



**COURAGEOUSLY**  
*imperfect*  
COACHING AND DEVELOPMENT

**Recognizing  
& Addressing Patterns  
of Drama (Trauma)  
in the Workplace**

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**Key Takeaways**

- 1 Manage your own energy first.
- 2 You can care; you don't have to engage.
- 3 It's not efficient. Do it anyway.

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**Definitions**

**STRESS RESPONSE**      **DRAMA RESPONSE**      **TRAUMA/TRAUMATIC RESPONSE**

A natural, escalated response to a situation or person, requiring additional energy to adapt

"Fight/Flight/Freeze/Appease"

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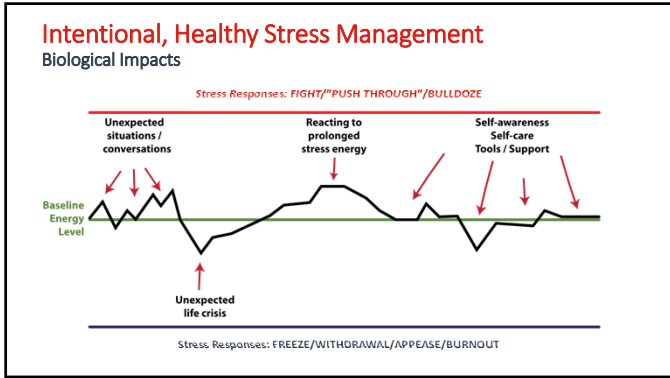
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### Healthy Stress Response Strategies

Strategy	Impacts
Actively "pausing" before reacting	<b>Reduced Cortisol</b>
Being kind – to yourself. You're human, too.	
Getting enough sleep, nutrition, water/hydration	<b>Reduced Adrenaline</b>
Engaging in hobbies/interests/exercise outside of work	<b>Maintained Blood Sugar</b>
Creating and maintaining a supportive network/community	<b>Feeling More Connected/ Less Lonely &amp; Agitated</b>
Being willing to learn something new	<b>Increased Positive Energy</b>
Talking with an objective sounding board	<b>Balance/Harmony (even when life is "life-y")</b>
Asking for help (from leader, team and other development professionals – coaches, counselors, etc.)	

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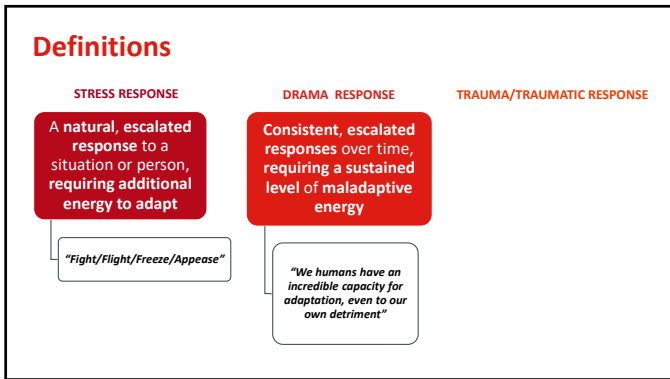
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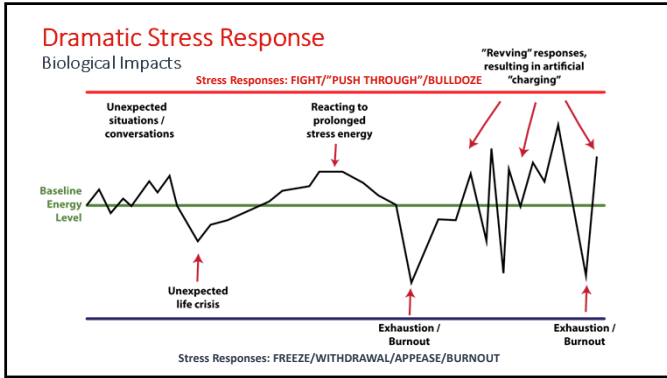
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### Common Drama "Archetypes"

<b>The External Revver</b>	"There's so much going on. I NEVER get a break!"
<b>The Internal Revver</b>	"I'm just ALWAYS so STRESSED OUT!"
<b>The Center-Stager</b>	"I worry that I won't be important and people won't like me if I'm not always working/being busy."
<b>The Erupter</b>	"Something just takes over and I EXPLODE!"
<b>The Martyr</b>	"I can't walk away. I'm all they have. They'd be devastated/so disappointed."
<b>The Dramatic Narrator</b>	"Then he said... then she said... can you BELIEVE...?"

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### Why Drama Persists

Interpersonal Conflicts	AND	Not learning new skills/ways to get better outcomes
Unmet/Unrealistic Personal Expectations	AND	Not focusing on what can be done, rather than what's still not done/perfect
Insecurity, Jealousy	AND	Not taking time to work through the personal, emotional causes, leading to better outcomes
Stress/Pressure (including a Global Pandemic)	AND	Not consistently engaging in healthier stress habits, leading to better energy
Past Trauma/Emotional Wounds	AND	Not recognizing, addressing, and working toward healthier mindsets, skills, and tools to get better outcomes

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### Definitions

#### STRESS RESPONSE

A natural, escalated response to a situation or person, requiring additional energy to adapt

"Fight/Flight/Freeze/Appease"

#### DRAMA RESPONSE

Consistent, escalated responses to situations or people, requiring a sustained level of maladaptive energy

"We humans have an incredible capacity for adaptation, even to our own detriment"

#### TRAUMA/TRAUMATIC RESPONSE

Rigid, exaggerated, habitual responses to situations or people that are **not in proportion** with the actual situation, event, or person

"If it's hysterical, it's historical"

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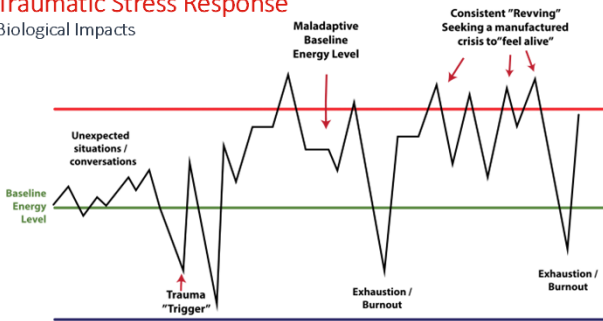
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### Traumatic Stress Response

Biological Impacts



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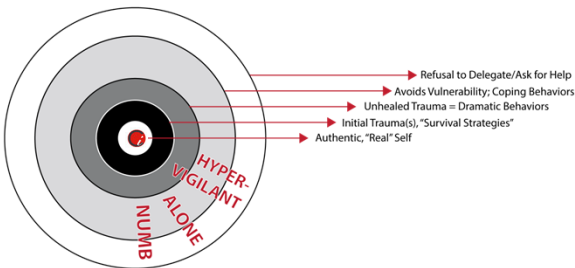
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### What Trauma Feels Like



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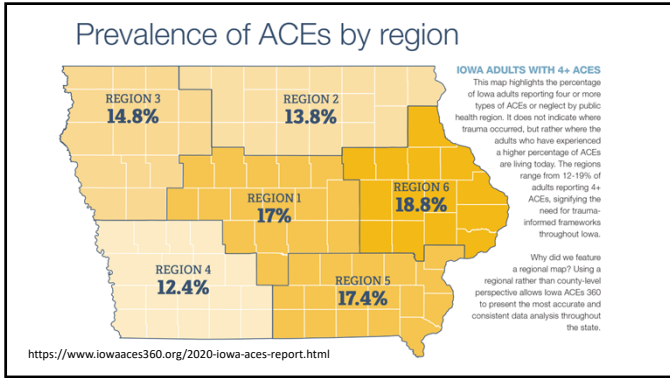
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### When Someone Approaches You With A Drama/Trauma Reaction

**Mindset** Appreciate the effort it took for them to trust you.  
 Acknowledge that this amplified reaction isn't about you.

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**Listen to Validate/ Understand (Not fix)** *Validate: I can see why \_\_\_ would be \_\_\_*  
 Listen with full attention & ask questions about what they are experiencing

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**Clarify Support** *What does support look like for you right now?*  
*What would be helpful for you?*  
*What resources have you tried already?*

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### Proactively Approaching Someone

**Mindset** *Important: if you sense that a team member may not be okay, check in with them.*  
 Acknowledge that multiple conversations may be needed.

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**Open with a ?** How is your week going so far?  
 I've noticed that \_\_\_\_, is everything okay?  
 This is a challenging time - how are you doing?

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**Reinforce Support** I'm here if you want to talk.  
 You're not alone. It's ok to need help at times.

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### Common Drama "Archetypes" & Strategies

Archetype	Motto	Thoughts/Beliefs/Behaviors	Compassionate Strategies
<b>The External Revver</b>	<i>"There's so much going on. I NEVER get a break!"</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Constantly adding things to their schedules regardless of capacity, space, or ability.</li> <li>Avoids being calm/still/BORED</li> <li>Equates busyness and productivity with self-worth and validation</li> <li>Confuses constant movement with productivity</li> <li>Talks over/interrupts people</li> <li>Needs things to ALWAYS be fresh/exciting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What would a realistic break look like? How could I support you in this habit?</li> <li>What does this level of busyness give you? What does it cost you?</li> <li>How could you spend less effort and still accomplish the same?</li> <li>What needs to be re-prioritized? How can I help?</li> </ul>

Adapted to Drama: Healing Dependency on Crisis & Chaos In Yourself and Others. Lyons, Dr. Scott, 2023

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### Common Drama "Archetypes" & Strategies

Archetype	Motto	Thoughts/Beliefs/Behaviors	Compassionate Strategies
<b>The Internal Revver</b>	<i>"I'm just ALWAYS so STRESSED OUT!"</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Negative thinking loops that maintain a constant sense of chaos/crisis, which feels "alive"</li> <li>Overanalyzing/analysis-paralysis</li> <li>Chronically late</li> <li>Constantly being in a rush</li> <li>Compares self to others</li> <li>Worries about worry (visibly anxious)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When was the last time you felt at ease? Describe what that felt like. What conditions made that possible?</li> <li>What's your relationship with comfort? What brings you comfort? How could you pursue that, along with your to-do list?</li> <li>What, specifically, is creating the most stress? How can I support you with that?</li> </ul>

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### Common Drama "Archetypes" & Strategies

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<b>The Center-Stager</b>	<i>"I worry that I won't be important and people won't like me if I'm not always working/being busy."</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The need to feel important, special, and recognized is the driving force behind thoughts, behaviors, and actions</li> <li>Having (and needing to have) a magnetic personality</li> <li>Having to be an expert/the BEST</li> <li>Exaggerating facts to attract attention</li> <li>Brings conversation back to themselves</li> <li>Sharing to be "seen" as opposed to sharing to share/support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When was the last time you felt genuinely seen/validated? What made you feel that way?</li> <li>If your need to feel important/busy were filled, how would things be different for you? How would that vision benefit you?</li> <li>Do you believe you can connect to others without having to be so busy/important?</li> </ul>

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<b>The Erupter</b>	<i>"Something just takes over and I EXPLODE!"</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unwilling to take responsibility for emotions</li> <li>Blows things out of proportion</li> <li>Nagging feeling of losing control</li> <li>Justifying the intensity of a response through shared stories and roping others into it</li> <li>Feeling rejuvenated/pleased/energized after an eruption</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>(In a neutral setting)</i> What might you have been feeling right before something "just took over"?</li> <li>On a scale of 1-10, how much of that energy are you feeling now, in this moment?</li> <li>How much energy/emotion is actually needed for what is happening?</li> <li>How could you become aware of when you start to feel that way again? What support can I offer?</li> </ul>

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### Common Drama "Archetypes" & Strategies

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<b>The Martyr</b>	<i>"I can't walk away. I'm all they have. They'd be devastated/so disappointed."</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Finding self-importance by being the rescuer</li> <li>Playing referee between others' chaos</li> <li>Using others' drama to maintain own stability</li> <li>Doing things, then sharing what they did, to be seen/noticed</li> <li>Creating conditions and scenarios in which they are needed</li> <li>Offering help, then resenting those who accept it</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When you are meeting others' needs, who is tending to yours?</li> <li>Who would you be if you weren't needed by someone else?</li> <li>What do you gain by being invaluable to others in their time of pain, chaos, and stress?</li> <li>Do you believe people could connect with you without first having to fulfill their needs?</li> </ul>

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<b>The Dramatic Narrator</b>	<i>"Then he said... then she said... can you BELIEVE...?"</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uses dramatic storytelling to "rev" and "sync up" with other people, done as a means to avoid internal feelings</li> <li>Gossips</li> <li>Uses exaggerated language</li> <li>Being obsessed with others' business</li> <li>Badmouthing others</li> <li>Overanalyzing the "why" of others' behavior</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As you describe other people's faults and actions, how does this make YOU feel? How does that benefit you?</li> <li>How are you making yourself feel superior or inferior as you replay the story?</li> <li>Do you recognize how pulling people into your story directs the attention back to you?</li> <li>When you focus so strongly on others, how is the focus coming back to you?</li> <li>Who are you without your stories?</li> </ul>

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Being willing to learn something new	<b>Increased Positive Energy</b>
Talking with an objective sounding board	<b>Balance/Harmony (even when life is "life-y")</b>
Asking for help (from leader, team and other development professionals – coaches, counselors, etc.)	

Care Well For Yourself  
Walk the Talk

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### Responding to High Distress

**Mindset** *Stay calm.*  
Remember, the person is experiencing a high level of shame/cortisol & may not be thinking clearly.

**Know Your Resources** Follow your organization's HR protocols.  
Have your HR contact in your phone/make a call.

**Additional Support** NAMI Iowa numbers and support  
<https://namiowa.org/crisis-info/#:~:text=855%2D581%2D811,your%20life%20back%20on%20track.>

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**30-minute complimentary call**



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