

Queensland Ambulance Service

# How a Good Leader Can Prevent Potential Psychological Trauma

Global Paramedic Leadership  
Alliance - March 2019



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# What we know.

- “....just over half of the respondents identified stressful experiences with issues of poor management or being treated badly by managers.” Answering the Call- The National Mental Health and Wellbeing Study of Police and Emergency Services, BeyondBlue 2018.
- Significant focus and discussion around the nature of management interactions and managerial process's. National Senate Enquiry into First Responders
- ALF Conference - Lots of discussion around the need for compassionate leadership and issues around bullying and Harassment etc.



Why do Ambulance leaders have  
trouble supporting staff?



- **Mental Health training package –  
Research Findings (2009)**

(*n* = 283) emergency service supervisors  
209 males and 73 females (1 no gender)

20 multiple-choice questions re: mental health knowledge, designed collaboratively by the Priority One facilitators and the QUT research team

Day's Mental Illness Stigma

Barnes, B. (2009). Evaluation of workplace resilience training package in the QAS. Unpublished Doctoral Thesis. Queensland University of Technology



Professor Jane Shakespeare-Finch



# P1 Facilitator Interviews

- Issues arising during workshops:
  - Confidentiality – “What can I do with what I know?”
  - Raised awareness of MH resources but not convinced it is for them
  - Feeling neglected
  - Think they have to be ‘headkickers’
  - Caught between a system & empathy
- Other key themes included:
  - the impact of the generation gap
  - heavy workloads
  - difference between country versus city respondents
  - impact of non-traumatic stressors
  - issues of confidentiality and mistrust.



# Managerial Empowerment

- Managers play a significant role in preventing psychological illness and injury – but they need to be empowered to do it and they need to know why it is important.



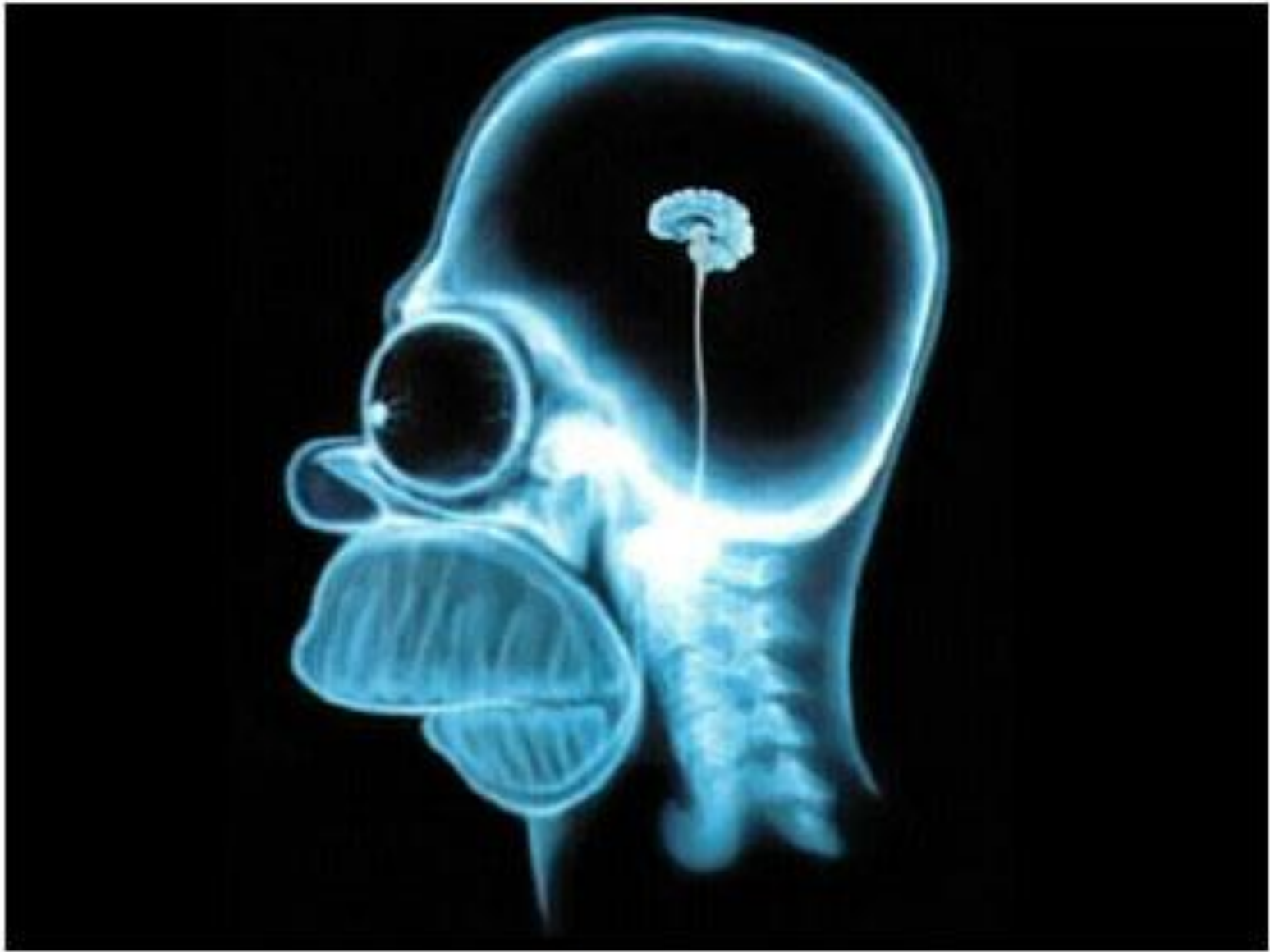


# QAS Leadership Investment

- Trauma in the Workplace – training for all Managers and Supervisors
- Critical Incident Management Training
- Classified Officers Development Program (CODP) 1, 2 and 3
- Critical Care Development Program (CCDP)
- Managers Coaching and Mentoring



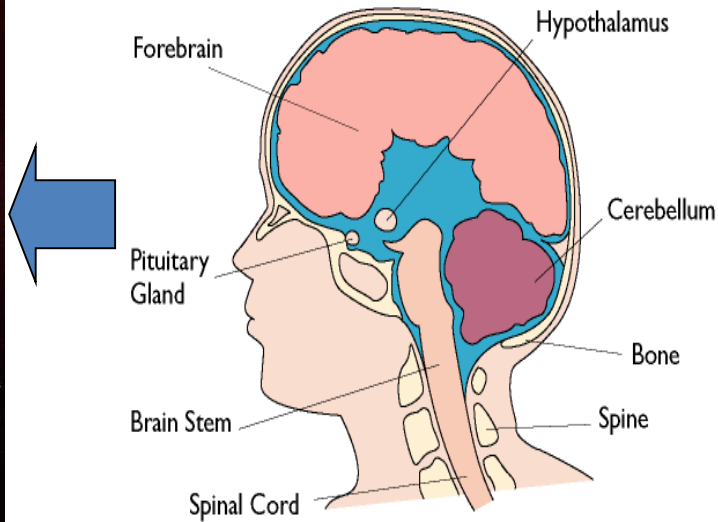
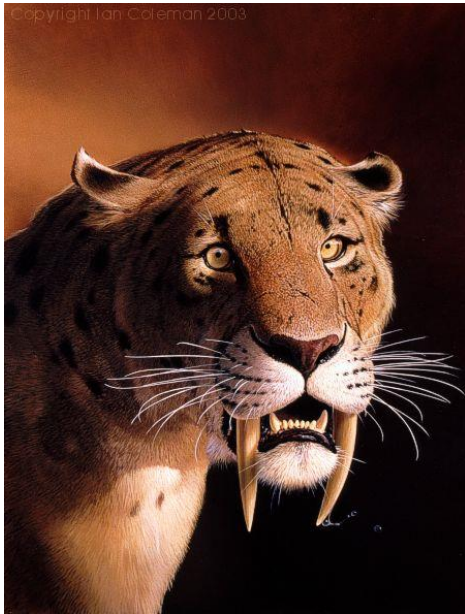




Stimulus

Recognised as danger

Results in chemical release



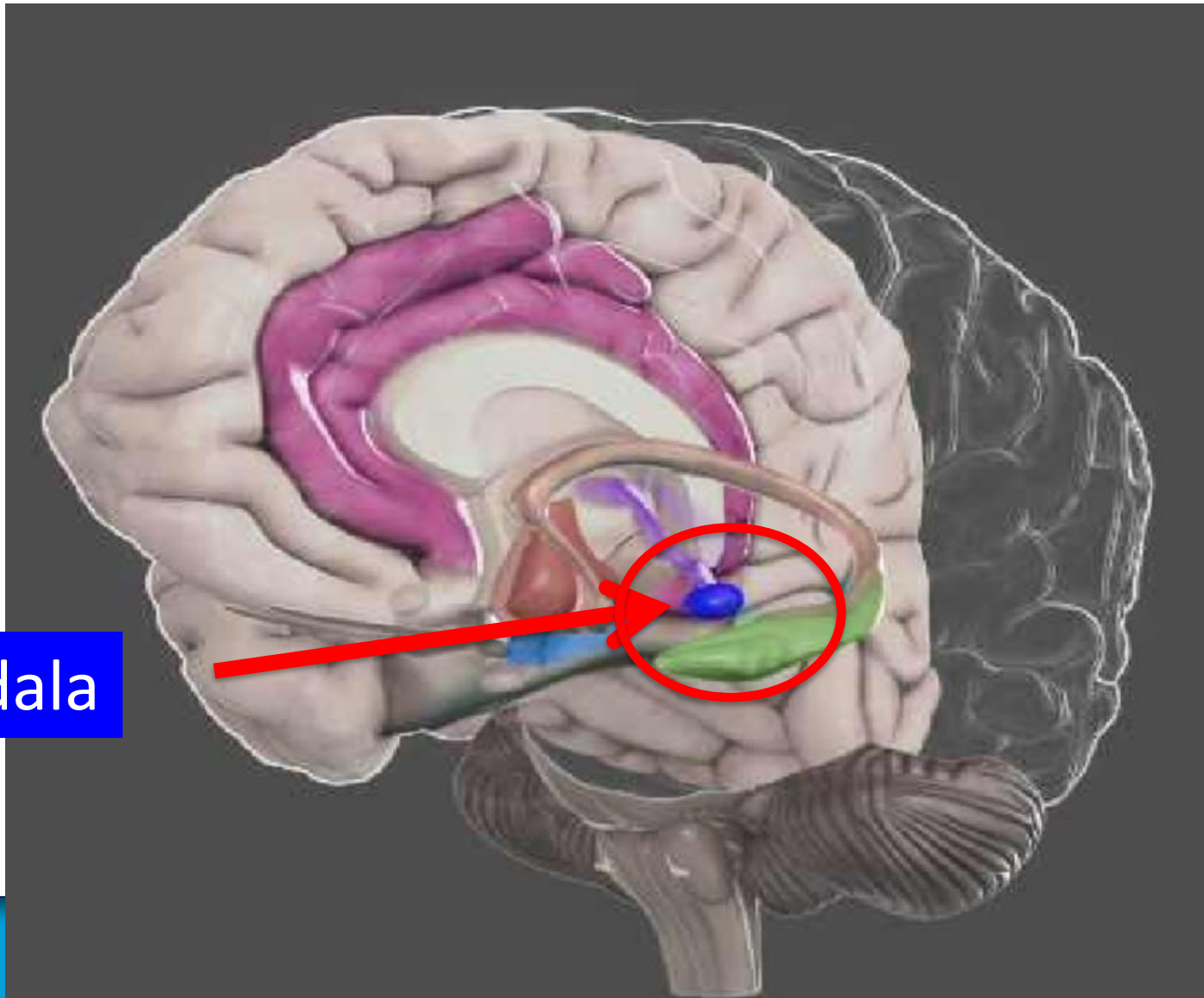
Hypothalamus releases  
Adrenaline  
Noradrenaline  
Cortisol

Physiological Response

- ↑ Heart rate
- ↑ Respiratory rate
- ↑ Metabolism
- ↑ Awareness/ vigilance
- Shunts blood away from GI tract to muscles and limbs
- Pupils dilate

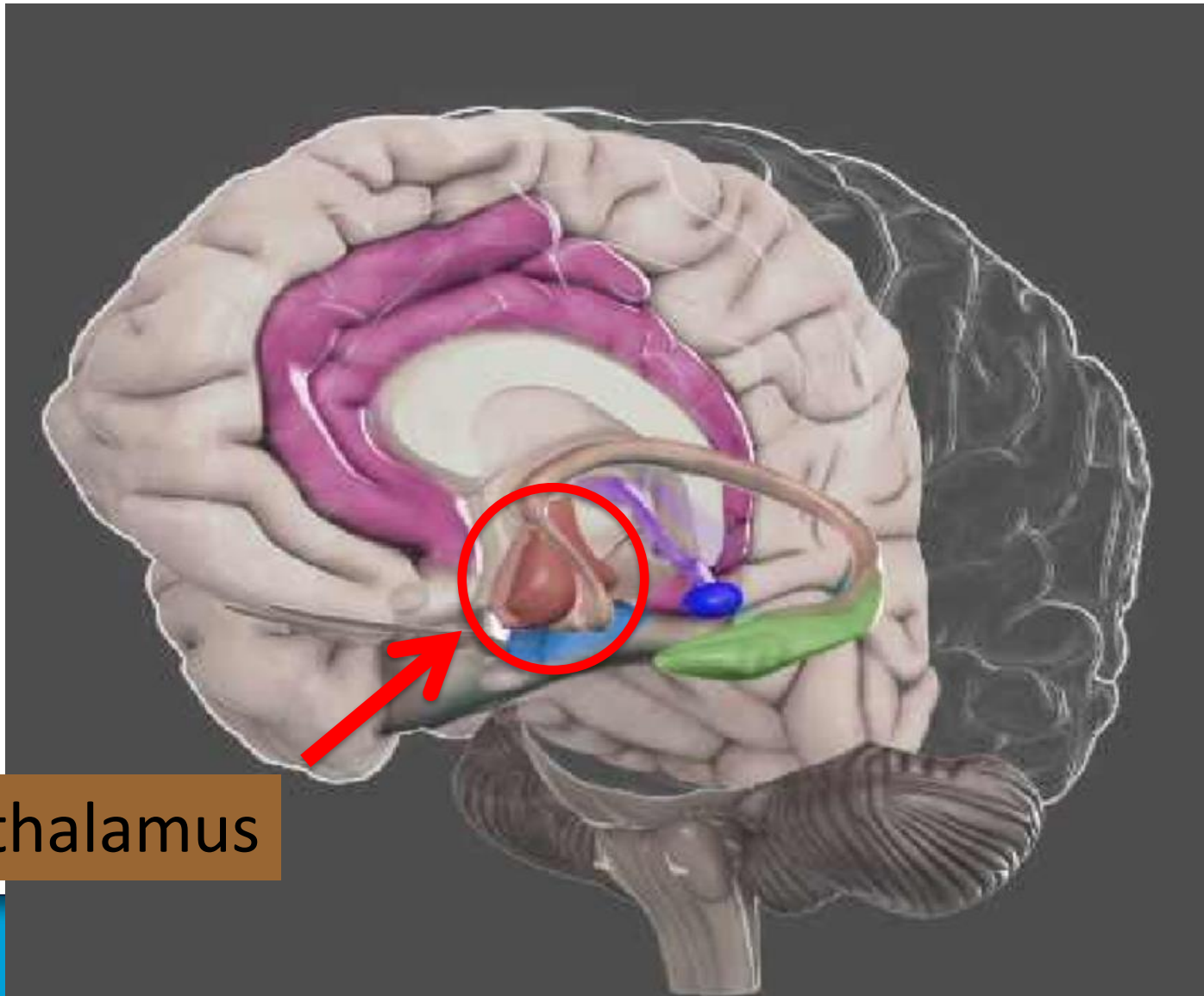


# The Neuropsychology of Trauma - The Limbic System



Amygdala

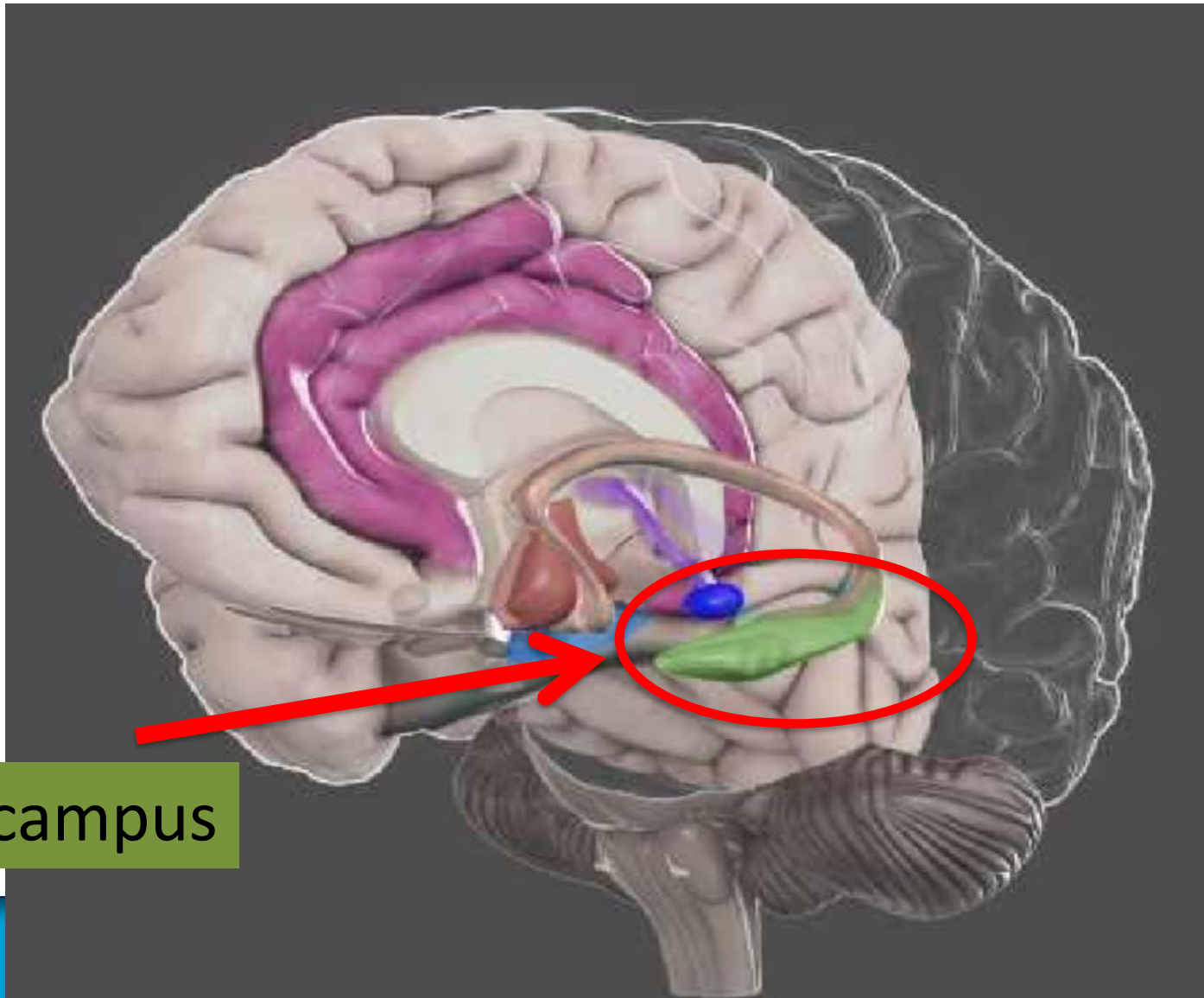
# The Neuropsychology of Trauma - The Limbic System



Hypothalamus

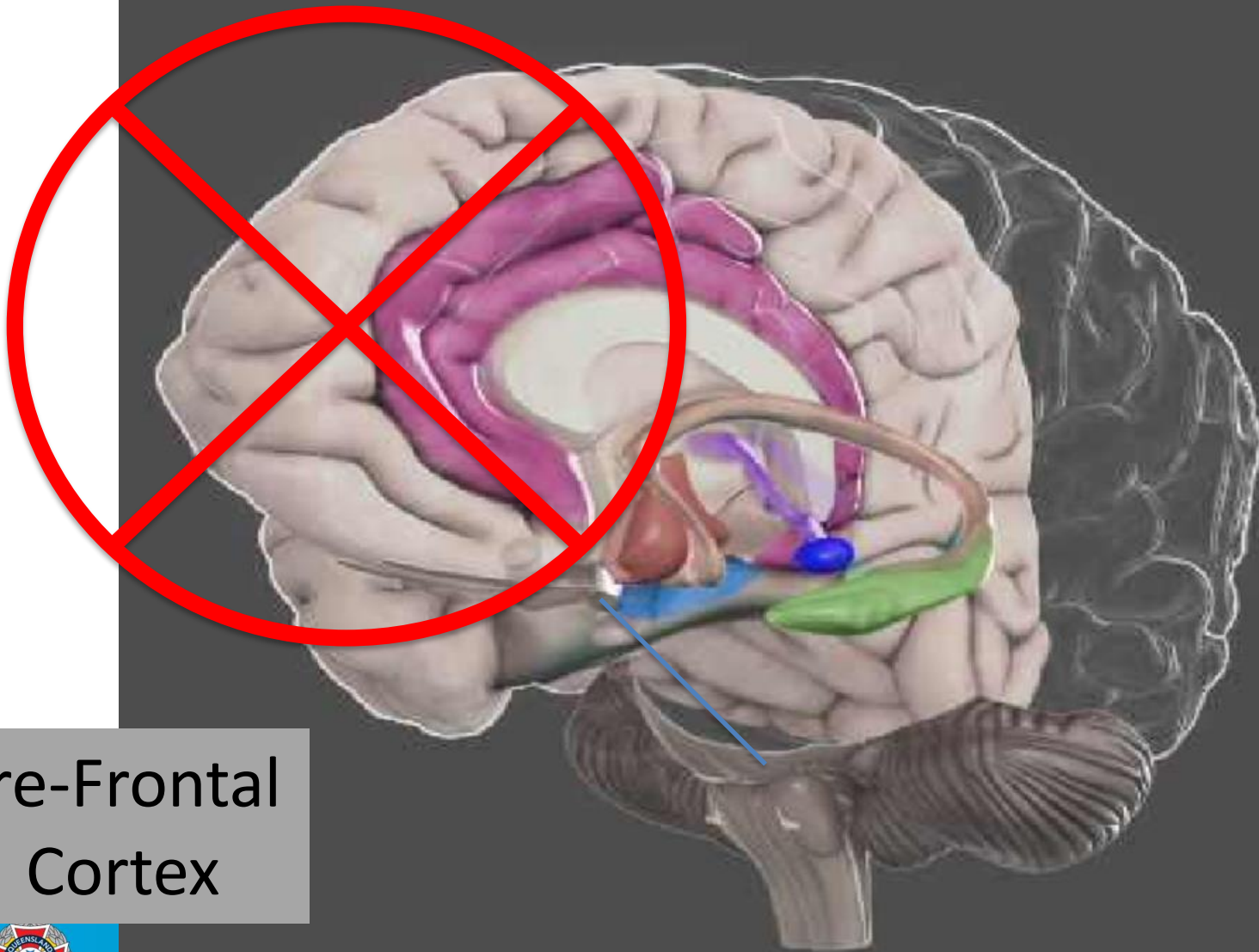


# The Neuropsychology of Trauma - The Limbic System



Hippocampus

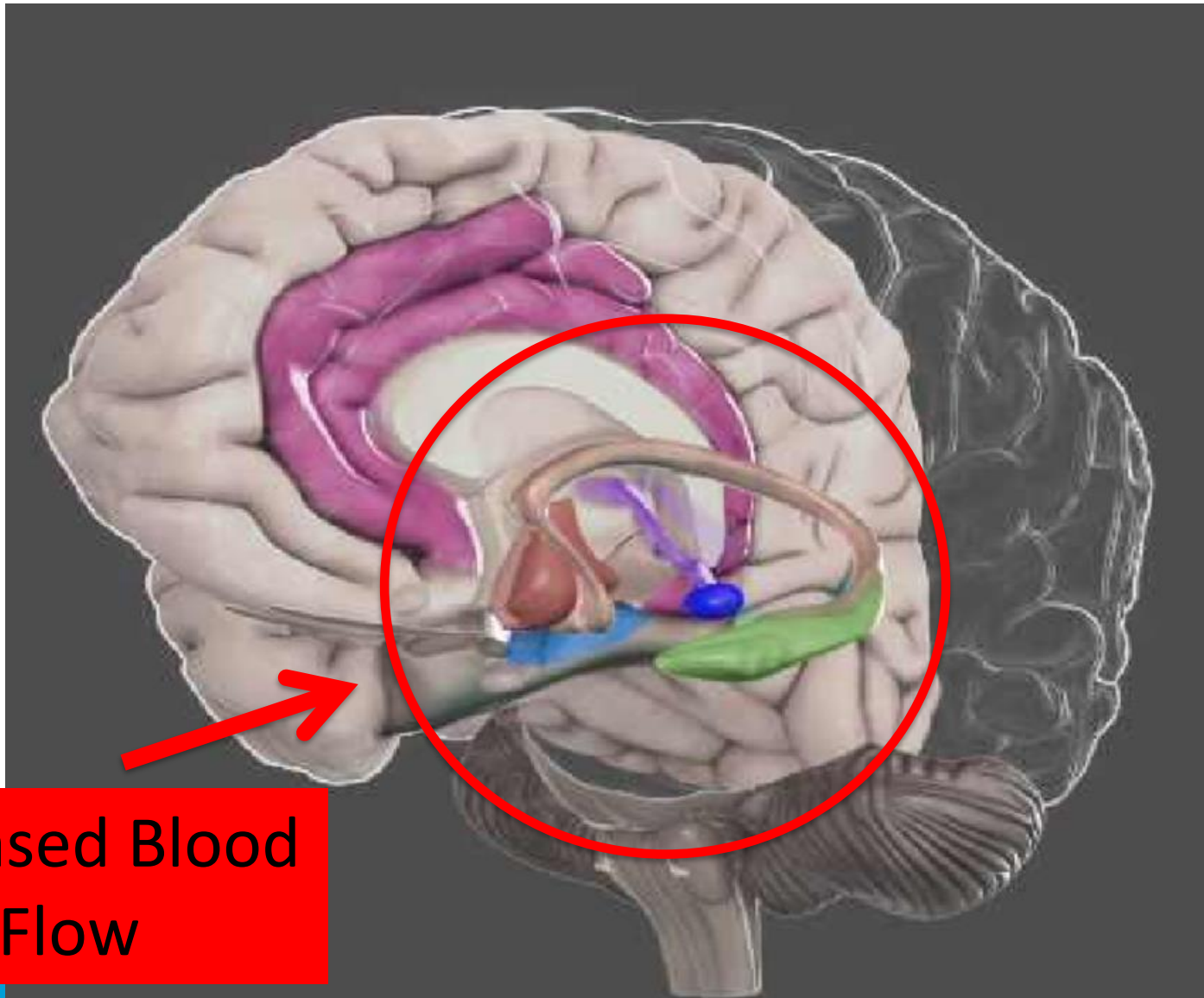
# The Neuropsychology of Trauma - The Limbic System



Pre-Frontal  
Cortex



# The Neuropsychology of Trauma - The Limbic System



Increased Blood  
Flow





# Trauma management and building resilience.

1. Immediately provide a sense of safety and to allow down regulating of the amygdala
2. Provide staff with a sense of control – find out what they need - listen
3. Support must be consistent and authentic
4. Allow self-titrated talking
5. Exercise
6. Good sleep

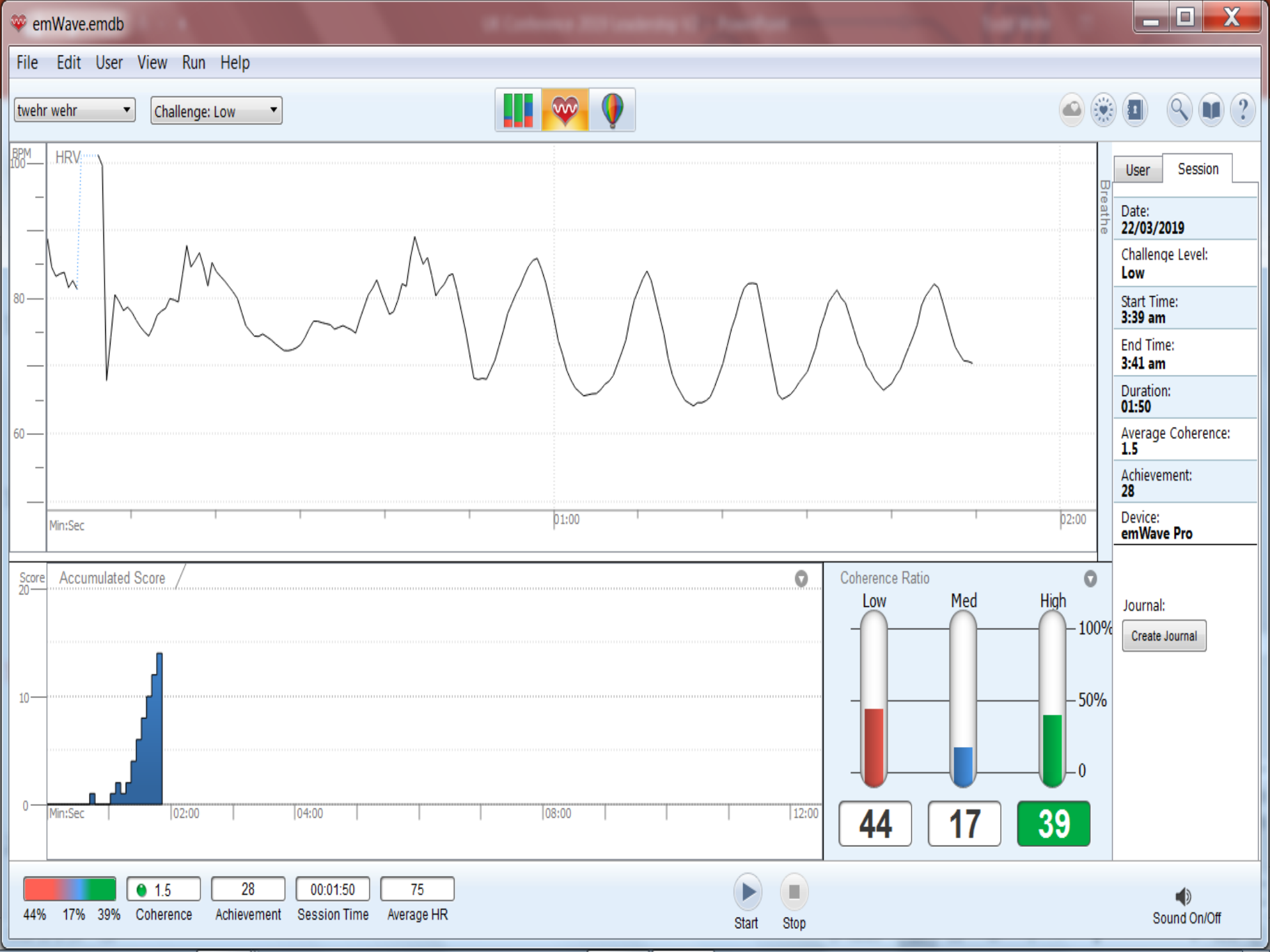


# Trauma management and building resilience

## 7. Breathe

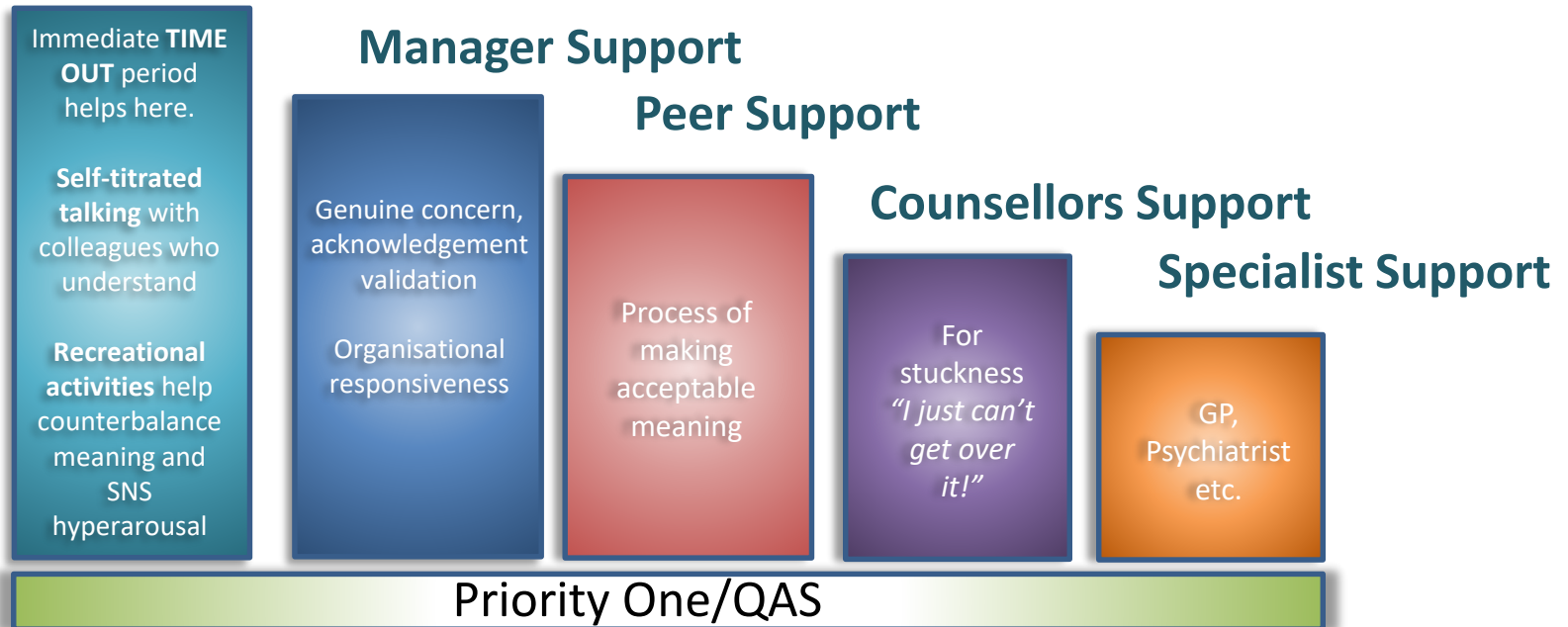
Professor Pieter Roussouw





# Critical Incident Response – A stepped approach

## Natural Coping Strategies



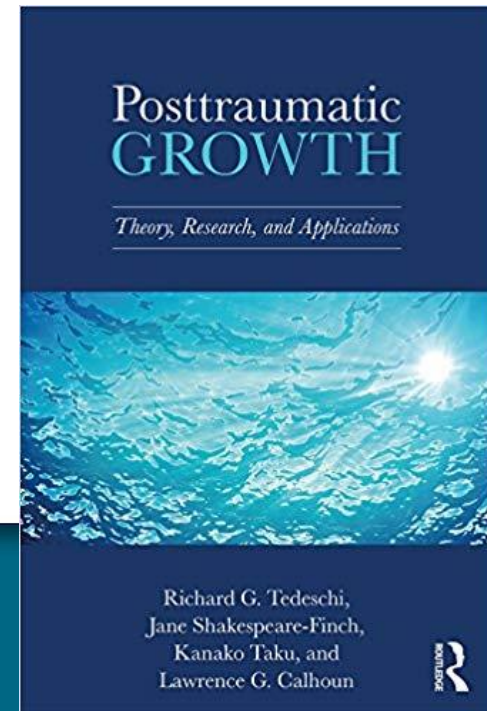
# Posttraumatic Growth

( Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2006, 2013; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995, 1996, Tedeschi, Shakespeare-Finch, Taku & Calhoun 2018)

- Beyond resilience, PTG refers to positive changes that a person may perceive as the result of engaging in the struggle to adapt to life post-trauma
- 5 factors of the PTGI – Changes in:
  - Personal Strength
  - Appreciation of Life
  - Relationships
  - Priorities
  - Religious beliefs/spirituality

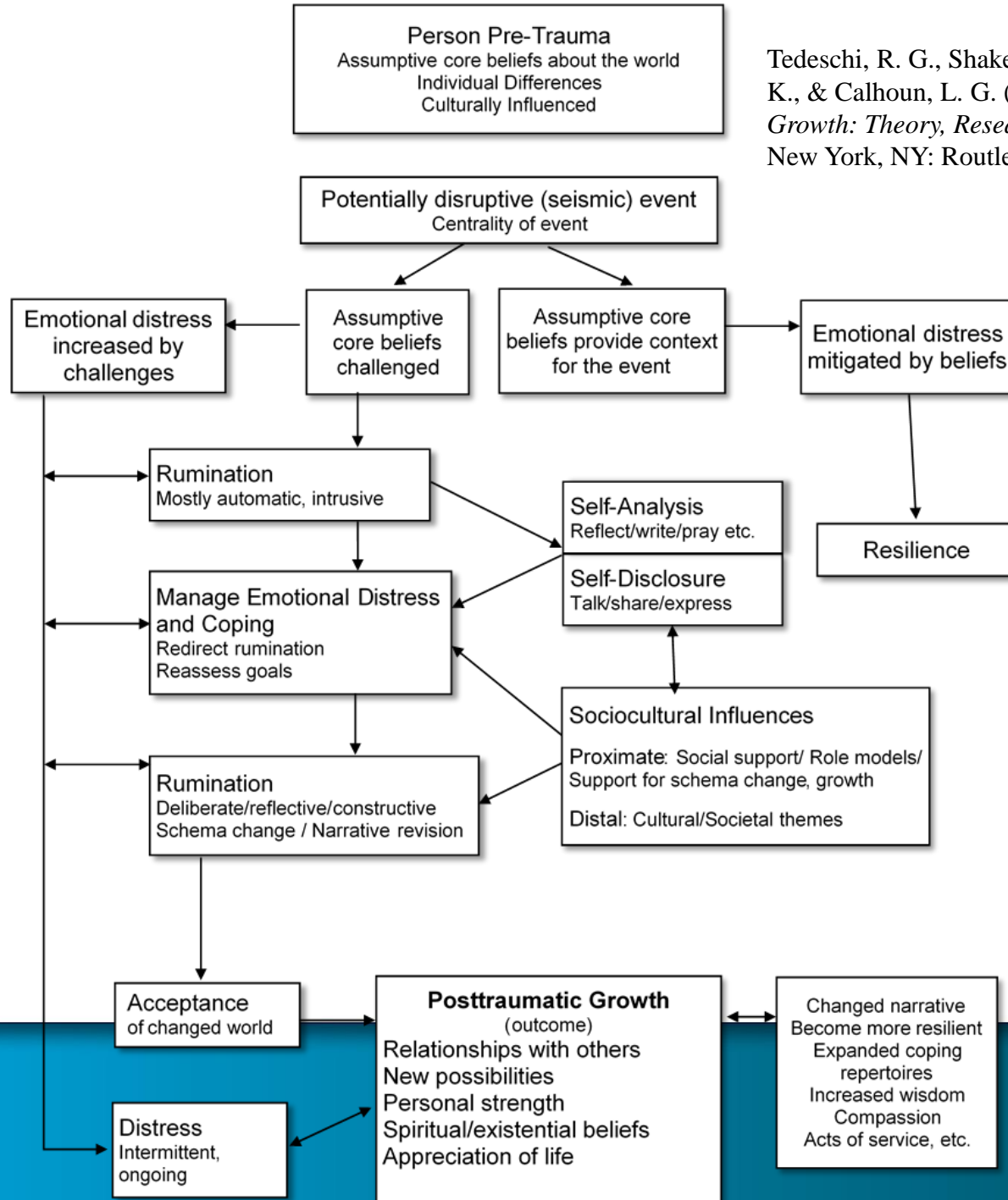


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Development of QAS  
Mental Health and  
Wellbeing Strategy 2018



Development of the QAS  
Mental Health and  
Wellbeing Portfolio 2018



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