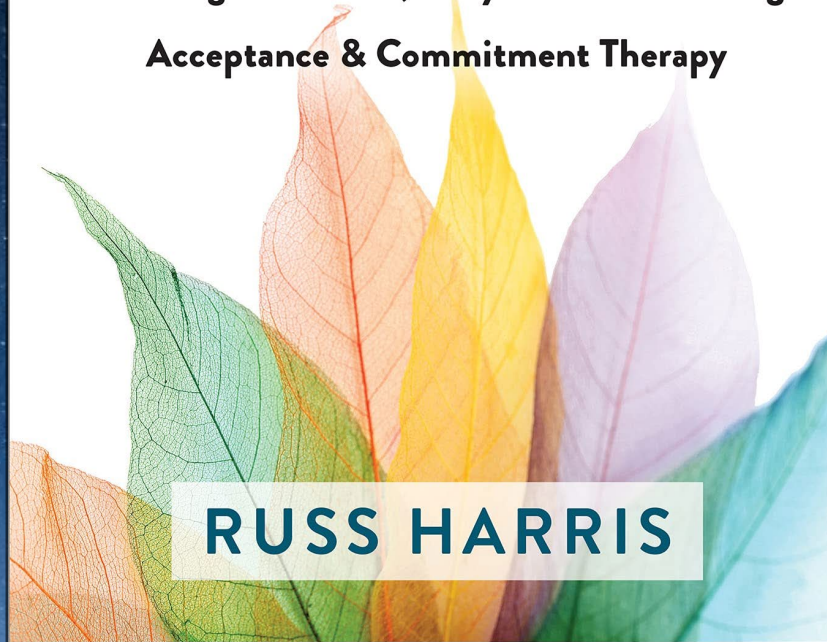



Trauma-Focused

ACT

**A Practitioner's Guide to
Working with Mind, Body & Emotion Using
Acceptance & Commitment Therapy**



RUSS HARRIS



What is Trauma- focused ACT?

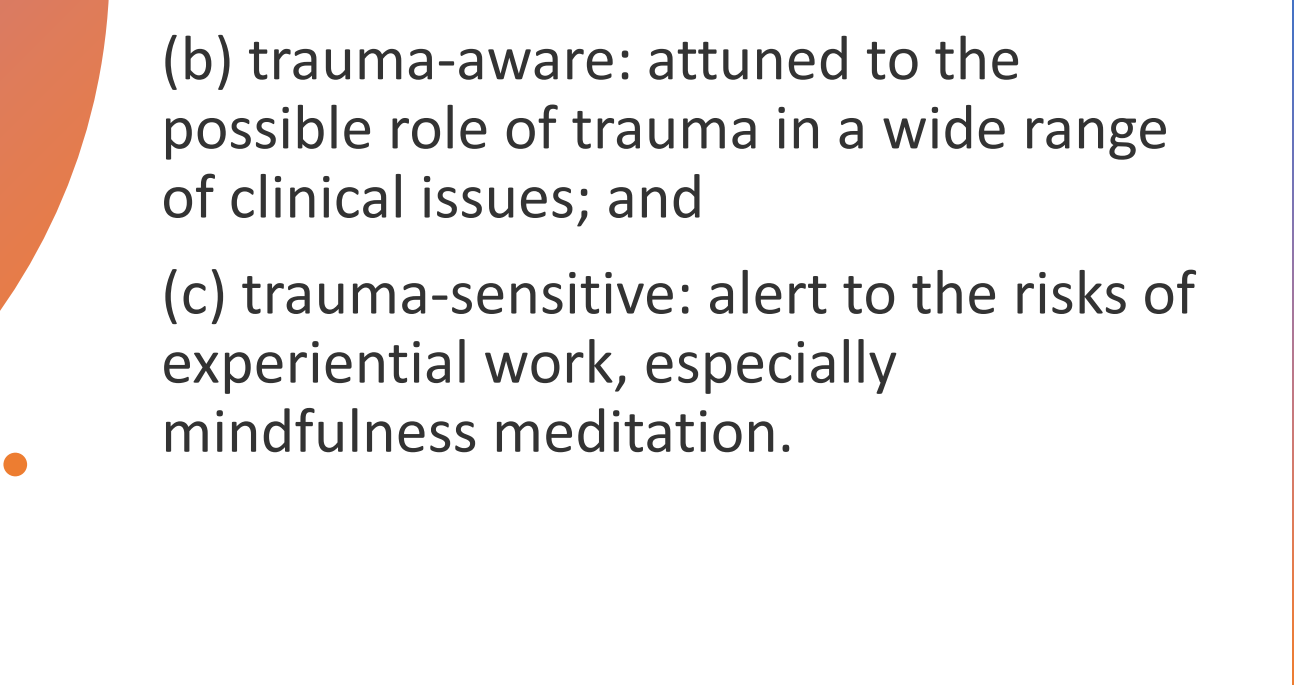
Not a protocol; not a treatment for a specific disorder (e.g. PTSD)

A compassion-based, exposure-centered approach

(a) trauma-informed: drawing upon evolutionary science, polyvagal theory, attachment theory, inhibitory learning theory;

(b) trauma-aware: attuned to the possible role of trauma in a wide range of clinical issues; and

(c) trauma-sensitive: alert to the risks of experiential work, especially mindfulness meditation.



Trauma: 3 Streams of Symptoms

1. Reexperiencing the event

2. Hyperarousal/hypoarousal

3. Psychological rigidity

Stream 1: Reexperiencing

Memories

Flashbacks

Nightmares

Intrusive
thoughts and
feelings

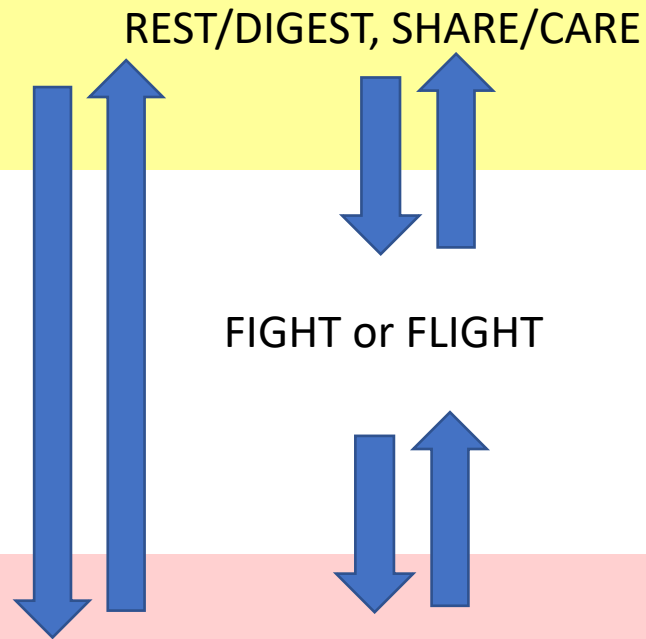
Ruminating

Retelling

Stream 2: Hypo & Hyper Arousal



CLIENT PRESENTATION



REST/DIGEST, SHARE/CARE

FIGHT or FLIGHT

FREEZE or FLOP

PARASYMPATHETIC N.S.

Engaged, open, curious, present

HYPERAROUSAL (SYMPATHETIC N.S.)

Worry, anxiety, fear, panic

Frustration, irritation, anger, rage

HYPOAROUSAL (PARASYMPATHETIC N.S.)

Dissociation, numbness

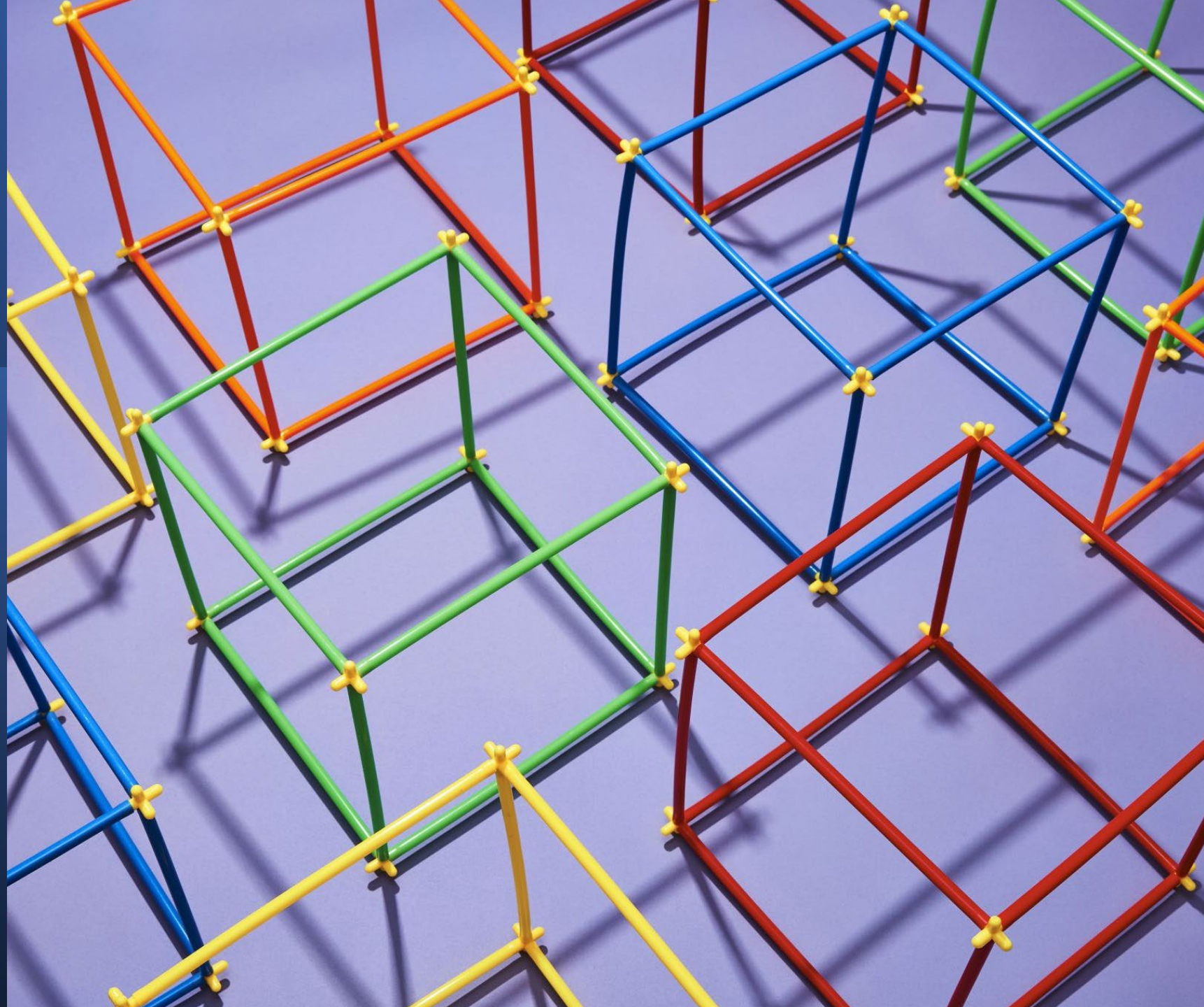
Helplessness, hopelessness

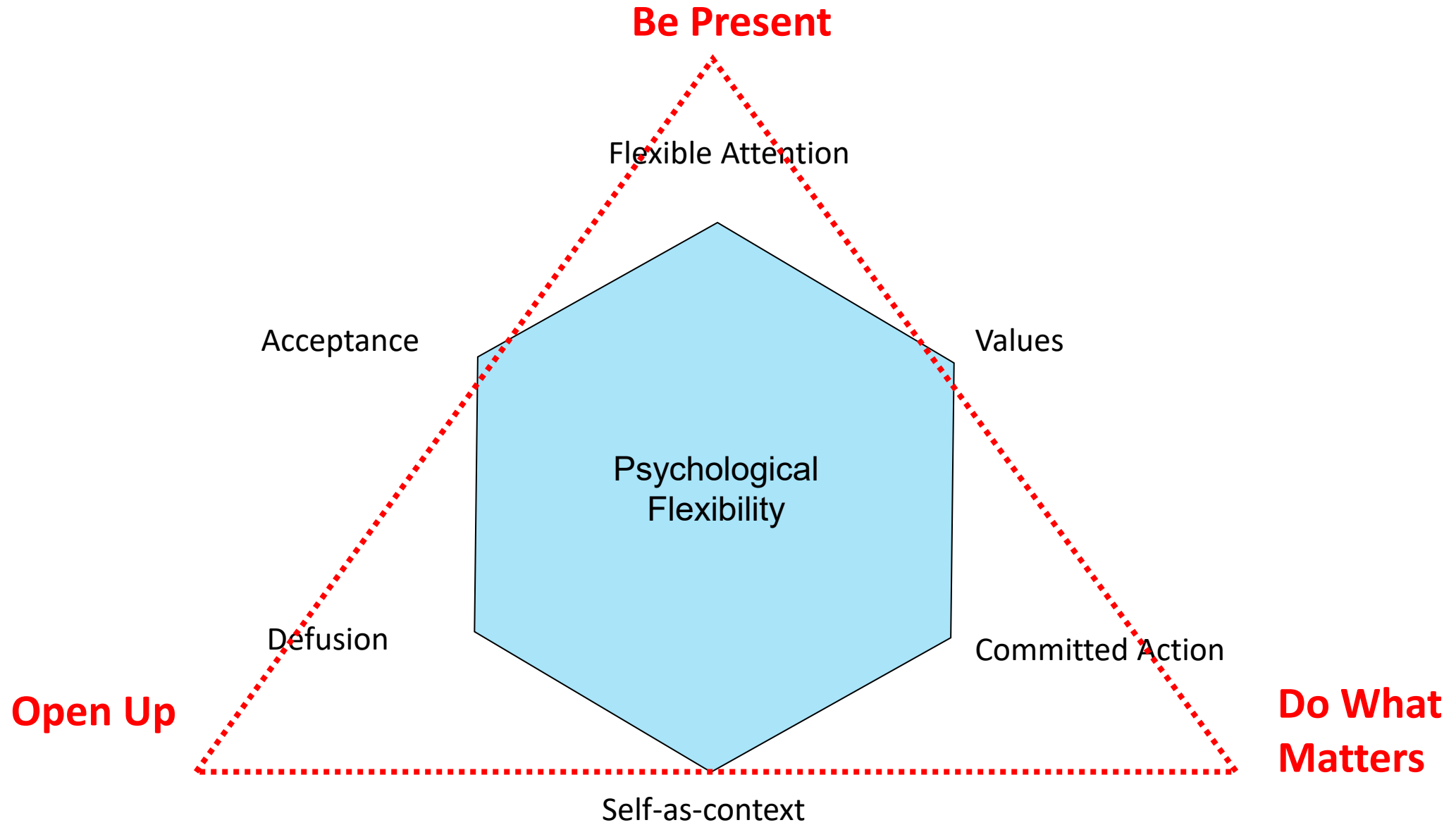
Lethargy, sleepiness

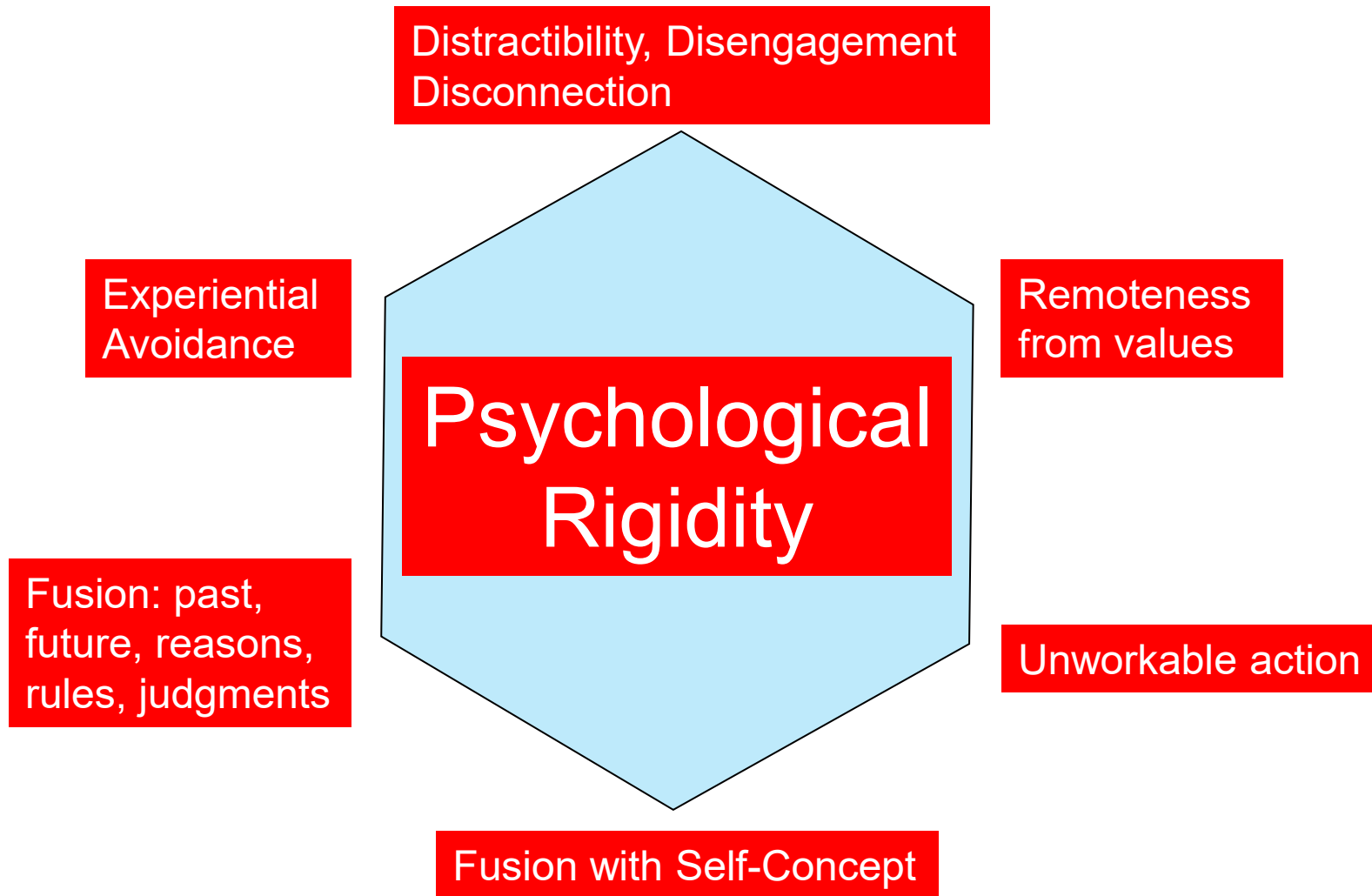
Slumping, shutting down

Zoning out, disengagement

Stream 3:
Psychological
Rigidity

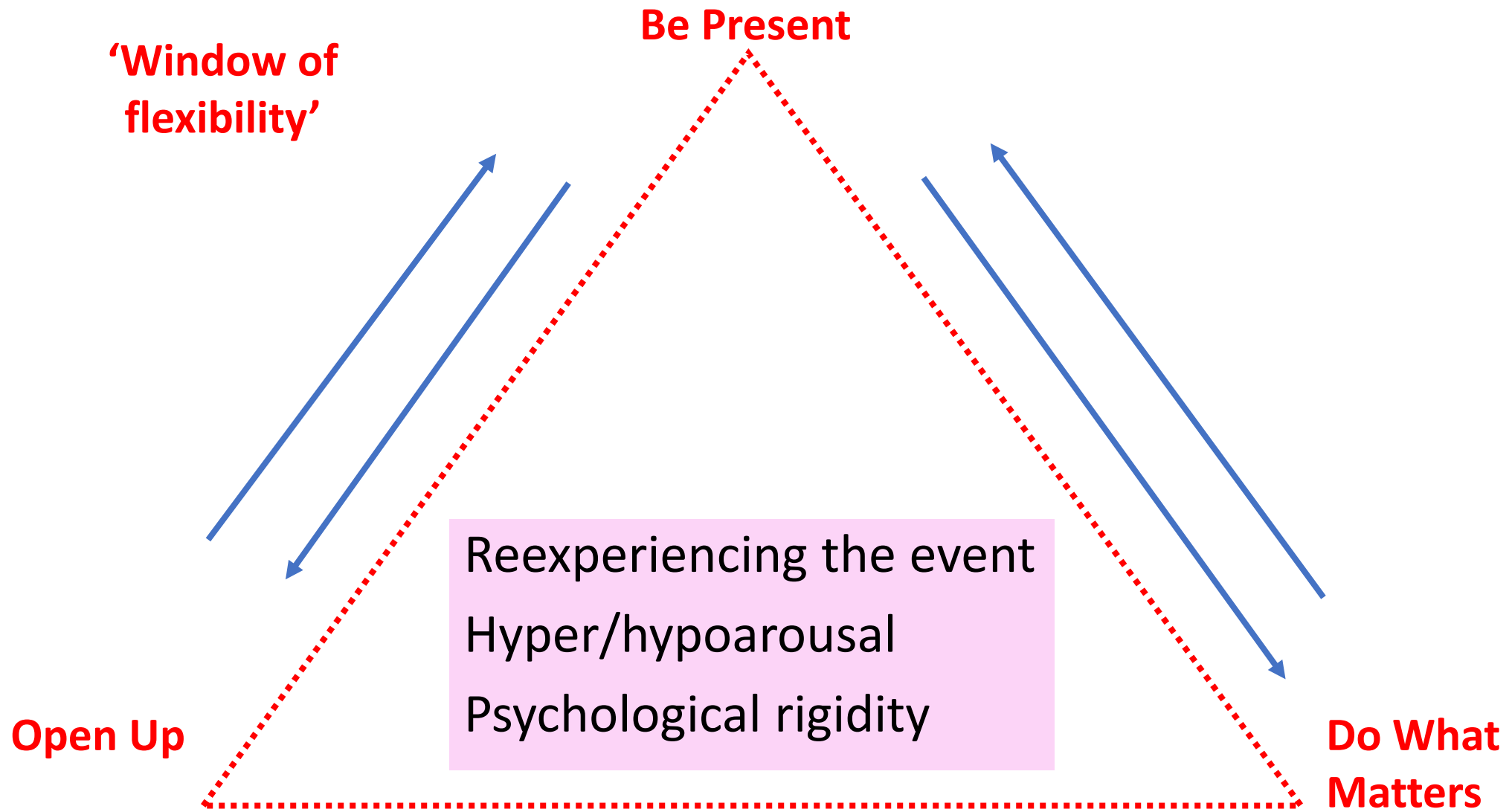






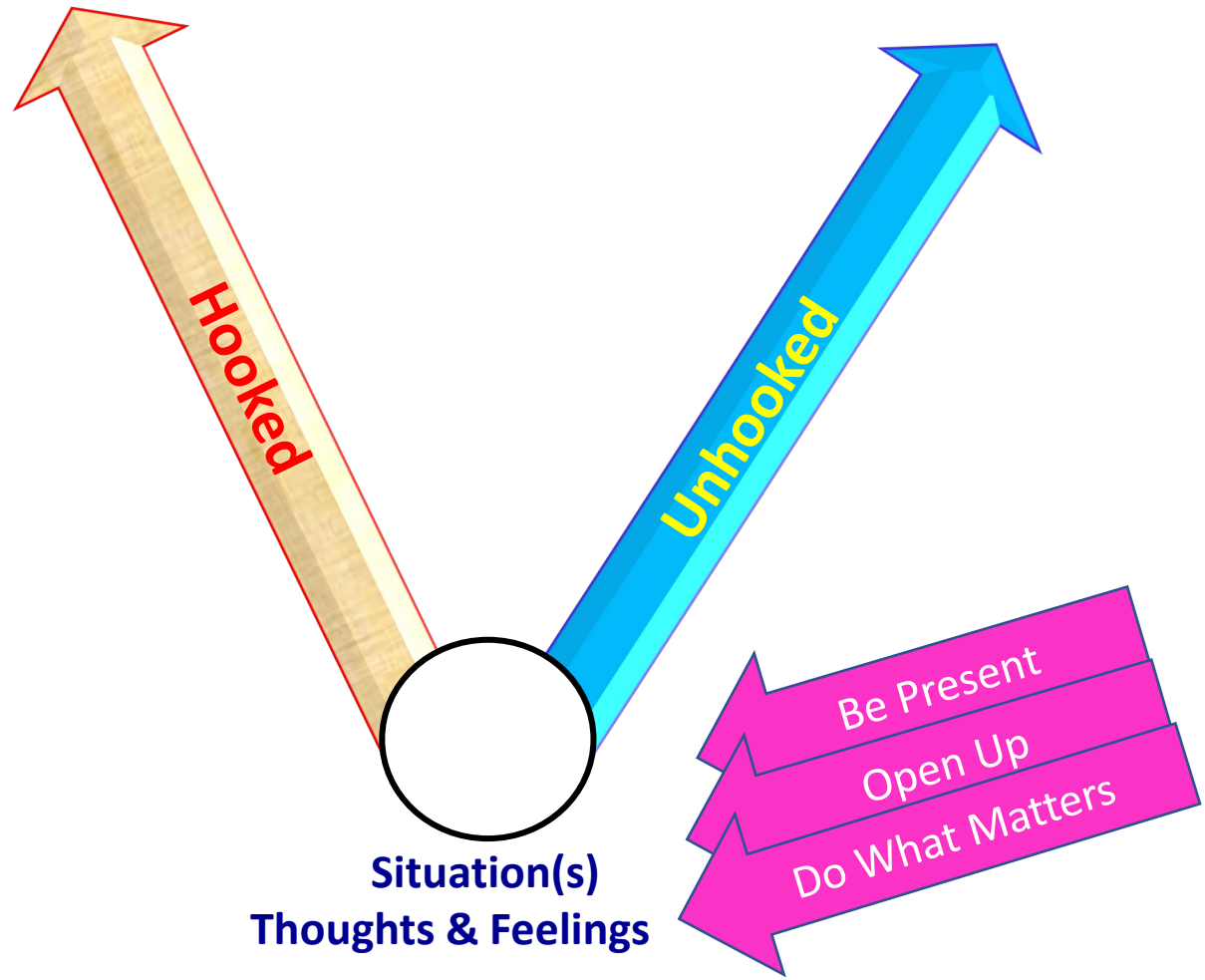
How can
TFACT help?



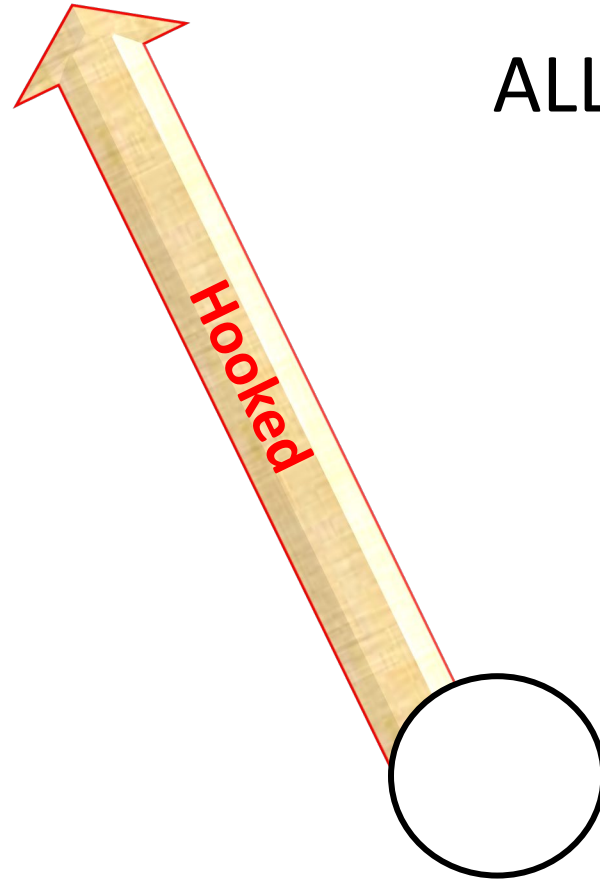


TRAUMA

FLOURISHING



AWAY



**Situation(s)
Thoughts & Feelings**

ALL TRAUMA-RELATED ISSUES
& COMORBIDITY!!
=> EVERY ASPECT OF
COMPLEX TRAUMA

Exposure

*“Organized contact with **repertoire-narrowing** stimuli for the purpose of increasing **emotional, cognitive, and behavioural flexibility**”.*



AWAY

TOWARDS

Exposure

Inflexible responding

**Narrow, inflexible repertoires of
overt and covert behaviour**

Hooked

Flexible responding

**Cognitive, emotional &
behavioural flexibility**

Unhooked

Repertoire-narrowing stimuli

Thoughts, images, memories, emotions, sensations

People, places, objects, events, activities

Be Present

Open Up

Do What Matters

Let's all drop anchor!



Dropping Anchor is **ACE**

A = Acknowledge thoughts & feelings

C = Connect with your body

E = Engage in what you're doing



DROPPING ANCHOR

- **There's XYZ showing up** and I want to help you handle it
- Push your feet hard into the floor
- Straighten your back, sit forward in your chair
- Push your fingertips together, shrug your shoulders
- **Notice what's happening in your mind and in your body**
- **Name what's showing up inside you**
- **So notice, there's XYZ showing up**, and also notice your body in the chair – hands, feet, back
- Also look around – notice 5 things you can see
- And notice 3 or 4 things you can hear
- And also notice you and I, working together
- **So notice: XYZ is present**
- **And around XYZ**, is your body, in the chair
- And notice, around your body, there's a room
- And notice you and I working together
- **So there's XYZ here**, and a body that you're moving, and you and I working as a team, and a room around us – all here, right now.

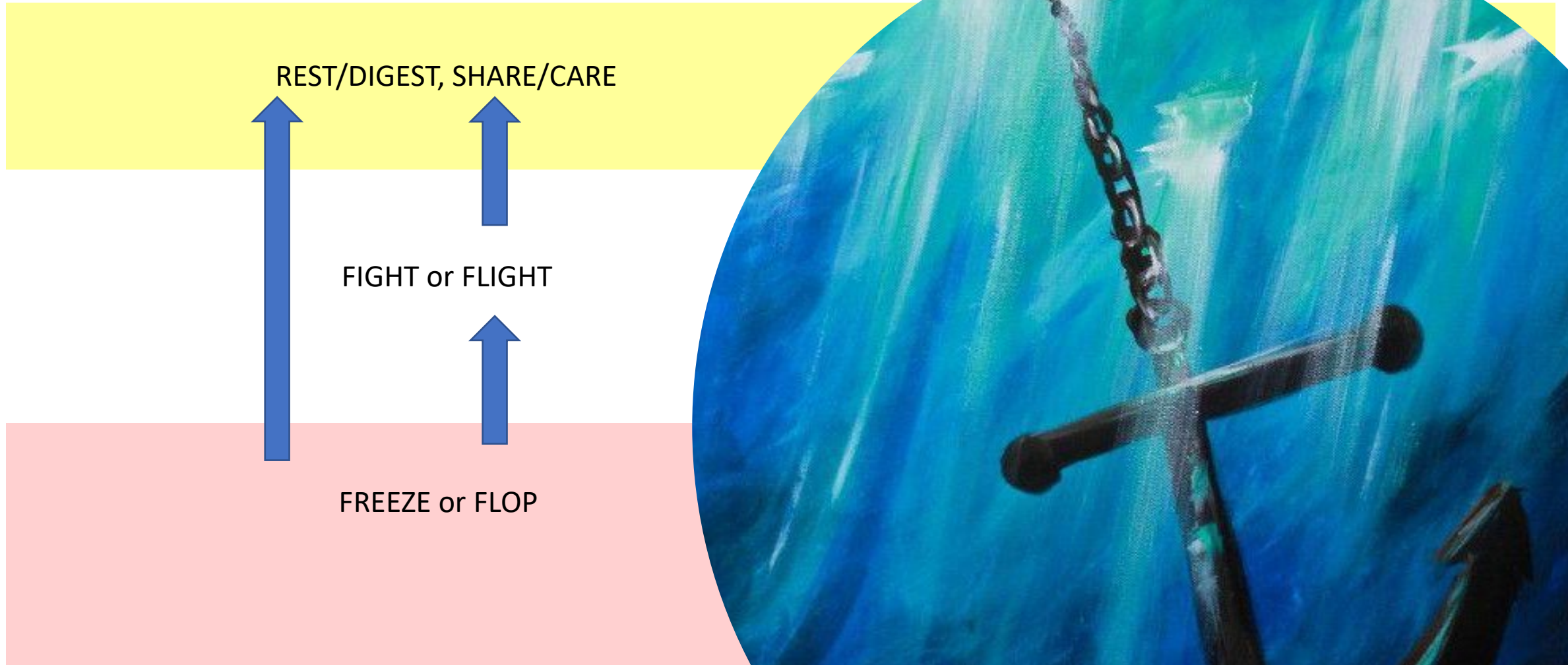
Ending the exercise ...

- *Do you notice any difference? Are you less pushed around by this XYZ?*
- *Is it easier for you to engage with me/ to be present/ to focus/ to talk/ to hear what I'm saying?*
- ***(Only if true)** You seem more present/ I feel more connected with you*
- *Do you have more control over your actions? Move your arms and legs – check it out.*
- *So XYZ is still here, but it's lost some of its impact; it's not pushing you around so much.*
- *Notice I'm not trying to distract you from XYZ; the aim here is to ...*

Two useful 0-10 scales for telehealth

- PRESENCE SCALE
- On a scale of zero to ten, where ten means you're fully present here with me—engaged and focused and really tuned in to what we're doing—and zero means you've completely drifted off, gone off somewhere in your head, lost all track of what we're doing, then zero to ten, how present are you right now?
- CONTROL OF PHYSICAL ACTIONS (CPA) SCALE
- On a scale of zero to ten, where ten means you've got full control over your physical actions—what you do with your arms and legs, hands and feet—and zero means you're completely frozen, locked up, can't move at all, then zero to ten, how much control do you have over your actions right now?

CLIENT PRESENTATION



- 
- ✓ Emotion dysregulation
 - ✓ Hypoarousal
 - ✓ Hyperarousal
 - ✓ Dissociation
 - ✓ Overwhelming emotions
 - ✓ Extreme fusion
 - ✓ Flashbacks
 - ✓ Panic attacks
 - ✓ Disengagement
 - ✓ Distractibility
 - ✓ Impulse control
 - ✓ Urges, cravings, compulsions
 - ✓ Aggression
 - ✓ Disrupt worrying & rumination
 - ✓ Basic contacting the present moment

Psychological Flexibility

Be Present

E = Engage in what you're doing

A = Acknowledge thoughts & feelings

C = Connect with your body

Open Up

**Do What
Matters**

Distraction

**Turn attention away
from the difficult stuff
Inside you**

**Avoid the difficult
stuff inside you**

**Do what helps
you to avoid
difficult stuff
inside you**

After any
mindfulness
practice:

- *How could this help with XYZ (behavioral goals/ difficult situations)?*
- *Would you be willing to practise this? (Where? When? How often? How long?)*
- *Can we do more of this in our sessions?*
- *Can we start off our sessions doing something like this?*

Client says...

“I can do that here with you, but in the real situation ...”











*Repeatedly **Acknowledge** and allow
difficult inner experiences*

while also **Connecting** with the body
and also **Engaging** in activity

If you don't repeatedly **Acknowledge**,
likely to function as distraction

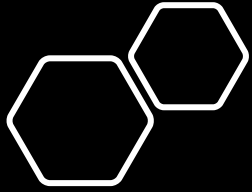
ACT-Style Grounding:
“Dropping Anchor”

Client says...

“I don’t get it. How will this dropping anchor help me?”

How can dropping anchor help?

- First step in self-control: gain control over your actions
- Helps focus on/engage in tasks, activities, life
- Helps switch you off auto-pilot/ remote control
- Help you 'unfreeze' or 'unlock'
- Helps unhook from difficult thoughts and feelings
- Interrupts rumination, worrying
- Interrupts problematic behaviours
- Behave like the person you want to be when difficult stuff is present



The basic
A.C.E.
“formula”
applies to ...

- Thoughts
- Feelings
- Emotions
- Memories
- Images
- Urges
- Impulses
- Sensations
- Any type of physical, emotional, psychological pain
- Any automatic, involuntary physical reaction