

# Trauma Informed Support and the Path to Healing

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THANK  
YOU!!!

# Trauma in the World of Intellectual Disabilities

- ▶ McNally et al – People with intellectual disabilities are more vulnerable to psychological trauma than people without intellectual disabilities
- ▶ Gentile, J. – People with intellectual disabilities are often not diagnosed with post traumatic stress disorder when it is their most dominant condition
- ▶ Keesler – Trauma and PTSD are underdiagnosed and undertreated in adults with intellectual disabilities

# Sources of Trauma for People with Intellectual Disabilities

Sexual Abuse

Physical Abuse

Bullying

Exclusion

Institutionalization



## Major Events

## Little “t” Trauma

Sexual Abuse

Discrimination

Physical Abuse

Neighborhood  
Violence

Neglect

Social Exclusion

Negative Events

Exclusion from Family

Grief and Loss

Frequent foster care or  
group home  
placements and lack of  
stability

# Big T and Little “t” Traumas

ABC

LOVE ON THE  
**SPECTRUM**





ASSUME TRAUMA



# BETRAYAL TRAUMA



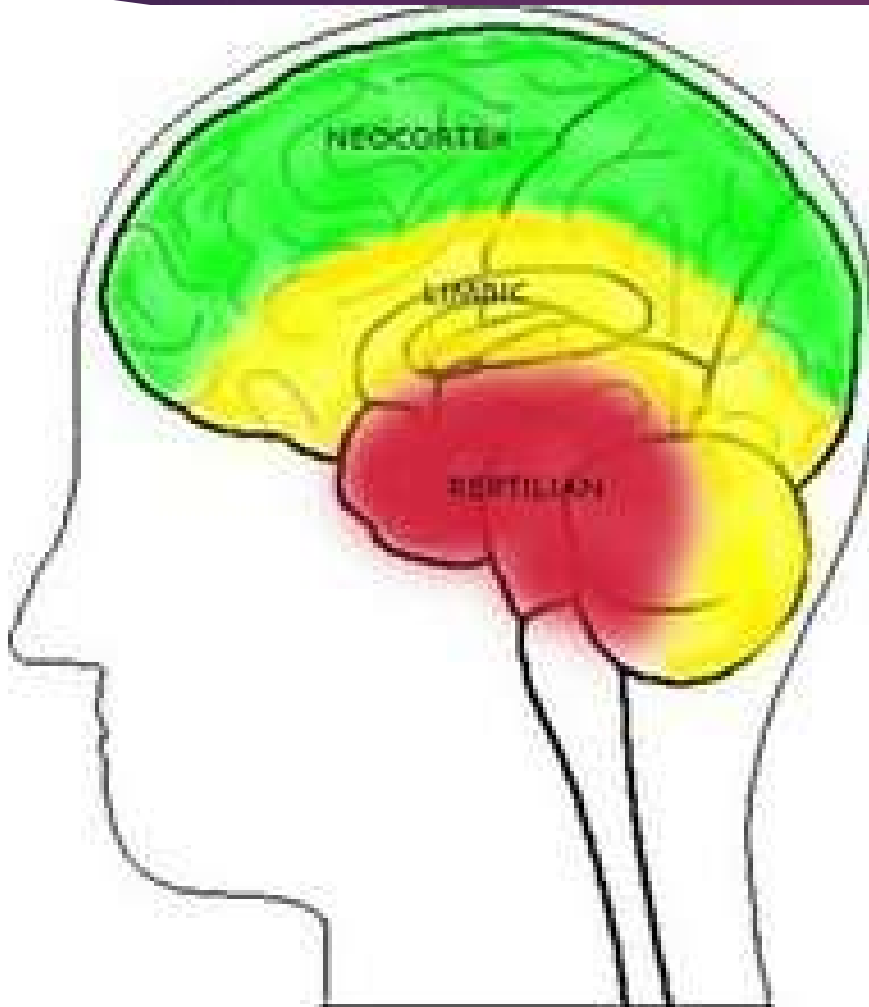
# TRAUMATIC EXPOSURES

**IN-UTERO DRUG EXPOSURE**

**IN-UTERO DRUG/ALCOHOL EXPOSURE**

# Psychological Trauma – Past is Present

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The Triune Brain

## Neocortex

The rational brain: Intellectual tasks

## Limbic

The intermediate brain: Emotions

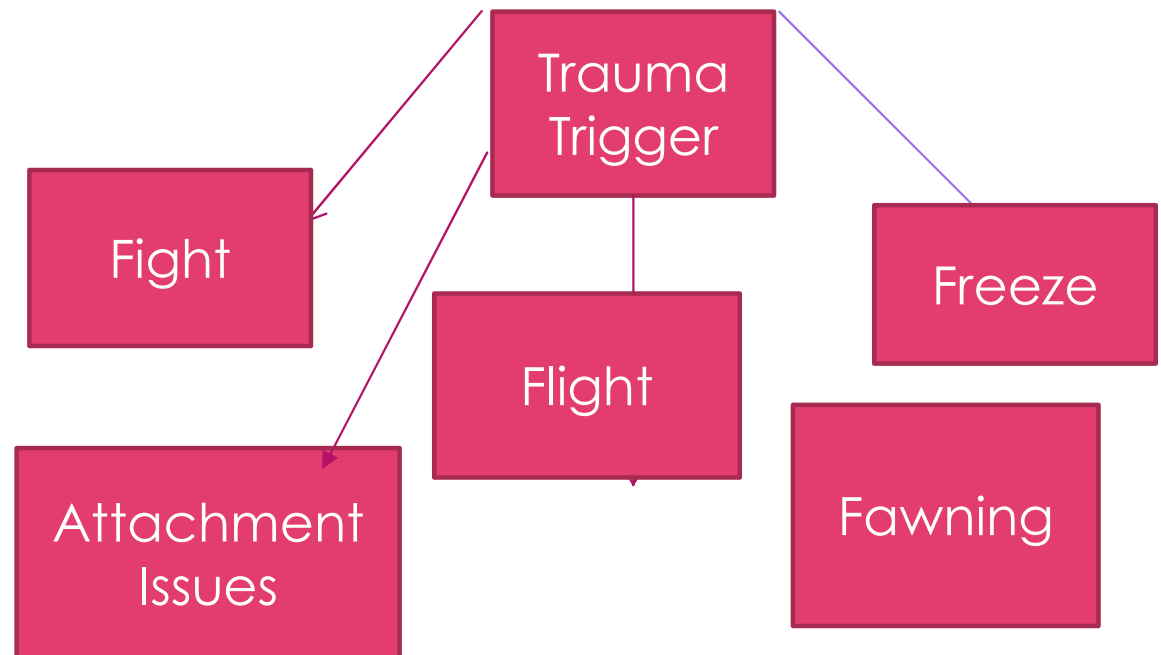
## Brain Stem

The primitive brain: Self preservation, aggression

# Trauma Responses

- ▶ Trigger Response – Something happens in the present that reminds the person of the negative past - person goes into fight, flight or freeze mode:

- ▶ Thinking he or she is in Danger!



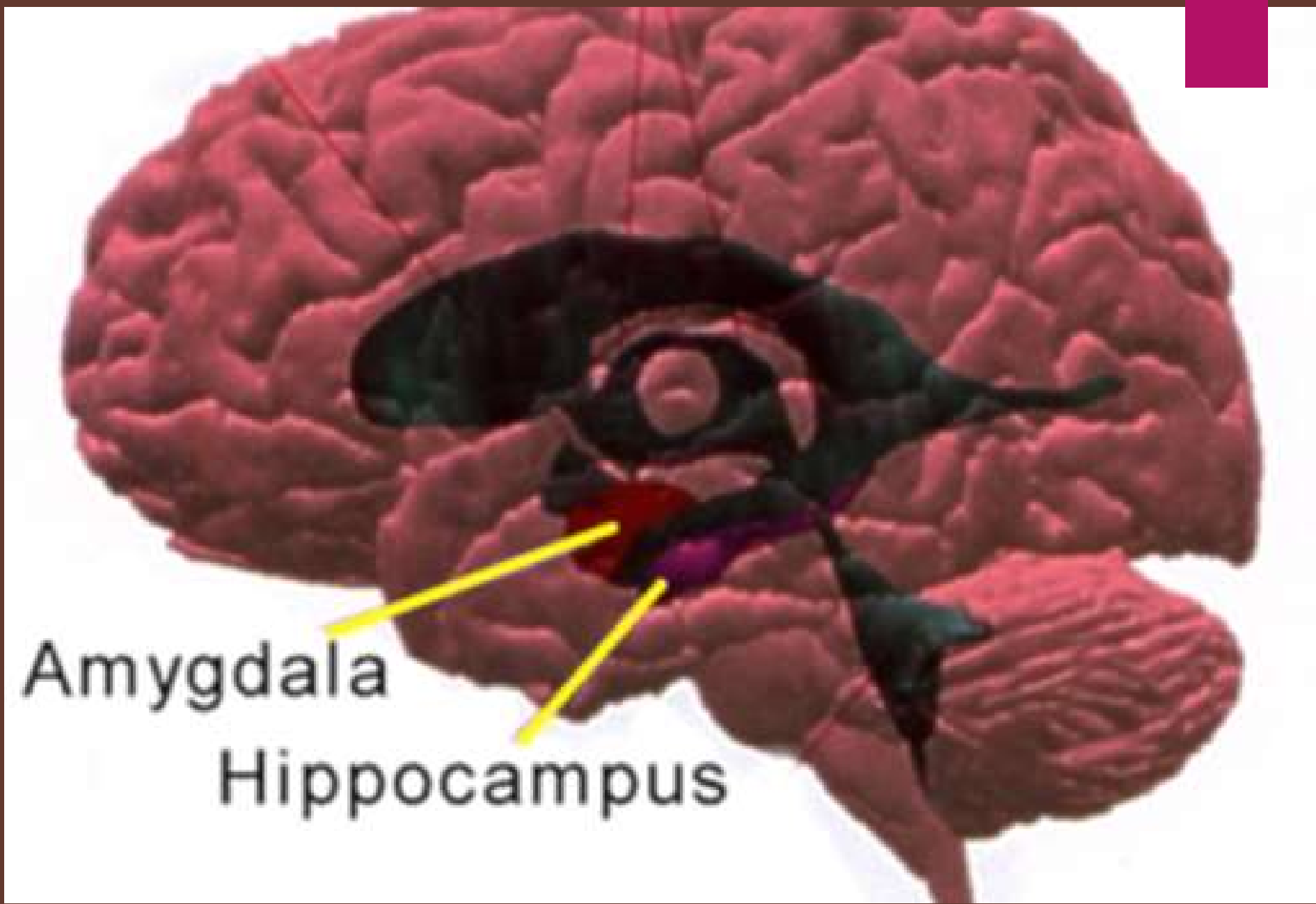
# Trauma Response vs. Behavioral Response

## Trauma

- ▶ Triggered in an irrational manner
- ▶ Overreaction to small event
- ▶ Very emotion based
- ▶ Does not serve the person well
- ▶ Does not move them forward

## Behavioral

- ▶ Has a purpose and intent
- ▶ Deliberate- acting on environment to get response
- ▶ Intent is important in identifying the response
- ▶ Goal is to get something they want, can move them forward
- ▶ You can typically identify the antecedent



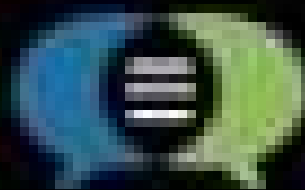
Amygdala

Hippocampus

LISTEN

LISTEN

A short film made by and with non-speaking autistic people



Sometimes the “Behaviors” we  
see are really symptoms of  
Post-traumatic Stress Disorder

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## 4 Areas of symptoms of PTSD

### 1. Re-experiencing ( interfering with present to different degrees) –

- ▶ Intrusive Memories
- ▶ Nightmares
- ▶ Flashbacks- Person can disconnect from reality and be convinced he or she is being attacked, hurt or threatened due to a memory that becomes present

### 2. Avoidance –

- ▶ Blunted emotions/
- ▶ Shut down responses
- ▶ Person can become obsessive about details concerning self and safety
- ▶ Disconnection and withdrawal

# Symptoms of PTSD Continued

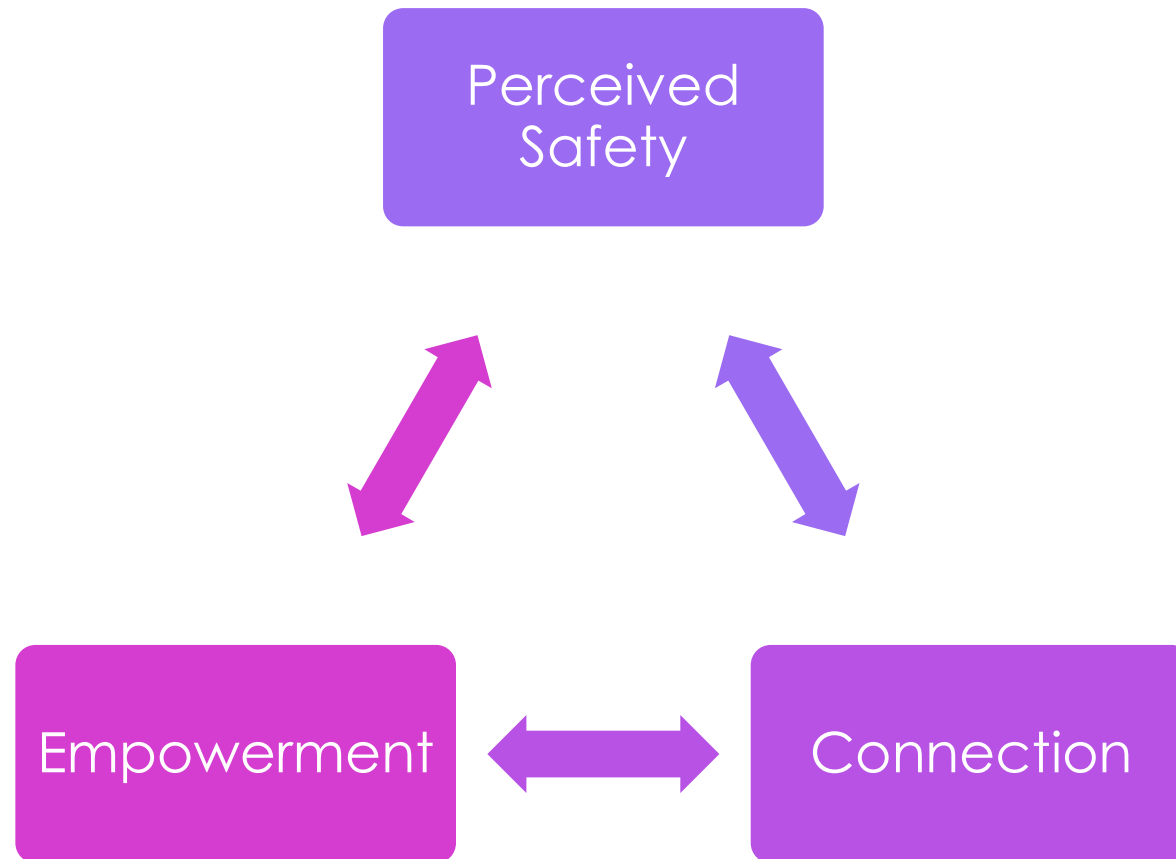
## **3. Negative Alterations in Cognition and Mood**

- ▶ **Persistent negative-trauma related emotions**  
**ie. fear, horror, anger, guilt and shame**
- ▶ **Constricted emotion – inability to express positive emotion**
- ▶ **Alienation and withdrawal from others**
- ▶ **SHAME**

## **4. Arousal –**

- ▶ **Easy to startle**
- ▶ **Agitated – can lead to property destruction**
- ▶ **Periodically Combative**
- ▶ **Impulsive**
- ▶ **Also associated with reckless or self-destructive behavior**

# Ingredients Necessary for Post traumatic Recovery



# The Healing Power of Relationships



# Harvard's Men's Study

ROBERT  
WALDINGER –  
PRINCIPLE  
INVESTIGATOR

# Therapy is Needed



# Positive Identity Development

## ▶ Negative Identity

- NOT the person who gets married
- NOT the person who drives
- NOT the person who plays on a high school sport team
- NOT the person who is popular or liked
- Not the cool one

## ▶ Positive Identity

- ▶ Who I am
- ▶ What I do well
- ▶ Who my friends are
- ▶ What my preferences are
- ▶ Where I make a difference
- ▶ What I am proud of



What  
matters  
most  
is how  
**YOU**  
see  
yourself !



**We can hold up 2  
possible mirrors**



**“Ultimately  
happiness rests  
on how you  
establish a solid  
sense of self or  
being.”**

DAISAKU IKEDA



**Carol Dweck Studies-  
Positive Regard  
and  
The Growth Mindset**

# Developing a Growth Mindset

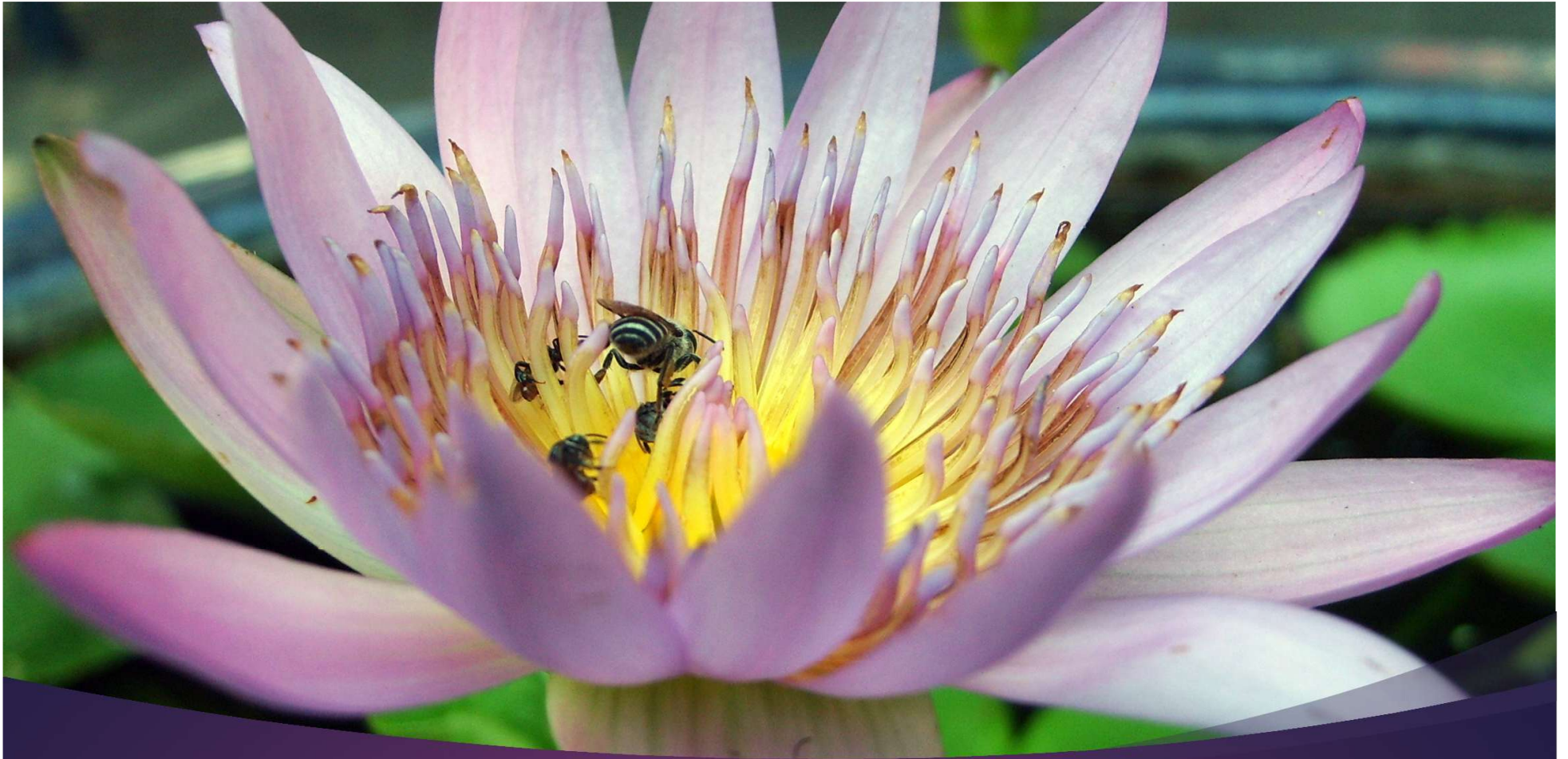
## Fixed Mindset

- People believe they are born with certain abilities that can't change. Fear of failure can prevent them from progressing.
- Labels
- Limitations
- Stigma
- Caregiving

## Growth Mindset

- People believe they can learn and improve with practice. They understand that effort makes them stronger, leading to higher achievement.
- Embracing new challenges
- Pushing past limits
- Higher expectations
- Celebrating uniqueness
- Self-discovery

*(Mindset: The New Psychology of Success, 2006)*



**Praise Character over Behavior;  
Reinforce Process over Outcome**

# Post Traumatic Growth

**Relationships**

**Positive  
Sense of Self**

**Growth  
Mindset**

