Biological Processes during Stress Response

- Trauma content heard and visually processed
- Sympathetic Nervous system triggered
- Norepinephrine released by nerves
- Epinephrine secreted by adrenal glands
- Receptors in blood vessels activated
- Chemical absorption of epinephrine & adrenaline occurs
- Working muscles ready for fight/flight mechanism
- Acetylcholine released by parasympathetic nervous system
- Digestive track stimulated to produce energy
- Blood then diverted to extremities
- Corticotrophin released by Hypothalamus
- Pituitary gland releases adrenal hormone
- Stimulating the release of cortisol

Tips during trauma exposure:
1. Stay relaxed, slow your breathing, and soften your posture.
2. Take note of visuals that develop while processing trauma content and if your own trauma memory is triggered.
3. Sit comfortable in compassion and empathy, but do not take ownership of problems. Visualize a boundary to keep you and your family healthy. (Put on your gloves)
4. Dissociation is common; move your body, hands, or feet to remain grounded in the present. Don’t let the trauma content use the backdoor to your brain.

Tips following trauma exposure:
1. Debrief immediately with a trusted peer. Allow your brain to ventilate within 12 hours.
2. Share your feelings if you cannot share content.
3. Acknowledge the support you receive so the long-term memory is wrapped in compassion and empathy.
4. Be intentional as you transition into the next task or role. Wash hands, visualize changing hats or putting the issue in a drawer.
5. Give yourself permission to change focus and let issues go. Allow yourself to be a silent witness without shame.

"Our internal space must be expansive enough that we can sit with the sorrow of this life, but also feel the miracle of it all."

Laura van Dernoot Lipsky, Trauma Stewardship

Tips:
- Practice good sleep hygiene to include routine steps to wind-down and quiet your body and mind.
- Avoid blue-light exposure 2 hours before sleep to improve the onset sleep and sustain RIM.
- Regularly incorporate enjoyable activities, play games, goof-off; counteract your exposure to trauma content.
- Create deep roots of personal happiness you can rely on when phases of life and stressors change.
- Keep your cup full with joy and thankfulness so your resources aren’t depleted when hardship strikes.
- Repair negative habits by building new connections and relationships; step out of your zone!
- Brain function improves and adapts with when surrounded by new experiences.
- Create balance hourly, daily, and monthly by prioritizing personal needs and mental health.
- Make room in your schedule to tend to your physical and mental health, no one else will for you.
- Acknowledge the impact of all the negative; combat each harm with appreciation of your blessings.
- Be mindful of how your mood/behavior impacts your team, family, and environment.
- Practice visualizations to cleanse stress and transition. Remove your cloak often.
- Create, monitor, and maintain emotional boundaries to protect yourself and your personal life.
- Get out and enjoy Alaska. Sleep, play, and connect somewhere else! Get a 10,000 foot view!
Choose 2 activities from EACH category to plug into your schedule weekly!!

Have an **Accountability Ally** to help you ACTUALLY follow through with plan!