

— Psychosocial first aid after disasters

*Nils Vandenbroucke -
traumapsychologist*



— About me



Clinical psychologist and psychotherapist –
private practice

Expert psychosocial interventions – [Crisiscare.eu](https://www.crisiscare.eu)

Provincial Manager for Urgent Social Intervention
– Belgian Red Cross-Flanders

Lecturer and graduate coordinator 'Crisis and
Safety Management' Vives University College

Crisis, psychotrauma and especially complex trauma as an
interest

Care for the care provider = chronic area of interest

+10 years of volunteer management with Red Cross aid
workers

12 years of first care for those affected

Field experience through Red Cross and Bfast (bus disaster
in Sierre, train disaster in Wetteren, terrorist attacks in
Zaventem and Brussels, repatriations from Afghanistan and
Gaza, earthquake in Turkey, etc.)

— History psychosocial disaster relief

Railwayspine syndrome

Shellshock

PTSD~Avoidance and re-experiencing

CISD

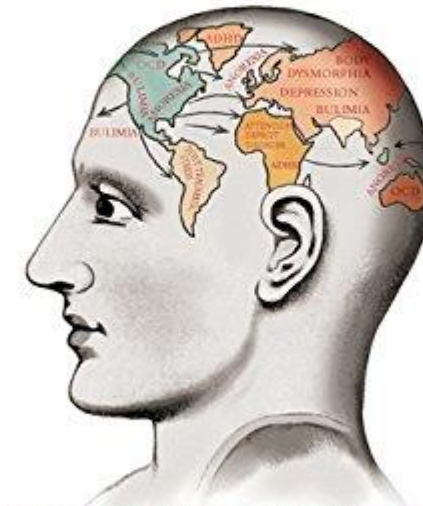
Do no harm

9/11

Resilience

CRAZY LIKE US

The Globalization of the
Western Mind



'A blistering and truly original work of reporting and analysis, uncovering America's role in homogenizing how the world defines wellness and healing.' Po Brosnan, author of *Nurture Shock*

ETHAN WATTERS



— PTSD – trauma - crisis

Conceptual confusion

— Characteristics shocking event

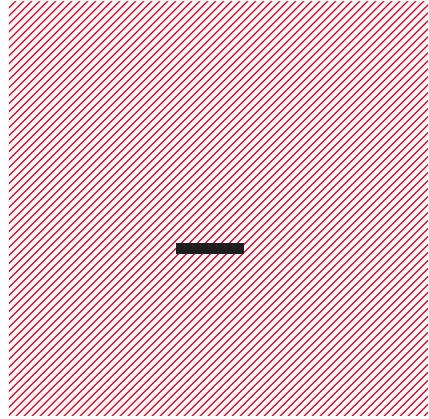
Common characteristics:

Danger

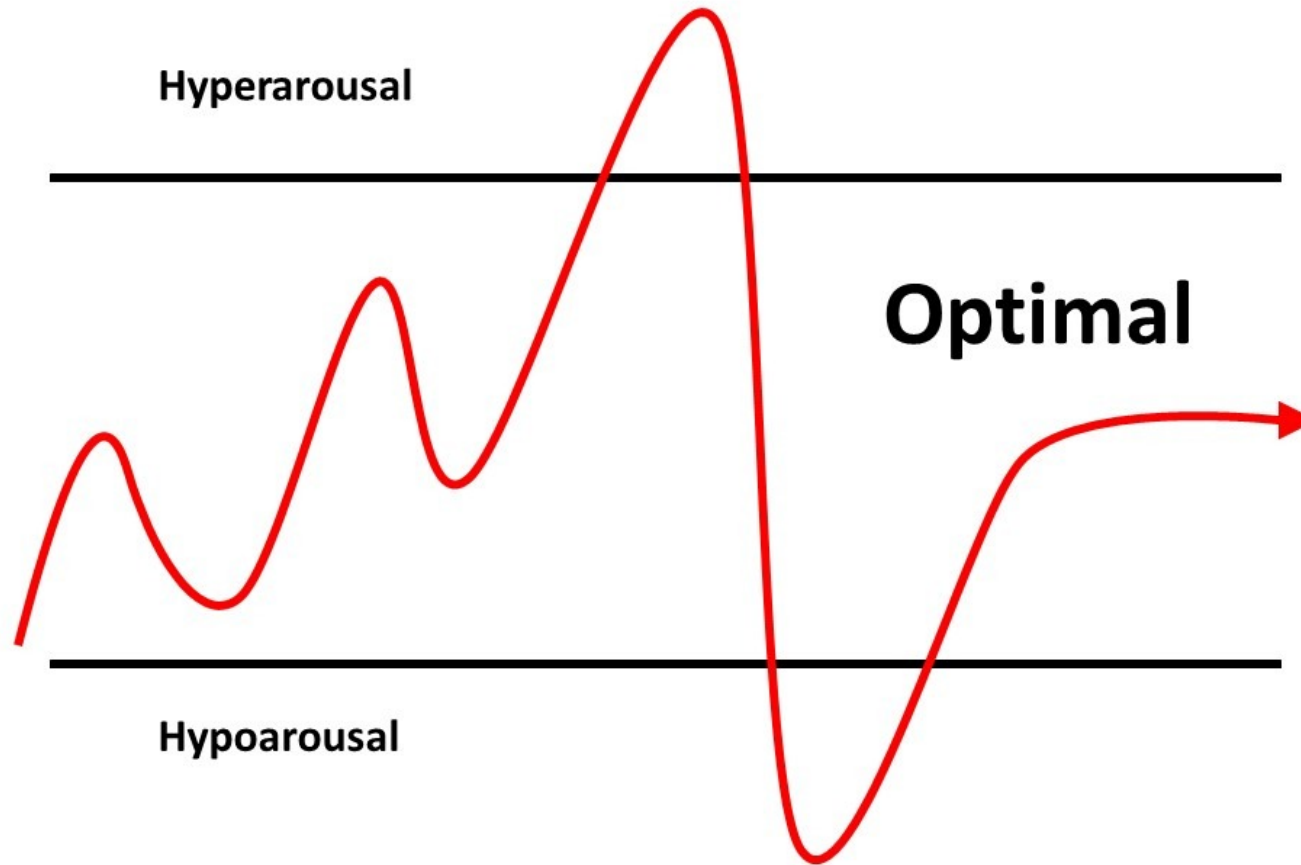
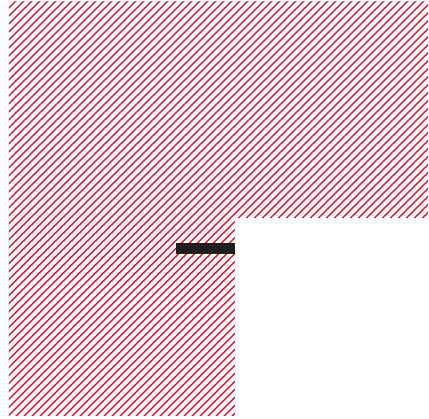
Unexpected / unpredictable

Powerlessness





Shocking event	Needs	Psychosocial support
Danger		
Unexpected		
Powerlessness		



— First reactions





— **First reactions**

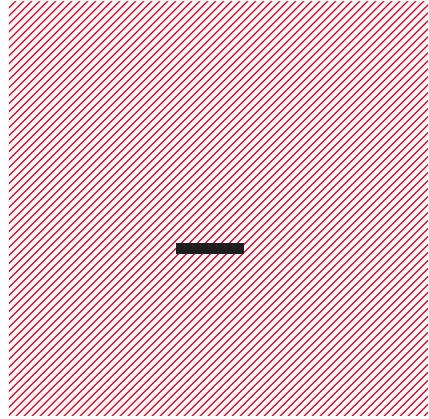
All reactions are:

- Unpredictable
- For everyone different

Normal reactions following an abnormal situation

Immediate reactions

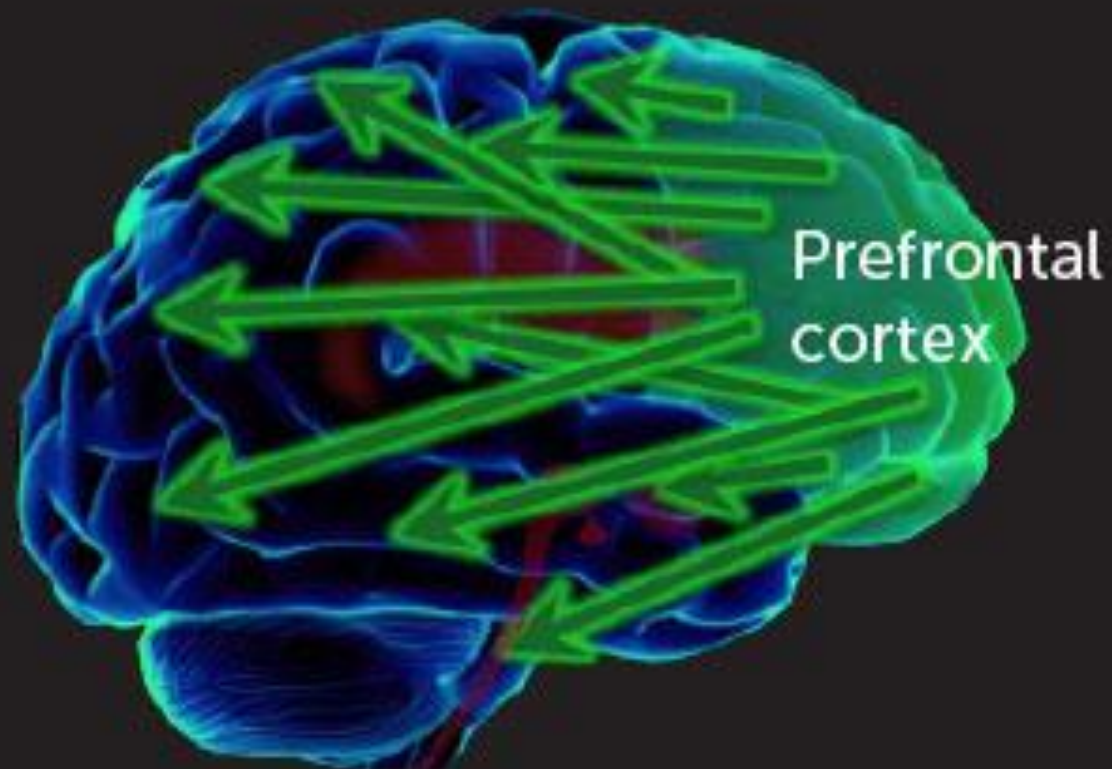
- Say little about further processing
- As long as they evolve



Shocking event	Needs	Psychosocial support
Danger	Safety	
Unexpected	Information	
Powerlessness	Control	



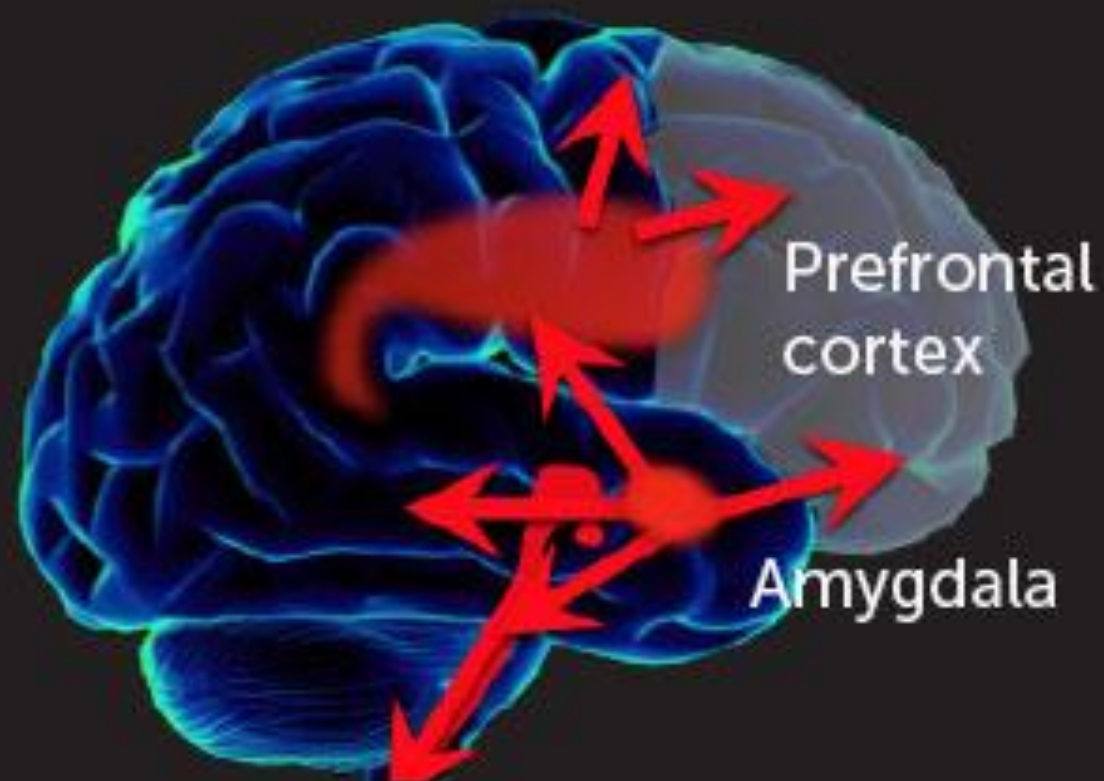
Unstressed



Prefrontal cortex

Tight control of thoughts, emotions and actions

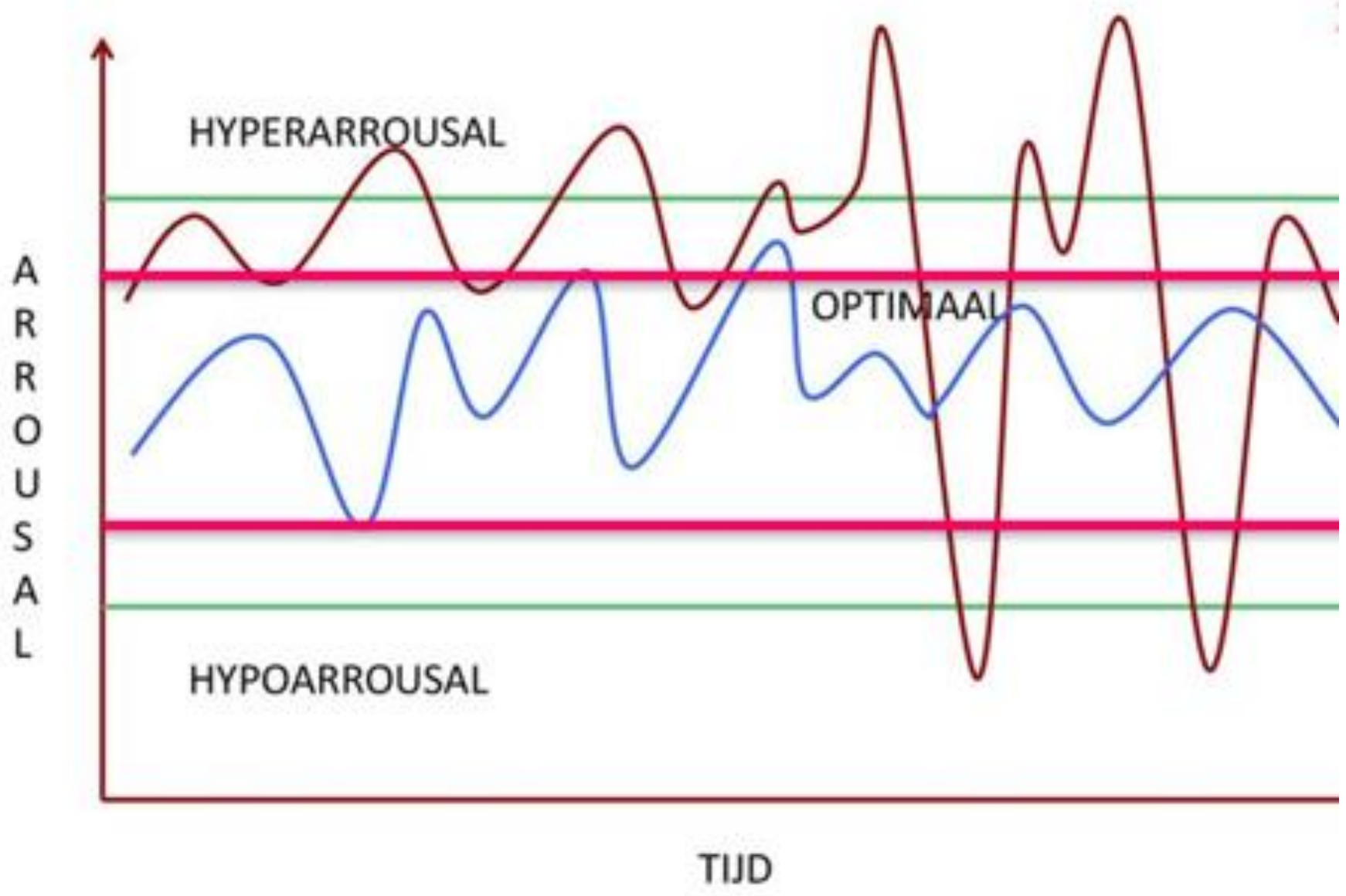
Stressed

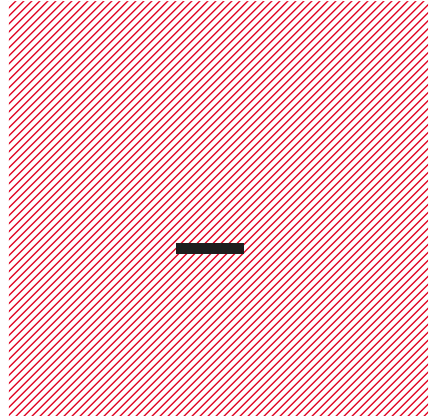


Prefrontal cortex

Amygdala

Weaker control of thoughts, emotions and actions





Shocking event	Needs	Psychosocial support
Danger	Safety	Safety
Unexpected	Information	Rest Self-efficacy Connectedness
Powerlessness	Control	Hope



— Care for caregivers/teammembers

Case: earthquakes Turkey February 2023



— Pathology 1

- Difference between 1st and 2nd rotation, direct and indirect consequences
- Wounds: under rubble or poor hygienic situation for a long time
- Open and infected wounds: gangrene - sporadic amputation
- Untreated fractures
- Primitive conditions (tent camps, wood fires) – epidemics, scabies, CO intoxication, burns
- Children: dehydration, stomach and intestinal complaints



— Pathology 2

Available mentalhealth facilities: none

- Acute interventions
- PFA
- Mourning, hyperarousal, sleepingproblems, anxiety, terrors, anger outbursts, feelings of depression, suicidal thoughts, existing pathology...



Before

Training

During

BFAST team

Patients

After

Formal and informal get together

Psychosocial follow up

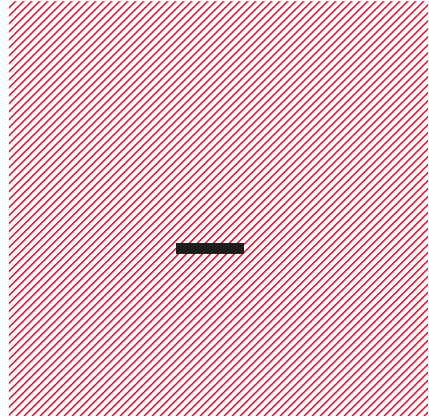


Psychological intervention
(individual or group)

Care for teamleaders

Buddy-system

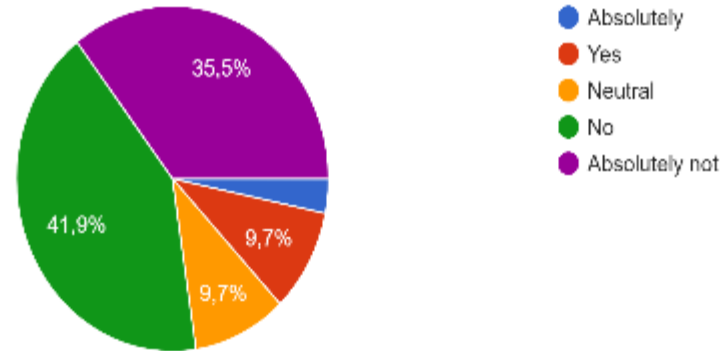
Selfcare and care for
colleagues



Through:
WhatsApp
QR code (toilet)
Computers

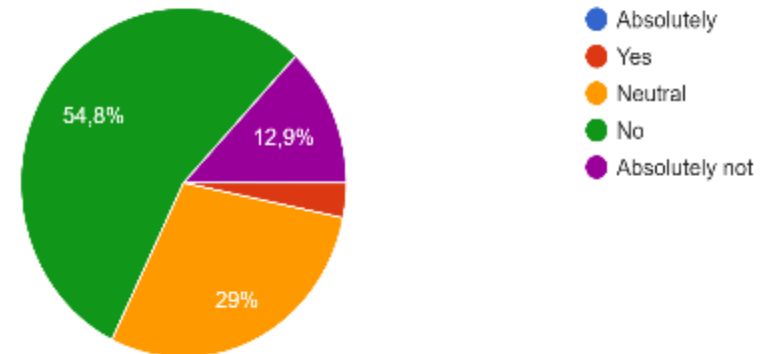
I jump or am startled by unexpected sounds. Door onverwachte geluiden word ik opgeschrikt. Je sursaute ou suis effrayé par les bruits inattendus.

31 antwoorden



I feel depressed because of the traumatic experience of victims in this situation. Les expérience traumatique des victimes de cette catastrophe, me ...he ervaringen van de slachtoffers van deze ramp.

31 antwoorden



Concluding tips for organizations

- Before the crisis
 - **PFA training**
 - **Psychosocial intervention plan**
 - **Peer support**
 - **Safe climate**
 - **Attention to self-care, self-care plan and signals of stress**
- After the crisis
 - **Single point of contact**
 - **Defusing**
 - **Proactive**
 - **Survey**
 - **Thank people involved**
 - **Information meeting**
 - **Debriefing**
 - **Individual guidance**

In the face of chaos, let empathy be our compass, resilience our guide, and compassion our legacy. Together, through psychosocial first aid, we rebuild not just communities, but the human spirit, stronger than before.