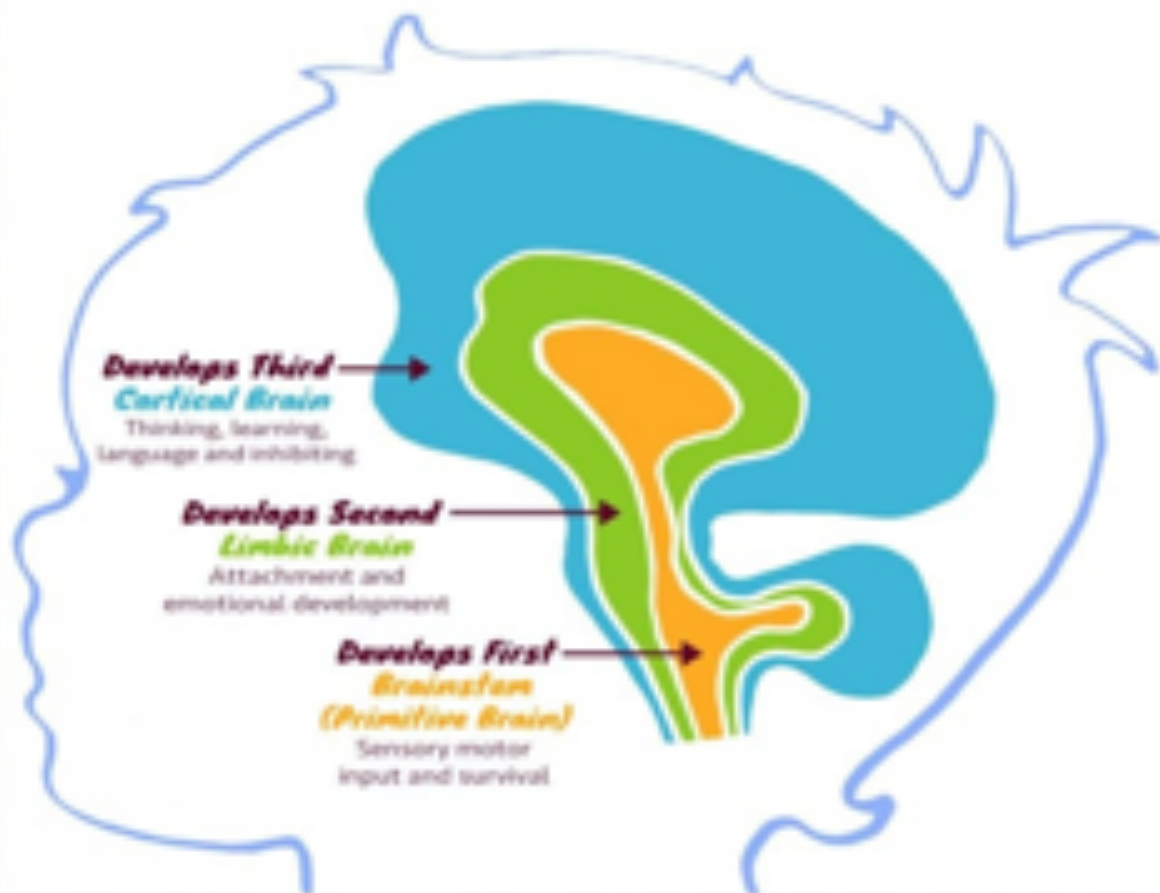
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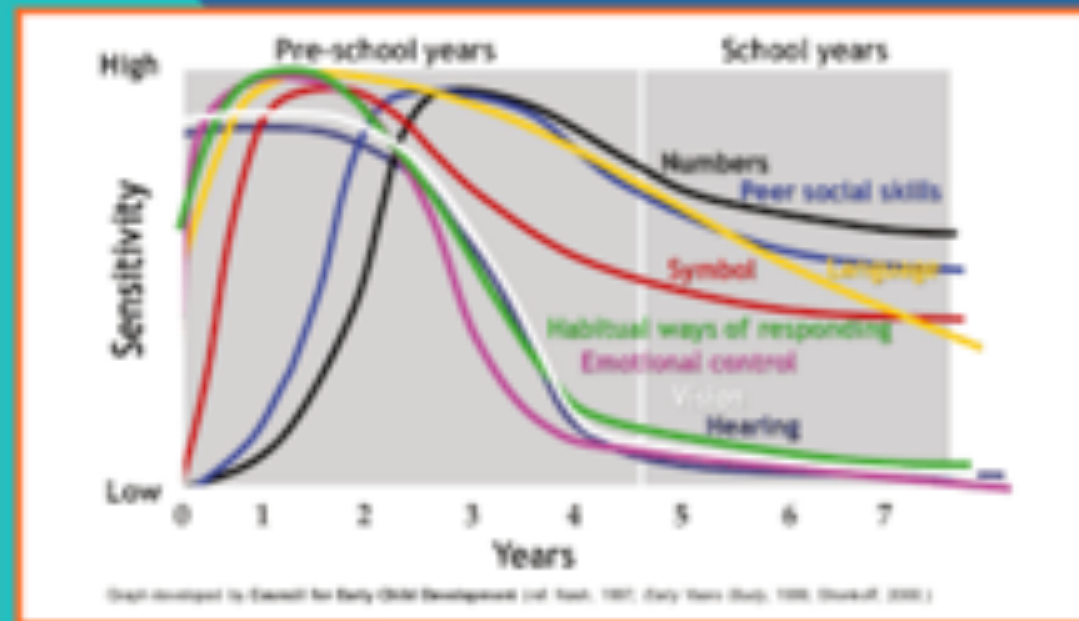
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Children's brains develop  
from the bottom up.



## Neurodevelopment: the brain is a use dependent organ.



**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?

another  
perspective

# 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."

Protective  
relationships

"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



# MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS



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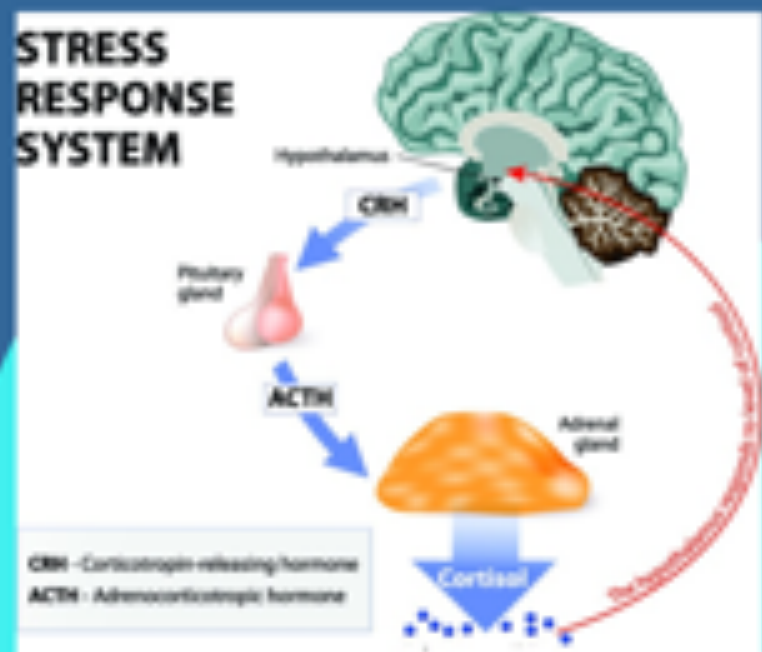
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# Stress



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

**Flock is the first step...  
There's safety in numbers!**

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

@LINDSAYBRAMAN

**Flop...  
play dead  
or  
dissociation**

90 seconds

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# ACEs

Adverse Childhood Experiences

What is an ACE?

Multiple levels of ACEs

ACE Outcomes

The ACE Pyramid

## 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.**

### ABUSE



Physical



Emotional



Sexual

### NEGLECT



Physical



Emotional

### HOUSEHOLD DYSFUNCTION



Mental Illness



Incarcerated Relative



Mother treated violently



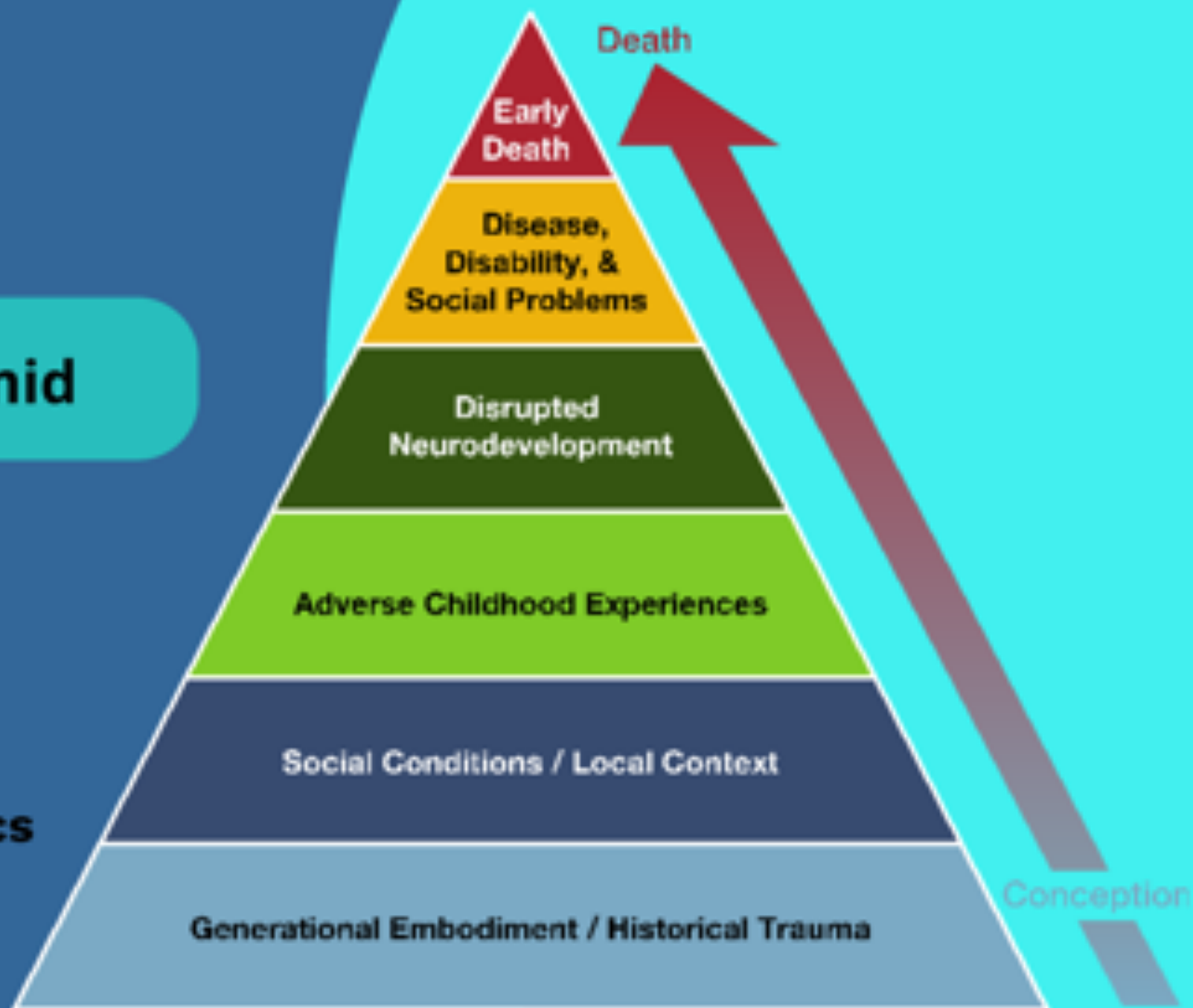
Substance Abuse



Divorce

## The ACE Pyramid

**Epigenetics**



**Generational Embodiment / Historical Trauma**

**Social Conditions / Local Context**

**Adverse Childhood Experiences**

**Disrupted  
Neurodevelopment**

**Disease,  
Disability, &  
Social Problems**

**Early  
Death**

**Death**

**Conception**



## Early Adversity has Lasting Impacts



### 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

With 0 ACEs

1 in 16 smokes

1 in 69 is alcoholic

1 in 480 uses IV drugs

1 in 96 attempts suicide

51% report 1-3 ACEs

With 3 ACEs

1 in 9 smokes

1 in 9 is alcoholic

1 in 43 uses IV drugs

1 in 10 attempts suicide

16% report 4-8 ACEs

With 7+ ACEs

1 in 6 smokes

1 in 6 is alcoholic

1 in 30 uses IV drugs

1 in 5 attempts suicide

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



The Essential **BILLY JOEL**



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Again, let's breathe and move 



4 characters of  
the brain -  
Jill Bolte Taylor,  
PhD

NeuroSequential  
theory  
-Bruce Perry, MD,  
PhD

Polyvagal theory  
- Stephen Porges,  
PhD

exploring multiple  
perspectives...

## Whole brain living by Jill Bolte Taylor, PhD

Can you  
nurture a  
Mary heart in  
a Martha  
world?

-Luke 10:38

Left Brain Thinking

### Character 1

In charge of the to-do list  
Gets things done  
Productive  
Goal-driven  
Organized  
Judgmental  
Hierarchical

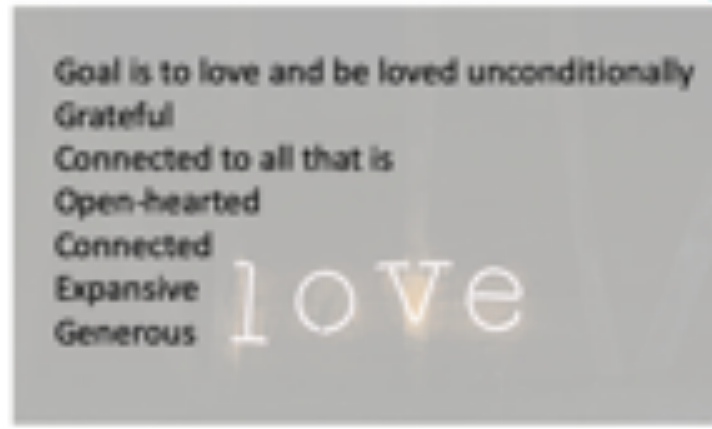


Right Brain Thinking

### Character 4

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

love



Left Brain Emotional

### Character 2

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



Right Brain Emotional

### Character 3

Moves toward anything juicy in the here and now  
Adrenaline junkie  
Playful  
Creative  
Empathic  
Forgiving  
Curious  
Awe-inspired



Present;  
thinks  
in  
images

Be as  
children...

Past &  
Future;  
thinks  
in  
words

## **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.

**Think &  
share**

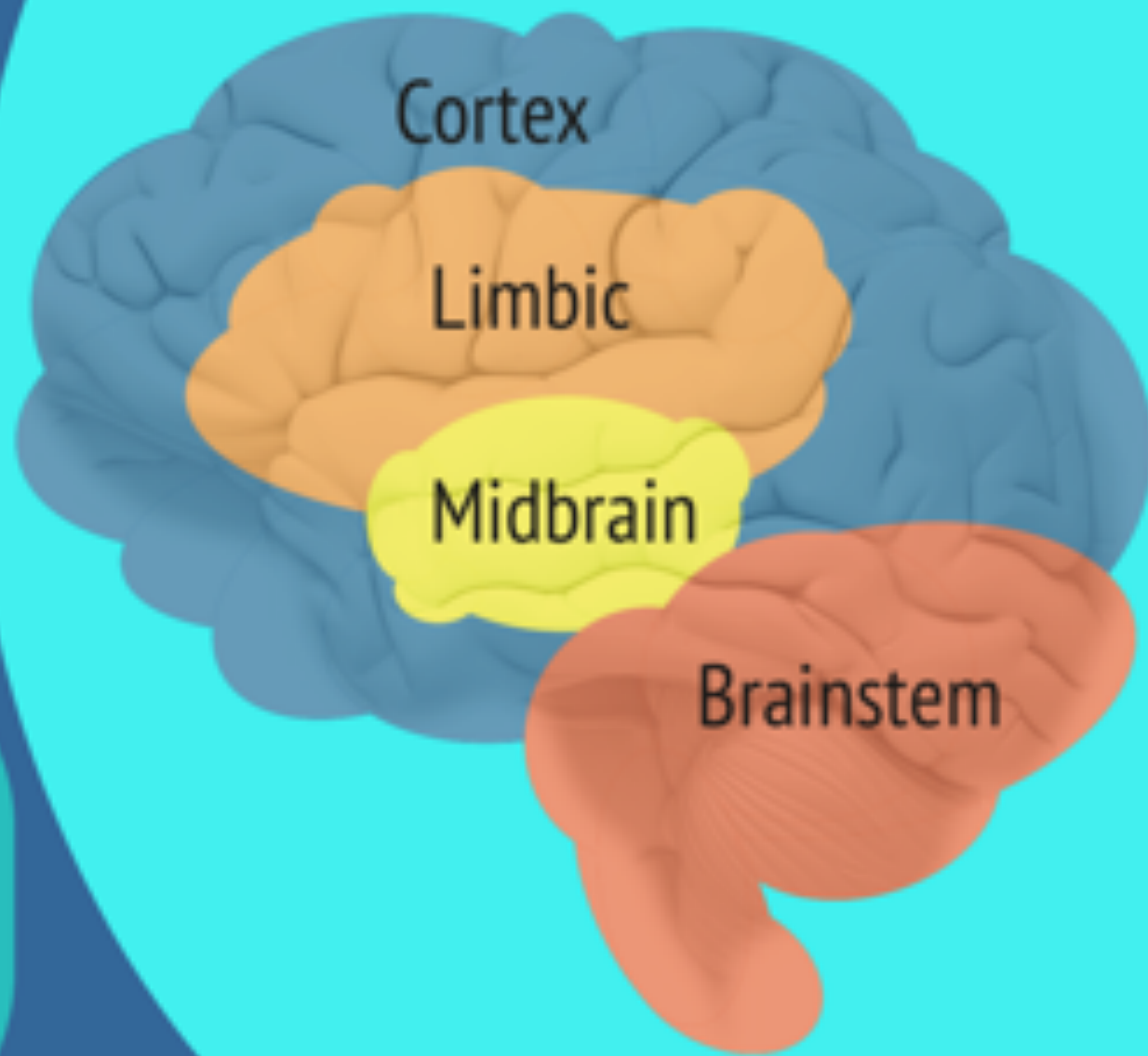
What does it look  
like to  
"be as children"?



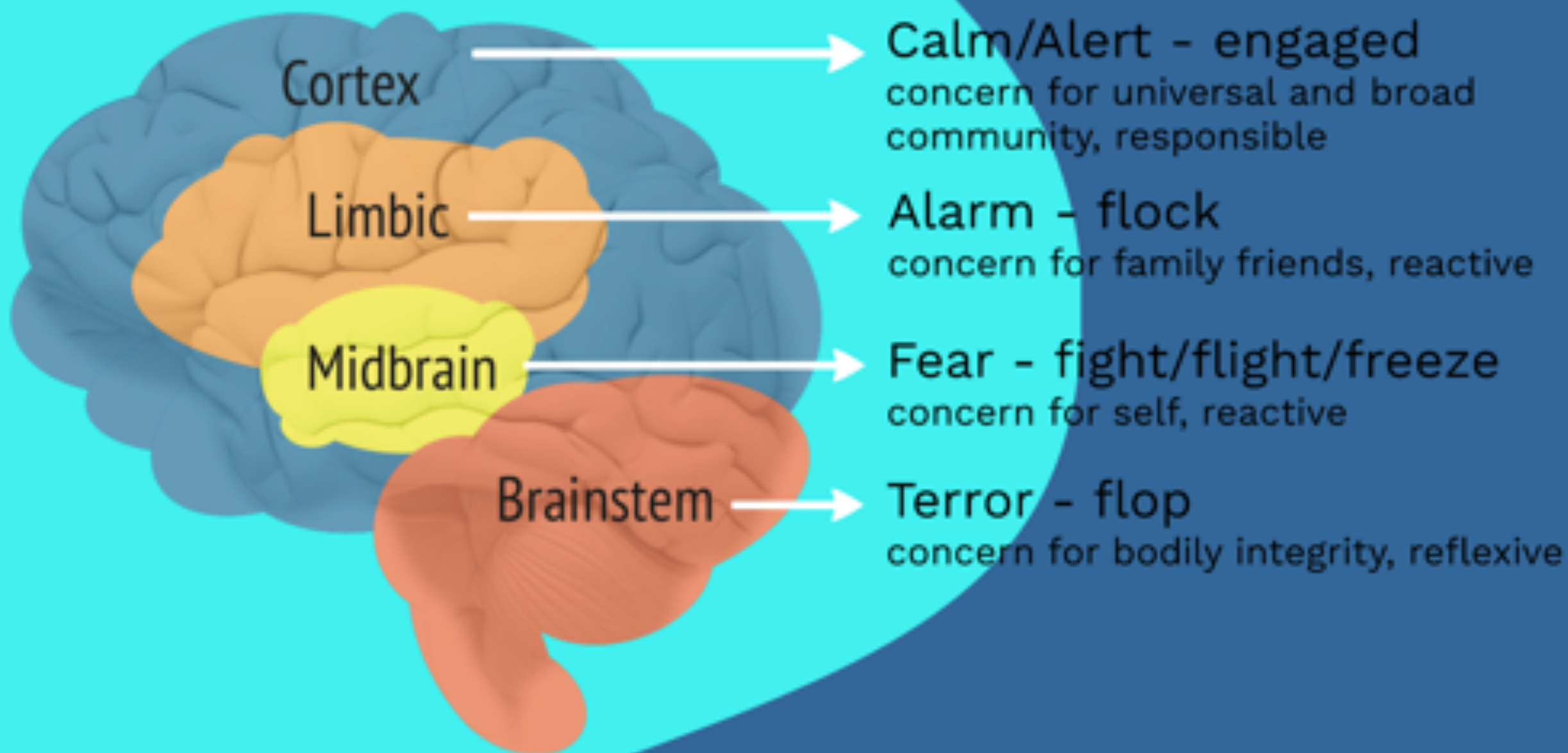
Brain  
regions

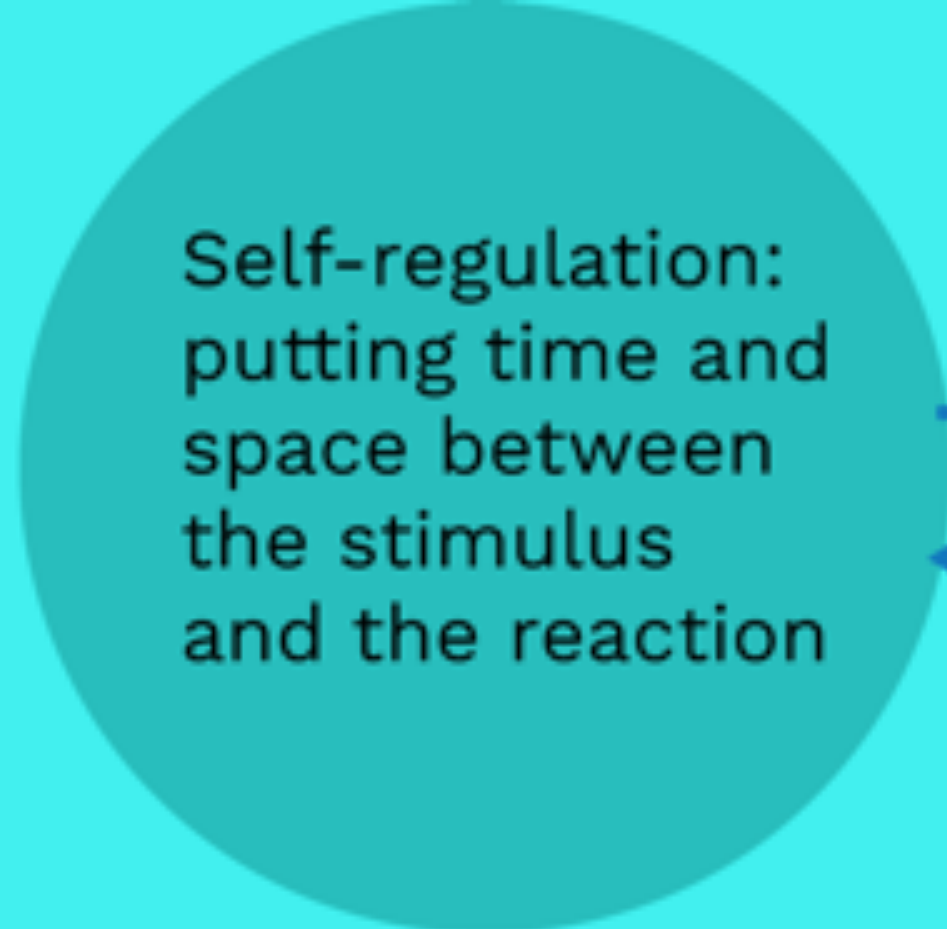
Brain  
states

NeuroSequential  
Model of the  
Brain  
-Bruce Perry



# Brain States of Arousal





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

**Indicators &  
Interventions**

How do we support learners with regulatory needs in the classroom during learning for knowledge?

For those with early elements this may be challenging

cortex: engaged, effective communication, curious, listening processing, imagination, creative, explicit memories

**this is where we want to be**

**limbic: lack of focus, distracting others/attention seeking, short term memory issues, emotional lability, implicit memories**

peer-to-peer partnering, singing, music and movement, mirroring, animal assisted activity, empathy

midbrain: movement (fine and gross), sensory seeking, eating issues, fight-flight-freeze

**walking, running, fidgets, bilateral movement, doodling, alternative seating, balance poses, drumming, music**

**brainstem: infantile behaviors- sucking, rocking, swaddling, skin sensitivity, eye movements, dissociation**

rocking, breathing, swinging, chewing, sucking, sips, humming, music at 60-80 bpm, somatosensory stimulation

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**

**Polyvagal Theory  
by Stephen Porges, PhD**

**STRESS  
SYMPATHETIC**

**CALM  
PARASYMPATHETIC**

PUPILS EXPAND

PUPILS SHRINK

FAST & SHALLOW  
BREATHS

SLOW, DEEP  
BREATHS

HEART PUMPS  
FASTER

HEART SLOWS

GUT INACTIVE

GUT ACTIVE

**Autonomic Nervous System**



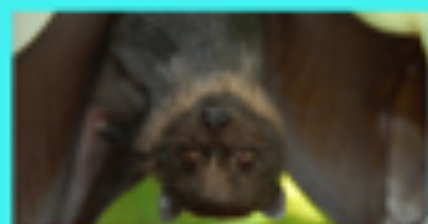


# Autonomic states:

Connect- social engagement

Protect- mobilize

Disconnect- immobilize

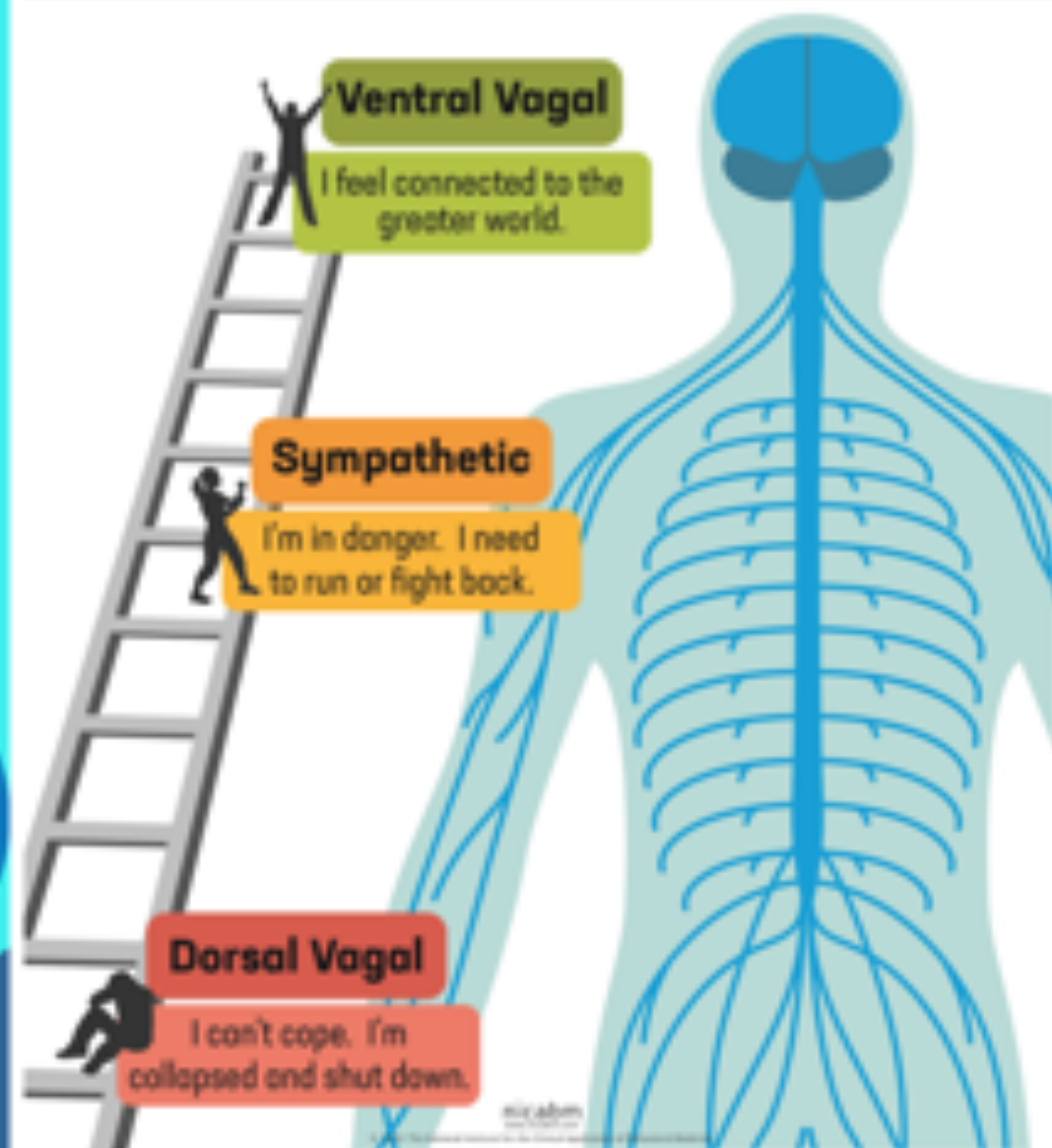


Neuroception

**Blended  
states**

Be still and cool in thine own  
mind and spirit.  
- George Fox

## Polyvagal Theory: The Autonomic Ladder Understanding the Nervous System Adapted from Deb Dana, LCSW



**Cortex**

Flexible Social Engagement Safe

Curious Joyful Focused Calm Interested

Mindful Playful Empathetic Happy Creative

**Cortex & Midbrain**

Alert Lively Blended Pathways Relaxed Laid back

Energetic Active Outgoing Tired Lazy Tranquil

**Cortex & Brainstem**

**Midbrain**

move away from threat Flight & Fight move towards threat

Fearful Worried Furious Anxious

Panicked Nervous Frustrated Angry

**Brainstem**

Shameful Depressed Freeze collapse/immobilize from threat

Sad Shut down Trapped Stuck Helpless

**SUPPORTABLE Solutions**

Model: Use the work of  
Therapies Institute  
Developed in Chicago  
Credit from the WMA & Dr. Stefan Porges at the time

**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  
Eyes squinted or wide open  
Eyebrows arched downward  
Mouth tight & straight or in a frown, pursed lips  
Staring eye contact  
Clenched jaw & teeth

looks like

sounds like

Monotone voice  
Loud volume  
High or low pitch  
Sarcastic  
Hostile or grumpy  
Fast rate  
Tense  
Interrogating  
Interrupting



## Neuroception



Our brains constant evaluation of safety in our environment - done at a **subconscious level**  
Threatening body language will activate our feeling brain because its job is to keep us safe.

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

## Nonthreatening body language

Normal breathing rate  
Relaxed muscles  
Inviting gestures (arms at sides open, welcoming, gentle touches, hugs)  
Smooth, predictable movements  
Open, welcoming body  
Below or at eye level  
Neutral face  
Smiles  
Eye contact that is sustained, breaks away, then returns

looks like



sounds like

Varied inflection  
Appropriate volume for the situation  
Not too fast or too slow rate  
Warm & caring tone  
Adequate wait time  
Back and forth communication

SUPPORTABLE Solutions...

Cues of Safety versus Cues of Threat

Think & share

**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

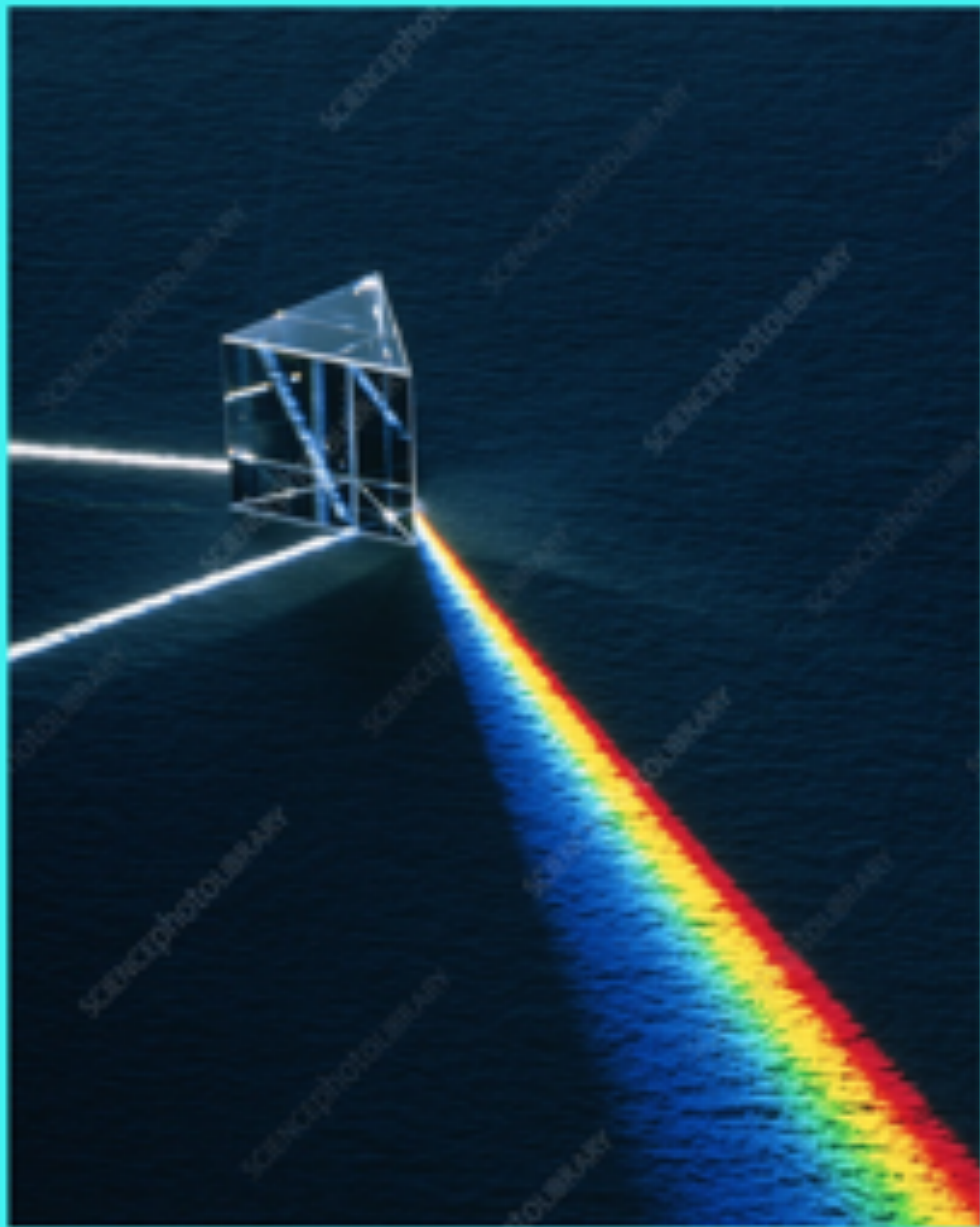


The Light is one and the same, which enlightens every one that comes into the world, believers and unbelievers.

-George Fox

**Refraction**





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

Genesis 11

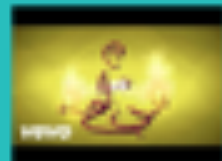
**Remember**

# Re-member who you are...



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

George Fox





**vevo**

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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

question?

Inertia

**The degree of disorder or uncertainty in a system.**




entropy

negative entropy: organizing a system...requires energy and focus.

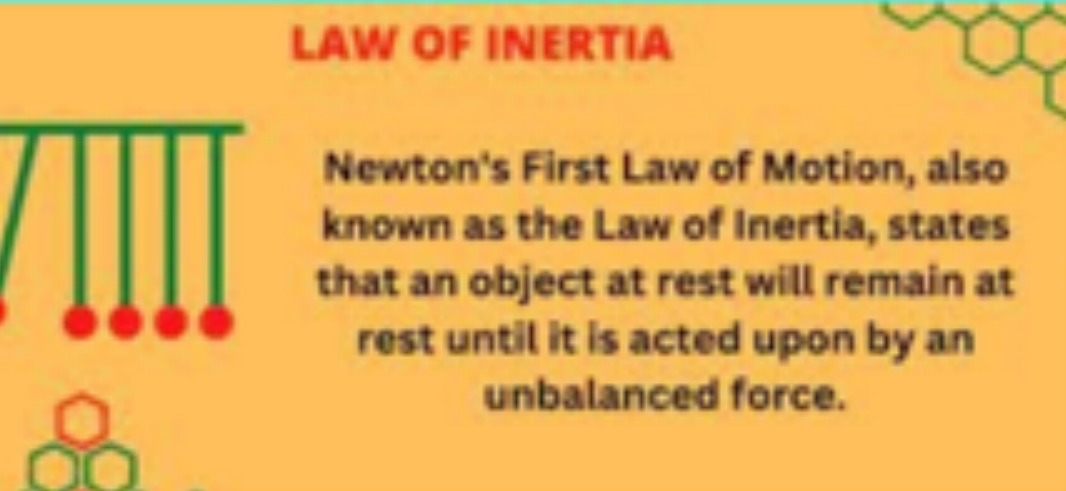


# Has the pandemic placed our Quaker Community at rest?



**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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