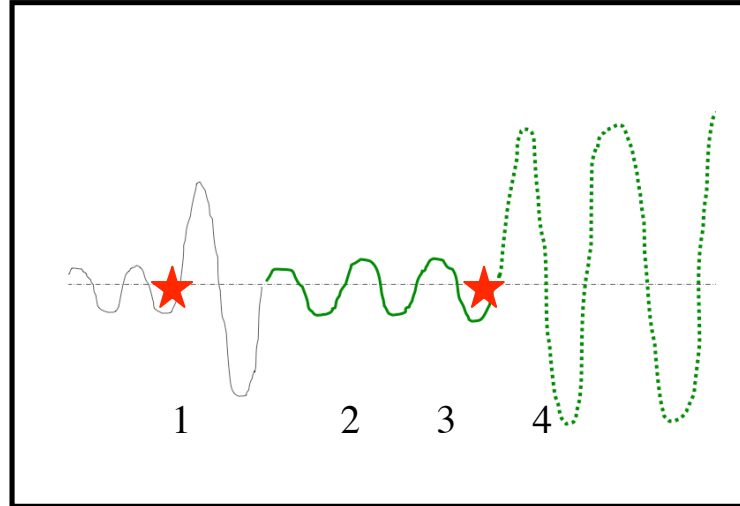


A Model for Understanding the role of Stress, Trauma, & Early Life Events in Origins of Chronic Illness

Origins of Chronic Symptoms / Chronic Illness



1. Predisposition (to a symptom or chronic illness)

- appears to occur in early life
- is influenced by trauma/stress, which imprint a **conditioned response** in the nervous system
- occurs during pregnancy, birth, or in the first years of life
- influences parts of the organism undergoing greatest development (critical period programming)
- may impact genes by turning them on or off

2. Latency Period

- Represents a time frame during which conditioned responses strengthen, and physiological/emotional changes occur that are not yet visible
- the classic example of latency involves posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which can occur days, months or years following a traumatic event
- Is also referred to as “kindling” in the trauma literature (stimulation of nervous system patterns)
- Is shorted by events that stress the system, such as trauma and other environmental factors (pollution, infections, etc...)
- latency periods can last 10 years + in type 1 diabetes; 30 years in Alzheimer’s; 7 yrs in lupus;

2. Unmasking or ‘Reinstatement’ of the Conditioned Pattern

- a final stressful event stimulates the conditioned response and makes it visible, dominant, recurrent

4. Symptoms / illness begin days, months, years after the “final stressor”

- express a change in nervous system functioning
- represent an intelligent, albeit magnified and prolonged “survival strategy” or defense response
- the stronger the symptom., the more intense the traumatic experience and severe the perception of life threat