The Community Resiliency Model (CRM)
Simple practices to support mental health and well being

Slides by Clare Norelle, based on the work of Elaine Miller-Karas and the Trauma Resource Institute
The Community Resiliency Model (CRM) is used around the world during and after natural disasters, wars, and other hard experiences, to help people stay strong and healthy in their bodies, hearts, and minds.

CRM combines simple practices from psychotherapy and mindfulness meditation with education about the nervous system and biological aspects of mental health.
This set of slides is adapted from the work of Elaine Miller-Karas, who developed the Community Resiliency Model at the Trauma Resource Institute.

These slides are meant for people who want to explore CRM for their own use, or share it with others informally; in the Community Resiliency Model such people are called CRM guides. To learn more about CRM you can also read Miller-Karas’s book, Building Resilience to Trauma.

To become a CRM teacher or trainer, or learn about CRM trainings, you can go to the Trauma Resource Institute website, at:

https://www.traumaresourceinstitute.com/crm
The Community Resiliency Model, or CRM, can help you:

- Pay attention to how you're feeling in your body, heart, and mind
- Notice when you feel calm and okay
- Notice when you start to feel too activated (maybe overwhelmed by anxiety, fear, or anger)
- Notice when you start to feel too slowed down (maybe frozen or stuck in depression, fear, or sadness)
The Community Resiliency Model, or CRM, can help you:

• Learn skills that help you move from feeling too activated or too slowed down, to feeling more okay more of the time.
CRM may also help you:

- Break out of cycles of thinking, feeling, or acting that aren’t helping you.

It’s hard to think or even talk your way out of harmful patterns.

CRM Skills give your nervous system opportunities to practice doing and feeling other things, working with your body to change your mind.
The purpose of CRM Skills isn’t to change which feelings you might feel.

With CRM Skills you can still feel things like anger, sadness, grief, the need to take action or the need to rest.
CRM skills are meant to help you feel what you feel, but in ways that are manageable for you.

This helps your body stay healthier. It helps you be able to see more clearly what’s happening, and think more clearly about how you want to respond to things that happen.
If you share CRM skills with other people, it’s important to do it through **invitation and choice**: inviting people to try the skills that they choose to, and supporting them in skipping any that they don’t want to do. The same is true if you’re exploring these on your own.

**It’s also important to remember that people’s nervous systems respond differently to things.** Instead of telling someone that an activity will be relaxing, you might encourage them to explore what they feel in their own body, and notice what’s true for them.
There are three main parts to this presentation:

**Part A: The CRM Zones:** This part explains the basics of the Community Resiliency Model, and the three Zones of the nervous system that we work with in the model.

**Part B: The CRM Skills:** This part has six sections—one section for each of the CRM Skills, explaining the skill and offering several activities or exercises for exploring it on your own or with other people.

**Part C: How CRM Works in Your Nervous System:** This part explores the neurobiology and research that explain how the CRM Skills work with your nervous system.
You’re welcome to explore these materials at your own pace, and in any order that appeals to you.

You can benefit from exploring and learning the CRM Skills in Part A and Part B, without ever reading Part C, about how CRM works in your nervous system. The first two parts will be easier to read and digest for most people, and the skills and activities will work just as well, whether or not you read Part C.

Still it can be helpful to understand what’s going on in your body and nervous system. So if you have the time and interest, you might explore Part C more slowly at some point, if you like.
If you want to break these materials into friendly-sized chunks, you might do something like this, possibly over eight to twelve days, or over eight to twelve weeks:

**Day/Week 1:** Read section A, *The CRM Zones*, and write or talk about your responses to the questions in the section. (Maybe one day, or one week)

**Days/Weeks 2 - 7:** Read section B, *The CRM Skills*, maybe exploring one skill each day or each week, doing one or two of the exercises described in each skill section, and writing or talking about what you notice, what you like or dislike, and any questions you might have. (Six days or weeks)

**Days/Weeks 8 - 12:** Read section C, *How CRM Works in Your Nervous System*, writing or talking about any responses or questions you might have. (One to five days or weeks—or none, if the biological basis for CRM doesn’t matter to you)
Or, you might choose to read through all of the materials at once, choosing a few exercises to try, and seeing what works for you.

Again: you’re welcome to take this at any pace that keeps you curious and wanting to explore further… and maybe even having fun with it.
Part A: The CRM Zones:
Noticing the “Zone” that you’re in
CRM uses the idea of **Zones** to talk about the ways that your body’s nervous system feels as it automatically tries to keep you safe and well.

- **High Zone**
  - Feeling too activated

- **Resilient Zone**
  - (Okay Zone)
  - Things feel manageable

- **Low Zone**
  - Feeling too slowed down
Sometimes your nervous system feels fairly calm—
not too activated, not too slowed down, but all right.

In CRM this is called the Resilient Zone, or the Okay Zone.
In your Resilient Zone you might feel happy, angry, sad, or excited…

hungry, thirsty, tired, or comfortable…or a lot of other feelings.
In your Resilient Zone you might feel...

- energized or active (orange here)
- calm and alert and connected (yellow here)
- tired or slowed down (green here)
In your Resilient Zone your heartbeat and breathing usually feel okay, and your muscles might feel relaxed, unless you’re using them for work or play or exercise.
How your nervous system **feels** affects how you **think**…

When you’re in your Resilient Zone usually you can see pretty clearly what’s happening, and use clear thinking to choose what you’ll do.
Can you remember a time when you might have been in your Resilient Zone?

Maybe you feel in your Resilient Zone a lot of the time… or maybe it’s been awhile. If you want to, you might write about this, or talk about it with someone.
Sometimes your nervous system might get more activated than you want, until your body and emotions feel out of control.

In CRM this is called the High Zone.
In your High Zone you might feel really really angry, or afraid, or anxious, or even very excited.

In the High Zone your heartbeats and breathing are quick, and your muscles are often tense.
If you’re in danger, your body might go into the High Zone for a Fight or Flight response—to help you defend yourself or get away to safety.

It’s good that our bodies can get revved up to do this. But sometimes we can go into the High Zone when we don’t need to, or we stay there too long.
How your nervous system **feels** affects how you **think**…

In your High Zone it’s hard to see clearly what’s happening, and hard to use clear thinking to choose what you’ll do.
Can you remember a time when you might have been in your High Zone? Can you remember how it felt to come back into your Resilient Zone afterwards?

Maybe you feel in your High Zone a lot of the time… or maybe it’s been awhile. If you want to, you might write about this, or talk about it with someone.
Sometimes your nervous system might get more slowed down than you want, until you lose the energy to do things.

In CRM this is called the Low Zone.
In your Low Zone you might feel really sad, or tired, or like you can’t feel much of anything.

Your heartbeats and breathing may be slow, and your muscles can feel frozen, or hard to move.
If you’re in danger, your body might go into the Low Zone for a Freeze or Shut Down response—to help you stay hidden and safe.

It’s good that our bodies can do this, too. But sometimes we get bumped into the Low Zone when we don’t need to be, or we stay there too long.
How your nervous system **feels** affects how you **think**…

When you’re in your Low Zone it’s hard to see clearly what’s happening, and hard to use clear thinking to choose what you’ll do.
Can you remember a time when you might have been in your Low Zone? Can you remember how it felt to come back into your Resilient Zone afterwards?

Maybe you feel in your Low Zone a lot of the time... or maybe it’s been awhile. If you want to, you might write about this, or talk about it with someone.
Sometimes hard things happen that can bump a person out of their Resilient Zone and into their High Zone or their Low Zone.
Sometimes people can get bumped from the High Zone right into the Low Zone—one moment revved up and scared or angry, and the next moment frozen or shut down.
If you’ve ever felt bumped into your High Zone, *do you remember what helped you to come back into your Resilient Zone?*
If you’ve ever felt bumped into your Low Zone,
*do you remember what helped you to come back into your Resilient Zone?*
Sometimes people are born with a wide Resilient Zone.

They can have many kinds of experiences without getting bumped into their High Zone or their Low Zone.
Sometimes people are born with a narrow Resilient Zone.

For them, many kinds of experiences can easily bump them into their High Zone or Low Zone.
A person can also end up with a narrow Resilient Zone after experiencing stress for a long time, or after hard experiences or trauma.
The purpose of the Community Resiliency Model is to teach people skills that they can practice in order to broaden their Resilient Zone.
As you practice CRM Skills your body learns new habits of response—so that you can experience more things without being bumped into your High Zone or your Low Zone.

This is what we mean when we say “widening” or “broadening” the Resilient Zone: being able to stay centered there, more of the time, in more kinds of circumstances.

*In part C we’ll look at how this works in your nervous system.*
Things to remember:

1) The Zones are a way of talking about the nervous system in your body, and how it makes your body feel. Like other parts of our bodies and personalities, our nervous systems are different from each other too.
2) It’s not a person’s fault if they happen to have a narrow Resilient Zone. They may have been born with one, or it may have been caused by stress or trauma.
3) **It can be hard to live with a narrow Resilient Zone,** because you end up spending a lot of time in your High Zone or your Low Zone, or both.

This is hard on your body, and makes it hard to feel good in your life.
4) *Luckily* there are things you can do to create a wider Resilient Zone.
5) CRM Skills work with your nervous system to help you develop a wider Resilient Zone. This lets you spend less time in the High Zone or the Low Zone.

Things like yoga, tai chi, and meditation can help with this, too.

What are some things that help you be in your Resilient Zone, where you feel calm and like you can handle things that happen?
Here’s one way to think about the different kinds of feelings you might experience in the different Zones...

High Zone: Wound up, out of control, overwhelming.
- Rage
- Panic
- Terror
- Shock
- Shame
- Grief

Resilient Zone: Energized (orange)
- Anxiety
- Surprised
- Giddiness
- Excitement
- Joy
- Anger

Manageable: Calm, alert, connected (yellow)
- Peacefulness
- Disappointment
- Tiredness
- Sorrow
- Love & connection
- Calm alertness
- Relief

Low Zone: Shut down, paralyzed, overwhelming.
- Numbness
- Fear
- Anguish
- Depression
- Shame
- Regret
- Guilt
- Paralysis

Clare Norelle 2022
Here’s another, with emojis...
And here’s another way:

Do you like one image of the Zones better than the others? If you do, you might use the one that works for you.

Or you could draw your own picture of the zones, using the colors that feel right to you.
Again, it’s better for your body and your mind if you don’t spend too much time in your High Zone or your Low Zone.

People usually feel better and think better in their Resilient Zone.
To create a wider Resilient Zone, you can begin by noticing where in the Zones you might be at different times.

You might notice if your breathing and heartbeats are fast or slow, if your muscles feel tense or loose, if you feel like running around or resting.
Sometimes you might not be able to feel in your body what Zone you’re in.

But you might be able to tell by the kinds of:

- Emotions that you’re feeling
- Things that you’re thinking
- Things you’re saying or doing
Sensations…

Emotions…

Thoughts…

Words & actions …

…can lead from one to another, and they can sometimes lead you into your High Zone or your Low Zone.
1. Sensations
A person might experience a feeling in their body, like fast heartbeats, or being hungry, or tired...

2. Emotions
As they feel sensations like fast heartbeats, hunger, or tiredness... they might also begin to feel emotions like anxiety, fear or anger...

3. Thoughts
As they feel emotions like anxiety or fear or anger... A person might begin to think thoughts like: “Something is really wrong!”
4. More body sensations
As the person thinks thoughts like: “Something is really wrong!”… They might breathe more quickly and tense up (moving into their High Zone). Or they might unconsciously hold their breath, lose energy, and shut down (moving into their Low Zone)…

5. Words and actions
In the High Zone or Low Zone, it becomes harder for a person see clearly what’s going on, and decide clearly about what they want to say or do. In their High Zone or their Low Zone a person might say or do things that are harmful or hurtful, foolish or even dangerous.

6. More thoughts…
Words and actions can sometimes take a person deeper into their High Zone or their Low Zone—where it stays hard to see clearly, or think clearly about how best to respond.
It might look something like this:

1. **Sensations:**
   - Fast heartbeats (or hunger, tiredness, etc.)

2. **Emotions:**
   - Anxiety

3. **Thoughts:**
   - “Something’s wrong!”

4. **Sensations:**
   - Fast breathing, tense muscles (High Zone)

5. **Words & actions**
   - in the High Zone, (which may make things worse)

6. **Thoughts:**
   - “Now something’s really really wrong…”
1. **Sensations:**
   Fast heartbeats (or hunger, tiredness, etc.)

2. **Emotions:**
   Anxiety

3. **Thoughts:**
   “Something’s wrong!”

4. **Sensations:**
   Fast breathing tense muscles (High Zone)

5. **Words & actions**
   in the High Zone, (which may make things worse)

6. **Thoughts:**
   “Now something’s really really wrong…”

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- Have you ever experienced this kind of cycling, or seen someone else seem to be doing it?
- What has helped you to get out of a cycle like this, or what have you seen be helpful for other people?
CRM Skills can help you use your body and mind to get out of this kind of cycle, and get back into your Resilient Zone.
And: inquiry and invitation are key.

At times it may seem clear in looking at someone else that they are acting as if they were in immediate danger, without immediate danger being present...

Trying to “correct” someone else’s perception of danger by telling them that they are safe may feel reassuring in some circumstances—but it can also feel invalidating or even condescending.

It’s also possible that the person responding to a sense of threat is aware of dangers that the person witnessing them is unaware of.
It’s often unhelpful to tell a person who may be in their High Zone or Low Zone that they are imagining danger, or push them to do things you think they should do.

If a person is feeling threatened or endangered in some way, you could begin by listening to them and validating that they are feeling what they are feeling.

If you want to offer the possibility of trying some CRM Skills, you might use wording like, “I wonder if it might feel helpful to….?” Or,

“I wonder if you might like to try…?”: Or,

“Do you have a sense for what might feel helpful right now?”
If you want to invite someone to learn about the Community Resiliency Model and CRM Skills with you, the best time to do it is when a person is feeling centered in their Resilient Zone, or close to it.

Later, once they’ve learned and practiced skills that appeal to them, it will probably become easier to use them when they are bumped into their High Zone or their Low Zone.

*This is true if you’re working with other people… and also true if you’re exploring these materials on your own.*
Part B: The Six CRM Skills
The Six CRM Skills are:

1. Tracking
2. Resourcing
3. Grounding
4. Gesturing
5. Help Now
6. Shift & Stay
• For some people all of the CRM Skills feel helpful; other people feel helped by some skills and not by others.

• You might notice which CRM Skills help you be in your Resilient Zone, and which ones don’t.

• You can just do the CRM Skills that feel helpful to you.
CRM Skill #1: Tracking

(Reading sensations)
Tracking is paying attention to what you can feel inside your body. With Tracking you can practice:

1) **Noticing** what you feel in your body, and learning to read what this tells you.

2) **Focusing** your attention on sensations that your body feels as positive or enjoyable, neutral or okay.
Without trying to figure out if something is good or bad, you might ask yourself...

- Is my heart beating fast, or slow, or....?
- Is my breathing fast, or slow, or....?
- Do my muscles feel tense, or loose, or....?
- Do I feel warm, or cool, or ....?
You might ask yourself…

• What does the “weather” feel like in my body? Sunny, windy, stormy, calm, or…?

• Does my energy feel jumpy, exuberant, heavy, flowy, or…?
Noticing things like these can sometimes help you identify which Zone you’re in.

Learning to notice sensations without deciding right away if you think that they’re good or bad can also help you take a pause before responding to them.
Tracking—paying attention to sensations within your body—is sometimes called interoception. Like other habits, as you practice interoception, you get better at it.

Sometimes it can be helpful to try out various sensation words as you explore what you feel in your body.
As you practice CRM Tracking, you might try using some words like these to explore body sensations that you feel:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vibration</th>
<th>Temperature</th>
<th>Intensity</th>
<th>Heart</th>
<th>Density</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shaking</td>
<td>Cold</td>
<td>Intense</td>
<td>Fast/slow</td>
<td>Rough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitching</td>
<td>Hot</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Rhythmic</td>
<td>Smooth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trembling</td>
<td>Warm</td>
<td>Mild</td>
<td>Flutters</td>
<td>Thick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fast/slow</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Numb</td>
<td>Jittery</td>
<td>Thin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Muscles</strong></td>
<td><strong>Size/position</strong></td>
<td><strong>Breathing</strong></td>
<td><strong>Weight</strong></td>
<td><strong>Taste</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tight</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Rapid</td>
<td>Heavy</td>
<td>Spicy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loose</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Deep</td>
<td>Light</td>
<td>Sweet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calm</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Shallow</td>
<td>Firm</td>
<td>Minty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rigid</td>
<td>Up/down</td>
<td>Light</td>
<td>Soft</td>
<td>Sour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Center</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bland</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Are there other kinds of words that you might like to use to describe sensations in your body?

*If so you could write some of them here if you like:*
Tracking Exercise: Sensation walk

Goal: to use sensory words to explore sensations of touch and smell, and also sensations within your body.

1. Create a list of sensations to look for. You might look for things that are sweet, soft, sour, rough, smooth, prickly, scratchy, hard, cold squishy, warm, pointed, silky, sharp, crinkly, smelly, or other kinds of things.

2. Bring your list and explore either an indoor or an outdoor space, or both.

3. Find things that fit with the sensations you listed. As you look at or touch each thing, notice any sensations you might feel in your body. You could describe these responses to someone, or write about them.
As you practice this **noticing** kind of Tracking, you might stop sometimes and see if you can feel any sensations in your body that could tell you what Zone you might be in.
With CRM Tracking you might begin by getting curious: **noticing** what you feel—and maybe don’t feel—in your body.

Then you might **focus** your attention on any areas in your body that feel positive or enjoyable to you, or even neutral or okay.
Over time this focusing kind of Tracking can help your nervous system spend more time in your Resilient Zone.

How does this work?
(Why Track pleasant or neutral sensations?)

Our bodies are programmed by nature to pay special attention to things that feel bad or threatening or dangerous.

*Scientists think that human bodies developed the habit of paying extra attention to sensations that might signal danger, to help us automatically notice dangers and protect ourselves from them.*
(Why Track pleasant or neutral sensations?)

Focusing on unpleasant sensations that might signal danger can sometimes help a person survive...

But if you do it too much or for too long it becomes stressful for your body and mind. Your body gets the habit of feeling like you’re in immediate danger even when you’re not, and your nervous system may become more sensitive to physical pain as well.
(Why Track pleasant or neutral sensations?)

Because our bodies have this habit of focusing on threats and danger, it can take extra effort to **focus** on things that feel pleasant or even just okay. Yet these are the sensations that can help you come back into your Resilient Zone.

*Fortunately this is a skill that you can practice and learn, and CRM Tracking can help you do that.*
In CRM, Neutral or Okay is Good

If you get bumped out of your Resilient Zone, focusing on a neutral or okay sensation can help your body come back to your Resilient Zone—just as well as focusing on a pleasant or enjoyable sensation.

This is why in CRM Tracking we practice focusing on both pleasant sensations and okay or neutral sensations.
Remember this cycle?
To get out of a cycle like this, you might:

A) Stop anywhere in the cycle and notice what you feel in your body, maybe naming the sensations without deciding if they are good or bad.

"Hmm. Tightness in my chest. My breathing is fast, and my stomach hurts."
Then B) Focus your attention on an area that feels pleasant or neutral to you, for 20 seconds or more.

“Hmm. My chest is tight, but my hands and feet feel okay. My hand is resting on this soft pillow, maybe I’ll focus on this for a bit…”

“Hmm. Hand on pillow, I’m noticing okay sensations with that, staying with them…”
Sometimes this can help your body come back into your Resilient Zone.

A. Noticing and naming sensations
B. Focusing on pleasant or neutral sensations
Any time you return to your Resilient Zone, you might feel sensations that can happen when your body releases stress energy and comes back into balance.

These can include sensations like trembling, tingling, yawning, stomach gurgling, burping, warmth, cooling down, etc.

As you Track these and other release sensations, it can also strengthen your body’s ability to be your Resilient Zone.
CRM Skill #2: Resourcing
Resourcing

In CRM Resourcing means thinking about something that helps you feel calm, at ease, peaceful, strong, steady, or resilient.

It could be a person, an animal or plant, a place, something that you like about yourself… or something else.
If you like, you could explore some of your Resources here by writing or telling someone about:

Who or what helps you feel supported?
Who or what gives you strength?
Who or what helps you get through hard times?
Who or what helps you feel alive and free?
Who or what helps you feel cared for and connected?
Sometimes, talking about pleasant resources can trigger strong emotions.

Sometimes a person might feel tears of gratitude, or feelings of sadness, regret, or even anger, for people or places that they have lost, or for Resources they can’t remember ever experiencing.

This is normal…. and one reason that it’s important to let people decide whether or not Resourcing is something they want to explore, and how to do it if they do.
Sometimes a person might identify a resource that is supportive in some ways but causes harm to them in other ways: it could be a relationship, or a substance, or an activity.
If a resource you've chosen fits this description, you might think about whether this is a resource you want to continue to develop.

You could consider what feels supportive about this particular resource, and explore other possible resources that offer similar support, with less harm.
If you observe someone else describing a resource that is both supportive and harmful, you might share this observation, and ask them if they want help exploring other resource options.

It's okay to express concern. And, it's important to offer support in a way that isn't telling someone else what they should do, or shaming them for the resources that have helped them.
Strengthening your Resource

If you like, you might:

• Choose a Resource that feels good to you right now: a person, an animal, a plant, a place, something that you like about yourself, or something else…
Strengthening your Resource

- Think about three or more details of how your Resource looks, sounds, or feels.

You can write, draw, or talk about these details of your Resource, if you like.
Strengthening your Resource

• When you think about these details of your Resource, notice how you feel in your body—checking your internal “weather”.

Can you notice sensations in your body that feel neutral (okay) or good in some way? You might draw or write about this, too…
Resourcing Exercise: Shining a light on your Resource

1. You might imagine that you have a flashlight or a lantern that you can shine on anything inside yourself when you want to.

2. When you’re ready, maybe bring to mind a Resource — something that helps you feel happy or peaceful or strong.

3. Then if you like, shine the light from your flashlight or lantern onto the place inside your body where you feel the sensations from your Resource.

4. See if you can describe the sensations that you feel in your body with this Resource: maybe warm or cool, strong or open, a flavor like mint or caramel, a smell like pine or spice, a color or a texture.

5. *If you feel any sensations that are unpleasant to you, remember that you can choose where to shine your light, and you can turn it back to places in your body that feel pleasant or neutral.*
Resourcing Exercise: Drawing your Resource

1. If you like, you could make a drawing of something or someone that gives you feelings of joy, hope, or peace.

2. If you want to… you might write or talk to someone about your drawing. As you describe or explain your drawing, you might pause to notice if you can feel any pleasant or neutral sensations inside.

3. As you’re writing or talking about your drawing, you might touch a part of the drawing that you especially like. Then notice again if you feel any pleasant or neutral sensations in your body.
Resourcing Exercise: Tree of Life

1. Draw your roots: include your name and where you came from, your city or town.
2. Draw your ground: a) what gives you joy; b) what do you do in every day life?
3. Draw your trunk: who are you in the world?
4. Draw your branches: a) new directions you’d like to take, b) your hopes and dreams
5. Draw your leaves: a) what do you love about yourself? b) what are you proud of?
6. Draw your fruit: a) things you’ve created or helped happen b) people you’ve supported
7. **Optional**: Draw your fallen fruit—losses you have experienced.
8. Draw the compost that nourishes your tree: any ways you might have transformed hard experiences to nourish and strengthen your tree.
9. Surround your tree with names of people you’re grateful for in your life.
Resourcing Exercise: Creating a Resource collection

If you like, you might write a list of ways that you like to feel. Maybe peaceful, strong, loved, safe, or free… or other feelings that you like.

Then you might:

1) Cut out pictures from magazines that feel like each of these feelings to you. These pictures can become a kind of Resource, which you could glue together in a collage. Or…

2) Draw a Resource image or symbol for each of the feelings on your list, or

3) Find small objects that can stand for each of these feelings (maybe little shells, rocks, sticks, beads, or other small things) and gather them into a treasure box of Resources.

If you like, you might share your collection of Resources with someone and notice any pleasant or neutral sensations you can feel as you tell about them.

Any time you feel yourself moving into your High Zone or your Low Zone, you might look at your collection of Resources, and notice how you feel.
Conversational Resourcing

This skill uses questions to help people come back into their Resilient Zone.

After someone experiences something really hard, you might ask them:

- I’m wondering—when and how did you know you were going to be ok?
- Do you want to tell me about the moment help arrived?
- Or about the parts of yourself that helped you through this?
- Do you want to tell me who or what is helping you now?
Conversational Resourcing

After a person has lost someone they loved:

• Would you like to tell me some good memories you have of the person who died?

• Are there things that you learned from this person that are helpful to you now?

• Would you like to tell me something that you liked or respected about this person, that you want to carry forward in your life?
In Conversational Resourcing it’s important not to tell people what you think they should feel or think about their own experiences, or what you feel or think about their experiences.

That’s not the point!
With Conversational Resourcing you try to ask questions that might help a person return to their Resilient Zone—without asking them to feel better, ignore what’s happening, or “get over” anything. You might ask their permission as you do this, or check that they feel like answering your questions.

Once a person feels themself back in their Resilient Zone it’s more possible for them to move through hard experiences without getting completely overwhelmed or stuck. This is the purpose of Conversational Resourcing.
If you like, you might think of some Conversational Resourcing questions that you wish people would ask you, when you’re having a hard time.

You could write those questions down on the next page, or maybe share them with another person…

*Remember, these are questions meant to help you feel Resourced or supported, so that you can come back into your Resilient Zone.*
These are some Resourcing questions I might like people to ask me, to help me come back into my Resilient Zone where I can feel calm and connected:

When I’m feeling too angry, you could ask me:

When I’m feeling too afraid, you could ask me:

When I’m feeling too sad, you could ask me:

When I’m feeling too ________, you could ask me:
CRM Skill #3: Grounding
“Grounding” can mean different things in different contexts.

In the Community Resiliency Model, Grounding means paying attention to the contact you can feel between your body and something else.
As with all of the CRM Skills, people can experience Grounding in different ways. Some people find it very helpful, while others can find it challenging or even upsetting.

It’s important to support people in deciding for themselves if this is something they want to try, and support them if they decide to stop at any time.
You can Ground in a lot of ways:

By walking and feeling your feet on the ground…
...by floating in water, and feeling the water all around your body.
You can Ground by standing against a wall and noticing what you feel where your body is pressed against it...
…or by feeling your hand against a wall or some other surface.
You can even Ground by sitting on a chair, sofa or on the ground, and feeling where it’s holding you up.
Notice how you feel in your body when you’re Grounding.

First, you might notice what you can feel where you’re in contact with a surface (like the ground, or the water or a wall).

Then while you’re Grounding, you might notice how you feel in your internal “weather”. Can you notice any sensations inside your body that feel neutral (okay) or good in some way? You might name what you feel, or write or draw about it if you like.
Grounding Exercise: Grounding Like a Tree

1. If you like, you might stand like a favorite tree. Notice any sensations you can feel in the trunk of your tree.

2. Feel your feet, and imagine roots growing into the earth… and notice how this feels.

3. Imagine your arms becoming the branches of your tree, letting them move in the wind if you like… and notice how this feels.

4. Imagine what your tree feels like in the roots and trunk, bark and branches and leaves.

5. Notice if you feel like moving your body, or if you feel like staying still… and notice how this feels.

6. Still standing like a favorite tree, you might pay special attention to any sensations that feel pleasant or neutral to you.
A Grounding Exercise for groups or pairs

1. One or more people might sit or lie down on the ground, with space between them and each in a position that they feel is comfortable for them.

2. One person might be the guide, beginning by telling people that they are welcome to stay with the exercise or come out of it at any time if they want to.

3. The guide might explain that they will be inviting people to travel their attention down through their body, noticing where they are in contact with the ground and being held up by it.

4. The guide could say something like:
   *If you like, you might bring your attention to where your feet are touching the ground. You might see if your feet feel like softening a bit or getting heavier, maybe letting the ground hold them up. You might notice how that feels...*

5. The guide might do this with each area of the body, inviting people to notice if they want to let go a bit and feel the ground holding them up.

6. At the end, the guide might invite people to notice any areas of their body that feel pleasant or neutral.
You might explore Grounding in a bunch of different ways, and see if there are any that you especially like.

If you want to, you could write or draw pictures on the next page, of the ways that you like to do Grounding—then maybe write about how you feel when you Ground in these ways.
Here are some ways that I like to do Grounding:
CRM Skill #4: Gesturing
With CRM Gesturing you explore using your body to express an idea, an emotion, or an attitude that you would like to feel.

You can Gesture with movement, or come into stillness with your body or hands positioned to help you feel in a particular way.

If a person doesn’t feel comfortable doing CRM Gestures with their body, they might explore writing about different Gestures, drawing them or making a collage of Gestures that they like.
You might explore Gestures that feel happy or calming to you…
Or maybe successful, or receptive…
Maybe Gestures that feel like love to you, or like being loved...
Here are some pictures of kids doing Gestures that you could try, if you’d like to see how they feel to you…
Here are some pictures of young people and adults doing Gestures that you could try, if you’d like to see how they feel to you…
You might choose a few of these qualities—or other qualities—and try creating some Gestures that help you feel and express them:

Joy
Kindness
Self care
Wonder
Safety
Curiosity
Clear thinking
Reverence
Intelligence
Belonging
Friendship
Courage
Love
Steadiness
Comfort
Self-calming
Confidence
Freedom
Self compassion
Independence
Irreverence
Peacefulness
Strength
Blessing
Humor
Protection
Well-being
Clare Norelle 2022
You might see if you can find a Gesture that feels soothing to you…

Maybe practice your soothing gesture often, so that when you feel like you’re getting bumped into your High Zone or your Low Zone you can remember to try your gesture, and see if it still feels soothing.

If you don’t like how one gesture feels, you can always try another one!
Gesturing Exploration Exercise, Part 1:

1. If you like, you might pick a Gesture you'd like to try—maybe from one of the photos in this section, or maybe something different of your own. *You could pick a Gesture where you stay in one position, or you could pick a Gesture where you might do a movement again and again.*

2. Try your Gesture for at least 20 seconds, noticing any sensations you might feel in your body as you do it.

3. After you come out of this Gesture you might write, draw or talk to someone about: A) physical sensations you may have felt in your body with this gesture, and B) emotional feelings you may have felt in your body with this gesture.

4. Notice if this Gesture feels like it might help you come back to your Okay Resilient Zone during times when you’re bumped out of it.
Gesturing Exploration Exercise, Part 2:

1. If you like, you might make a list of Gestures that feel like they help you be in your Resilient Zone. You might describe the Gestures in words, or draw pictures of people doing these Gestures, or use pictures you find in a magazine or somewhere else.

2. If you want to, you could make a booklet or a poster with your words or images of these Gestures. You might use this any time you feel yourself bumped into your High Zone or your Low Zone, if you want a reminder of some Gestures you could try, to help your nervous system come back into your Resilient Zone.
Gesturing Exercise, noticing similarities and differences (version 1).

A chance to explore how different people may experience Gestures in different ways.

1. With a partner or a group of people, you might take turns with each person doing a Gesture and inviting other people to try a similar Gesture if they want to.

2. Using a timer you might stay with each Gesture for 20 -30 seconds.

3. After each Gesture, people might close their eyes or in some way take a moment to notice any physical sensations and any emotions they may have felt in their bodies with the Gesture. Then they can write down what they noticed.

4. Remember that there isn’t one “right answer“!
   People who want to, can share what they wrote with a partner or with the group—noticing similarities and differences in how different people experienced the different Gestures.
Gesturing Exercise, noticing similarities and differences (version 2).

An exercise for partners or groups who are pretty comfortable together.

1. With a partner or a group of people, you might make a list of different emotions that you think could help a person be in their Resilient Zone. You could use the emotions listed a few slides back (joy… clear thinking… love… self compassion…humor) or other emotions that the group agrees might help with this.

2. With everyone’s eyes closed, one person calls out an emotion from the list, and everyone does their own Gesture, which for them creates or expresses that emotion.

3. Everyone continues their Gesture for 20 - 30 seconds, eyes closed.

4. When someone calls out that time is up, people can open their eyes, but continue with their Gesture. Looking around, they might notice similarities and differences among their Gestures, and share things that they felt in their bodies as they were doing them.
Are there other things that you’d like to explore with a Gesture or a movement, that might help you be in your Resilient Zone?

*If you like, you could draw or write here about some Gestures that you like, and the feelings that you notice when you do them.*
CRM Skill #5: Help Now
There are 10 CRM Help Now Strategies:

Things you can do for a short amount of time, to help move your body back into your Resilient Zone.

In some circles these are also called Grounding techniques; in CRM Grounding is specifically about feeling physical contact between part of your body and another surface.
The Help Now Strategies are often about practicing exteroception: noticing and attending to sensory information from outside your body: sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and tactile sensations, or touch....

Then using interoception (Tracking) to notice and attend to sensory information from inside your body—especially any sensations that might feel pleasant or neutral to you—to help yourself become more centered in your Resiliency Zone.
How the Help Now Strategies work

Your “survival brain” — the automatic part that sends you into the High Zone and the Low Zone— responds to the language of sensation.

Through **exteroception** it takes in sensory information from outside your body: *what you see, hear, smell, touch, or taste.*

Through **interoception** it also takes in sensory information from inside your body: *feelings of hunger, tiredness, calmness, excitement, comfort,* etc.
How the Help Now Strategies work

Your “survival brain” is always reading these sensations from the outside of your body, and sensations from the inside of your body...

And deciding automatically —without thinking— if you are safe enough to be in your Resilient Zone, or if you should go into your High Zone (to fight or run away) or your Low Zone (to freeze and hide).
How the Help Now Strategies work

When you focus for 20 seconds or more on sensations that feel positive or neutral, this tells your survival brain that it’s safe enough right now for you to be in your Resilient Zone.

CRM Help Now Strategies are things you can try for a short time, to help send this “safe enough” message to your brain.
After trying each Help Now Strategy for 20 seconds or more, you might ask yourself:

1. Can I feel any pleasant or neutral sensations in my body now? *(maybe peacefulness… alertness… movement… steadiness… or?)*

2. If so, **where** in my body do I feel these sensations?

3. What other kinds of words could I use to describe any pleasant or neutral sensations that I feel?

You might also notice: Which of the Help Now Strategies seem to be mostly about exteroception—paying attention to what you see, hear, smell, touch, or taste? And which seem to use something else to help your body return to your Resiliency Zone?
10 CRM Help Now Strategies

1. Listen to sounds
2. Count to ten
3. Touch something in nature
4. Push against a wall
5. Go for a walk
6. Name 6 colors or 6 shapes you can see
7. Drink a glass of water or juice, or a cup of tea
8. Feel the temperature around you
9. Touch something indoors, notice textures you can feel
10. Look around, naming and describing things you see
Listen to the sounds around you, and notice what you hear.

- Do you hear sounds that are high pitched, maybe like a small bird? Or low pitched, maybe like the rumble of a clothes dryer? Or musical in some way?
- Are the sounds loud or quiet, or both?
- Do you hear human voices, or animal sounds, or sounds of wind blowing through trees?
- If you like, you might name six sounds that you can hear....
- After doing this for 20 seconds or more, you might see if you can feel any pleasant or neutral sensations in your body. You can tell someone about what you notice, or write or draw about it if you like.
CRM Help Now Strategy #2

Count to 10, or to 100...

- You might try walking around while you count...
- You can count backwards if you like.
- If you count backwards, every time you stop counting you could choose a new number and start counting backwards again from there.
- If you like, you could count by 2’s or 3’s or 10’s...
- After doing this for 20 seconds or more, you might see if you can feel any pleasant or neutral sensations in your body. You can tell someone about what you notice, or write or draw about it if you like.
CRM Help Now Strategy #3

Touch something in nature, and notice what you feel.

- You might find something small to touch. What do you notice about the size, shape, texture, or temperature of what you chose?
- Touching six different kinds of plants, you might notice the similarities and differences between how they feel.
- You might see how many different kinds of things you can touch in a small area of ground: rocks, plants, sticks, dirt, maybe water or snow, noticing how they feel.
- After doing this for 20 seconds or more, you might see if you can feel any pleasant or neutral sensations in your body. You can tell someone about what you notice, or write or draw about it if you like.
CRM Help Now Strategy #4

Push your hands against a wall or door, or against the ground.

- Pushing against a wall or door, you might notice what you can feel in the muscles of your arms and legs.
- You might try pushing different parts of your body—hands, feet, back, or side—against a wall, or maybe against the ground, noticing how that feels...
- You might notice how it feels if you push really hard, and how it feels if you push more softly or gently.
- After doing this for 20 seconds or more, you might see if you can feel any pleasant or neutral sensations in your body. You can tell someone about what you notice, or write or draw about it if you like.
CRM Help Now Strategy #5

Go for a walk, and notice what you can see and hear around you.

- You might notice how your feet feel when they push against the ground. Does the ground feel rough or smooth? Are you walking uphill, downhill, or on the flat?
- Maybe notice the feeling of your legs moving, and see if your arms want to be moving, too.
- You might notice sensations like heaviness, lightness, pressure, swaying, wind, air, temperature, or friction...
- After doing this for 20 seconds or more, you might see if you can feel any pleasant or neutral sensations in your body. You can tell someone about what you notice, or write or draw about it if you like.
CRM Help Now Strategy #6

Name six colors or shapes that you can see, or more…

• You might look around in all directions and see what colors or shapes you can see: look close to you and far away; ahead of you and behind you; to the left and to the right; and above and below you as well…

• You might name everything that you see that’s red… then everything you see that’s green, or blue, or yellow…

• You might name everything you see that looks like a circle, or a spiral, a square, a rectangle, a triangle…

• After doing this for 20 seconds or more, you might see if you can feel any pleasant or neutral sensations in your body. You can tell someone about what you notice, or write or draw about it if you like.
CRM Help Now Strategy #7

Drink a glass of water or juice, or a cup of tea.

- You might pay attention to the temperature of what you’re drinking, and the flavor, and whether it’s bubbly or smooth, sloshy, nippy, refreshing, or comforting.
- You might pay attention to what it feels like on your lips, and on your tongue, going down your throat… maybe even in your belly.
- After doing this for 20 seconds or more, you might see if you can feel any pleasant or neutral sensations in your body. You can tell someone about what you notice, or write or draw about it if you like.
CRM Help Now Strategy #8

Pay attention to the temperature of the air, noticing how it feels.

• You might see if the air feels hot, warm, cool, or cold...
• You might notice if it feels dry or moist, sunny or foggy, still or windy, rainy or snowy...
• You could notice if you feel the temperature differently in different parts of your body—hands, feet, head, face, in your torso, legs or arms.
• After doing this for 20 seconds or more, you might see if you can feel any pleasant or neutral sensations in your body. You can tell someone about what you notice, or write or draw about it if you like.
CRM Help Now Strategy #9

**Touch some things indoors, and notice how they feel.**

- You might see how many different textures you can feel—smooth, hard, soft, rough, tickly, bumpy, jagged, furry, fuzzy, or other textures.
- You might see if you can feel the temperatures of different things that you touch.
- You might notice if things you touch are still or moving, vibrating, stiff, or if they change shape.
- After doing this for 20 seconds or more, you might see if you can feel any pleasant or neutral sensations in your body. You can tell someone about what you notice, or write or draw about it if you like.
CRM Help Now Strategy #10

Look around and see what you see…

• You might name every thing you can see!
• You might look at one thing very closely, and see how many details you can notice—describing them to someone, if you like.
• You could notice the farthest thing you can see, and the closest thing.
• You might notice things that look especially interesting to you, or beautiful, or unusual, or things that look like each other.
• After doing this for 20 seconds or more, you might see if you can feel any pleasant or neutral sensations in your body. You can tell someone about what you notice, or write or draw about it if you like.
If you like, you could write or draw here about any of the CRM Help Now Strategies that feel helpful to you.

You might write or draw about any okay or enjoyable body feelings (sensations) you were able to feel while you were doing these things, and after doing them.
Would you like to invent some of your own Help Now Strategies?
If you want to, you could write or draw about them here:
CRM Skill #6: Shift & Stay
**Shift and Stay** means…

1. First, **shifting your attention** from body sensations that feel unpleasant to you, to sensations that feel neutral (okay) or enjoyable, using one of the CRM Skills:

   - Tracking
   - Resourcing
   - Grounding
   - Gesturing, or
   - Help Now Strategies.
2. Then after using the CRM Skill, **staying with your attention on any neutral or enjoyable sensations**, until you feel like you’re in your Resilient Zone.
3. Then…with Shift and Stay you **practice staying in your Resilient Zone.** If you start to feel bumped towards your High Zone or your Low Zone again, **you might come back to focusing on sensations that feel neutral or pleasant.**
4. The “Staying” part of this helps your body get better at being in your Resilient Zone, and better at coming back to it again and again.
Shift and Stay exercise for two or more people

Purpose: to feel yourself near the edge of your Resilient Zone, practice returning & staying in it.

1. Participants, in pairs, choose some CRM Skill that they want to try. It could be the same skill for both people, or they might each choose a CRM Skill of their own.

2. Next they do a physically active game or exercise for five minutes, designed to bring them up into the higher part of the Resiliency Zone, where they can feel their heartbeats and breathing speeding up a bit, Sympathetic Nervous Systems mildly engaged.

3. In pairs again, partners spend 1 - 5 minutes practicing the CRM Skill of their choice.

4. Then partner A might invite partner B to center their attention for 1 minute in some area of their body that feels either neutral or enjoyable. Partner B might describe any neutral or enjoyable sensations they can feel, or draw or write about this—or in some way that appeals to them, center their attention in staying with neutral or enjoyable sensations.

5. The exercise is then repeated from the beginning, switching roles. At the end participants might share what Zone they feel themselves in.
Shift and Stay exercise for two or more people (alternative)

**Purpose:** to feel yourself near the edge of your Resilient Zone, practice coming back into it, and practice staying there.

Note: this version can be a bit more triggering for some people, so you might explore the first version instead if you think it best.

1. Participants, in pairs, choose some CRM Skill that they want to try. It could be the same skill for both people, or they might each choose a CRM Skill of their own.

2. Next Partner A invites Partner B to think of some situation that they find a little bit annoying or troublesome—something that might help them feel their nervous system going to a +1 or +2, or a -1 or -2 on the Zones image to the right, but not further.

3. In pairs again, partners spend 1 - 5 minutes practicing the CRM Skill of their choice…. and the exercise continues from there as with the first version.
Shift and Stay exercise for one person

Purpose: to feel yourself near the edge of your Resilient Zone then practice coming back into it and staying there.

1. The next time you notice yourself becoming annoyed or upset about something, you might take five minutes to step away and try one of the Help Now strategies, to explore how it feels to you.

2. You might look at this image of the three CRM Zones and see where you feel that your nervous system is (for example, maybe +1 or +2 if you feel a little wound up; -1 or -2 if you feel a little shut down)

3. Next, you might spend one or two minutes practicing the CRM Skill of your choice...

3. Then, see if you can spend a minute or more centering your attention in some area of your body that feels neutral or pleasant to you.

4. Finally, you can check back with CRM Zones image, and notice where you feel that your nervous system is now—seeing what’s true for you.
On your own or with another person, you might **design a Shift and Stay exercise of your own**, and write it down. It could include:

1) A beginning, where in some way a person can feel themselves at the edge of their Resiliency Zone, in a +1 or +2, or a -1 or -2 in this image; near the edge of either a High Zone or a Low Zone response.

2) A second part, where the person tries one of the CRM Skills for 1 - 5 minutes or more.

3) A third part, where the person centers their attention in pleasant or neutral sensations they feel in their body, for 1 - 5 minutes or more.

4) A fourth part, where they might notice where in the Zones chart they feel that their body is now. They might notice what helps them to know what Zone they’re in, and also what seems to help them stay centered in their Resilient Zone.

5) **Possibly a fifth part, where they might write, draw or talk about what they have noticed.**
So here we’re coming to the end of Part 2, about the CRM Skills…
Is there anything you want to write about the CRM Skills, any questions you have about them, or anything that you want to try with them?

You could write or draw about these things here, if you like.
Taking care of yourself moving forward

• What kinds of things do you already do in your life that help you be in your Resilient Zone?

• Are there any of the CRM Skills that you’d like to weave into your daily routine? If so, you might write about which ones you want to use, and how you’ll do that.

• If you like, you could also write or draw about any CRM Skills you’d like to try in the future, when you feel yourself getting bumped out of your Resilient Zone.
If you like the CRM Skills, you might share them with other people that you know. If they like them too, you can practice them together.

This can help you and the people you share them with get better at using the Skills, until it becomes natural to use them in your everyday life, whenever you need them.
You can also practice the CRM Skills by getting and using the free iChill app for your phone. The app talks you through all of the CRM Skills in either English or Spanish, explaining the Skills and helping you to practice them as well.
Part C: How CRM works with your Nervous System
Here we’ll look at how CRM works with your nervous system, exploring...

1. What’s the nervous system?
2. What’s the Autonomic Nervous System?
3. What’s neuroplasticity?
4. What are implicit and explicit memories?
5. What is trauma in the nervous system?
6. How can CRM Skills help your nervous system become more resistant to anxiety, depression, and trauma?
1: What is the Nervous System?

This section is based in part on the Community Resiliency Model, but includes other information about the nervous system from neuroscientists Bessel van der Kolk and Stephen Porges; psychiatrist and brain researcher Ruth Lanius, and yoga therapist and researcher Marlysa Sullivan.
So... what exactly is your nervous system, and how does CRM work with it?
Your nervous system includes:

- Your brain and spinal cord (Central Nervous System), and
- All the nerves running through your body (Peripheral Nervous System).
Your Peripheral Nervous System can be divided into two more systems:

Somatic Nervous System, which lets your brain and muscles communicate with each other, creating voluntary movement.

Autonomic Nervous System, which automatically controls glands and internal organs, keeping your body going without you needing to think about it.
Altogether, your nervous system is the communication system of your body—it’s how different parts of your body send messages to each other to make sure that you’re okay.
Your nervous system automatically checks out:

How am I doing, with…

• safety?
• food and water?
• rest?
• shelter?
• physical activity?
• connection with others?
Then your nervous system:

- Tells you of dangers and opportunities
- Prepares your body to deal with things that are happening
- Helps you connect with others, for safety and well being
All of the time... often without even thinking about it... your nervous system is doing all of these things, trying to keep you okay.

It wants to know:

*Where can I go, and what can I do, to take care of what I need?*
Our bodies and nervous systems are designed to need, and seek, many kinds of nourishment.

We need food, drink, physical activity and rest to stay healthy...
We’re also biologically designed to need, and seek, connections with other humans, animals, plants, and the world around us.

A lack of nourishing connections can actually harm the nervous system.

Strengthening connections can strengthen nervous system resilience.
One particular part of your nervous system is set up to automatically respond to your basic needs for all of these things: safety, food and water, rest, shelter, physical activity, and connection with others.

This part is the Autonomic Nervous System, or ANS.
2: What is the Autonomic Nervous System?
What is the ANS?

Your Autonomic Nervous System (ANS) is the part of your overall nervous system that **automatically** does things to keep you safe and well.

**Your ANS manages your heartbeat, breathing, muscle tension, hormones and other chemicals in your body,** helping your body respond to whatever you might be experiencing, without you needing to think about it.
The ANS has three main divisions, with one of them divided into two parts:

1. **Sympathetic Nervous System**: speeds up most parts of your body, in response to what you sense of the world around you.

2a. **Parasympathetic Nervous System (Ventral Vagal network)** calms and connects you in response to what you sense.

2b. **Parasympathetic Nervous System (Dorsal Vagal network)** slows you down or stops you in response to what you sense.

3. **Enteric Nervous System**: regulates digestion; connected with the Dorsal Vagal network, but can also function on its own.
In the Community Resiliency Model we explore feeling and working with:

- **The Sympathetic Nervous System**

- **The Upper Parasympathetic Nervous System**
  (Ventral Vagal network: “ventral” means front—connected with the front parts of the vagus nerve)

  and

- **The Lower Parasympathetic Nervous System**
  (Dorsal Vagal network: “dorsal” means back—connected with the back parts of the vagus nerve.)
Your vagus nerve or “wandering nerve” is the main nerve of your parasympathetic nervous system. It goes from your brain stem to your face, throat, heart, lungs, liver, stomach, intestines, kidneys, spleen – to all of your organs.

Your vagus nerve brings information from your organs to your brain, and also brings information from your brain to your organs.
Ventral Vagal Network

The top branch of the vagus nerve runs down the front (ventral) part of your body. It connects your face (facial muscles, soft palate and pharynx), inner ear, throat (larynx and esophagus), lungs / breath (bronchi) and heart.

This is the Ventral Vagal network; It responds to environmental and social cues that signal safety, and supports feelings of physical safety and safe emotional connection with others. Because of these effects, it’s sometimes called the social engagement system. *Its functioning is at the center of your Resilient Zone.*
Dorsal Vagal Network

The lower branch of the vagus nerve runs down the back (dorsal) side of your body to the organs below your diaphragm: stomach, intestines, kidneys and liver. It provides a vital connection with your gut and all of the sensations and functioning centered there, in your enteric nervous system.

This is the Dorsal Vagal network; it responds to cues of danger in your environment, and tends to pull you away from connection, out of awareness, and into a state of self-protection. Its functioning can put you in the lower part of your Resilient Zone, or bump you into your Low Zone, depending on how it’s activated.
Now let’s look at these three responses of the Autonomic Nervous System...
1. The Sympathetic Nervous System (SNS):

Setting off production of the hormones adrenaline, norepinephrine and cortisol, the SNS speeds up most areas of your body.

In moderation this can energize you and stimulate physical, mental, and creative activity.

However if your survival brain feels that you are in danger, it may use the SNS to start an emergency Fight or Flight response.
If your senses seem to signal danger, your Sympathetic Nervous System may prepare your body to:

**SPEED UP:** in a High Zone fight or flight emergency response, to defend yourself or get away.

*In some circumstances this can protect you or save your life… In others it might leave you reactive, enraged, anxious, panicky or terrified.*
Some scholars of yoga believe that the SNS corresponds with traditional yoga concepts of Rajas, a Guna (quality or energy) which in moderation can be activating and energizing, or in excess can lead to anxiety, panic, or rage.
2. The upper part of the Parasympathetic Nervous System (PSNS): The Ventral Vagal network

Setting off production of the hormones acetylcholine and oxytocin, **the upper part of the PSNS calms the body and supports connection with others.**

Acetylcholine slows the heart and aids digestion, while oxytocin stimulates positive social interaction, reduces blood pressure, increases the pain threshold and supports the immune system.

However if your survival brain feels that you are in danger, it may use the upper part of the PSNS to start an emergency Tend and Befriend response.
If your senses seem to signal danger, your Ventral Vagal network may prepare your body to:

3) CONNECT: in a tend and befriend* emergency response, to join with others for self-defense, protect those who seem vulnerable, or placate someone who is threatening harm or withdrawal.

In some circumstances this can save your life… In others it might leave you anxiously seeking approval, or seeking and maintaining connections that aren’t healthy for you.

* In some models this is called a “Fawn” response. However CRM and many other approaches to trauma treatment now recognize that this is an unnecessarily negative term for what is by definition an unconscious survival behavior; “tend and befriend” describes it well.
Some scholars of yoga believe that the Ventral Vagal network of the PSNS corresponds with traditional yoga concepts of Sattva, a Guna (quality or energy) which includes a sense of clarity, harmony, and calmness.
3. The Lower part of the Parasympathetic Nervous System (PSNS): The Dorsal Vagal network

Setting off production of the hormone acetylcholine, the lower part of the PSNS slows down and sometimes stops functioning in some areas of your body.

In moderation it slows your heart and helps with digestion, helping your body to rest, allowing both memories and nourishment to be processed and integrated.

However if your survival brain feels that you are in danger, it may use the lower part of the PSNS to start an emergency Freeze or Shut Down response, which can include immobilization, numbness, holding the breath, or fainting.
If your senses seem to signal danger, your Dorsal Vagal Network may prepare your body to:

2) **STOP:** in a Low Zone freeze or shut down emergency response, to hide you if it seems you won’t be able to defend yourself or escape, or paralyze and numb you if harm gets too close.

In some circumstances this can save your life… In others it might leave you depressed, numb, lethargic, disconnected, or dissociated.
Some scholars of yoga believe that the Dorsal Vagal network of the PSNS corresponds with traditional yoga concepts of Tamas, a Guna (quality or energy) which in moderation can feel grounding and restful, or in excess can lead to apathy, inertia, numbness, or depression.
This is how these different Autonomic Nervous System responses look in relation to the CRM Zones:

- **High Zone**: Sympathetic Nervous System, Fight or Flight, emergency response
- **Resilient Zone**:
  - Sympathetic Nervous System, Mild to medium response
  - Upper Parasympathetic Nervous System (Ventral Vagal)
  - Lower Parasympathetic Nervous System, Dorsal Vagal network, mild to medium response
- **Low Zone**:
  - Lower Parasympathetic Nervous System, Dorsal vagal network, Freeze / Shut Down, emergency response
As you spend more time in your Resilient Zone—centered in your Ventral Vagal network, with some moderate Sympathetic and Dorsal Vagal network responses—you Autonomic Nervous System (ANS) gets better at being there.

As you work with tolerating the upper and lower portions of your Resilient Zone without getting bumped into your High Zone or Low Zone, you broaden your Resilient Zone.
Very related to the Resilient Zone:

- Vagal tone and
- Vagal flexibility
Vagal Tone

Your ventral vagus nerve runs along the sinoatrial node of your heart—muscle fibers that regulate your heartbeat. Normally as you inhale, your vagus nerve lifts off of the sinoatrial node and your heart rate speeds up. Then **if you have good vagal tone, as you exhale your vagus nerve settles back onto the sinoatrial node making your heart rate slow down.** This causes what is called **Heart Rate Variability, or HRV.**

When you have good HRV your Ventral Vagal network is dominant, and you’re at the center of your Resilient Zone.
Vagal Tone

Because of this movement of the vagus nerve, long slow exhalations tend to slow your heart rate, contributing to vagal tone, and calming your body and mind.

However for some people a focus on breathing can be triggering, pushing them into a High Zone or Low Zone response. This is why breathing practices aren’t included in the Community Resiliency Model.

This is another area where it can be valuable to notice what’s true for your nervous system, and for your body, and choose the practices that feel helpful for you.
When your body perceives danger and your **Sympathetic Nervous System is activated**, your vagus nerve lifts off of your heart and stays off, allowing your heart rate to speed up so that you can take action to protect yourself.

*If you have weak vagal tone, your vagus nerve may stay lifted much of the time, keeping your Sympathetic Nervous System activated.*
Sometimes if a person has weak vagal tone, they might experience:

- Hoarseness of voice
- Difficulty swallowing, loss of gag reflex
- Abnormalities in heart rate
- Gastrointestinal problems
- Depression and anxiety

(these can be caused by other things as well)
Vagal Tone

Again: with high Heart Rate Variability (HRV) and good vagal tone, your heartbeat speeds up when you breathe in and slows down when you breathe out. Both high HRV and vagal tone are associated with positive emotions and resistance to stress.

Low Heart Rate Variability and low vagal tone are associated with anxiety and depression (High Zone and Low Zone responses) and contribute to many disease processes, such as cardiovascular disease, cancers, and autoimmune, inflammatory, and digestive disorders.
When your nervous system is centered in vagal tone and your Ventral Vagal network, in CRM terms you are right in the middle part of your Resilient Zone.

This supports good physical and mental health. **But it can require prioritizing a sense of calm over everything else: being careful about what you let in, as you reconnect with your body and with the ability to release and rest.**

This may be a good place to begin, in working to strengthen your Resilient Zone. To become more flexible and adaptive, eventually it can help to also work with developing **vagal flexibility**.
**Vagal flexibility** is the ability to move around among:

- Being centered in vagal tone (in your ventral vagal network, the yellow part here)
- Having some moderate sympathetic nervous system response (the light orange part here) and
- Having some moderate dorsal vagal response (the light green part here)

—according to the circumstances that you’re in, without becoming over-activated or shut down.
**Vagal flexibility** allows you to experience, feel, and respond effectively to more things—without having strong reactions to them, and without getting bumped into your High Zone or your Low Zone.

**When you have vagal flexibility you have a broad Resilient Zone.**
Vagal Flexibility also supports physical and mental health. Studies have found vagal flexibility is associated with decreased loneliness and greater accuracy in reading social-emotional cues and cues from one’s environment.

This makes sense in CRM terms too: as you broaden your Resilient Zone (creating vagal flexibility) you are able to tolerate more kinds of situations, and stay connected, present and aware in them.
You might wonder:

What is it that makes your nervous system develop patterns of response that aren’t helpful to you?

And what can help change those patterns of response to patterns that strengthen and broaden your Resilient Zone?

Let’s talk now about neuroplasticity…
3: What is Neuroplasticity?
Neuroplasticity is about the connections between our nerve cells, and how those connections grow and change with time and experience.
Nerve cells are called **neurons**. They have three parts: a **cell body** with a nucleus, **dendrites** to receive information, and **axons** to send information. Some neurons have one axon, and some have a bunch of axons...
A neuron (nerve cell) receives information through its dendrites, then sends it along as bursts of electricity that travel out along its axons…
At the end of each axon there’s a space, called a synapse. To get a message across this space, the axon sends out chemicals called neurotransmitters. These chemicals carry the message across the space to the dendrite of the next neuron.
As neurons connect with each other through their axons and dendrites, they form **neural pathways**, carrying information throughout your nervous system.
Some neural pathways are physical structures that you could see with your eyes or a microscope.

These include longer nerve tracts in your body (nerves) or shorter nerve tracts in your brain (grey matter and white matter).
Some neural pathways are less visible to the eye; they are patterns of connection among nerve cells and nerve tracts, that activate together when you do or think or feel things.
Neuroscientists map these patterns of activity along neural pathways using Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI).

They have found that neural pathways that are used more often get stronger, and become more habitually used...

...while neural pathways that are used less stop functioning as well, and can start to shut down.
This ability of the nervous system to change with use is called **neuroplasticity**: it is how our bodies and brains learn, in both conscious and unconscious ways.
Neuroplasticity is the reason that your body learns from experience, including from practicing something.

As you practice something—an action, or a way of thinking or feeling—the same neurons fire together again and again, creating a habit of response in your nervous system.
Neuroplasticity:

• Thoughts and experiences create neural pathways: neurons that fire together to send signals from one part of the nervous system to another.

• *To help us survive, memories of harm and how to avoid it create the strongest neural pathways.*

• Practice and repetition strengthen neural pathways; neural pathways that are used less, get weaker or disappear, though neural pruning.
• Your body and your nervous system are always changing.

• Sometimes you can help direct those changes.
As you practice a thing, your nervous system gets better at it. For example: playing the piano, doing math, learning a language, running, meditating, etc.

With practice, you can teach your Autonomic Nervous System to respond differently to some of the things that you experience.

CRM Skills are designed to help your nervous system practice new ways of responding to things.
Neuroplasticity creates especially strong habits of response in your nervous system around things that feel threatening or dangerous.

If an experience feels physically or emotionally life-threatening to your nervous system, it can stay strongly recorded in *implicit memory*—in order to warn you about similar dangers in the future.

Meanwhile *explicit memories* of the experience may be fragmented, weak, or may not exist at all.

What does this mean?
4: What are Implicit and Explicit Memories?
Implicit memory includes:

- Unconscious memories of experiences, skills, habits and behaviors that shape how we feel and respond to things in our lives. *(Including implicit biases and prejudices)*

- Body-memories (or “procedural memories”) of things like how to play the piano, ride a bike, tie your shoes, or brush your teeth…. and

- Unconscious associations between things, learned through experience *(associating the words “piano” and “music”, or the sound of a piano with the taste of cinnamon tea you once drank while listening to one)*
Implicit memories can be formed even before you’re born...

When implicit memories are triggered, the sensations that are a part of them may be felt again as if they’re happening in the present moment.

Many areas of the brain can be involved in forming implicit memories, but the basal ganglia and the cerebellum are key.
Explicit memory includes:

- Memories of facts and events, and spatial memories of locations.
- Memories of personal experiences (like the time last week when you visited the piano store, or the memory of a conversation you had with a friend)
- Memories of ideas, stories, or concepts that you’ve learned (like your knowledge about pianist and composer Scott Joplin, things that you know about manatees, or your understanding of the nervous system...)

![Image of Scott Joplin and manatees]
Explicit memories—often with a sense of time, place, and/or self—begin to develop when children are between 18 and 24 months of age.

Memories we might have of things that happen in our lives before this age generally are stored in implicit memory.

Many areas of the brain can be involved in forming explicit memories, but the hippocampus is key. Without it, experiences may be recorded only in implicit memory.
Sometimes even after our explicit memory develops, certain experiences may not get recorded there, staying mostly or only in implicit memory.

Sometimes this is because an experience has caused trauma in the nervous system. How does that happen?

On the next few pages we’ll look at how traumatic memories are formed in the nervous system. If you’d rather not read this, you might skip ahead to the last part, about using the powers of neuroplasticity to spend more time in your Resilient Zone.
5: What is trauma in the nervous system?
Trauma is a condition of the nervous system that’s created by a person’s body after overwhelming experiences of harm; it’s meant to warn and protect them from future harm.

Trauma comes from habitual emergency responses of the Autonomic Nervous System that become stronger over time, due to neuroplasticity. Although these emergency responses can be helpful in extreme circumstance, over time they can harm the physical and mental health of a person who has trauma.

The effects of trauma were once believed to be permanent. But brain research in recent years has shown that many of the effects of trauma can be changed and healed over time, also due to neuroplasticity.
Key aspects of trauma prevention lie both within and beyond, our bodies:

Working to counter circumstances likely to cause traumatic harm:
war, poverty, climate change, structural injustice, racism, misogyny, homophobia, abuse, violence, etc.

Creating alternatives that support health and well being: peaceful alternatives to war, shared resources, abolitionism, antiracism, LGBTQ+ rights, climate justice, environmental care, community connections and support, etc.

As part of that: sharing accessible, affordable educational and therapeutic resources that support the health and well being of people’s bodies and minds.

Easily learned and shared among friends, families, neighbors and others, CRM Skills may be well designed to help with this part.
Working with the nervous system it may help to know that:

The limbic system in your brain is where emotions are created, feelings meant to move you into doing things to protect your well being.
One part of your limbic system, the **amygdala**, uses implicit memories of intense experiences to make unconscious maps, to help your body automatically watch out for and avoid things that might be dangerous.

(NO, the maps don't actually look like this…)

[Image of a brain with an arrow pointing to the amygdala.]
As your nervous system continually brings in information about what’s going on…

- **in the world around you** *(through *exteroception*: sight, hearing, touch, taste, smell)*
- **and the world within you** *(through *interoception*: internal sensations like hunger, thirst, tiredness, alertness, energy & physical sensations of emotions like anger, joy, etc.)*
Your “survival brain” (brainstem and thalamus) compares this sensory information with the maps of danger created by your amygdala—and asks:

Am in danger? Am I safe enough to stop and think?
If your survival brain does this instant check and decides that you’re **not in immediate danger**, it sends the sensory information along to your insula, cerebral cortex and other parts of your brain, to think and decide what to do.

Hmm. It seems that I am okay for now.
No need to rush about!
Let’s just think about this…
If your survival brain decides that you **are** in danger, it instantly sends the information to your **Autonomic Nervous System (ANS)** for an emergency response.

![Diagram](image-url)

- **Yow!**
- **Danger danger danger!**
- **Can't think now—must do something!**
- **Call the ANS!**
Remember the three emergency responses of the Autonomic Nervous System?

**Fight or Flight:**
*Sympathetic Nervous System emergency response*

**Tend and Befriend:**
*Upper Parasympathetic Nervous System emergency response*

**Freeze or Shut Down:**
*Lower Parasympathetic Nervous System emergency response*
An emergency response in the Autonomic Nervous System isn’t the same as trauma… but it can contribute to trauma if:

1) It feels too intense for the nervous system of the person experiencing it, or
2) It goes on for too long or gets repeated too often.

In either case, **neuroplasticity can turn an emergency response into a chronic condition in the nervous system—trauma.**
What is too intense?

It’s important to know that what is too intense for one person may be okay for another person; what causes trauma in one person’s nervous system might not cause trauma in another person’s nervous system.

*What makes a person more vulnerable to developing trauma in their nervous system?*
Some things can make a person’s nervous system more vulnerable to trauma, such as:

- If their biological parents or ancestors experienced trauma (we can inherit changes in how our genes are expressed, including changes related to trauma; siblings within the same family can inherit these differently from each other)

- If a person’s mother experienced stress or trauma when pregnant with them.

These things can affect a person’s developing nervous system so that it’s more oriented towards chronically perceiving and preparing for danger. This may help protect a person from external dangers, but over time it’s very stressful for their health.
A lack of safety with a primary caregiver in childhood also impacts the development of the nervous system, and can affect a person’s ability to:

- trust people
- self regulate
- have a resilient nervous system, or a broad Resilient Zone
Without a broad Resilient Zone—without vagal flexibility—a person can end up spending a lot of time in High Zone and Low Zone emergency responses.

In these emergency responses sensory information from the outside world and from inside a person’s body doesn’t dependably travel to their thinking brain.

If this happens a lot over time, the neural pathways that carry sensory information to the brain can begin to weaken or shut down (including the vagus nerve and other pathways), and different areas of the nervous system become less dependably connected with each other.
Ideally, internal sensory information from your organs gets carried by your **vagus nerve** up through your **spinal cord** to your **brainstem** (survival brain) and from there up to your **insula**—which is devoted to helping your mind and your body communicate with each other…

As the place where sensory experience of the world meets up with the ability to think about it, **many neuroscientists consider the insula the part of the brain where a sense of self is created and felt.**
Your insula partially processes the information from your senses, then sends it on to your **medial prefrontal cortex** (thinking brain) to look at more carefully and clearly.

When you have strong healthy connections from your nerves to your survival brain to your insula to your cerebral cortex, this is called **vertical integration of the nervous system**.

**Vertical integration and other patterns of neural connection are harmed when a person has trauma.**
When areas of your brain lose connectivity with each other it may make you feel less connected with your body, with other people, and with the world around you, and less connected with the present moment.

*It can also create a kind of looping cycle:* as the neural pathways carrying sensory information to your insula and cerebral cortex become weaker, you have less opportunities to think clearly about what’s coming in, and your unthinking survival brain becomes more reactive to sensory input.

This can trigger implicit sensory memories of past harm, recreating distress or pain in your nervous system. Together, these create some of the neural patterns of trauma.
Here’s how many neuroscientists currently believe that trauma develops in the nervous system:

1. In experiences that feel physically or emotionally life-threatening, the amygdala creates very strong sensory and emotional signals, to warn a person to respond to danger.

2. The hippocampus and other areas of the brain shut down partially or completely, to allow a focus on survival.

3. Without the experience being processed by the hippocampus, it may be recorded mainly as strong implicit memories of sensations and emotions, with only fragmented explicit memories or none at all.

4. The areas of the brain that shut down during traumatic events lose some of their functioning and connectivity as trauma stays in the body over time.
1. Amygdala highly activated
   *Creating strong sensations & emotions warning of danger…*

2. Hippocampus shut down…
   *Experience may not be fully processed into explicit memory…*

3. Strong, repeating implicit memory
   *physical & emotional feelings of harm = trauma*
Both physical harm and emotional harm can create trauma in the nervous system.

Our nervous systems are set up to need and seek certain kinds of safe attachment relationships, and may create chronic emergency responses when these connections aren’t felt, or if they are harmed.
Whether harm is first experienced in the body and creates emotional responses in the nervous system, or whether it’s first experienced as a shock to the emotions and creates physical responses in the nervous system, the physiological and psychological effects of both kinds of trauma can end up being very similar.
After either physical trauma or emotional trauma, people often feel some combination of physical pain and emotional pain. This can be caused by:

• **Physical sensations and emotions** that the person experienced when they were traumatized, now stored in their nervous system as implicit memories

• **Conditions and illnesses** *caused or worsened* by the chronic stress of trauma

• The **pain response** of the nervous system becoming amplified by chronic stress
Some common effects of both physical and emotional trauma:

**Disconnection, from atrophied neural pathways:** feelings of disconnection within the nervous system... and between different parts of one’s self... and with other people and beings.

**Impaired processing of internal and external sensations:** difficulties accurately feeling present-moment sensations, due to overactive emergency responses, atrophied interoceptive pathways.

**Dissociation:** hijacked out of the present moment by physical sensations and emotions from the past, stored in implicit memory.

**Internal landscape dominated by sensations of danger & discomfort:** implicit memories of physical sensations and emotions from harm are re-experienced again and again.
More common effects of both physical and emotional trauma:

Physical harm from chronic stress, loss of Heart Rate Variability & vagal tone: chronic pain, cardiovascular disease, cancers, and autoimmune, inflammatory, and digestive disorders.

Shame: part of an Autonomic Nervous System freeze response meant to stop a person from doing anything that might incite future harm; may include High Zone and Low Zone symptoms—highly vigilant brain + frozen body.

Ongoing feelings that one’s power has been taken away: the ability to make one’s own choices in life may feel lost or stolen; by its nature trauma takes away a person’s power in the moment, and it is common for body sensations from this to stay recorded in implicit memory.
Each person’s “unconscious map of danger” and patterns of emergency response and symptoms may be different, based on their particular nervous system and their history.

But to avoid deepening trauma response patterns in the body, it’s important to start practicing different patterns of nervous system response as soon as possible after a potentially traumatic experience.

The Community Resiliency Model was designed specifically for this purpose: as a set of practices that community members can learn easily and use to help each other develop resistance to trauma after potentially traumatic experiences.
Fortunately, even many years after a traumatic experience, neuroplasticity can still help a person’s nervous system let go of old patterns and create new ones, to better support their health and well being.
6: How can CRM help your nervous system become more resistant to anxiety, depression, and trauma?
Anxiety and depression are deep and persistent versions of High Zone and Low Zone states in the nervous system. They can be caused by many things, and may or may not improve as a person practices CRM Skills.
But... in many studies both **anxiety and depression decreased as people developed vagal tone** (activating and strengthening the vagus nerve, and centering in the ventral vagal network) and **vagal flexibility** (the ability to move in and out of the ventral vagal network without becoming too activated or too shut down).

*As you practice CRM Skills you use neuroplasticity to improve vagal tone and vagal flexibility.*
In working with the vagus nerve you might begin with strengthening vagal tone.

To do this, you could practice CRM Skills that promote feelings of peace and calm:

- **Tracking** with a focus on positive or neutral sensations
- **Resourcing**
- **Grounding**
- **Gesturing** with a focus on peaceful, calming sensations
- **Help Now strategies**
To strengthen vagal tone you could also explore using CRM Skills to stimulate areas connected with your vagus nerve—such as your face, throat, heart, and belly:

**Gesturing** that involve moving the muscles of your face, yawning, bringing your hands in contact with your face, moving your eyes; or maybe putting a hand on your neck, or a hand on your belly and a hand on your heart.

**Help Now strategies** centered in listening, seeing, or drinking water or juice (connecting with the vagus nerve). Creating your own Help Now strategies that use singing, humming, or breathing in ways that help you feel and release the soft palate in the roof of your mouth—an area also very connected with the vagus nerve.
Once you know:

• What your body feels like when you’re in vagal tone—centered in the calmest, most connected part of your self…

• How to notice when you’re moving away from vagal tone…

• How to use your skills to come back into vagal tone…
You might work with expanding your vagal flexibility, possibly practicing the CRM Skills of:

- **Tracking** and noticing
- **Gesturing** with a focus on more activating feelings like joy, excitement, confidence, strength, wonder, etc.
- **Shift and Stay**

To expand your vagal flexibility, you could use these CRM Skills to explore what it feels like at the edges of your Resilient Zone—a bit into Sympathetic Nervous System response (light orange here) and then a bit into Dorsal Vagal response (light green here). If you feel yourself slipping towards a High Zone or Low Zone response at any point, you might use your skills to come back into vagal tone, right in the center of your Resilient Zone.
CRM Skills also help strengthen the ability to have your awareness centered in the present moment: they are practices of mindfulness.

Many studies have shown that mindfulness practices can reduce both anxiety and depression.

In addition, mindfulness practices have been found to correspond with the lengthening of a person’s telomeres—the little laces at the ends of our chromosomes that hold our chromosomes together.
Studies have found strong connections between the length of a person’s telomeres and their physical and mental health.

Ordinarily with stress and over time our telomeres get shorter and more frayed. The authors of these studies say that mindfulness practices that focus our attention in the present moment (and all of the CRM Skills do this) seem to help strengthen and maintain our telomeres, creating better health for our bodies and minds.
How can CRM Skills help alleviate trauma and help prevent trauma from developing in your nervous system?
To work towards alleviating:

• disconnection
• impaired sensory processing
• dissociation or numbness

from trauma or other causes, you might especially practice skills that strengthen vertical integration in your nervous system.

**CRM Tracking (or interoception) is a key practice for vertical integration.**
Again: **vertical integration of your nervous system** is about strengthening connections among your sensory nerves, vagus nerve, spinal cord, brainstem, limbic system (amygdala, hippocampus, etc.), insula, and medial prefrontal cortex.
Interoception, or Tracking, is the process of bringing sensory information from within your body up into areas of your brain that can pay attention to it and think about it—it is a way of practicing vertical integration of your nervous system.

Brain scans and brain research have shown that this kind of intentional interoceptive practice can reactivate neural pathways that have been shut down by trauma, and may also help prevent new trauma from developing in the nervous system.
Strengthening connections in your nervous system can support a greater sense of connection:

- with your body
- with your emotions
- with different parts of your self
- with other people and beings
- with the world, and
- with the present moment
Because all CRM Skills come back to Tracking, all of them can contribute to strengthening vertical integration in your nervous system.

But CRM Skills that emphasize bringing internal and external sensory information to your insula (for sensory processing) and medial prefrontal cortex (for observing and thinking) may be especially helpful for this. These include:

- Tracking
- Grounding
- Help Now and
- Shift and Stay
To work towards alleviating:

• physical and emotional pain

from trauma or other causes, you might especially practice skills that **calm the High Zone pain responses of the nervous system.**

*Generally any of the CRM Skills that strengthen vagal tone and return a person to their Resilient Zone could be good for this: Tracking, Resourcing, Grounding, Gesturing, or Help Now.*
However sometimes if a person is in a lot of physical or emotional pain it may be especially helpful to emphasize the CRM Skills that bring attention outside their body for bit, before coming back to Tracking any pleasant to neutral sensations within their body.

**CRM Resourcing** can be good for this, as well as some of the Help Now strategies.
To work towards alleviating feelings of:

• shame
• powerlessness or
• the theft or loss of self-determination

from trauma or other causes, **three aspects of CRM may be especially helpful.** None are specific CRM Skills; instead they are aspects of CRM that are about **relationship,** **education,** and **taking action.**
Aspects of CRM that can help alleviate shame, powerlessness, and the theft or loss of self-determination

**Relationship:** When possible… practicing CRM Skills with another person (or people) through invitation and choice, in ways that encourage each person to make their own decisions about which practices they want to try, and when and how, and that treat with respect each person’s perceptions and perspectives.
Aspects of CRM that can help alleviate shame, powerlessness, and the theft or loss of self-determination

**Education**: When possible... sharing information about the nervous system, the biological features of anxiety, depression, trauma, healing and resilience. This can help to destigmatize mental illnesses, demystify mental wellness, and give a person a sense of small doable steps they can take to feel better.
Aspects of CRM that can help alleviate shame, powerlessness, and the theft or loss of self-determination

Taking action: When possible... using these and other healing practices to strengthen the ability to take action, to change conditions that may be traumatizing to your self, to other people, and to other life on the planet.
This is about the neurobiology of healing connections.

CRM Skills are things that you can do on your own to strengthen connections in your nervous system, and through that, your connections with the present moment, with your body and emotions, with other people and beings, and with being alive.

And—exploring the CRM Skills and understandings with other people can offer additional benefits.
If you practice CRM Skills with another person—without pressure, and with invitation and choice—the social connection between you can help to activate the ventral vagal part of your nervous systems, strengthening vagal tone for each of you.

Meanwhile the mirror neurons in your brains can further support this effect…
A **mirror neuron** is a neuron that fires both when a person does a thing and when a person sees a thing begin done by someone else.

The neuron "**mirrors**" what it sees: to some extent, the person watching may feel as if they were doing the thing that they’re seeing.

**When a person is in their Resilient Zone and responding from their best self, another person seeing them often finds it easier to be in their Resilient Zone as well.**
This means that while you may find that you benefit from practicing and learning CRM Skills, it’s likely that people around you will benefit as well.
The world is full of beauty, magic, miracles, and patterns that induce wonder… Emergence is one of the best concepts I have learned for discussing this wonder. Emergence emphasizes critical connections over critical mass, building authentic relationships, listening with all the senses of the body and the mind.

The crisis is everywhere… And we are small.

But emergence notices the way small actions and connections create complex systems, patterns that become ecosystems and societies. Emergence is our inheritance as a part of this universe; it is how we change. Emergent strategy is how we intentionally change in ways that grow our capacity to embody the just and liberated worlds we long for.

*adrienne maree brown, Emergent Strategy*
Thank you for exploring the Community Resiliency Model with me. I wish you curiosity, creativity, connection, and enjoyment in any further exploring you might do.

love,
Clare
These pages have been put together by CRM teacher and Trauma Center Trauma Sensitive Yoga (TCTSY) facilitator Clare Norelle, adapted from the work of Elaine Miller-Karas and the Trauma Resource Institute, with some changes (more emphasis on the polyvagal model of the ANS, and several new exercises). They are meant to support people who want to practice CRM Skills on their own, and/or share them with other people, as informal CRM guides.

To learn more about the Community Resiliency Model or to get trained to teach it, you can go to the CRM website at: https://www.traumaresourceinstitute.com/crm

To learn more about Clare’s work, you can go to clarenorelle.com

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