

The background of the slide features a photograph of a modern office interior. In the foreground, the silhouettes of several business professionals are visible, standing and talking near a large glass window. The window looks out onto a city skyline with various skyscrapers. The lighting is warm, suggesting a sunset or sunrise, with the sun's glow visible on the left side of the frame. A diagonal graphic element, consisting of a yellow and blue stripe, runs from the top left towards the bottom right, partially obscuring the office scene.

Welcome

Leading Humans is Hard:

3 Strategies for
Public Defense Leaders

WITH SHANNON McQUAIDE



Shannon McQUAIDE

- ➔ Certified Leadership Coach
- ➔ Teacher & Education Leader
- ➔ Created FireFlex Yoga in 2014
- ➔ M.A. Psychology & Leadership
- ➔ Published Author



What is Warrior Culture

- ➡ Built on shared identity and values
- ➡ High - stress
- ➡ Performance under pressure
- ➡ Requires constant willingness to sacrifice for the collective good



False Narrative

*Everything that
makes us human, is
a liability at work*





The overall strategy for today's leaders needs to account for what allows humans to do their best:

Safety, Connection & Community.

Grounding Practice



Partner Discussion

Owl

Heather

Fox

Brendon

Bear

Rooster

Connector

(2 mins)

Think of a time when you were part of a professional community where you felt connected, included and welcomed.

Reflect and write on the following:

- ➔ What was that like for you?
- ➔ How were you affected physically, mentally and emotionally?
- ➔ Bring to mind a leader in that community, what did they do or how were they being, that allowed you to feel connected, included and welcomed?

(1 min)

Contrast this with an experience where you felt like you didn't belong?

Reflect and write on the following:

- ➔ How were you affected physically, mentally and emotionally?
- ➔ Bring to mind a leader in that environment what did they do or fail to do, in order to create conditions of connection and belonging

Partner Discussion (3 mins)

Owl



Fox

Bear

Rooster



Whole Group Share Out

- ➔ What did you notice about leaders who create welcoming professional communities?

Benefits of Building Relationships

1

Trust & Psychological Safety

Staff feel safe to raise concerns and admit mistakes, improving communication.

2

Collaboration & Cohesion

Encouraging listening, inclusivity, and shared decision - making.

3

Engagement & Motivation

Boosts job satisfaction, belonging and morale.

4

Innovation & Creativity

Fuels knowledge-sharing and new ideas

5

Retention & Stability

Relational Climates
Reduce Turnover

6

Community Connections

Strengthen ties with courts, service providers, and communities.

7

Alignment with Purpose

Connects daily work to mission values

Strengthening Leadership Muscles

Skill #1

Awareness of Impact

Skill #2

Taking a Beat

Skill #3

Finding a Homebase



A deep sense of love and belonging is an irreducible need of all people. We are biologically, cognitively, physically, and spiritually wired to love and be loved, and to belong.

When those needs are not met, we don't function as we were meant to. We break. We fall apart. We numb. We ache. We hurt others. We get sick.

~Brene Brown



In Real Life - Case Study

Team makeup

- Client advocate
- Social workers
- Supervisors

Challenges

- Talk about and not to people
- Withholding of Information
- Reluctance to participate as a Team

I don't need my co-workers
to be my friends. I go to
work to do my job, and then
I leave.

Your Internal Surveillance System

The Guard Dog (Amygdala)

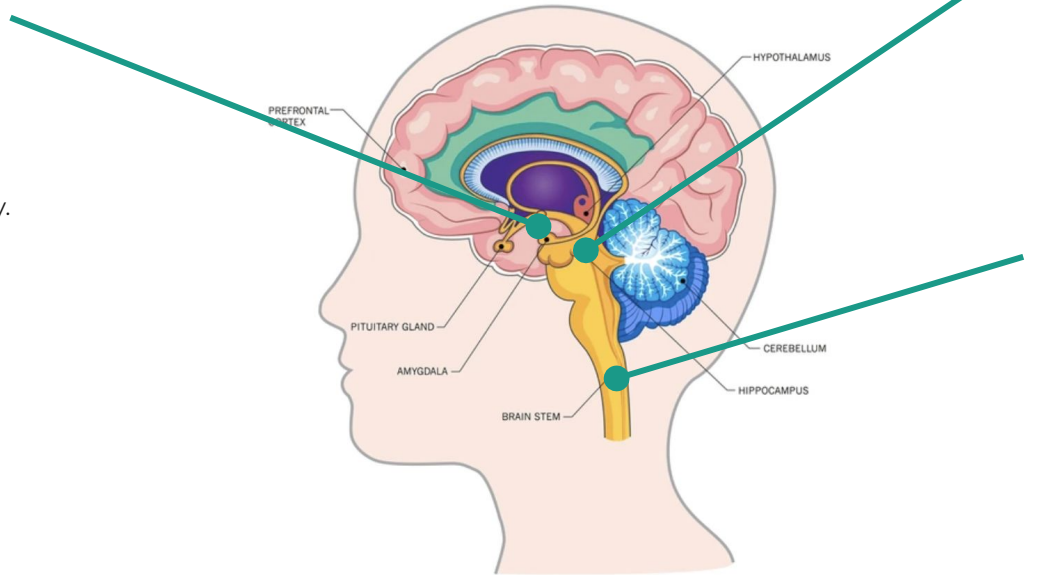
The amygdala acts as our guard dog trained to prepare the body for fight, flight, freeze or appease when anything threatens our physical or social safety.

ChatGPT (Hippocampus)

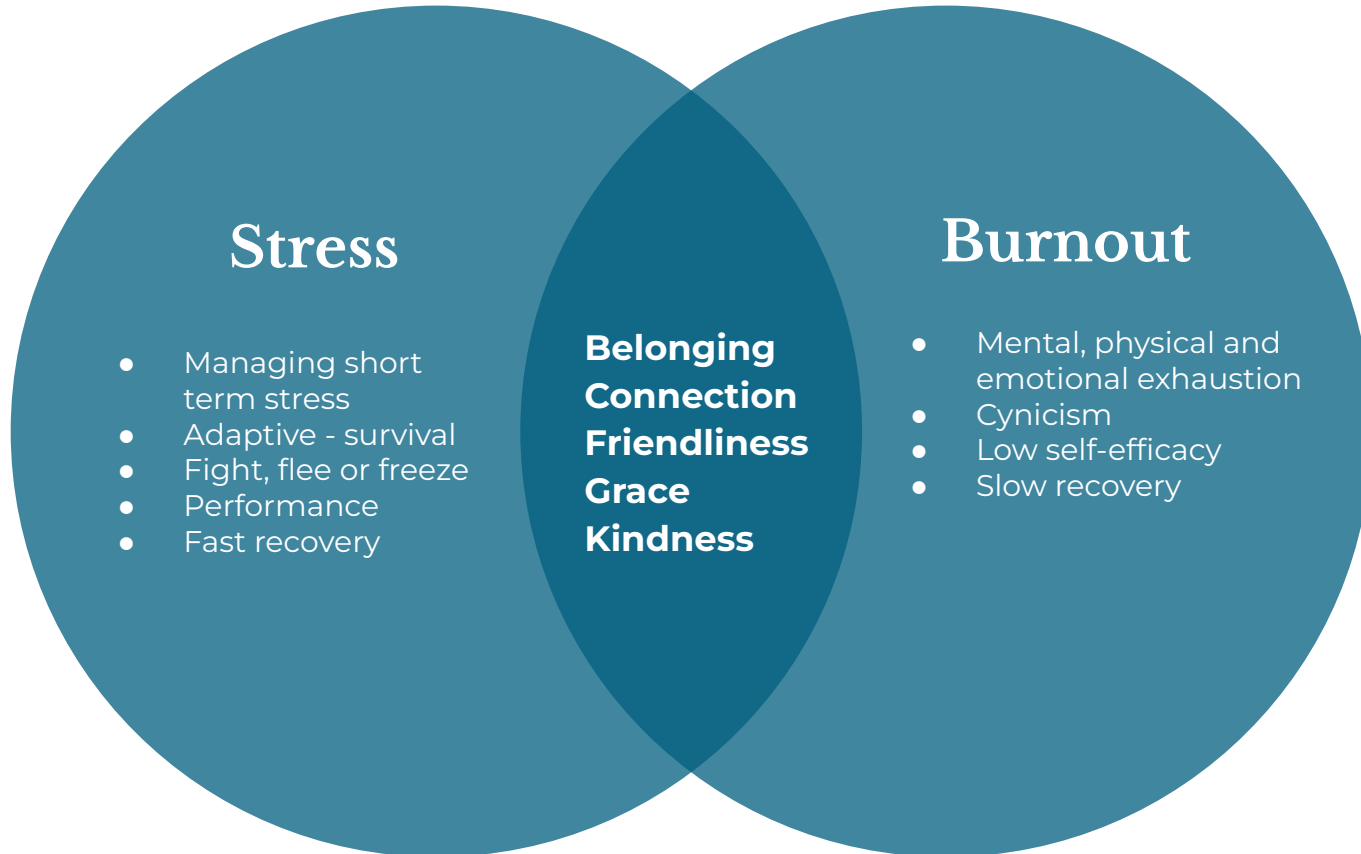
Storehouse for background knowledge. It's our working memory, where information is processed. Working memory shrinks when Amygdala is triggered.

The Watcher (Reticular Activating System)

The RAS scans our environment 24/7 for possible threats (bodily harm or humiliation) or rewards (food or friendship). It sends reports to the amygdala.



Stress & Burnout



Welcoming and Inclusive Professional Community



Reflection: Paradox

- ➡ How do you hold the tension between needing to be a warrior for your clients and also create the conditions for those you supervise to connect and experience safety?

Partner Discussion

Owl

Fox



Bear

Rooster



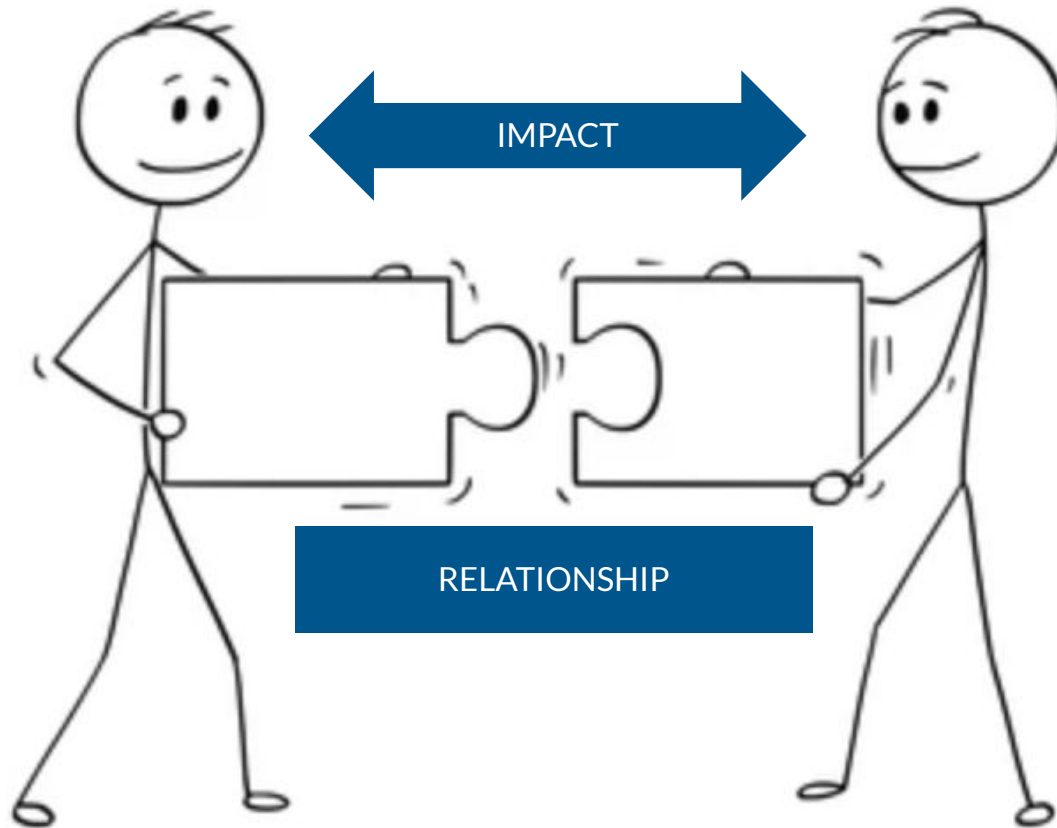
Whole Group Share Out

➔ What did you discuss?

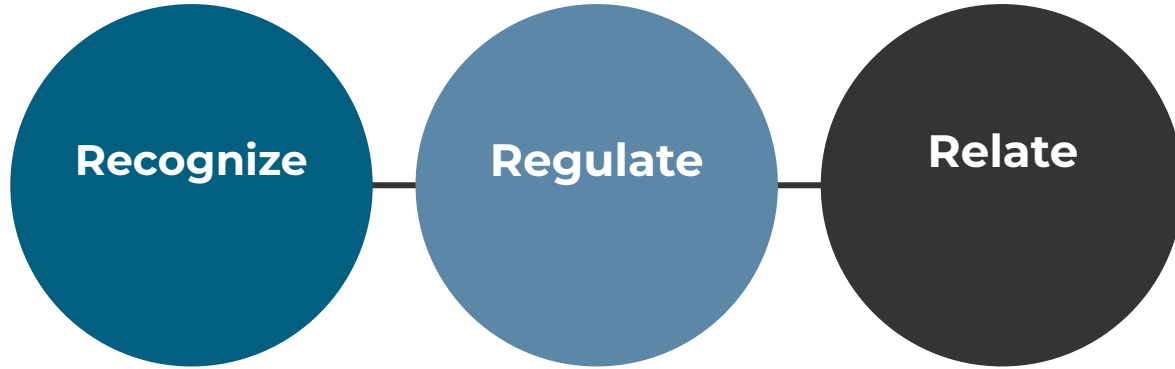


Enter the Gym of Relational Leadership - Self Awareness

Awareness of Impact



Skill #2 Taking a Beat



Deep Breathing

Self Awareness & WOT

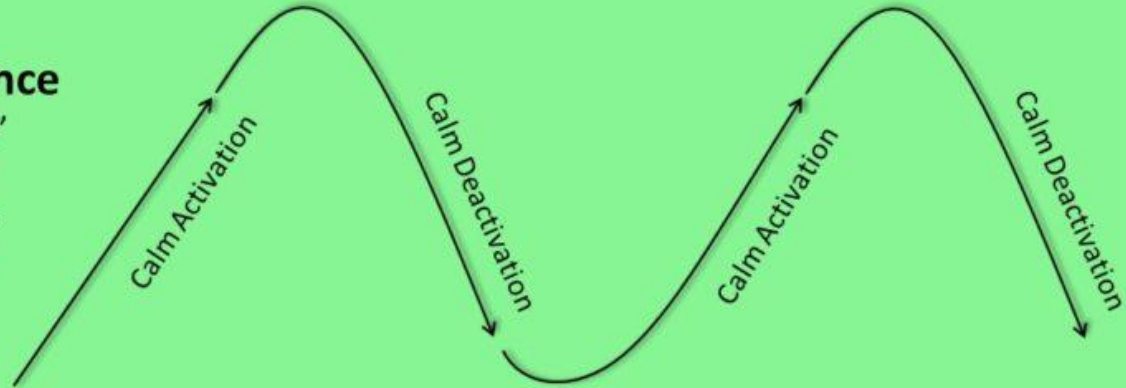
Calm Activation: Ready for action

Heart rate speeds up, muscles ready. Alert, able to think clearly and make decisions and respond.

Window of Tolerance

'Optimal Arousal Zone'
Calm, Alert, Relaxed
Awareness of options
Soothing is possible

"I've got this!"



Calm Deactivation: Settling down

*Heart rate slows, muscles relax.
Able to feel calm, think clearly and relax.*

Skill #3 Finding a Homebase

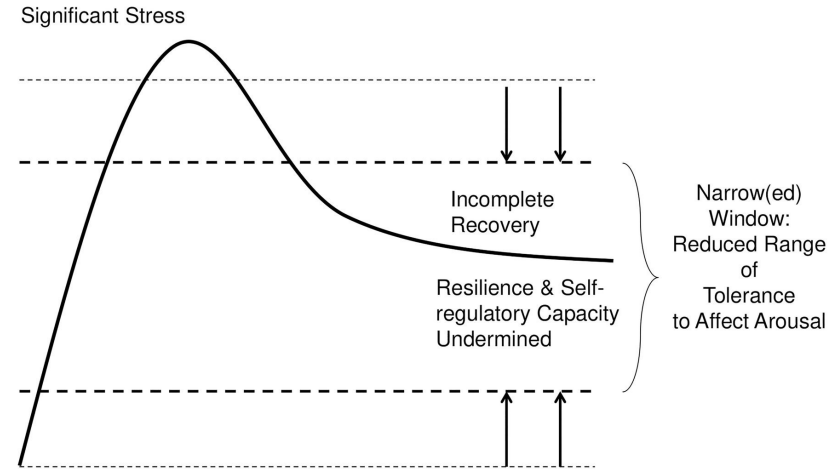
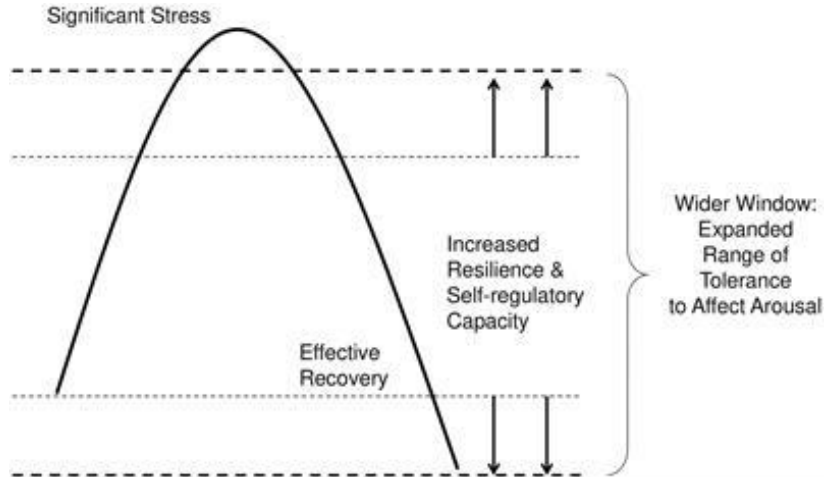
Auditory Learner

Kinesthetic Learner

Visual Learner



Self Awareness: Reset in the Moment



Relationship Building Requires Self Awareness

Case Study

1:1 Conversations

- Slow down and meet people where they are
- Start conversations by asking about what's working, followed by challenges and suggested solutions
- Listen not just for the words but also emotions & meaning
- Request feedback

Team Meetings

- Prioritize meeting as an opportunity to create connections
- Start with a short grounding practice to provide time for transitioning and presence
- Follow up with a connecting activity that increase peer to peer connection
- Intentional closure, find out what people are getting from their time
- Request feedback

Scenario Practice

1. Bring to mind a difficult interpersonal situation at your Office.
2. Describe the challenge.
3. Explore how you would like the situation to be different?
4. Apply any of the self-awareness strategies you have learned, and explore how leading from a place of self - awareness might alter the way you approach this situation.



Partner Discussion

Owl

Fox

Bear



Rooster

Opportunities for Practice



1

Before
performance
Reviews

2

Before
leadership
meetings

3

In the car

4

Bathroom

5

Between
phone calls

Where else are you practicing?

Intentional Closure

**What's one thing you learned that will
change the way you lead?**

Partner Discussion

Owl

Fox

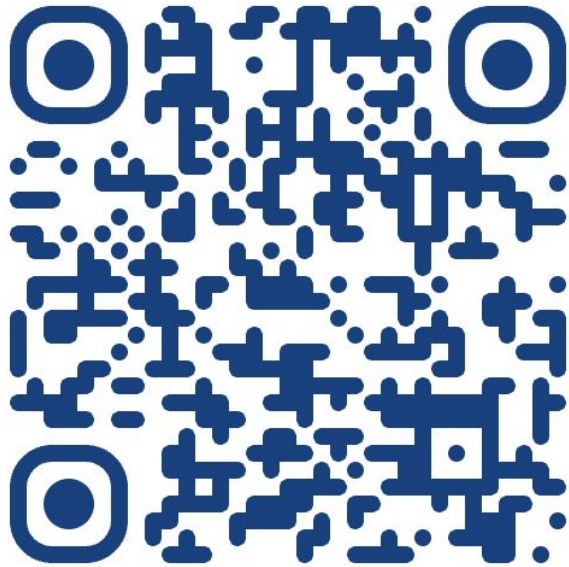
Bear

Rooster



Next Steps

How can you take what you are learning to your team and into your life.

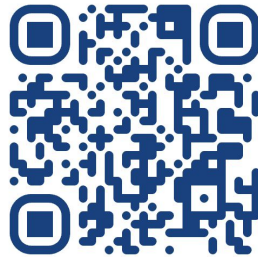


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Shannon
McQUAIDE



Shannon McQuaide
smcquaide.consulting@gmail.com
@shannonmcquaide
(831) 431-0850