



Mental health and wellbeing post the COVID-19 Pandemic and the  
Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing

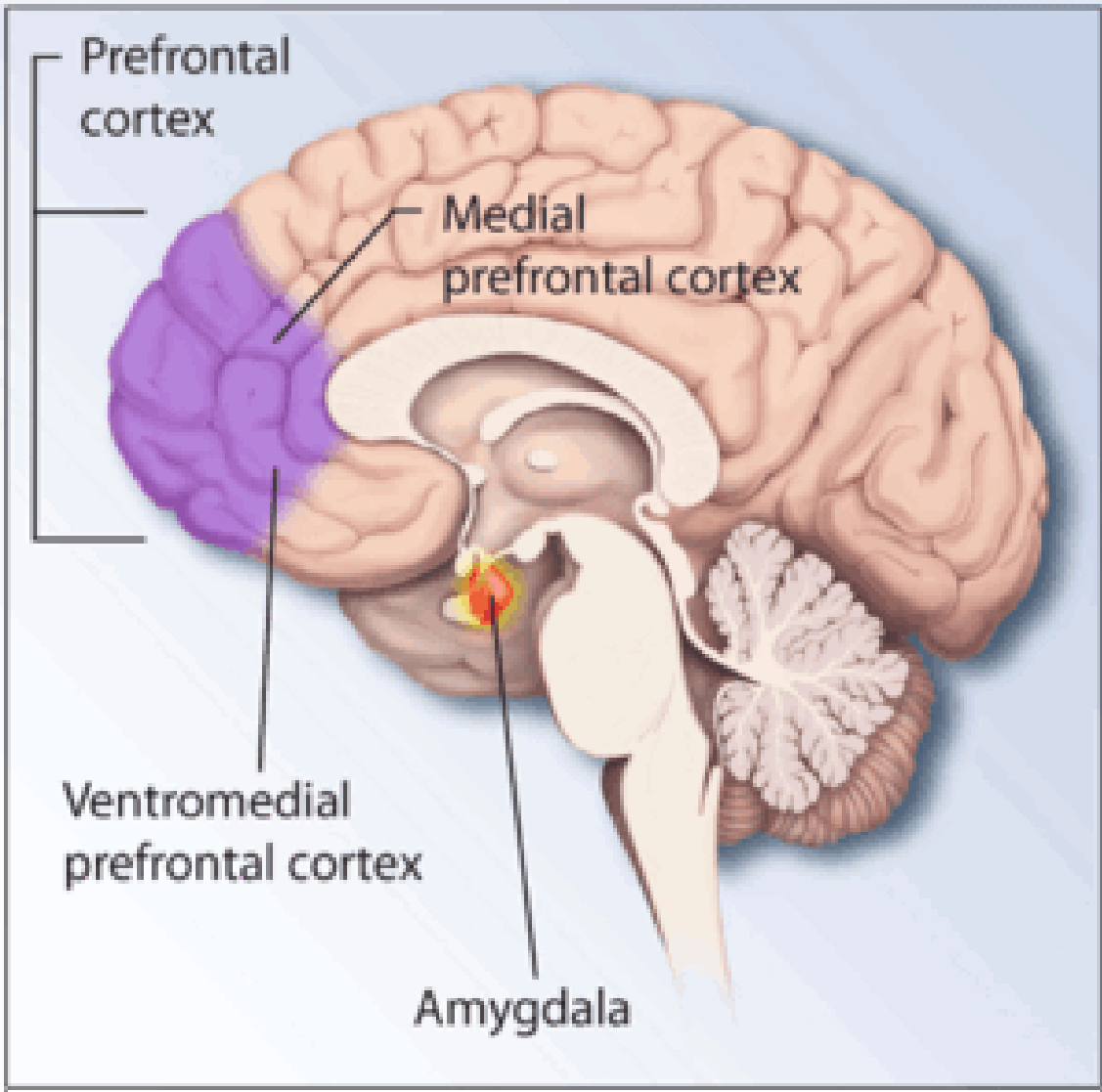
**WHLGNI**

Professor Siobhan O'Neill

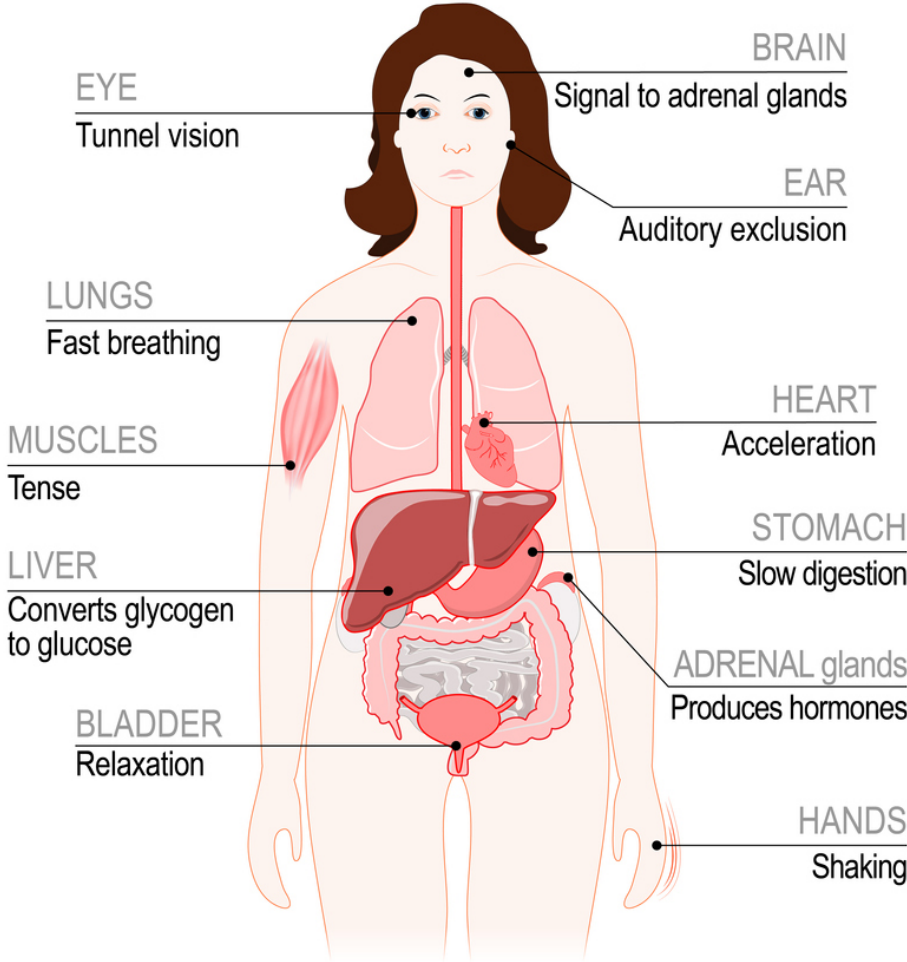
# **What is mental illness?**

**A trauma informed perspective.**





# Fight-or-flight response



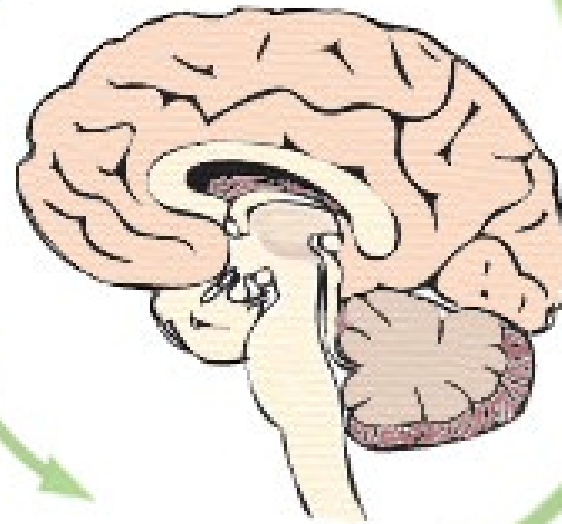
# The stress-brain loop

## chronic stress

- inadequate sleep
- poor nutrition
- emotional distress

increases  
glucocorticoids

decreased regulation  
of cortisol



cellular changes in  
the hippocampus

- ↓ attention
- ↓ perception
- ↓ short-term memory
- ↓ learning
- ↓ word finding

# Normal response to stress



**Thoughts (cognitive)**  
distracted,  
concentration, memory



**Emotions**  
irritable, anxious &  
threatened, angry.



**Physical**  
energy, tension,  
startled, appetite, sleep

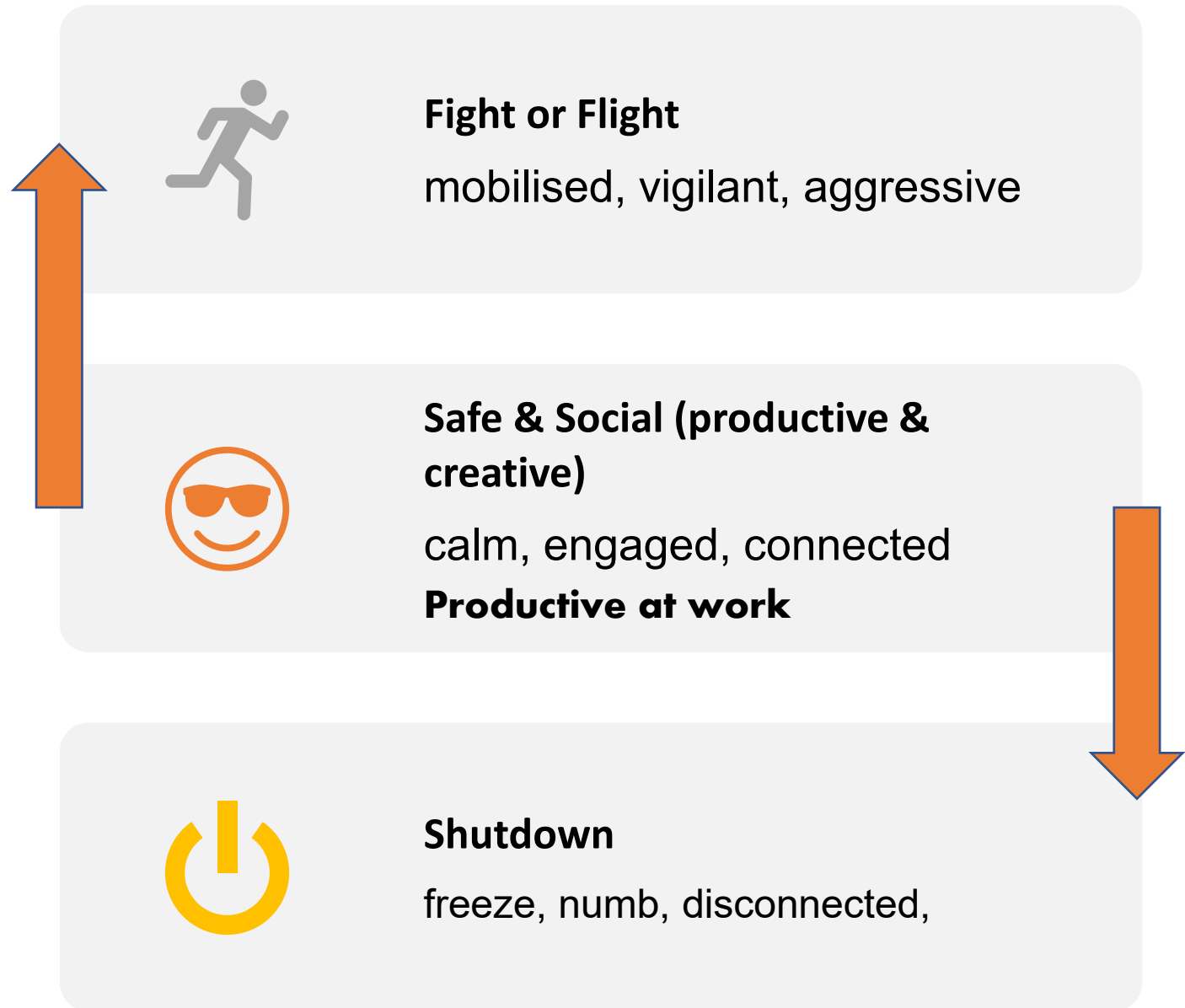


**Social**  
blaming others,  
arguments

# Circuits of Survival

Perception of danger triggers a shift.  
**Emotional regulation.**

Repeated stress/trauma → re-calibration of thresholds for each stage.



# Mental Illness



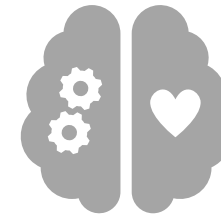
Biopsychosocial &  
Relational



**Trauma Continuum**

Stress (necessary)

Distress/ Trauma (overwhelms ability to  
cope)

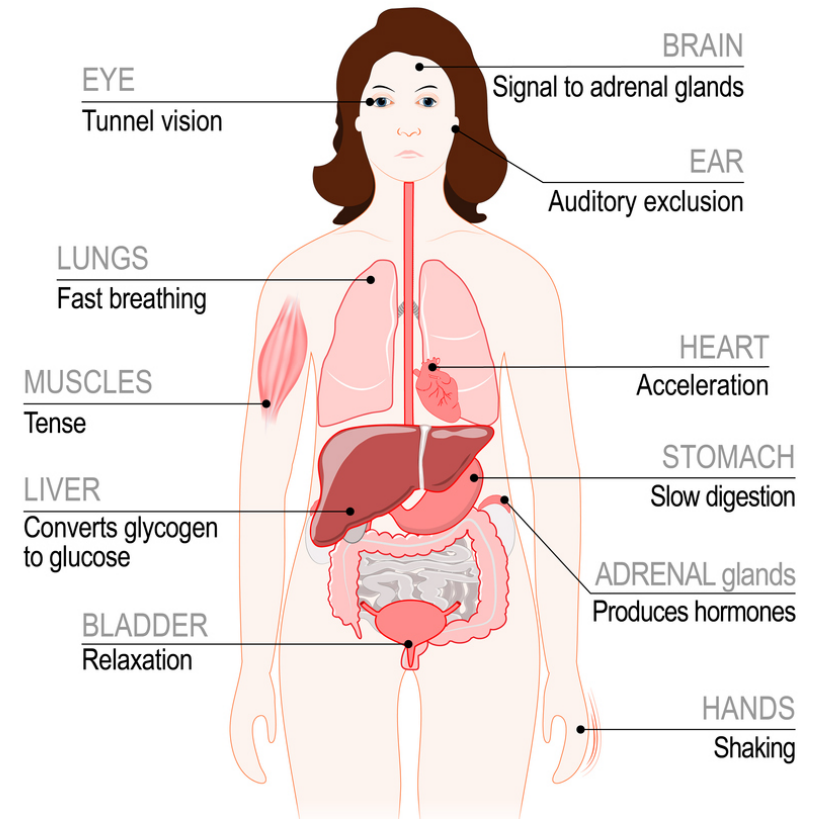


**Chronic stress/ distress/ trauma →**

biological dysregulation →  
changes in feelings & behaviour (illness)



# Fight-or-flight response



# Post Pandemic Mental Health

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Most people have not developed mental illness

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Many people are doing better

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Women, Children at home, Carers

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Anxiety/ Phobia/ Mental illness

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Poverty/ low income/ job loss

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Loneliness/ live alone

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People who have had COVID



# The Neuroscience of Community

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- We are a social species.
- Neuroception.
- Mirroring of herd survival states.
- Calmness & authentic safety are contagious.

# Leadership in a Pandemic



Self awareness and self care.



Listening and validating.



Problem solving WITH not FOR.

# Take 5 Steps to wellbeing

A simple guide that can help you.



**Connect**



**Be Active**



**Take Notice**



**Keep Learning**



**Give**

 **MENTAL HEALTH  
CHAMPION**  
covidwellbeingni.info

**We'll get  
through this  
together**