

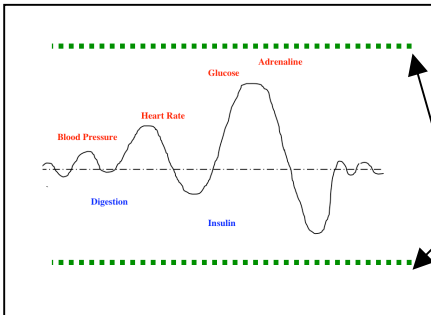
# Depression: Why Me?

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

Veronique Mead, MD, MA Somatic Psychotherapist

### The Environment of Experience influences Health

#### I. Healthy Nervous System Functioning



*The Nervous System fosters adaptability and recovery through:*

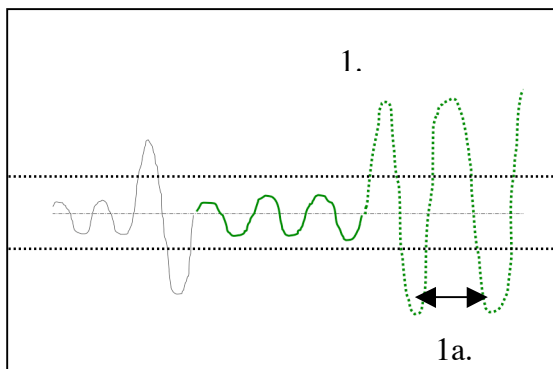
1. Regulating and interacting with all other organ systems
2. Oscillating
3. Range (from large to small, from sleeping to waking to running...)
4. Operating within a “window of tolerance”

#### II. Environmental Factors influence Nervous System Regulation

*In addition to pollutants, toxins and other factors, **stress, trauma, and events in early life** play a particularly important role in shaping the nervous system’s capacity for self-regulation.*

#### III. Symptoms represent Changes in Regulation

*Loss of nervous system oscillation, cycling, and flexibility alters the ability of the organism to adapt to change. It may also influence healthy by promoting certain physiological, emotional, and behavioral patterns. Such states often operate outside the window of tolerance.*



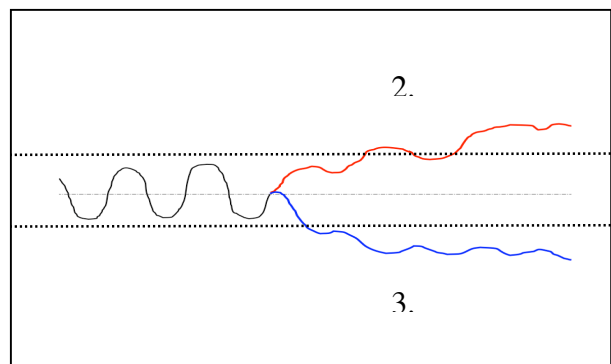
##### **Exaggerated Cycling**

###### *1. Symptoms*

PTSD, Bipolar (mania and depression)  
Irritable Bowel Syndrome

*1a. time between cycles varies (ie: hours to years)*

\* PTSD: post traumatic stress disorder



##### **Reduced cycling**

###### *2. Symptoms of “Fight or Flight” states:*

hypervigilance, anxiety, panic, startle  
hypertension, chronic pain, diabetes 1?

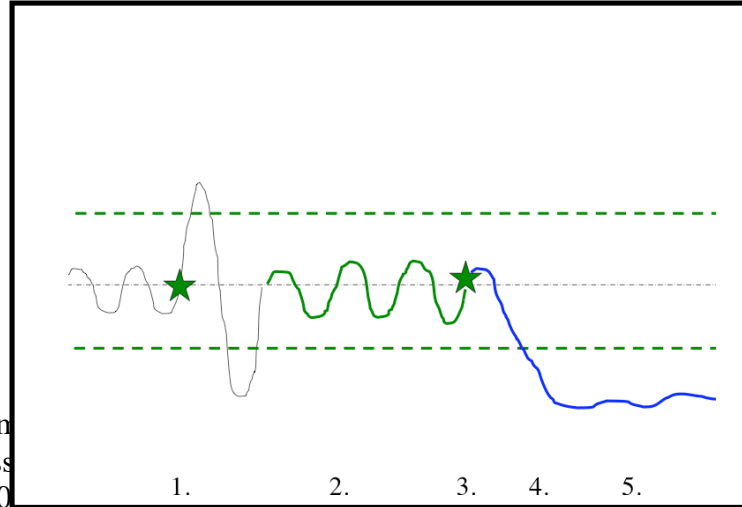
###### *3. Symptoms of “Freeze” states:*

depression, dissociation, foggy thinking  
chronic fatigue?, asthma?, Parkinson’s?

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### *5 Phases in the Origins of Symptoms*



1. Mead VP. A new model for the origins of chronic illness. *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry* 2004;63(6):10

in the origins of illnesses

2. Mead VP. Somatic psychology theory and the origins of chronic illness: a case study of type 1

#### **1. Predisposition (to a symptom or chronic illness)**

- appears to occur in early life during pregnancy, birth, or in the first years of life
- is influenced by bonding and attachment relationships, which teach the nervous system to regulate
- is affected by *trauma*, which conditions the nervous system to regulate by defense, protection, & survival
- 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 period during which conditioned responses strengthen, without visible changes
- the classic example of latency is posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD): symptoms can occur days, months or years following a traumatic event
- conditioned patterns are strengthened by events that stress the system, such as trauma, increasingly mild and seemingly unrelated stressors, and other environmental factors (pollution, infections, etc...)
- greater intensity or frequency of stressors facilitates more rapid the kindling and shortens latency periods
- supportive and resourcing life experiences serve as buffers that lengthen the latency period, delay the onset of illness, or protect the organism and prevent illness
- 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, symptomatic

#### **4. Symptom Onset: days, months, years after the "final stressor"**

- clinical symptoms are unmasked, representing changes in nervous system patterns
- symptoms represent an intelligent, albeit magnified and prolonged "survival strategy" or defense response
- the more severe the symptom the more intense the prior life experience(s) and perceptions of life threat
- the type of symptom or illness is influenced the timing of the predisposing events (the organ systems experiencing periods of highest growth are the most likely to be affected by life events)

#### **5. Triggers**

- symptoms vary in unique ways, based on past experiences (buffers and stressors) unique to each person
- identifying triggers can help predict, understand & prepare for exacerbations, or to eventually reduce them