

The background features a dark blue gradient with intricate white circular patterns. These patterns include concentric circles, dashed lines, and radial tick marks, resembling a technical or scientific diagram. Numbers such as 40, 150, 180, 190, 200, 220, 230, 240, 250, and 260 are scattered across the design, often following the curves of the circles. The overall aesthetic is clean and professional, with a focus on geometric and technical motifs.

# REPETITIVE TRAUMA, CULTURAL COMPETENCE AND TRAUMA INFORMED INTERVIEW TECHNIQUE

INCLUDING TECHNIQUE AND EXERCISES FOR VICTIMS OF PHYSICAL AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE,  
AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING VICTIM INTERVIEWS

BY SHARLENE GRAHAM BOLTZ

# TRAUMA WHETHER PHYSICAL OR SEXUAL OCCURS IN A CONTEXT WHICH IS EXPERIENCED BY THE HUMAN BRAIN AND BODY

**WE RELY ON THE HUMAN MEMORY OF THIS TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCE FOR PURPOSES OF  
INTERVENTION, INVESTIGATION, PROSECUTION AND TREATMENT OF INDIVIDUALS IMPACTED.**



TRAUMATIC EVENTS ARE RECORDED IN THE DNA  
OF THE DIRECT VICTIM WHO EXPERIENCES THE  
TRAUMA AND ARE PASSED DOWN TO OTHER  
GENERATIONS.

Mount Sinai School of Medicine, 2015

# MEMORY

- **An event collected in the brain.**
- **How is the memory of an event collected in normal circumstances?**
- **How is the memory of an event collected in traumatic circumstances?**
- **Impact on How and When memory is retrieved in an interview or interrogation context.**
- **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, SEXUAL ABUSE and HUMAN TRAFFICKING ARE A PROLONGED TRAUMATIC EVENTS.**



# ELEMENTS OF MEMORY

- **Three Basic Components**
  - **Electrical**
  - **Chemical**
  - **Vibrations/frequencies**
- **The Basic Components of Memory function in Three Parts**
  - **Sensory: External and Internal sensory experience**
  - **Process: How we perceive and store information**
  - **Action: Events occurring in a positive or negative CONTEXT.**

# THE CONTEXT OF AN EXPERIENCE

- **The context in which an event occurs has a direct impact on how human beings experience the event and therefore how human beings recall an event.**
- **Which parts of the brain are functioning in a positive, stress-free event?**
- **Which parts of the brain are functioning in a negative, stress-filled event?**
- **If the negative event is one involving an assault, understanding the context of the crime impacts the manner in which the memory of the assaultive event can be retrieved from the mind.**



# PURPOSE

- **To understand how trauma impacts memory in order to improve our interview/interrogation technique in order to effectively advocate for the person/people involved in a traumatic experience.**

# BRAIN SCIENCE IN A NUTSHELL

- **Initial formation of long-term memory requires a chemical called brain-derived neurotrophic factor – while subsequent recall depends on a transcription factor called Zif268.**
- **These processes are related, but fundamentally different and so researchers conclude that repeated remembering does not create a duplicate of the original memories.**



# BRAIN SCIENCE IN A NUTSHELL

- **How do we remember?**
- **Recall**
  - **More difficult – involves mentally rebuilding the experience**
  - **We reconstruct our memories every time and every time it is different**
  - **Question: Why do we believe changes in the story or retelling the experience or inconsistent statements equals a lie?**
- **Recognition**
  - **Easier – However, have you ever had difficulty placing a name to a face.**

# ISSUES RAISED BY THE BRAIN SCIENCE

- **What we cannot recall, we invent.**
- **Memory is designed to filter the world and discard what we deem irrelevant.**
- **We tend to hone in on the details of the event – called weapon focus.**
- **We recall the grisly details of the weapon pointed at us, but we may not remember the robber's face or the other people in the store.**
- **If our brains were perfect video cameras, we would be paralyzed by information overload.**



# USE-DEPENDENT MEMORIES

- **Cognitive Memories**

- Learning Names
- Phone Numbers
- Language

- **Motor Vestibular Memories**

- Riding a bike
- Typing
- Dancing
- Playing an instrument

- **State (Status) Memories**

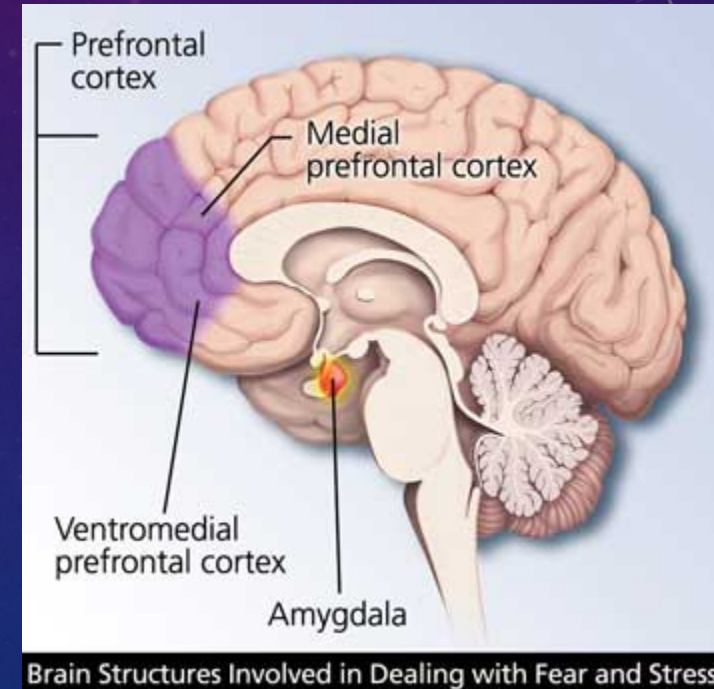
- Violence
- Stress

- **Emotional- Affect**

- Grief
- Fear
- Joy

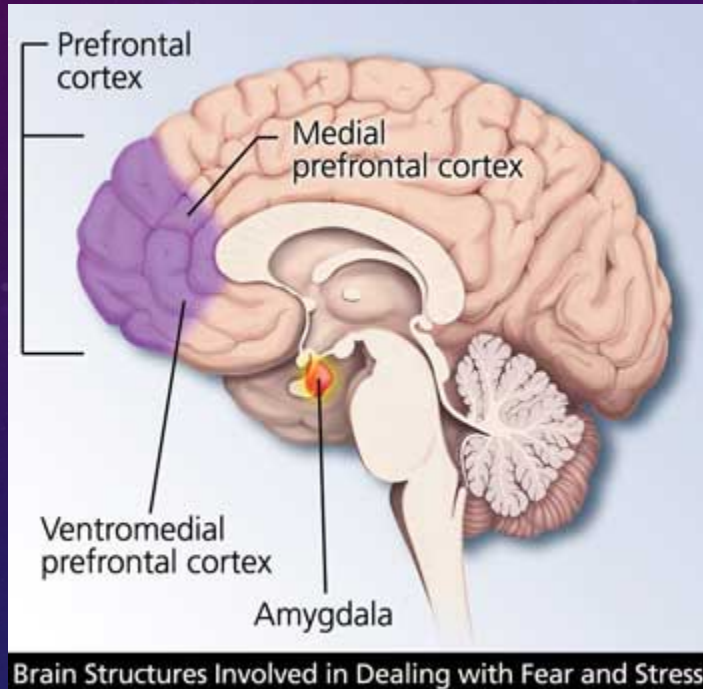
# THE BRAIN: PREFRONTAL CORTEX

- Allows control or, at least guidance of older more primitive brain areas (Hopper, 2012)



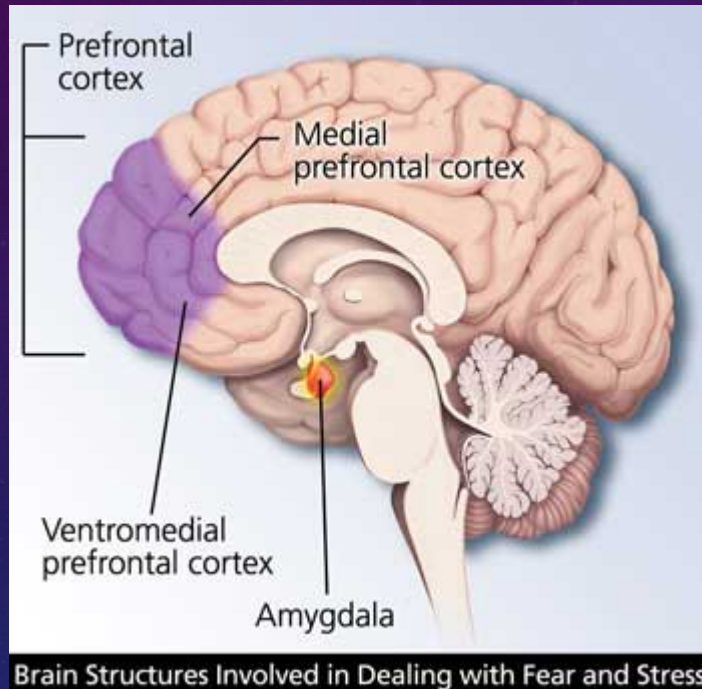


# PREFRONTAL CORTEX



- **Choosing where you focus attention and thoughts.**
- **Holding thoughts, memories and other information in mind, so that you can imagine alternatives to your present and past.**
- **Allows for “inside focus” and reflection**
- **Inhibit habits and automatic responses**
- **Regulates emotions**

# PREFRONTAL CORTEX AND NON-TRAUMATIC SITUATIONS



- **Chosen and Deliberate in conscious awareness (Arnsten, 2009)**
- **Top-down guidance of attention and thoughts**
- **Inhibition of inappropriate actions**
- **Regulating Emotions**
- **Reality testing**



# THE BRAIN DURING AN ASSAULT FREQUENTLY EXPERIENCED BY VICTIM

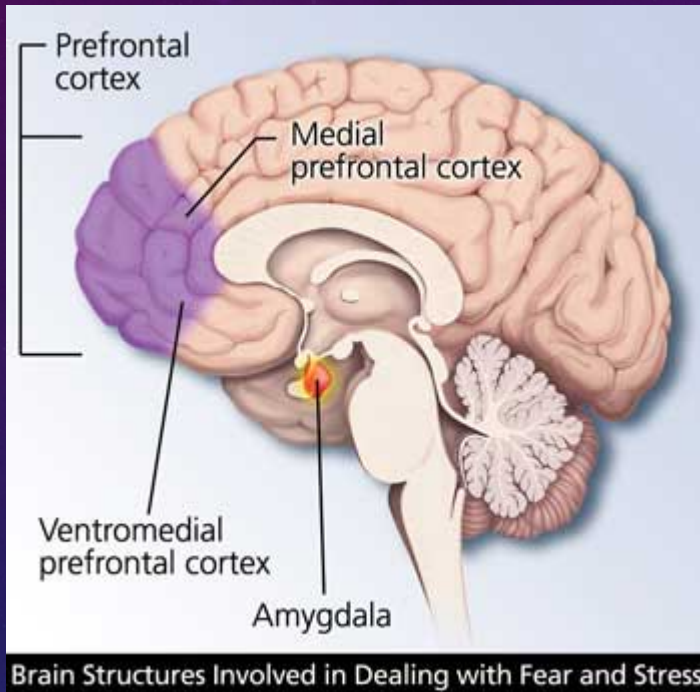
**PHYSICAL OR SEXUAL ASSAULTS**

# THE PREFRONTAL CORTEX DURING THE ASSAULT EXPERIENCE

- **High Stress Events result in an impaired prefrontal cortex.**
- **Stress chemicals basically turn the prefrontal cortex off.**
- **Old and primitive brain structures take control**
- **We cannot**
  - **Control Our Attention**
  - **Remember Our Values**
  - **Think Logically**
  - **Over-ride emotional reflexes or habits**
- **Evolutionary Origins for this response.**
- **Why?**



# THE AMYGDALA



- **Amygdala triggered automatic response**
- **Chemicals from the brain stem impair prefrontal cortex**
- **Automatically captured by anything dangerous or threatening**
- **Emotions are reflexive.**

# QUESTION

AS BETWEEN A PERPETRATOR OR TRAFFICKER AND A TARGETED VICTIM, WHO WILL HAVE MEMORIES OF THE ASSAULT THAT INITIALLY MAKE MORE SENSE?



# COMPARISON OF TRAFFICKER/PERPETRATOR AND TARGETED VICTIM

## Perpetrator/Trafficker

- **Not Stressed**
- **Prefrontal cortex in control.**
- **Thinking and Behavioral Response**
  - **Planned**
  - **Practiced**
  - **Habitual**

## Victim

- **Terrified, overwhelmed**
- **Amygdala in control**
- **Attention and thoughts driven by trafficker's actions**
- **Behavior controlled by emotional reflexes and habits from childhood (including abuse)\*\*\*\*\***

# PROGRESSIONS

- **Your mental state leads to the manifestation of emotional traits.**
- **Consider the progressive range of mental states:**
  - **Calm**
  - **Arousal**
  - **Alarm**
  - **Fear**
  - **Terror**
- **Progress of Mental State changes the area of the brain in control and therefore changes the cognitive response and sense of time. (Dr. Bruce Perry)**



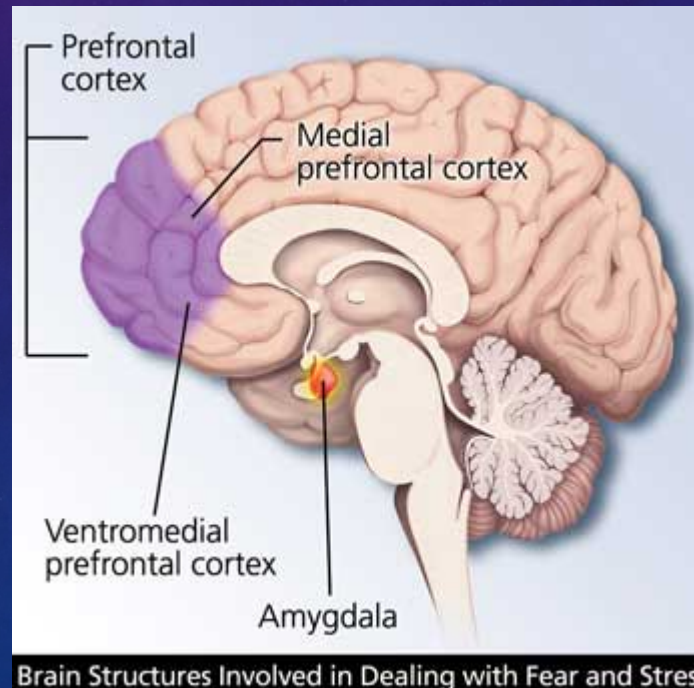
# PROGRESSIVE STATES AND IMPACTS

**Arousal: Concrete/  
Time perceived in  
days and hours**

**Alarm: Emotional/  
Time perceived in  
Hours and Minutes**

**Fear: Reactive/  
Time perceived in  
Minutes and  
Seconds**

**Calm: Abstract/  
Time extends to  
the future**



**Terror: Reflexive/  
Time perceived in as a  
lost sense of the  
passage of time**

# PROGRESSION OF EVOLVED AND ADAPTIVE RESPONSES – BRAIN AND BODY

- FREEZE
  - FLIGHT
  - FIGHT
  - DISSOCIATION
  - TONIC IMMOBILITY
- Freeze: Situation assessed, you freeze to avoid an assault or an escalation of the assault.
  - Flight and Fight: Goal is to avoid the assault or escape an escalation of the assault.
  - When Flight is impossible and Fight is useless...
    - Dissociation – self protection from overwhelming sensations and emotions
    - Tonic Immobility – last ditch attempt to avoid assault or escalation or ... to at least survive!



# DISSOCIATION

- **The Disintegrated Experience**
- **The disruption of mental processes involved in memory or consciousness that are ordinarily integrated.**
- **Mental functions and processes, pieces and streams of experience that are normally “associated” or go together, are now disconnected or dissociated.**

# TONIC IMMOBILITY

- **Characterized by**
  - **pronounced verbal immobility,**
  - **trembling,**
  - **muscular rigidity,**
  - **sensations of cold, and**
  - **numbness or insensitivity to intense or painful stimulation. (Marks, 1991)**
- **Induced by conditions of fear and physical restriction or the perception of the inability to escape (Heidt, Marx & Forsythe, 2005)**



# TONIC IMMOBILITY RESPONSE TO PHYSICAL OR SEXUAL ASSAULTS

- **NOT A LEARNED RESPONSE**
- **COMMON IN SEXUAL AND OTHER TRAUMA INVOLVING PERCEIVED INESCAPABILITY AND EXTREME FEAR OR TERROR**
- **SUDDEN ONSET, USUALLY AFTER A FAILED STRUGGLE**
- **SUDDEN TERMINATION, FOLLOWED BY MORE STRUGGLE OR ESCAPE EFFORTS FAIL**
- **CAN LAST FROM SECONDS TO HOURS**
- **DOES NOT IMPAIR ALERTNESS OR MEMORY ENCODING**

**(Humphreys et al. 2010, J Interpersonal Viol, 358)**

## EVENTS WHICH MAY TRIGGER TONIC IMMOBILITY RESPONSE

- Serious Traffic Accident
- **Assault or Physical Aggression**
- **Sexual Assault**
- **Serious Danger of Losing One's Life**
- Potentially Fatal Disease
- 44.4% experienced significant immobility
- 11.4% experienced extreme immobility
- Sexual assault victims, as a group, experience more physical inability than any other group. (Bados, et al., 2008), degrees of fear and proximity to threatening source are key factors where Tonic Immobility is present.



# POST ASSAULT BRAIN AND BODY RESPONSES

- **Immediate Post Assault Effects include any of the following:**
- **Disorganization, loss of control of mind and body**
- **Intrusive memories, nightmares**
- **Flashbacks: Reliving or reenacting experience**
- **Extreme emotions v. numbing, dissociation**
- **Fear and hyper-vigilance v. calm and denial**
- **Guilt, shame**
- **Shock, disbelief**
- **Irritability, angry outbursts**
- **Depression, suicidal thoughts, self-destructive acts**
- **Sleeplessness, fatigue**
- **Physical Pain**

(Hopper, 2012)

# POST ASSAULT BRAIN AND BODY RESPONSES

- Post Assault Outward Adjustments may include
- **Attempts to deny or minimize impact**
- Rationalization of why it happened, including self-blame
- Avoidance of Reminders
- **Continued Fear, Anxiety and Depression**
- Decreased intrusive memories and flashbacks
- **Capable of easily returning to crisis mode**
- Increased or decreased ability to experience and express emotions about assault
- **Develop some coping skills** (Hopper, 2012)



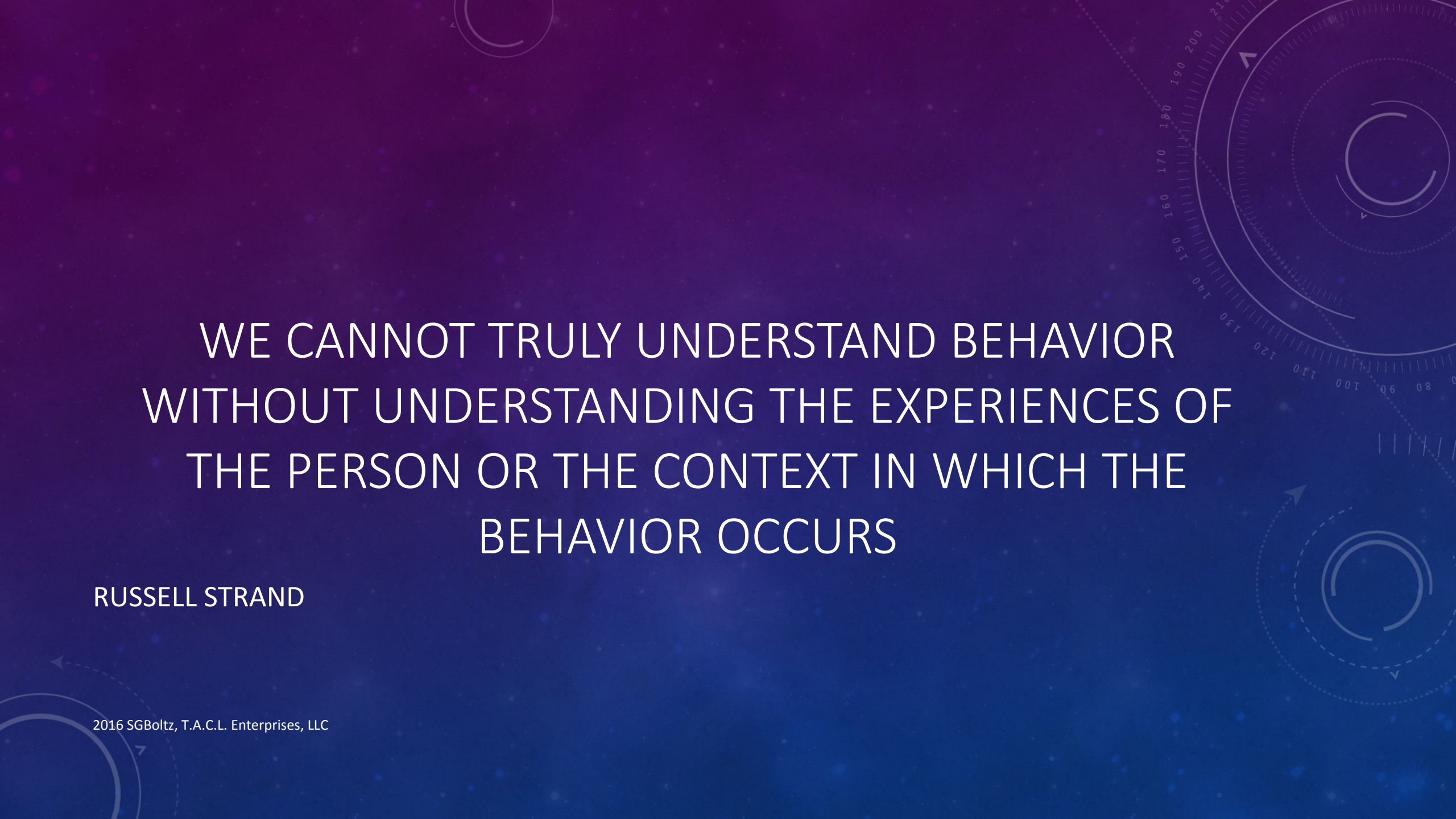
# EMOTIONAL HABITS

- Includes behaviors seldom used but deeply learned, which can take over when the “right” trigger comes
- Assault responses often reflect habits developed in childhood (or with soldiers, combat)
- **Habits of responding to abuse, e.g. dissociation**
- **General emotional habits, e.g. obeying those who dominate, threaten or attack you.**
- When the prefrontal cortex shuts down, emotional habits “trained” during childhood (traumas) can take over,

The background features a dark blue gradient with a subtle pattern of white stars and faint technical diagrams. On the right side, there are several circular gauges or dials with numerical scales (e.g., 100, 110, 120, 130, 140, 150, 160, 170, 180, 190, 200, 210) and arrows. Some of these diagrams are partially cut off by the edge of the frame. The overall aesthetic is scientific and technical.

# HOW DOES THIS INFORMATION ON THE BRAIN AND BODY RESPONSE TO TRAUMA ALTER THE WAY WE CONDUCT INTERVIEWS AND INTERROGATIONS?



The background features a dark blue gradient with a pattern of small white stars. Overlaid on this are several technical diagrams: a circular gauge with a scale from 80 to 210 and a needle pointing to approximately 190, located in the upper right; a circular diagram with concentric rings and arrows, located in the lower right; and a circular diagram with a dashed outer ring and a solid inner ring, located in the lower left.

WE CANNOT TRULY UNDERSTAND BEHAVIOR  
WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING THE EXPERIENCES OF  
THE PERSON OR THE CONTEXT IN WHICH THE  
BEHAVIOR OCCURS

RUSSELL STRAND

UNDERSTANDING THE BEHAVIORAL CONTEXT AND  
THE BEHAVIORAL RESPONSE TO TRAUMA ALLOWS  
US TO CONDUCT A FORENSIC EXPERIENTIAL  
INTERVIEW IN ORDER TO COLLECT RELEVANT  
FORENSIC EXPERIENTIAL EVIDENCE WHICH WILL  
IMPROVE THE INVESTIGATION OF HUMAN  
TRAFFICKING WHERE PHYSICAL AND SEXUAL  
ASSAULTS OCCUR.



# GOALS OF ANY INTERVIEW OR INTERROGATION

- **Getting the Who, What, Where, When and How**
- **Getting the “facts” which have been impacted by the trauma experience**
- **The Trauma Informed Interview allows for the**
- **Gathering the information of the “complete” experience in order to effectively communicate that experience to those who advocate, evaluate, prosecute or otherwise provide intervention services.**

# HOW TO CONDUCT THE TRAUMA INFORMED INTERVIEW

- **LET THE FACTS SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES**
- **PLAN AND PREPARE FOR THE INTERVIEW**
- **BEGIN WHERE THEY ARE, NOT WHERE YOU WANT THEM TO BE**
- **LEARN WHAT THEY HAVE COME THROUGH TO GET TO THIS ROOM**
- **UNDERSTAND HOW THEIR PAST AFFECTS WHO THEY ARE TODAY, AT THIS MOMENT**
- **ENGAGE IN AN ANALYTICAL PROCESS FOR CRIMES OF VIOLENCE, similar to domestic violence and other sexual assault events**



# A TRAUMA INFORMED INTERVIEW

- **The Analytical Process for Crimes of Violence**
- **Three steps which inform your interview strategy**
  - **Conduct an analysis of individual items to discern behavioral patterns**
  - **Consciously keep the interviewer's mind open to any possibility**
  - **Make analytical judgments as new information is developed – Make adjustments to your interview technique to gather the necessary information**
- **Recognize that more than one interview may be required.**

# THE TRAUMA INFORMED INTERVIEW

- **Acknowledge their trauma/pain/difficult situation**
  - **What are you able to tell me about your experience?**
  - **What was your thought process during the experience?**
  - **What were your reactions, emotional or physical, during the experience**
  - **What are you able to remember about the experiences, from the perspective of the five senses: sight, sound, smell, touch, smell**
  - **What is the most difficult part of this experience for you?**
  - **Clarify information and details after you facilitate all you can about the experience**



# THE TRAUMA INFORMED INTERVIEW

- **Watch out for interviewer bias**
  - **Difficult behavior**
  - **Substance abuse**
  - **Late disclosures**
  - **Reaction to sensitive information, usually related to sex, gender or ethnicity**
- **No phone interviews**
- **Record interviews, you must watch and listen**

# EXERCISE ONE

## ONE ON ONE

2016 SGBoltz, T.A.C.L. Enterprises, LLC



# LET THE FACTS SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES

- **The Trauma Informed Interview Plan: Are you prepared for the interview?**
- **What do you know about your subject before you begin the interview?**
- **Development of the Interview Plan**
  - **What do you know about the crime or offense?**
  - **What do you know about the person you are about to interview?**
  - **Select the interview setting in light of your interview goal.**



EMOTIONALLY RELATE TO HOW THEY ARE FEELING.

NOURISH THE RELATIONSHIP



The background is a dark blue gradient with a starry space pattern. On the right side, there are several technical diagrams, including a large circular gauge with numerical markings from 80 to 210 and a smaller circular diagram below it. On the left side, there are faint circular diagrams, one of which has a dashed arrow pointing left.

LEARN WHAT THEY HAVE GONE THROUGH  
TO GET TO THIS ROOM



UNDERSTAND HOW THEIR PAST AFFECTS WHO THEY ARE  
TODAY, AT THIS MOMENT



STAY IN THE ROOM EVEN IF YOU ARE SCARED, FEELING  
ANGRY OR HURT.

BE PRESENT.



UNDERSTAND HOW THEIR PAST AFFECTS WHO THEY ARE  
TODAY, AT THIS MOMENT



# EXERCISE TWO

## CHILD VICTIM

2016 SGBoltz, T.A.C.L. Enterprises, LLC

LASALLE BLANDELE

12 YEAR OLD FEMALE  
ADOPTED CHILD

GIFTED TO AUNT AND UNCLE (BROTHER AND SISTER IN LAW OF  
LASALLE'S ADOPTED FAMILY. CHILD'S SEXUAL SERVICES ARE  
FREQUENTLY TRADED FOR DRUGS.

BROTHER, ALSO ADOPTED, IS BELIEVED TO STILL RESIDE WITH  
ADOPTED FAMILY, BUT CONDITION IS UNKNOWN BY PATIENT

SHE IS PREGNANT.



# QUESTIONS

COMMENTS AND REFLECTIONS

2016 SGBoltz, T.A.C.L. Enterprises, LLC

SHARLENE GRAHAM BOLTZ  
PROFESSOR OF LAW  
CHASE COLLEGE OF LAW,  
NORTHERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY

[BOLTZS1@NKU.EDU](mailto:BOLTZS1@NKU.EDU)

859-572-5358

T.A.C.L. ENTERPRISES, LLC

859-380-9590

[SGBOLTZ@YAHOO.COM](mailto:SGBOLTZ@YAHOO.COM)