

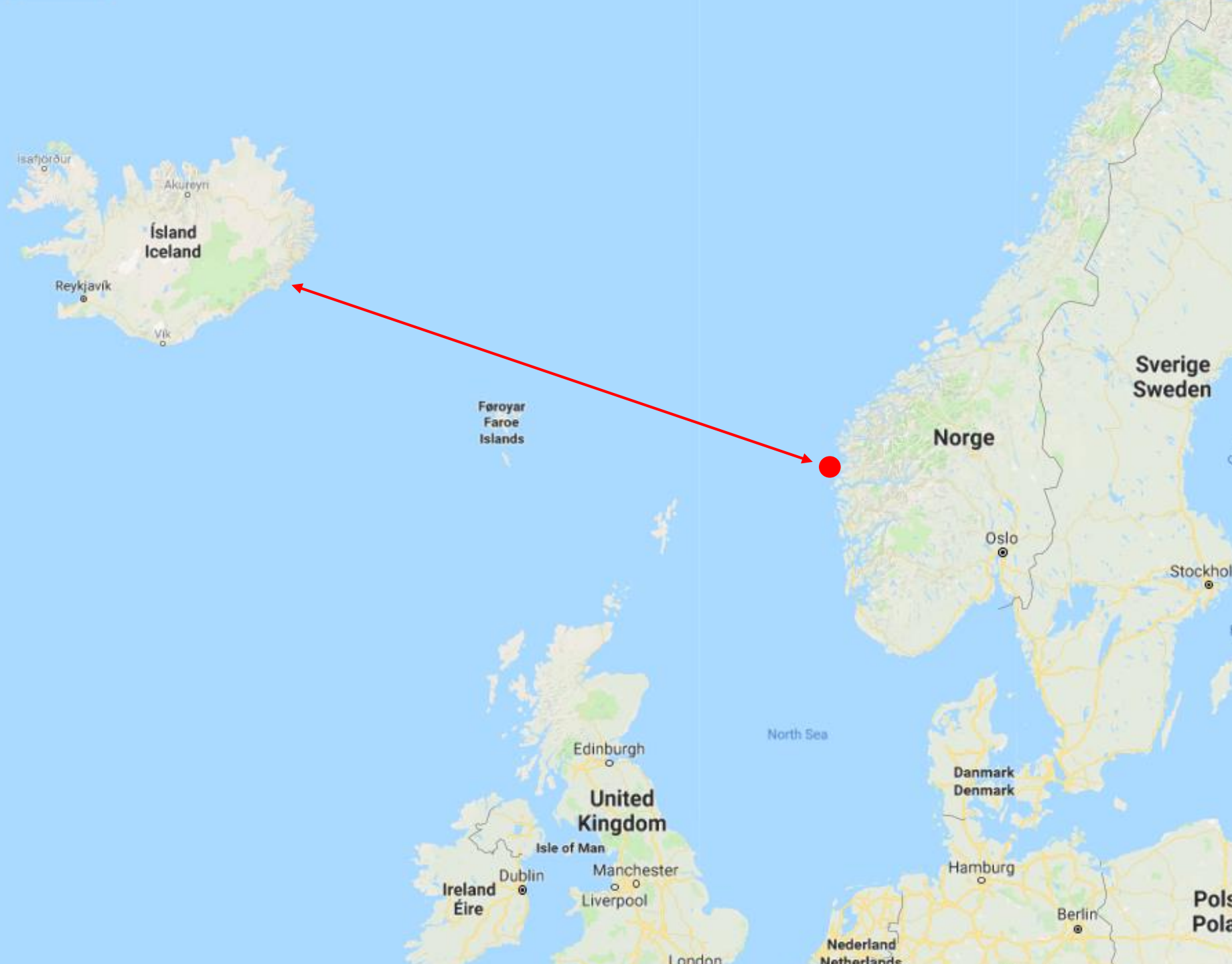
Regulation as the key concept in a new trauma psychology

BUP Conference, Reykjavik, January 2017

Dag Ø. Nordanger

Specialist in clinical psychology, RVTs West

Professor, Western Norway University of Applied Sciences



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Professor, Høgskulen på Vestlandet

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What is new?

The new thing is that knowledge about children's development now has become integrated in trauma psychology

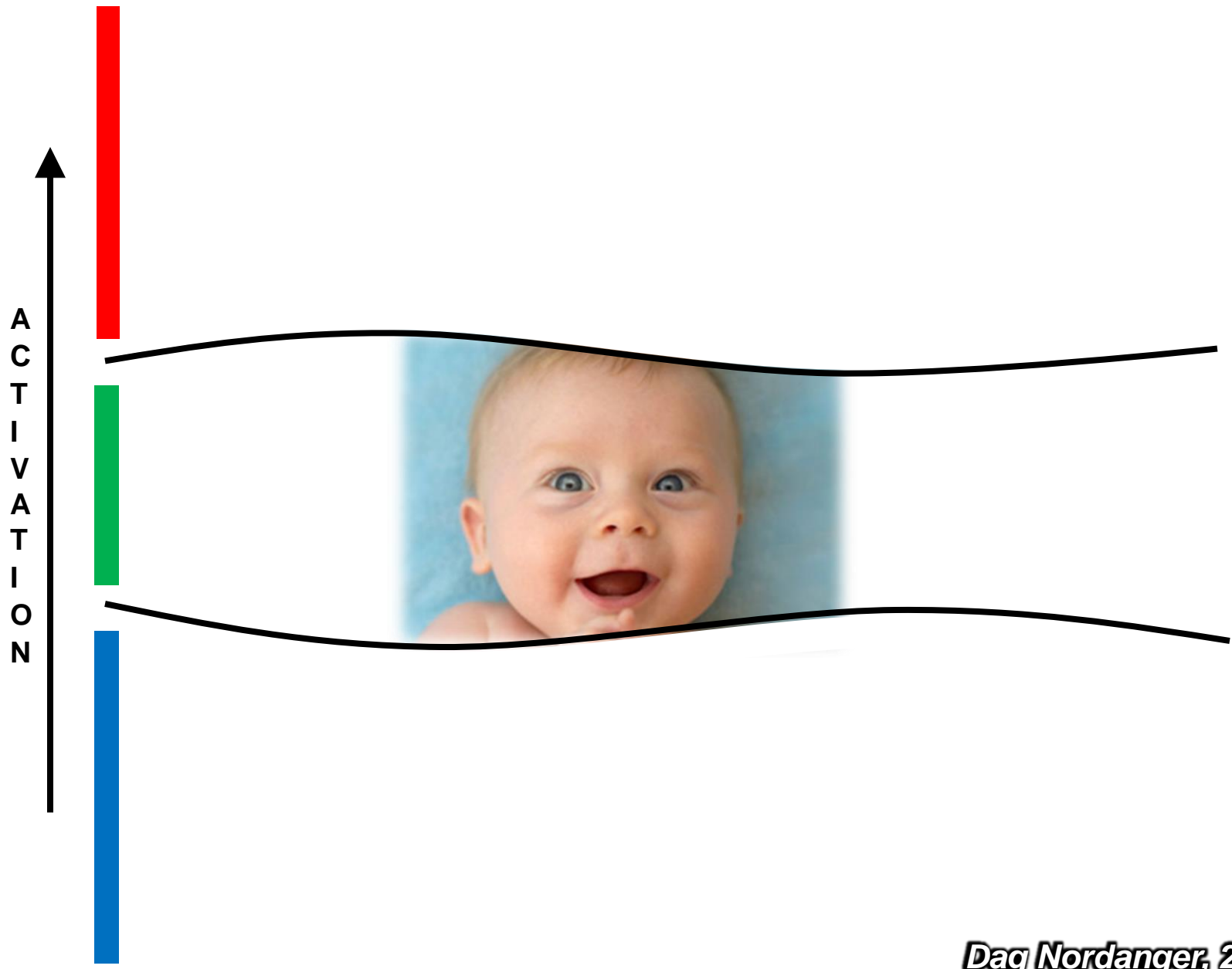
- Trauma psychology comes from the adult field, with a focus on the «damage» caused by overwhelming events (PTSD), and on how to «repair» this damage
- This applies poorly to the problems we see in children exposed to complex traumas from before they can remember; problems are more global and unspecific
- We've come to realise that kids traumatised in this way also miss crucial experiences. Their problems is not just about damage, it's as much about what they did not get ^{xx}
- New key question: What exactly are these experiences? The experiences children really must not miss?

**The most crucial need
a child has, is to get
*regulation-support!***

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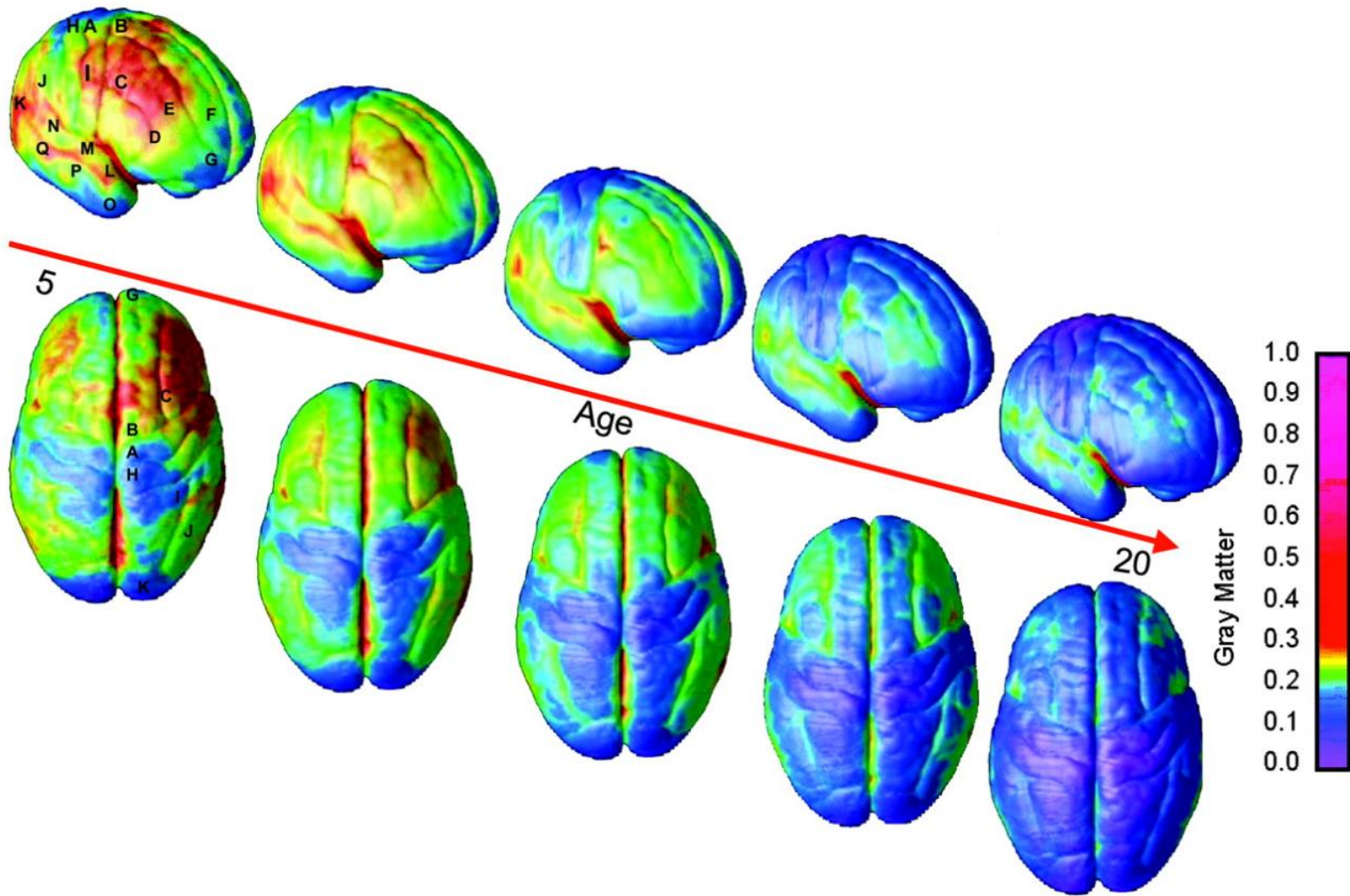
Richness of «somato-sensoric» stimulation

- Tone of voice
- Rythmic rocking
- Body warmth
- Touch
- Dialogic

(Tactile, balance, auditive, visual, smell, joints)

> ***Being regulated***

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Hentet fra: www.kidshealth.org.nz/adolescent-brain-development



Neocortex (logical brain)

- Consciousness/reasoning
- Intended actions
- Language/communication

Limbic system (emotional brain)

- Attachment
- Basic affect (anger, fear, lust)
- Alarm responses

Brain stem (survival brain)

- Cardiac rhythm and circulation
- Respiration
- Metabolism



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Brain develops through «Bottom-up» processes driven by basic regulating and somatosensory experiences

Hierarchical principle: When «filled up» at the top, we are rigged for «top down» processes; Higher structures can “take charge” over lower ones

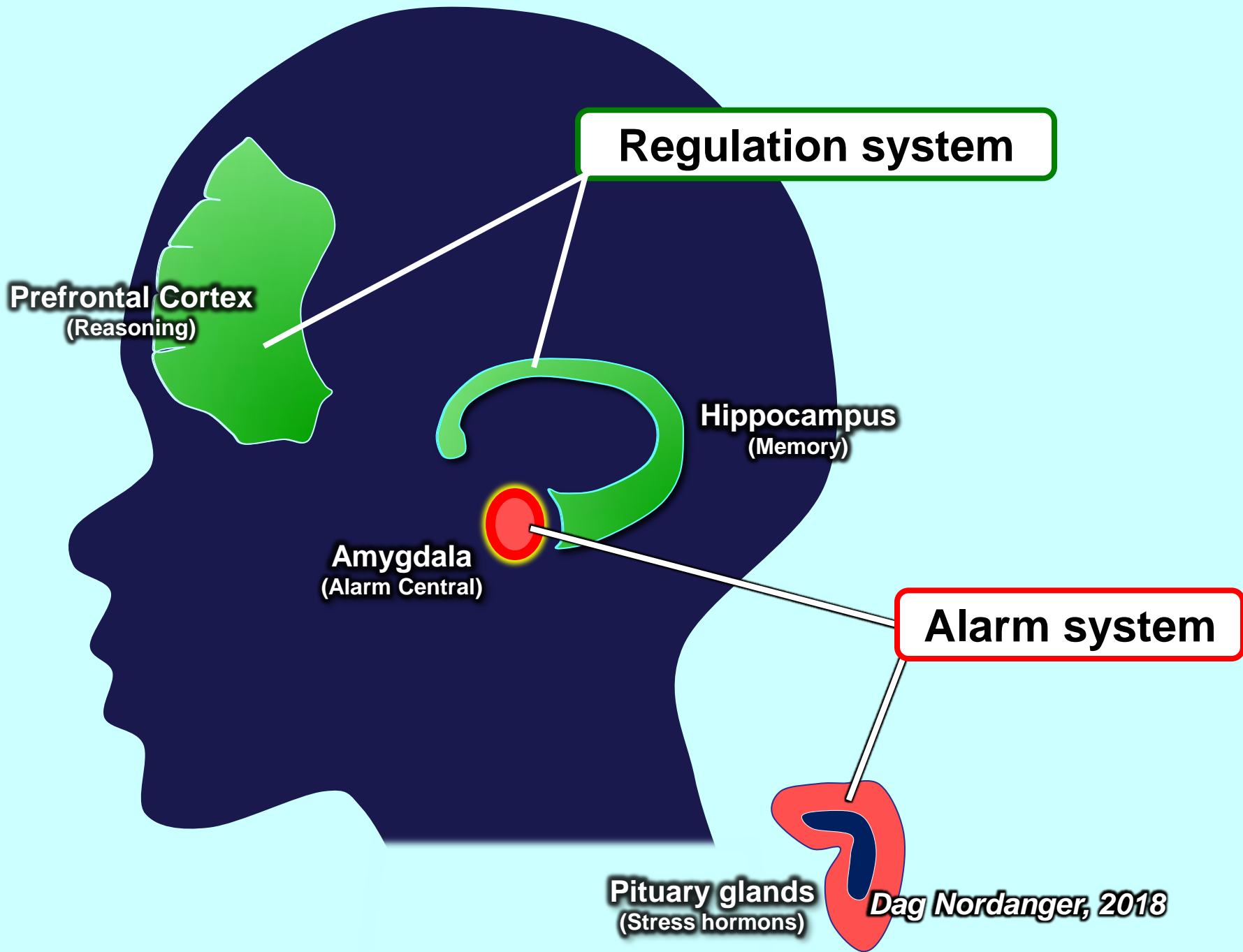
Not robust hierarchy: When we are outside our window of tolerance, we lose access to prefrontal regulation capacity

Then we all have to return to more basic form of regulating stimuli

Not all children have had the chance for optimal «bottom-up» development

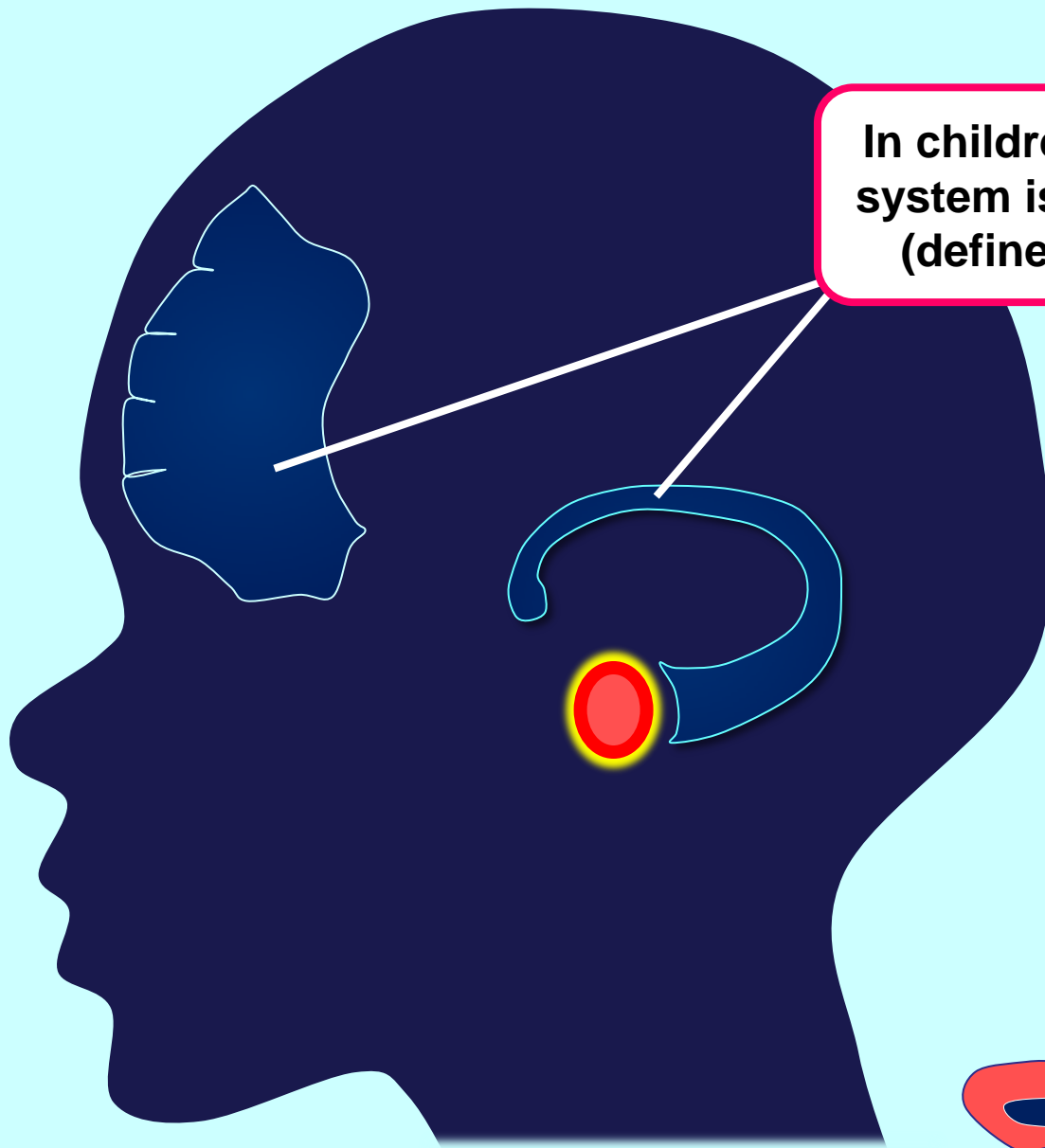
Many of them live with a constantly elevated baseline activation level

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Pituitary glands
(Stress hormones)

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In children, the regulation system is underdeveloped (defines being a child)

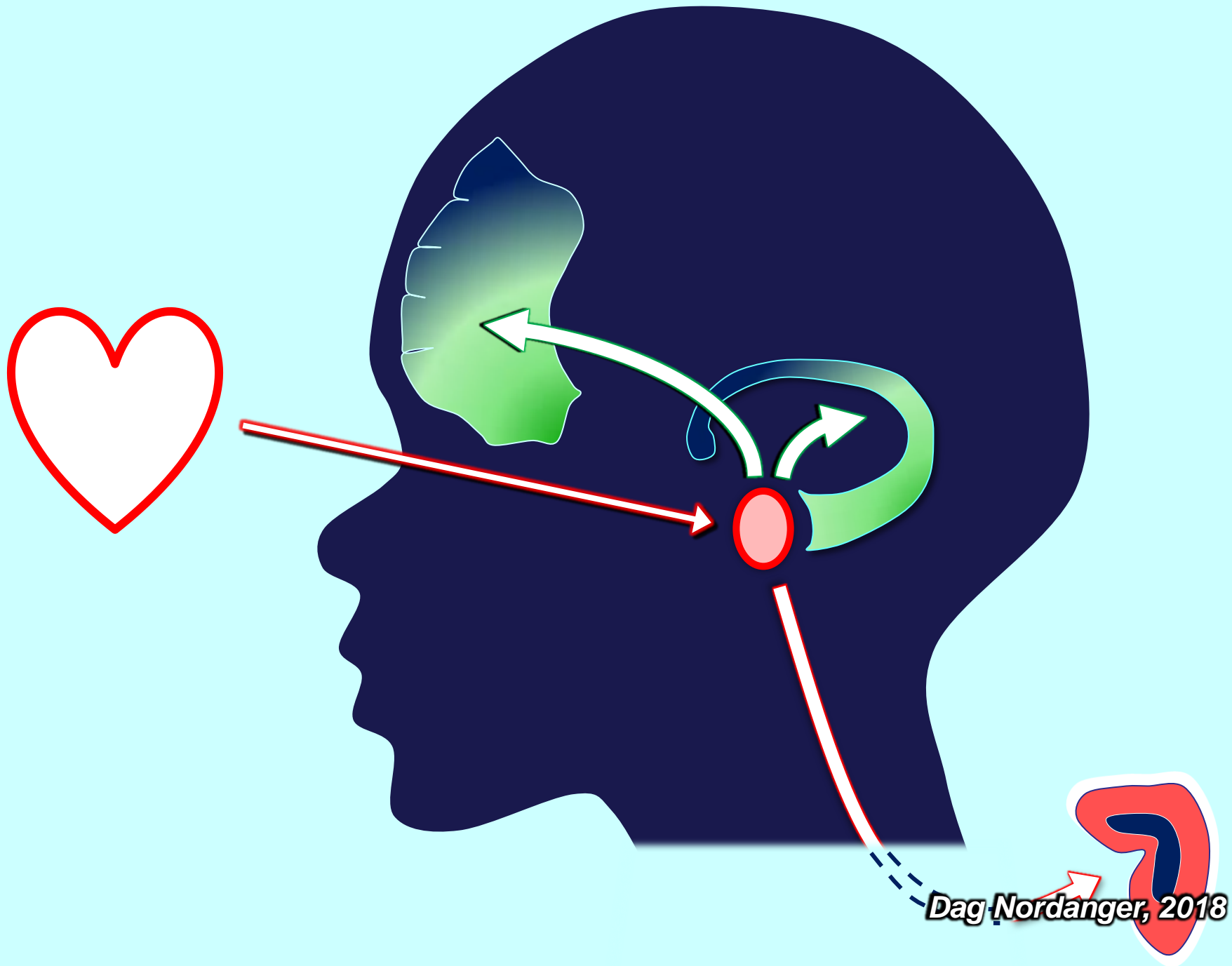


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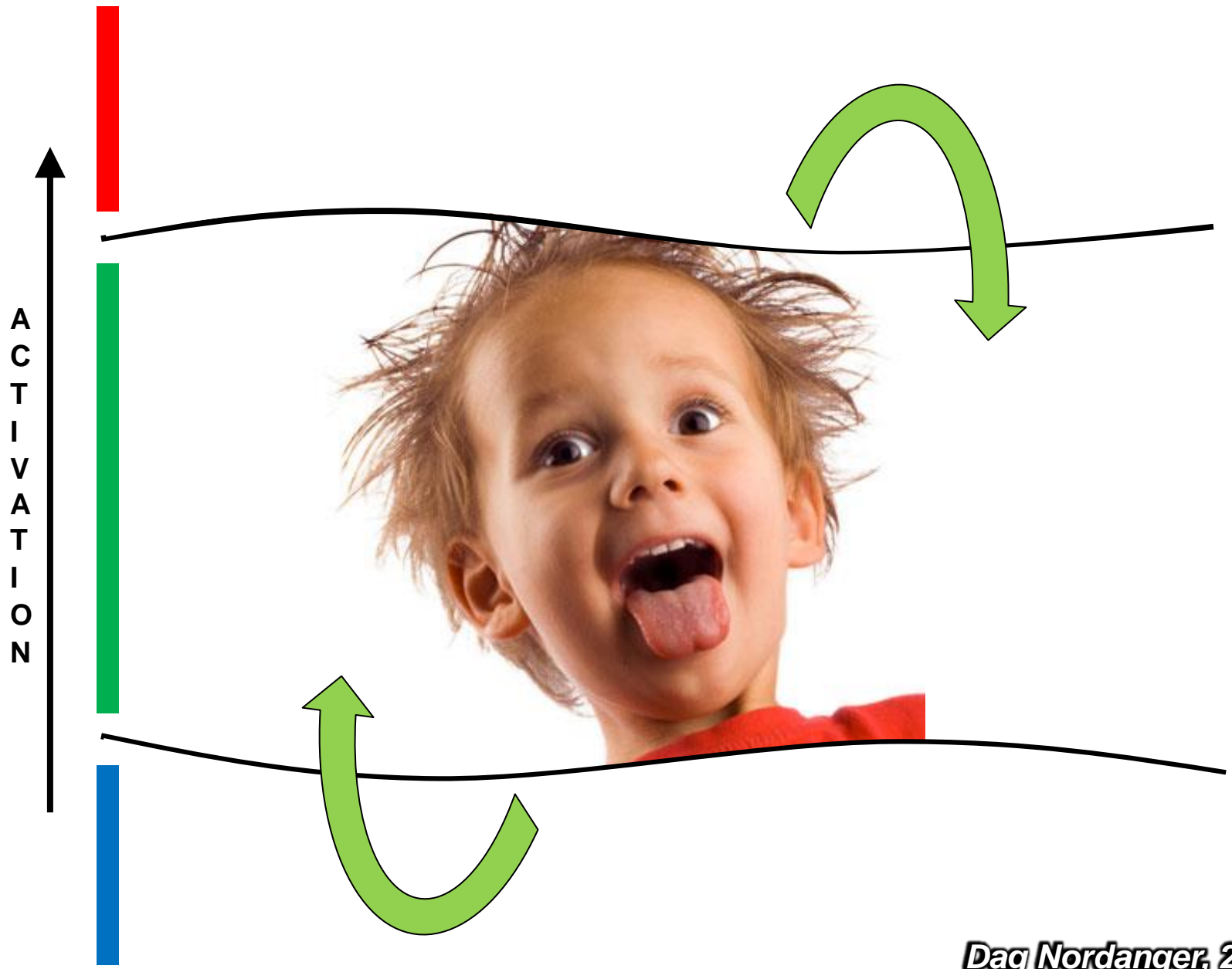
A photograph of a baby sitting in a kitchen sink. The baby is wearing a light blue long-sleeved shirt and striped pants. An adult's hands are visible near the faucet, possibly washing the baby's hands. The kitchen has a window in the background showing a green lawn and trees. There is a red electric kettle on the counter to the right. A green box highlights the text 'Regulation support' at the bottom of the image.

Regulation support

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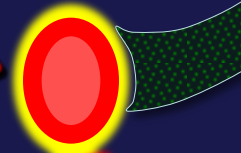
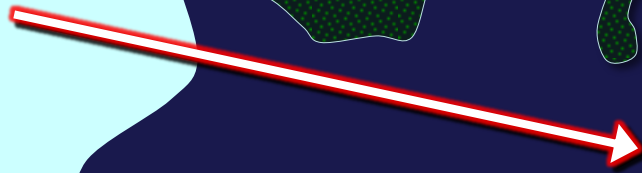
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STRESS

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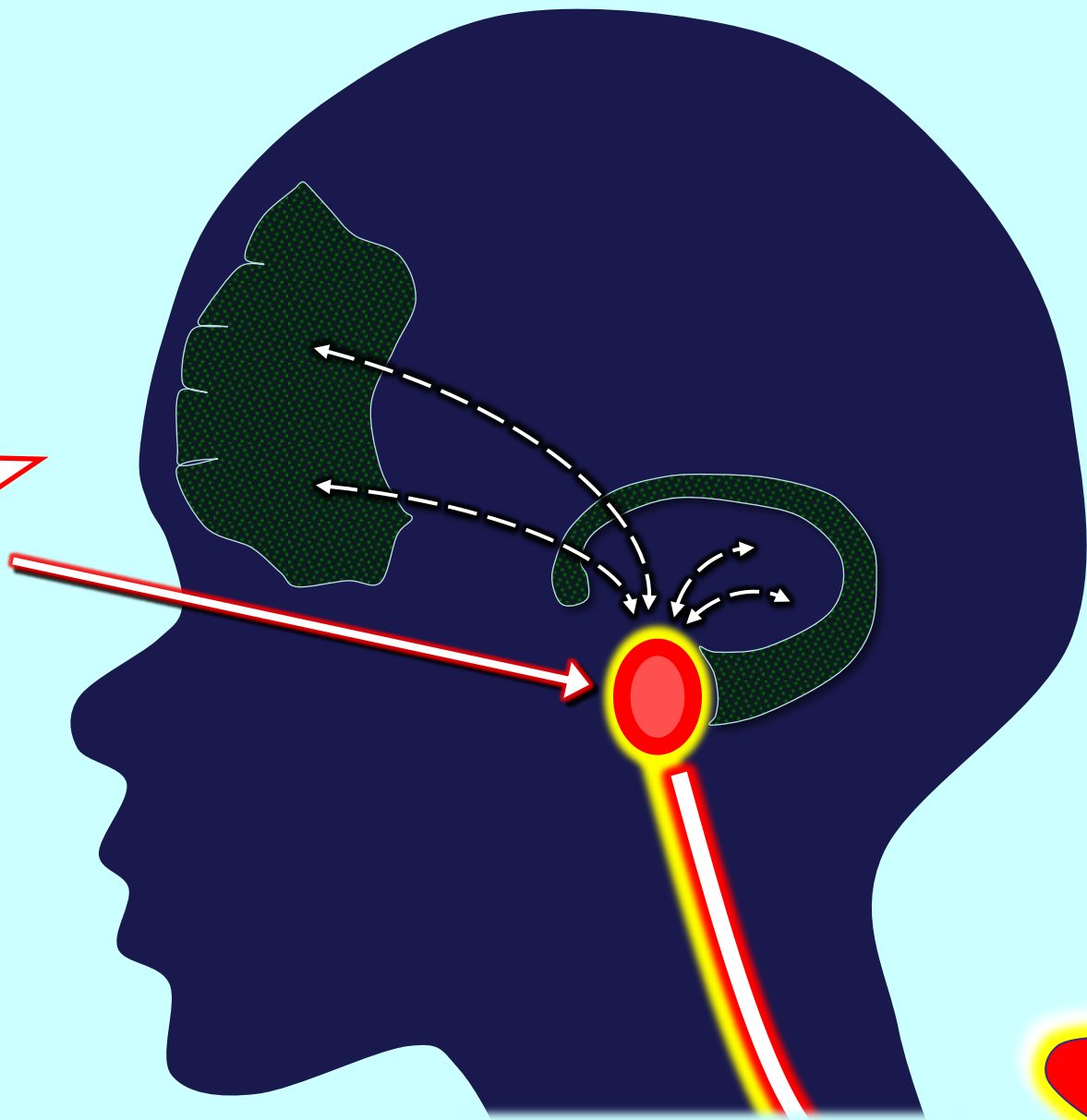


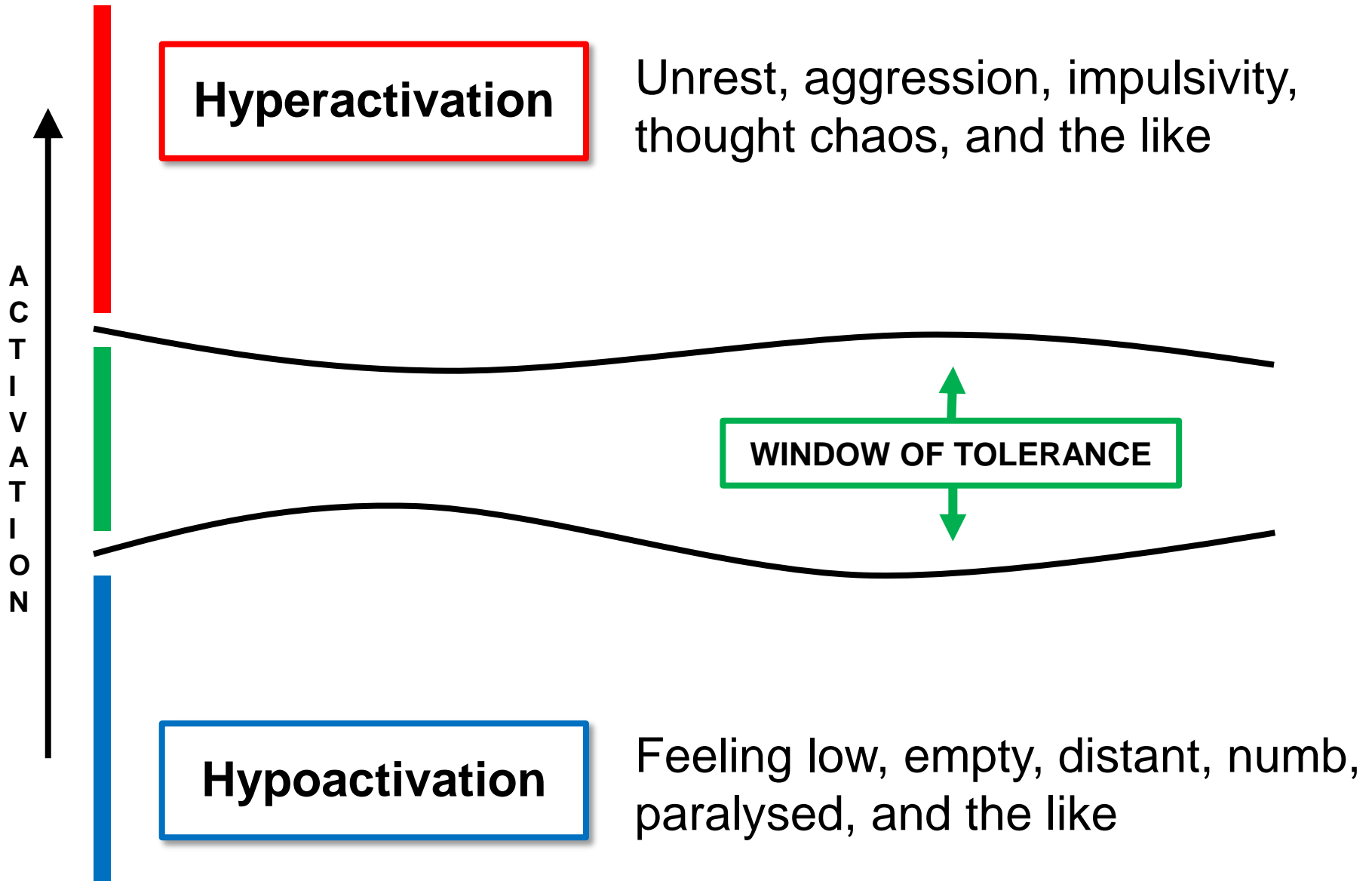
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**When two evils combine:
Traumatic stress + failing
regulation support**

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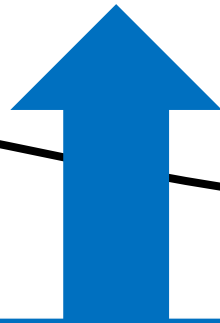
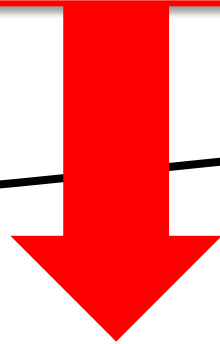




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«I cut myself to escape my inner chaos. I use the physical pain to drive away the mental one»

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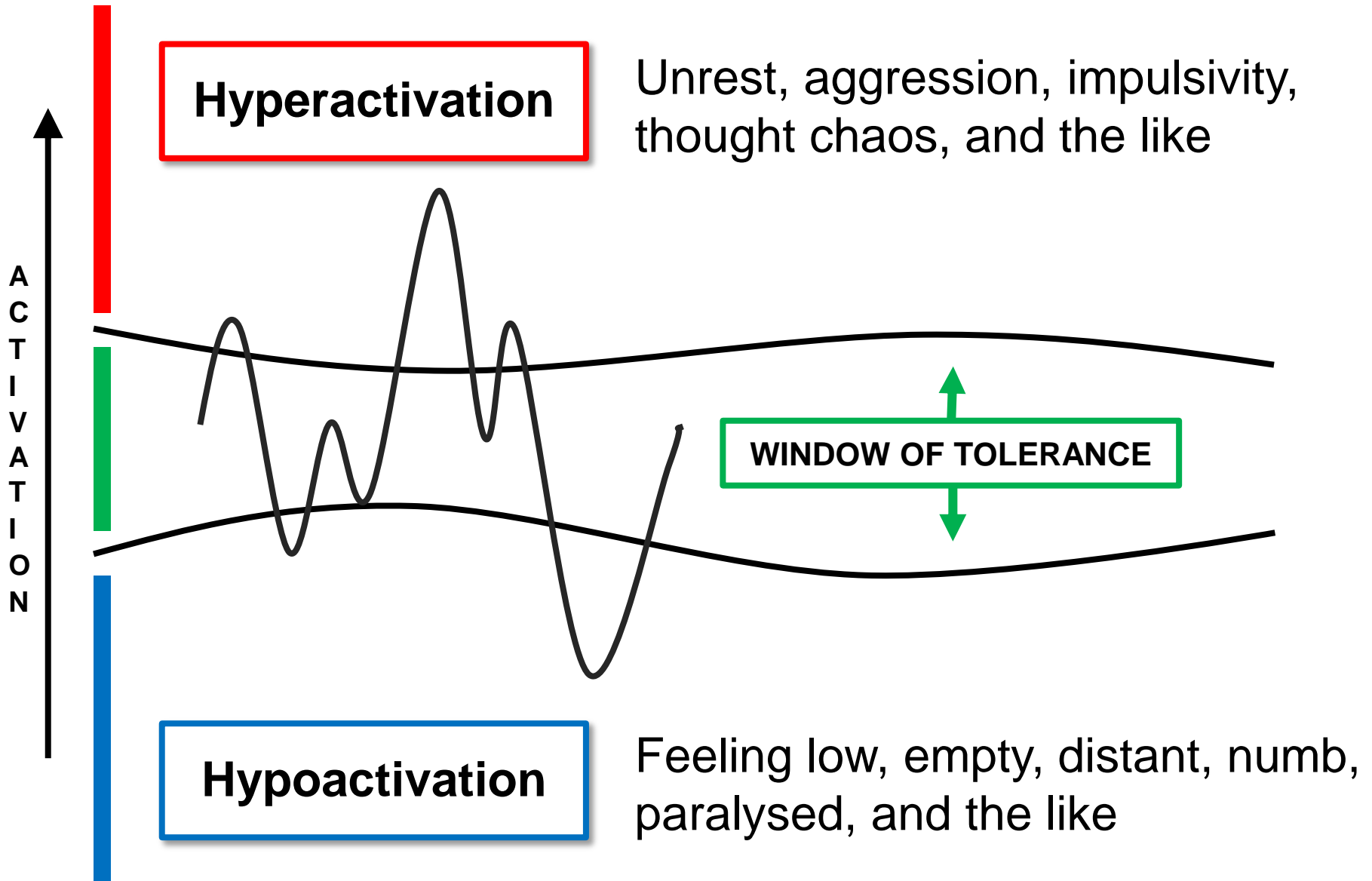
«I cut myself when emptiness overwhelms me. I am relieved when I see the blood flowing; I am alive, I am a human who can feel pain»

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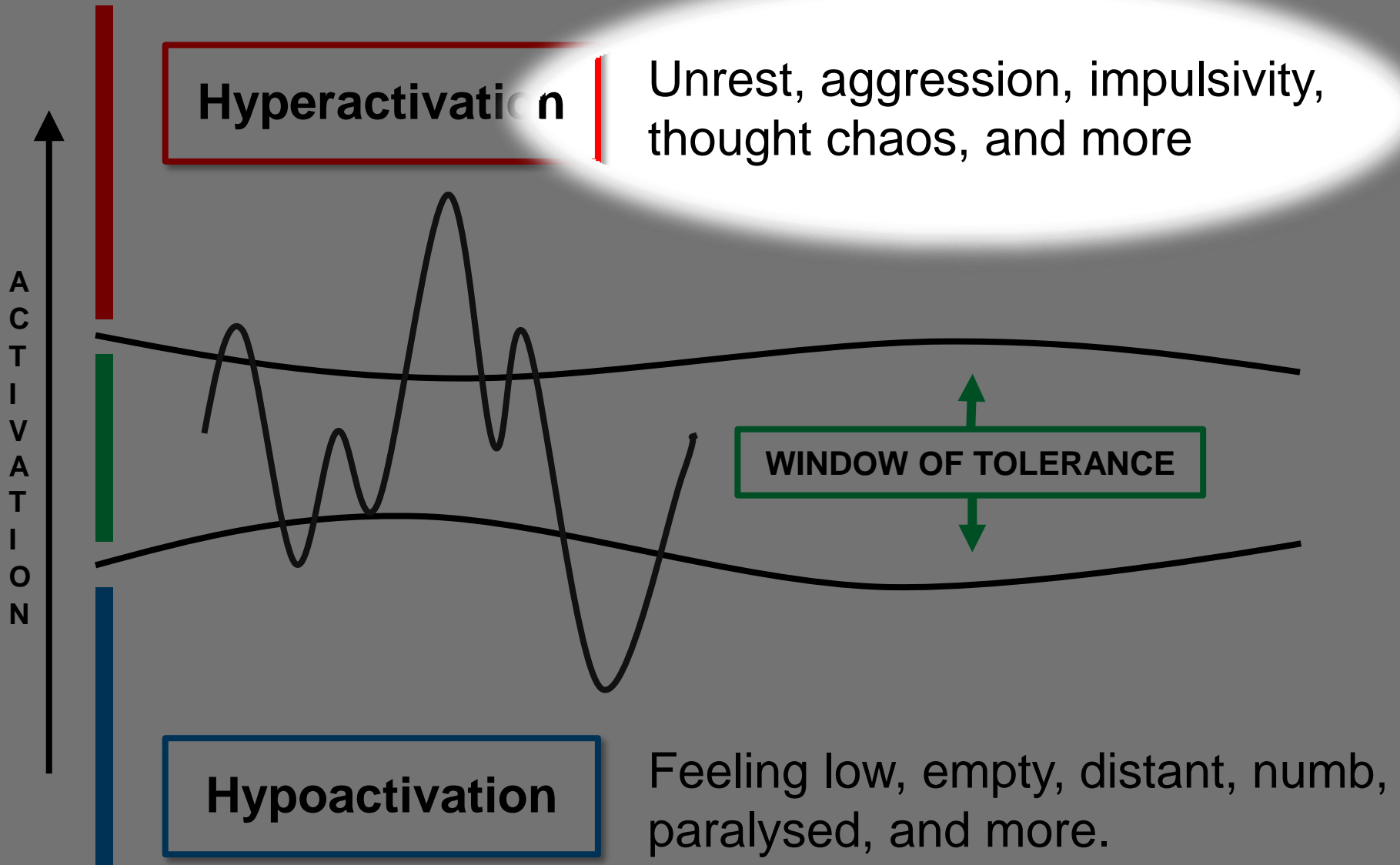
***What are the implications
of this field of knowledge,
what does it take from us?***

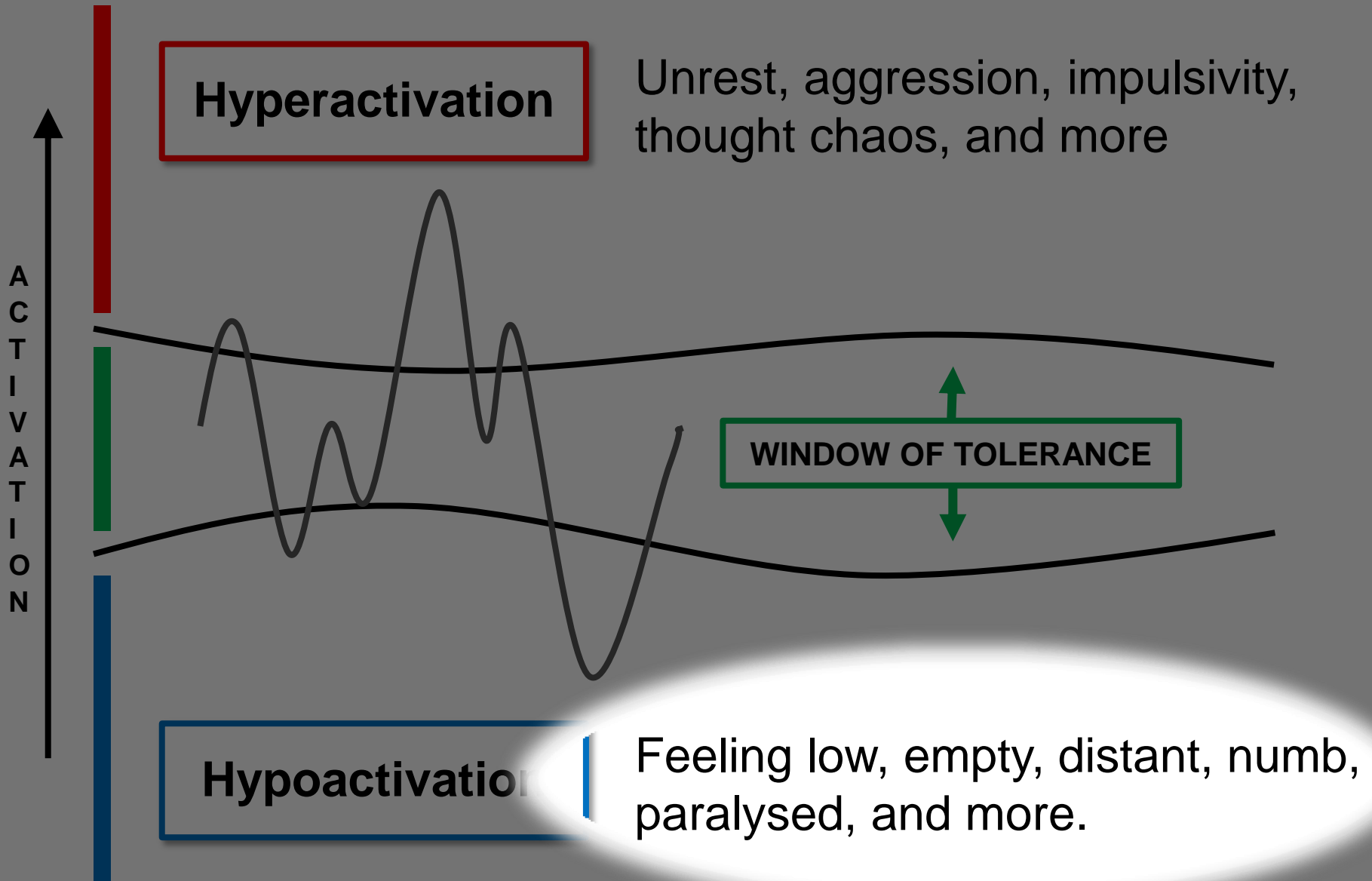
We have to see these children!

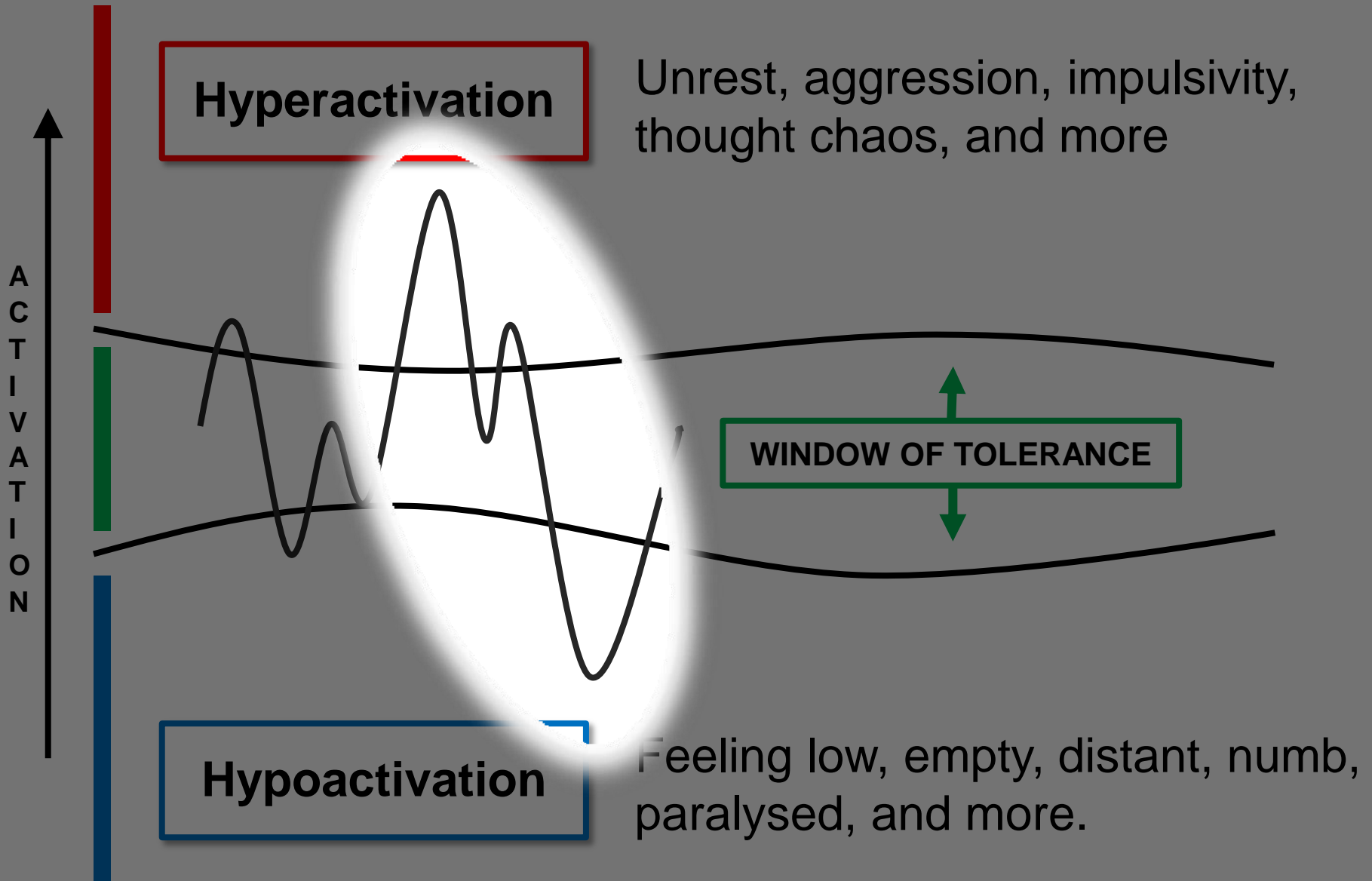
- We must see behind their symptoms and behavioural expressions
- To be able to do that we must free ourselves from a traditional diagnostic perspective
- Regulation problems cross categories, a diagnostic view may give us “tunnel-sight” and make us blind to mechanisms behind



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The Governmental Child Violence Committee



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NOU

Norges offentlige utredninger 2017:12

Svikt og svik

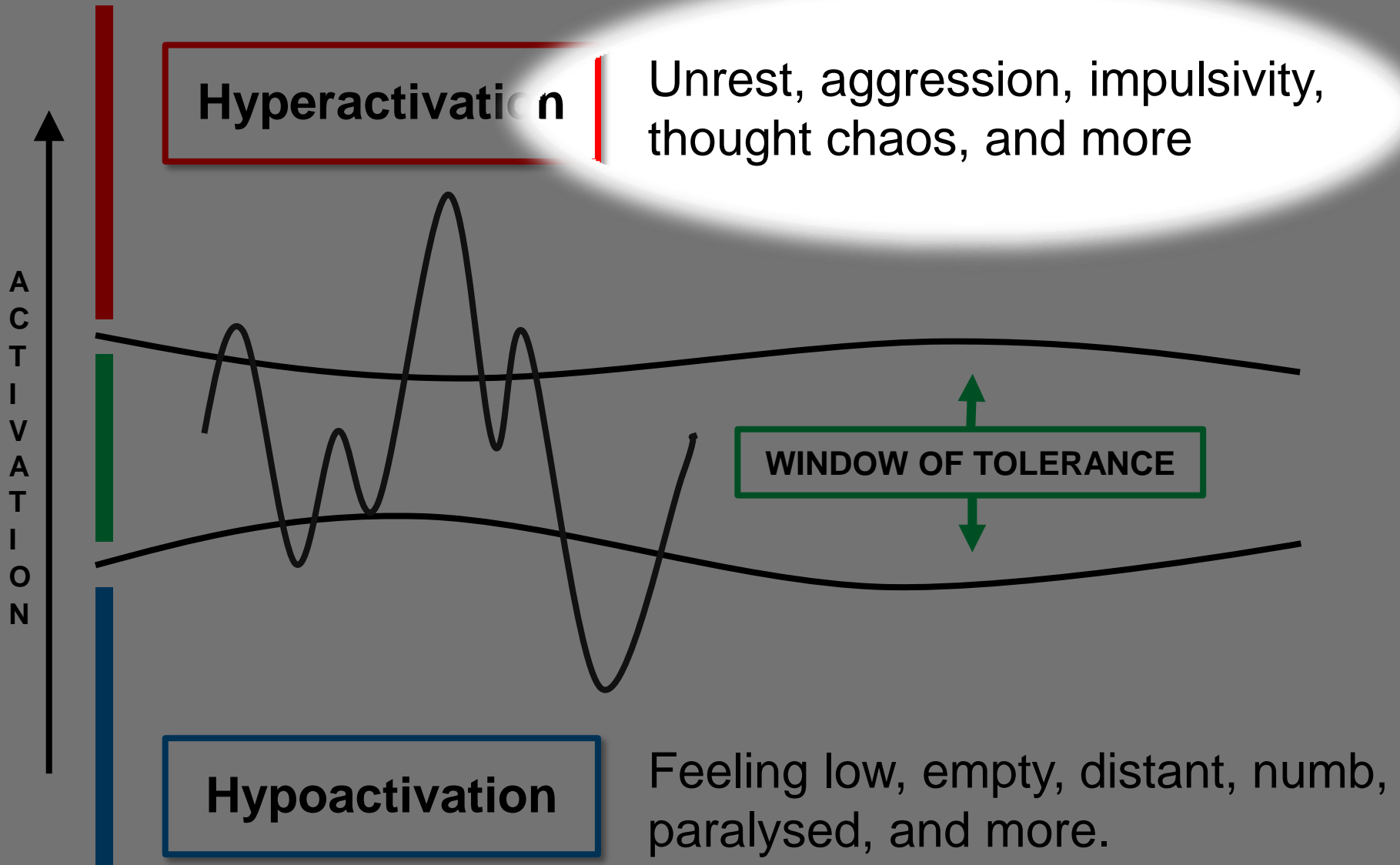
Gjennomgang av saker hvor barn har vært utsatt for vold, seksuelle overgrep og omsorgssvikt



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A major system failure:

”Failed understanding of the causes of children’s symptoms, behavioural expressions and signs of suffering”



«I grew up in a regime where I was threatened on my life from before I can remember. Nobody ever asked me why I behaved like I did. Instead, they gave me an amphetamine preparation, to cope with the situation at home»

When we know, what does it take?

- ***Our overarching challenge:*** How to recreate as many as possible of the elements of early regulation support (“How to cradle an adolescent?”)

Create «calming environment»!

- *We have to think **stress reduction** before behavioral correction!*
- *We must reduce triggers (and must understand that they sit on us)*

Understand that the brain develops according to the same principles even if the child get older!

- Not primarily top-down through insight
- Bottom-up through bodily experiences of returning to the Window of tolerance after being in affect
- Cannot happen in “isolation” alone, but through daily life relational experieeces

A young child with short brown hair, wearing a dark blue tracksuit and brown shoes, is sitting on a wooden bench. The child is looking towards a colorful play structure in the background. The play structure is green and yellow, with a spring rider. In the background, there are trees, a building, and a blue car. A speech bubble is positioned above the child, containing text.

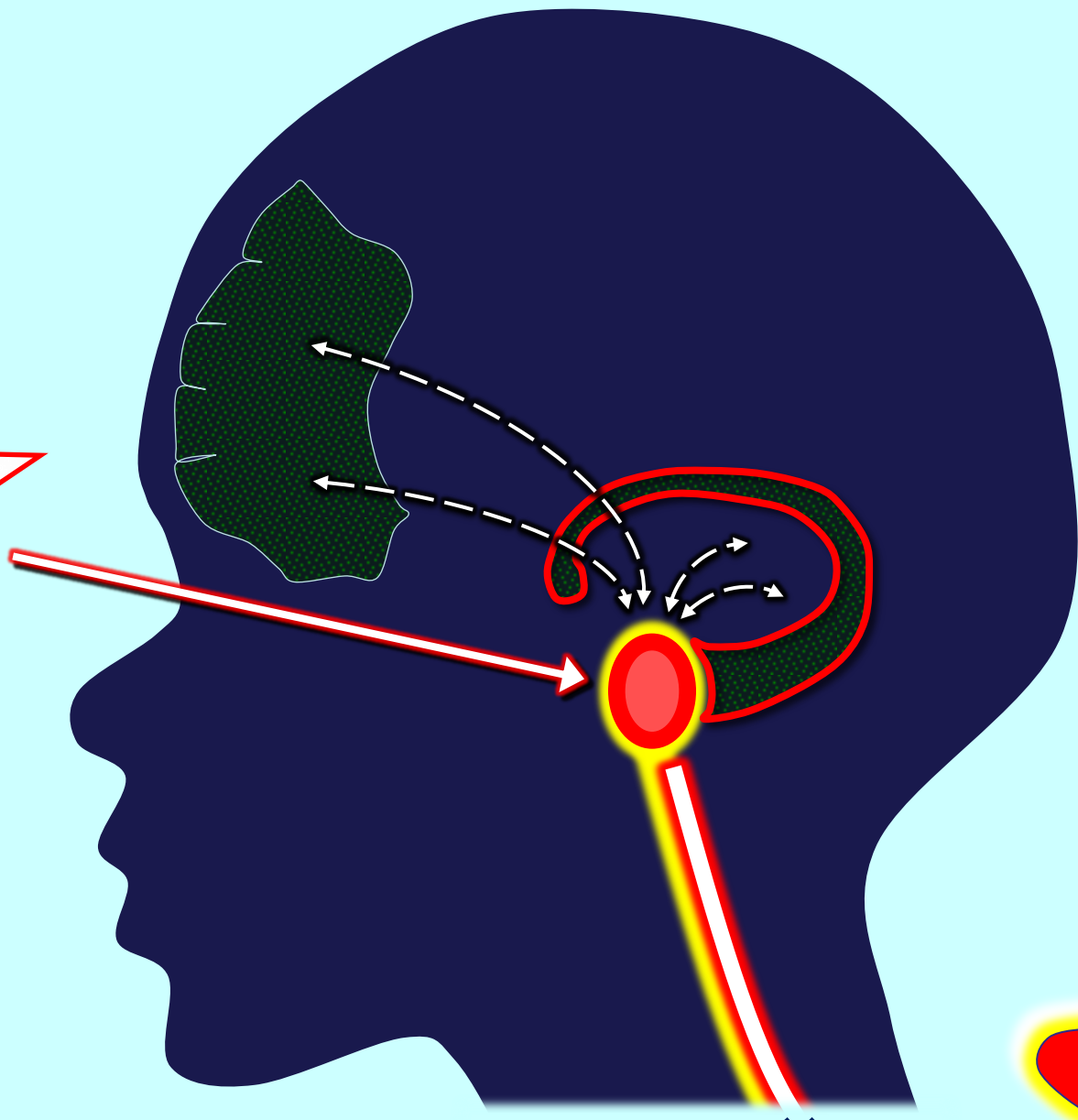
**So let me go back there
and be a little nice with
people for once!**

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Understand that the arrow points back at ourselves!

- Our inner state is more important than the words we say and «method» we use – it's our state alone that regulates others
- Our most needed competence is to resist the counter forces (e.g. our mirror neurons)





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Include as many somatosensory stimuli as possible in children's caring context!

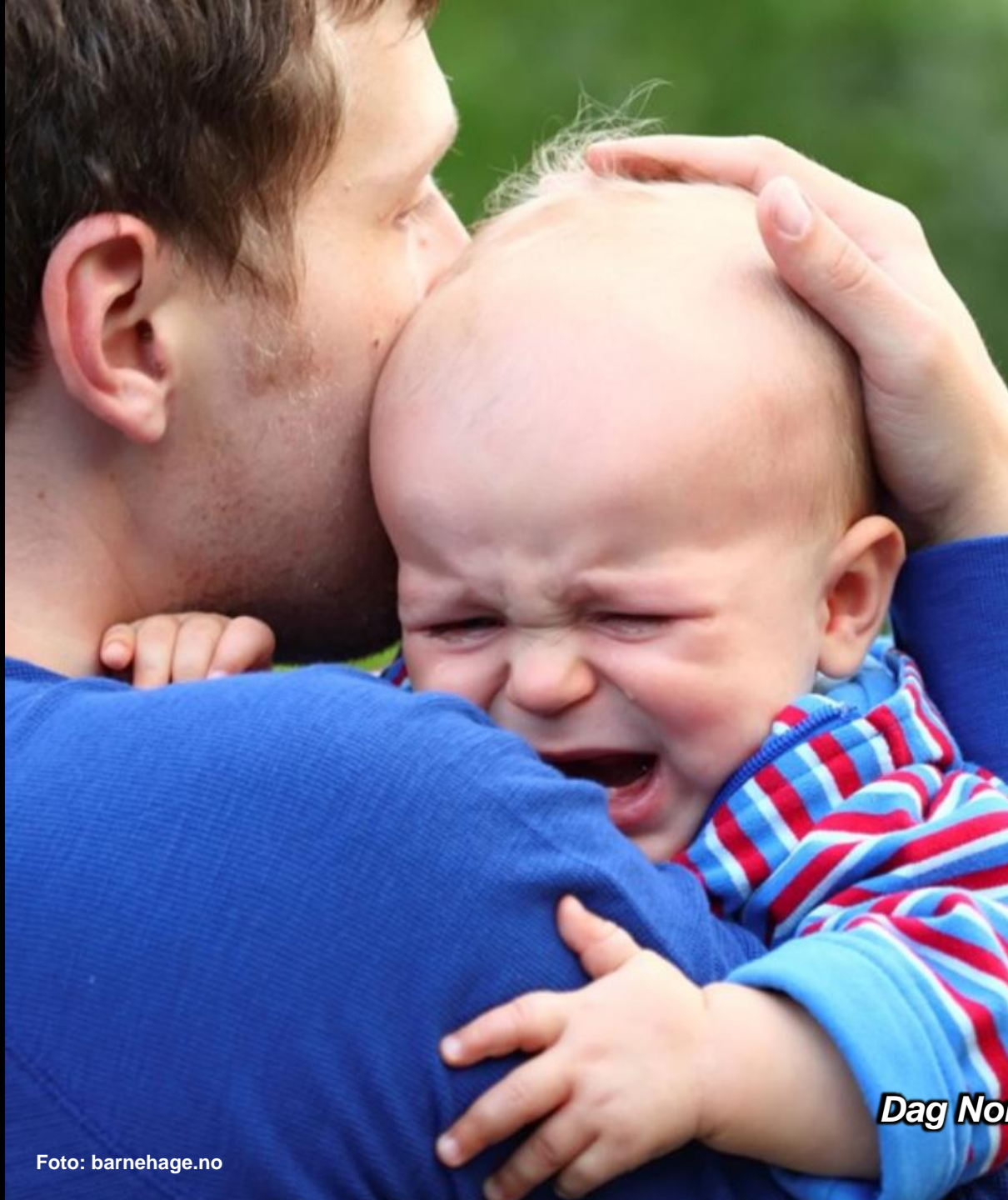


Foto: barnehage.no

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Calming sensory stimulation: Calm music, massage or foot bath, walking, cuddle an animal / something flossy, rocking chair, hammock, thick heavy carpet

Awakening sensory stimulation: Intense or rhythmic music, dance or run, low temperature in the room, cold cloth in the forehead, soaking a piece of ice

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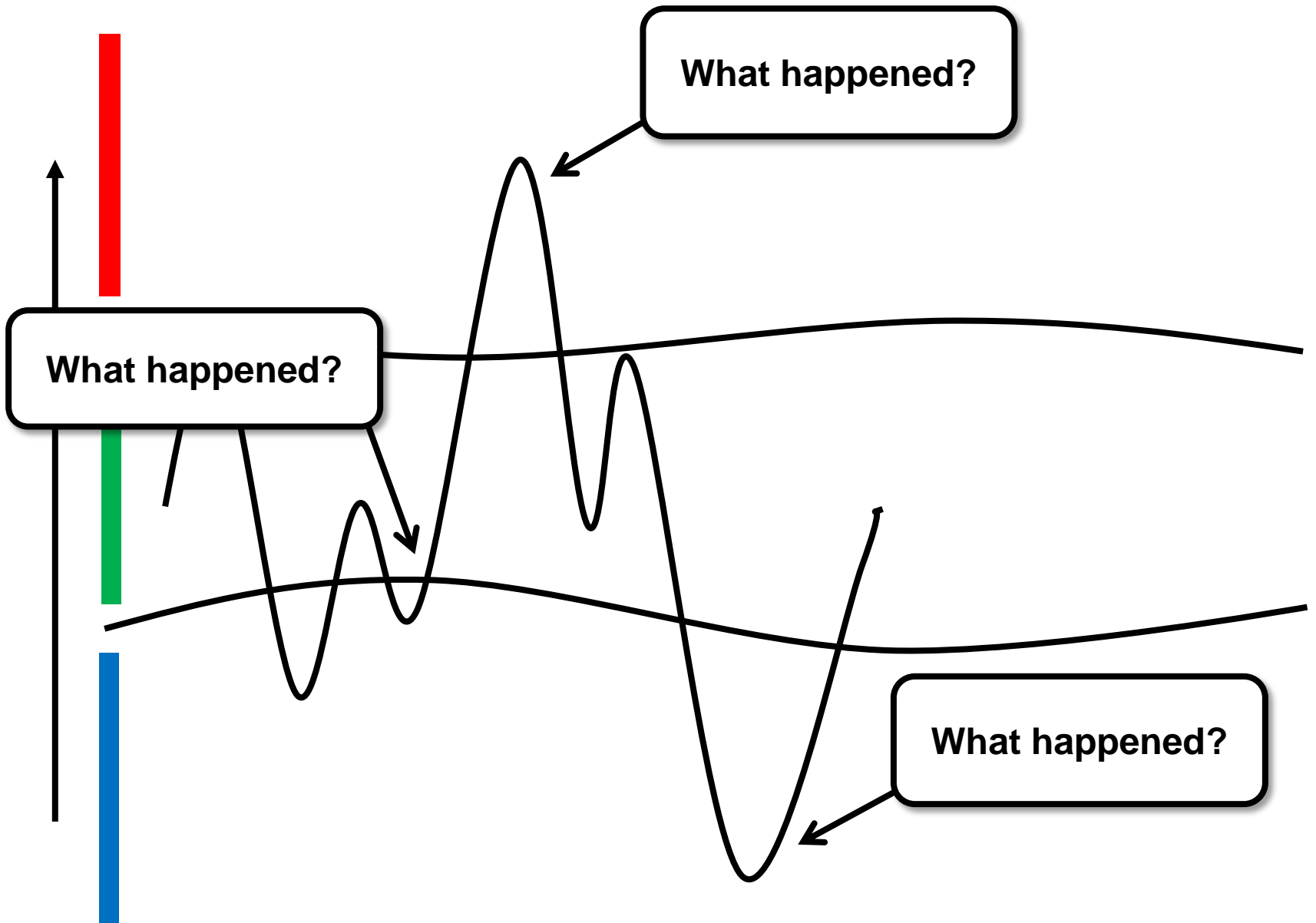
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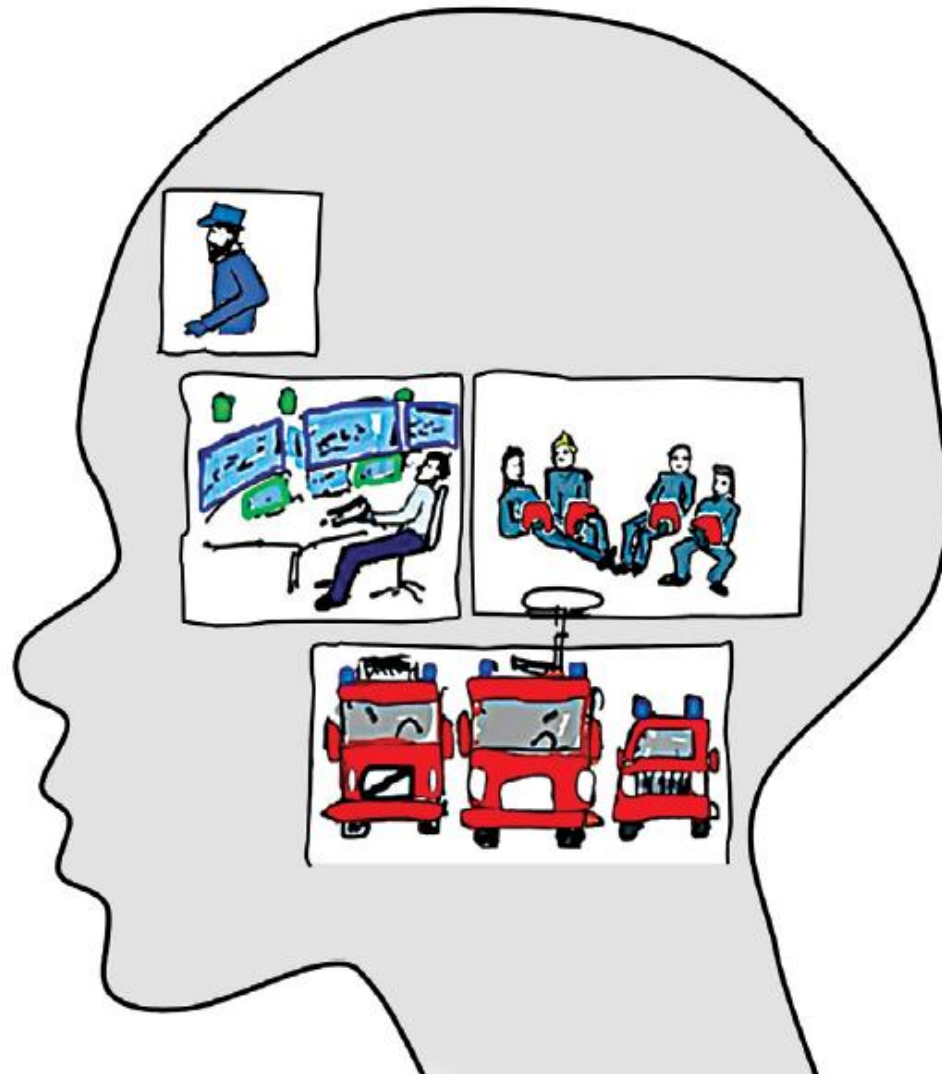
To help children understand their own problems!

- In this view, their problems have been functional, adjustment to a life condition
- Their own explanation is «I am bad»
- Understanding gives hope and motivation

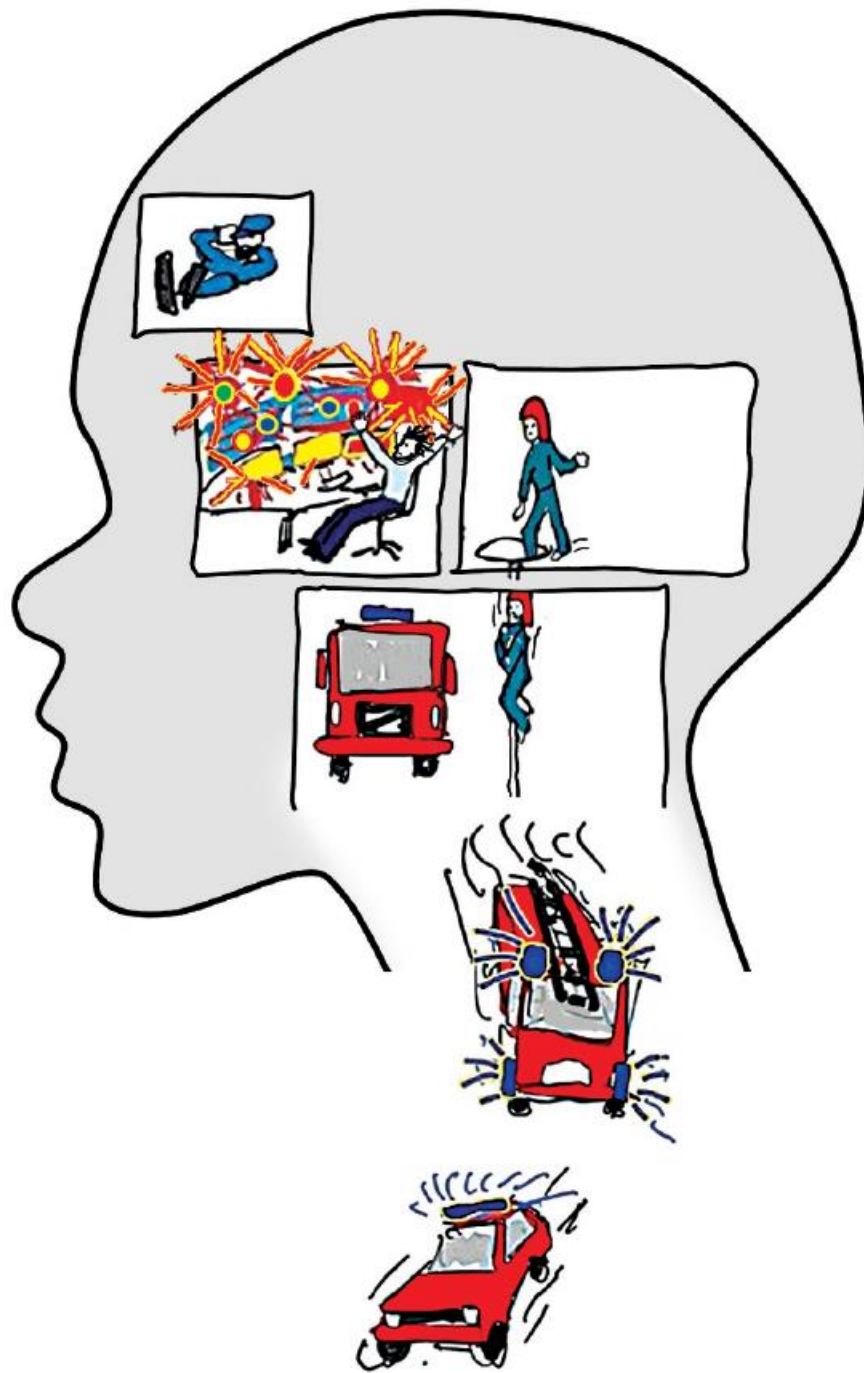




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CACTUS

Child and Adolescent Complex Trauma Society

Nasjonalt kompetansenettverk om
UTVIKLINGSTRAUMER

HVEM VI ER

HVA ER CACTUS, OG HVORFOR?

HVA ER UTVIKLINGSTRAUMER?

SCREENING OG KARTLEGGING

PEDAGOGISKE VIDEOER/MATERIELL

LITTERATUR

EN FORKLARENDE LYSBILDEPRESENTASJON

UTVIKLINGSTRAUMER

For å forstå hva utviklingstraumer er og kan lede til, er det nyttig å ha med seg litt grunnleggende kunnskap om hjernen og hvordan den utvikler seg. Se Dag Nordanger sin forklarende lysbildepresentasjon.

Les mer

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Thank you!



Klara Viken Sandnes
Photo: Johanne Viken Sandnes