

What They Never Taught You About Being a Dermatologist

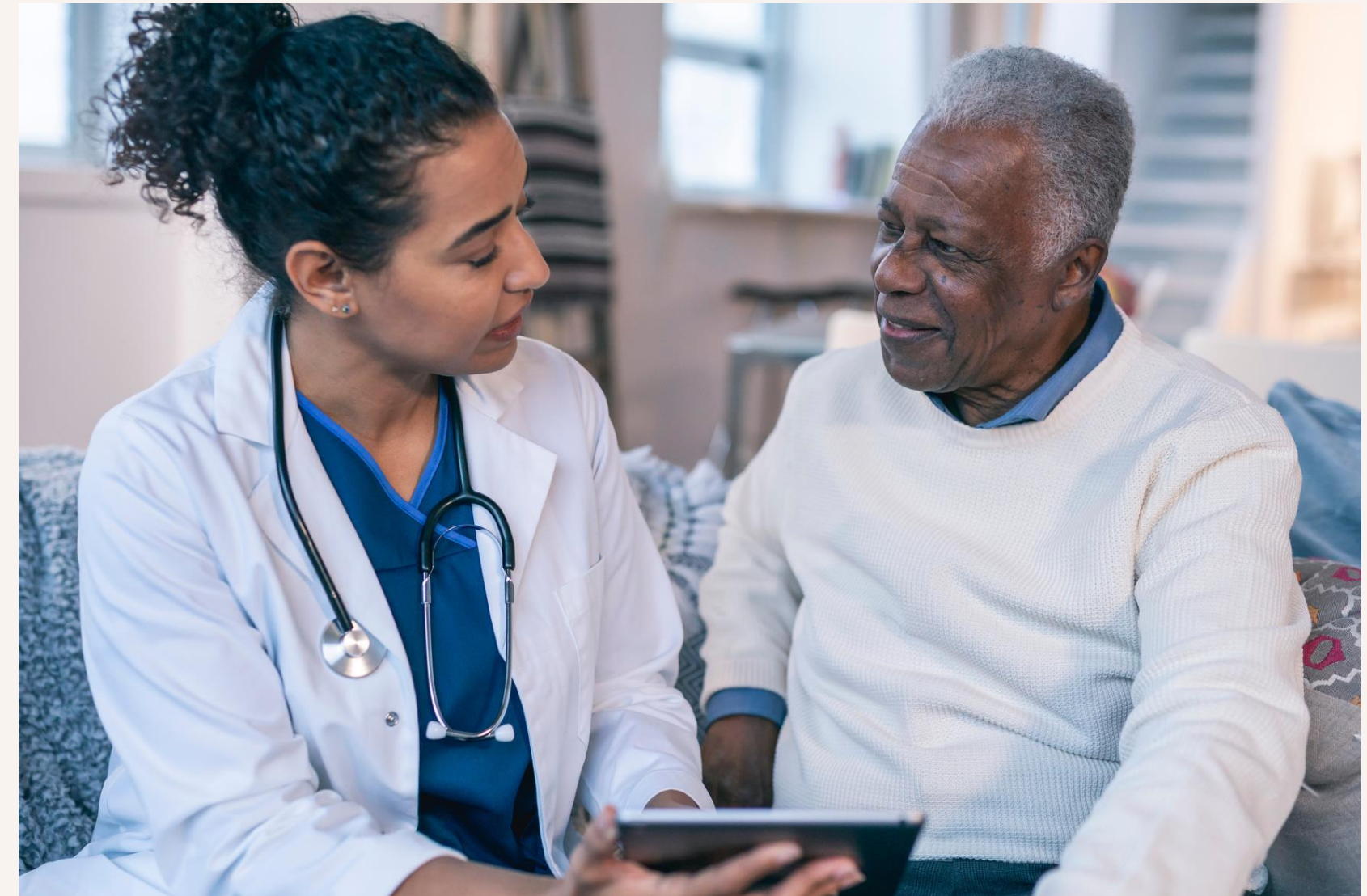
How your presence, not your protocol,
shapes every outcome
(including your own energy)

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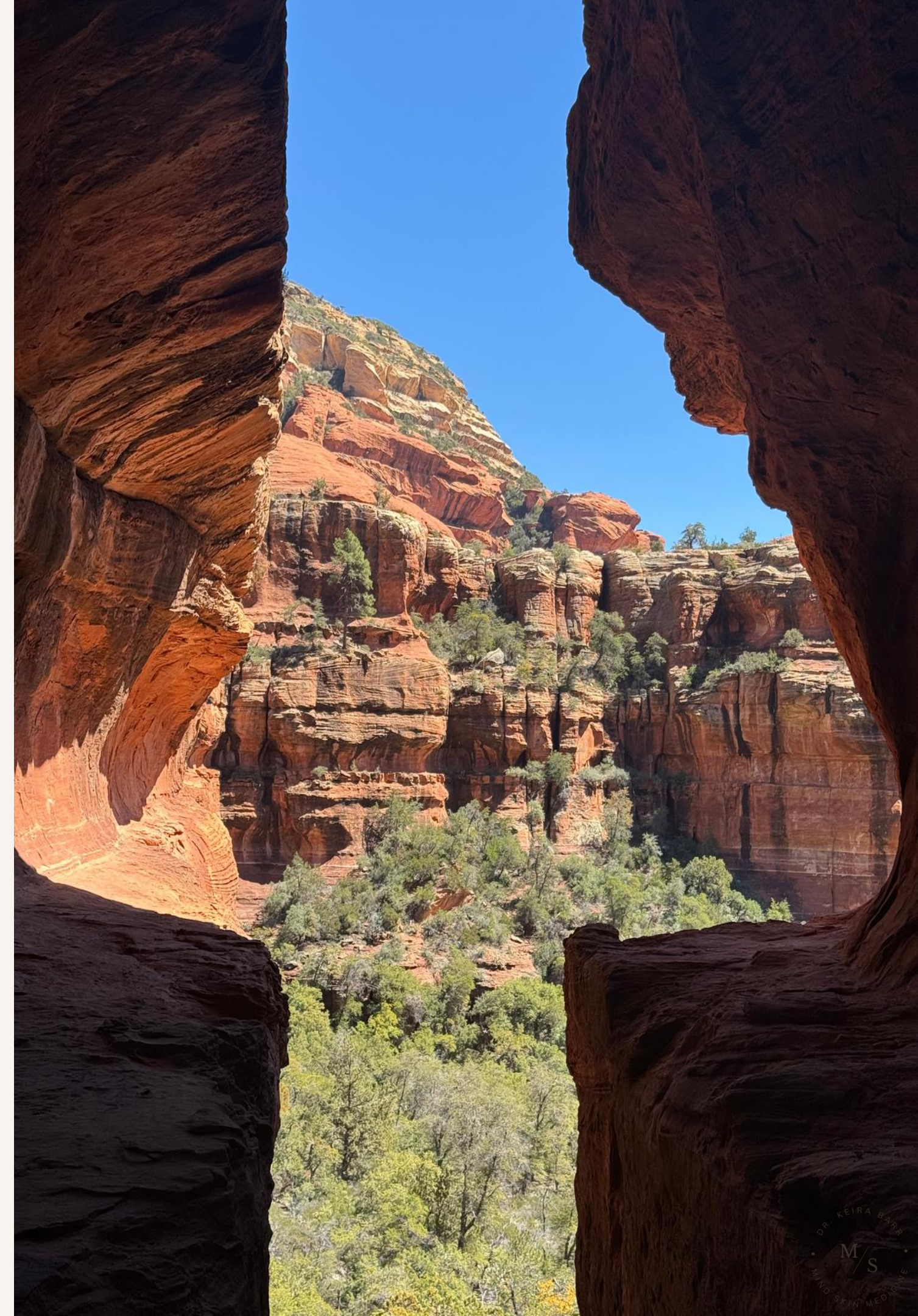


What They Taught You....

- Clinico-Pathologic Correlation
- Diagnostic Testing
- Procedural Techniques
- Pharmacology
- Curating skincare routine with products



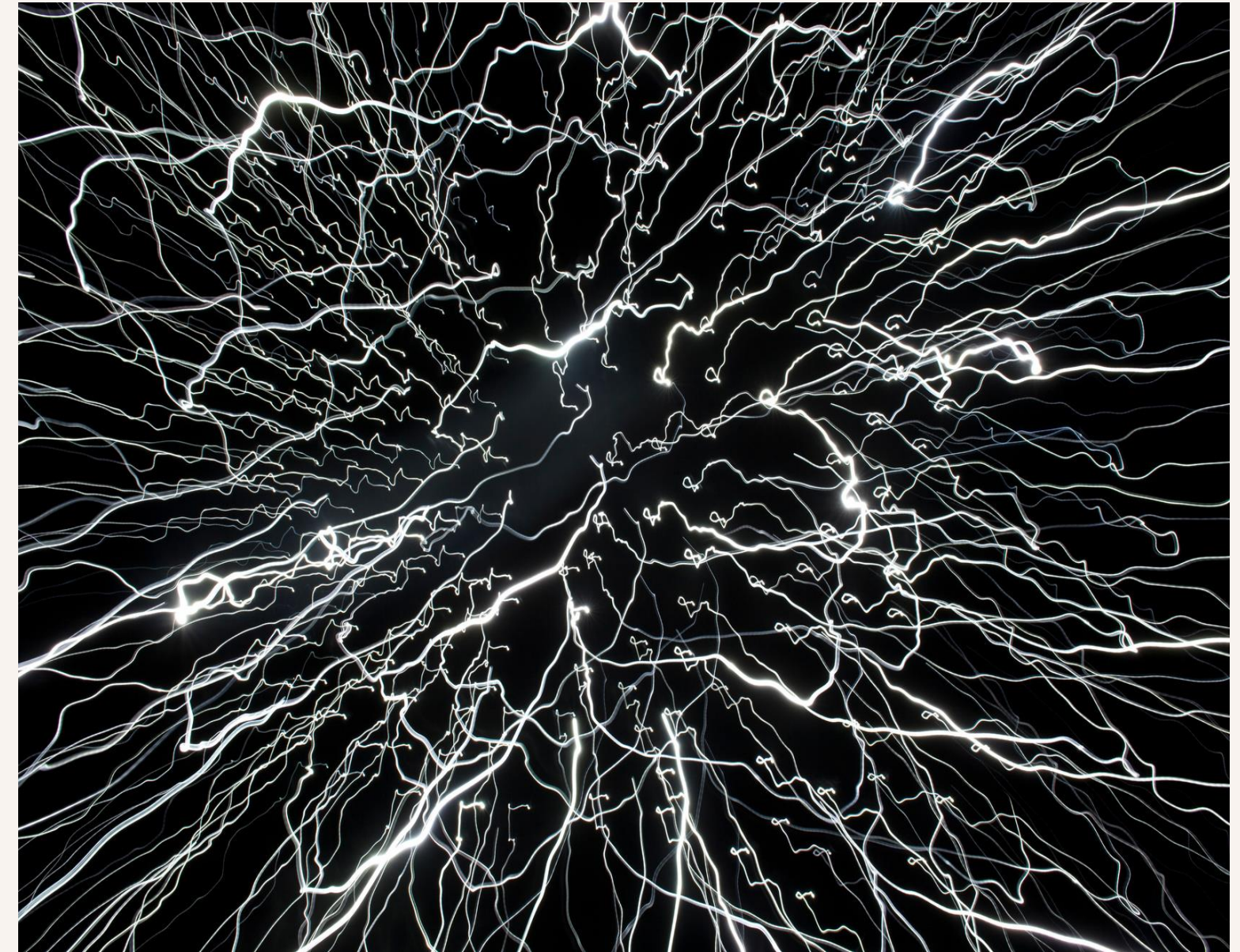
The Missing Curriculum in Dermatology



The Hidden Burden of Skin Disease

Living with a skin disease means managing....

- The uncertainty of when flares will occur
- Pain and its emotional toll
- Social stigma & medical gaslighting
- Years without a correct diagnosis



The Impact of Living With Skin Disease

- **1 in 3** dermatology patients experience psychiatric morbidity
- **85%** report mental health issues stemming from living with their condition
- **72%** of Vitiligo patients with >5% body surface area had moderate to severe depressive symptoms
- **63%** increased risk of developing clinical depression in the first year following an acne diagnosis
- **75.7%** Acne pts struggle with stress/anxiety
- Childhood trauma: increase risk

Even Mild to Moderate skin disease may be associated with depression and suicidal ideation

The Unspoken Burden of Being A Dermatologist

- Anxious, shut-down, overextended
- Living in survival mode
- Feeling rushed, depleted and exhausted



The body you bring into the room is
just as important as the treatment you
recommend.

*Because if we want to help our patients feel safe
in their skin, we have to start by creating safety
in ours.*

That's where healing begins. And
where burnout starts to unravel.

The Real Cost of Disconnection

- **>50%** dermatologists report burnout sx
- Anxiety and depression on the rise
- Running on empty

The problem is deeper

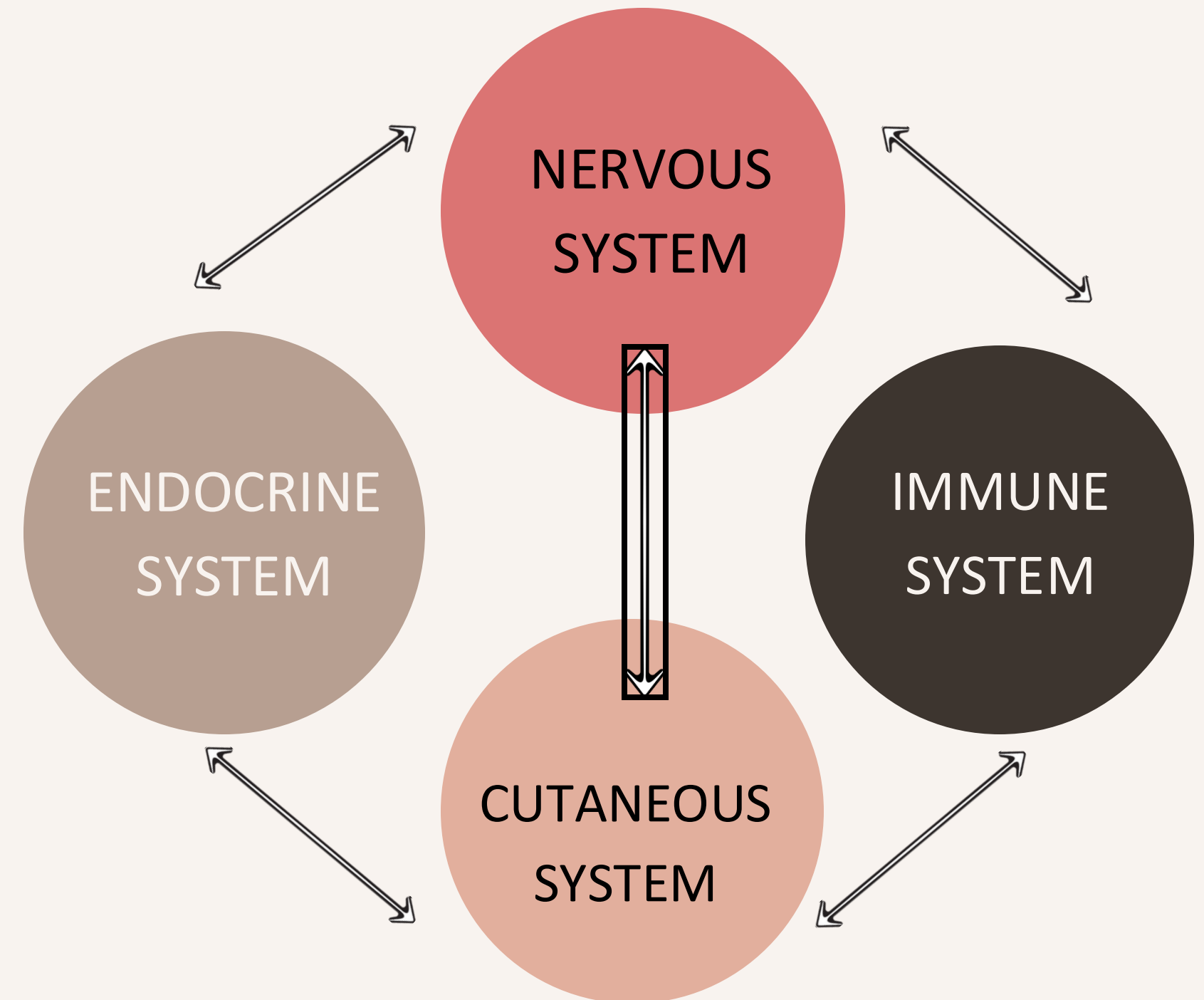
- We were never taught how to listen to our bodies
- How to track our nervous system state
- How to notice when we've left ourselves—***and how to come back.***



Why Your Nervous System Matters

You don't leave your nervous system at the clinic door. Neither does your patient.

- Nervous system and Skin derived from ectoderm
- Constantly communicating & responding to environments
- N.I.C.E. network **ensures a coordinated response** to stress, injury and inflammation maintaining homeostasis
- Chronic stress sends these systems into defense mode

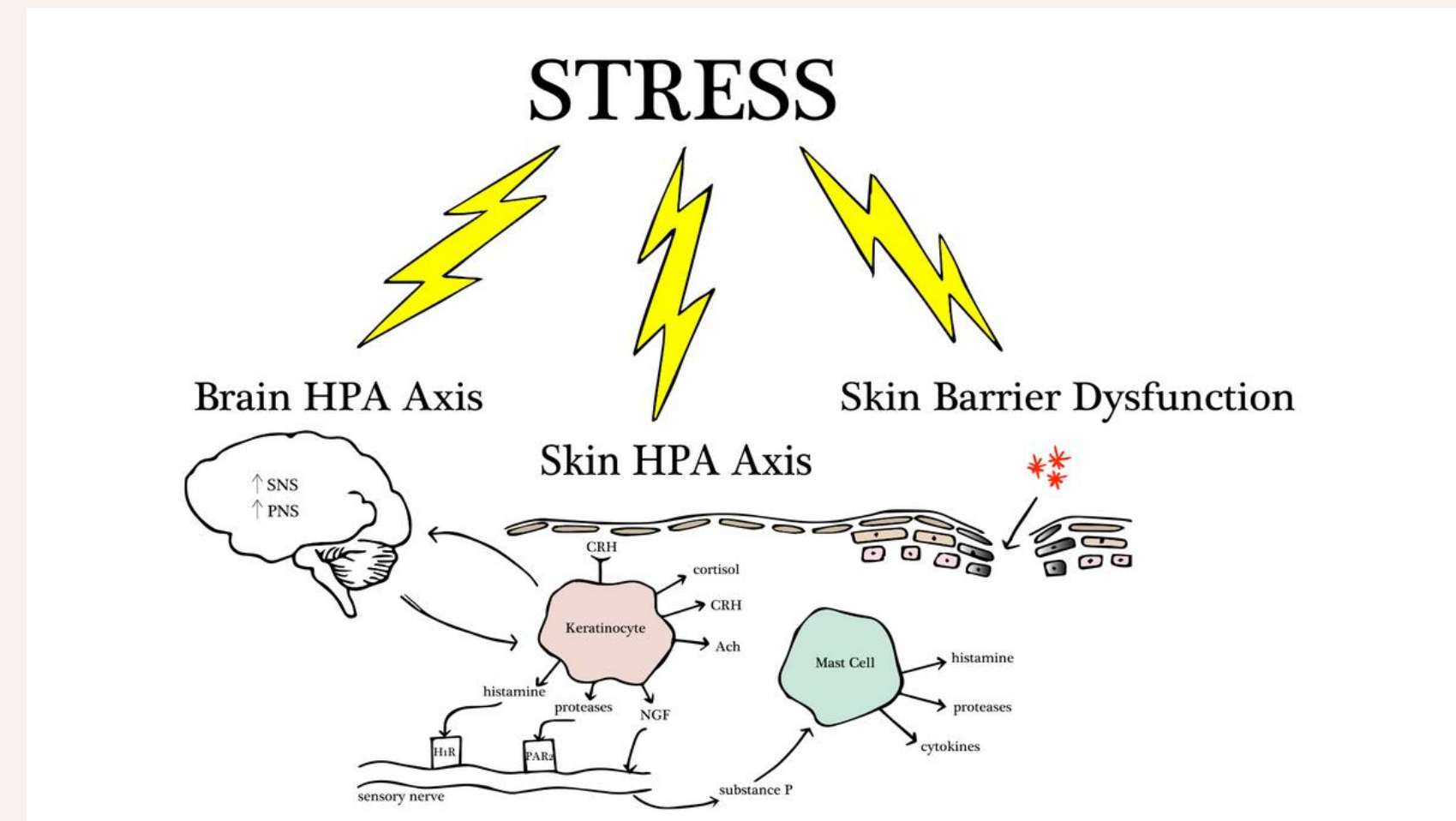


The N.I.C.E. Network

Your Skin Isn't Just A Barrier

It's a Messenger

- Skin has own HPA= stress response organ
- Skin is a neuroimmunoendocrine organ
- Generates & amplifies the stress response



A Vicious Cycle



Healing Requires Safety

And Safety Begins With Your Presence

What Happens When There's "Danger":

- Downregulation of antimicrobial peptides
- Impaired wound healing
- Impaired collagen synthesis
- Stimulation of melanogenesis
- Dysbiosis of cutaneous microbiome
- Increased mast cell degranulation
- Skin barrier dysfunction
- Decreased ceramide and lipid production
- Accelerated telomere shortening
- Stimulation of sebum and lipogenesis



How You Show Up Matters

- **Let's Reframe:**
 - *What's wrong with this patient?*
- **Get curious:**
 - *What's their nervous system been through?*
 - *What's mine been through and how do I want to show up today?*



My Story

The moment before it all came crashing down.....

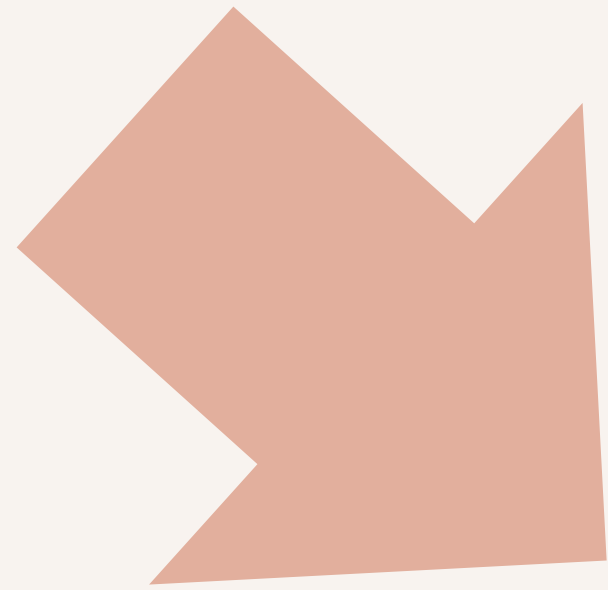


Your ANS is Your Personal Surveillance System

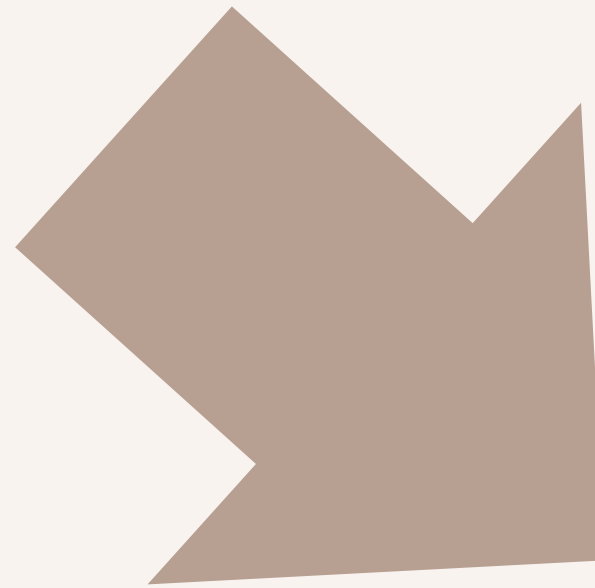


Pathways of Neuroception

Where to Listen When Your Body's Talking



inside/embodied



outside/environmental



between/relational

The Nervous System “Elevator”

Penthouse: Ventral Vagal (Safety & Connection)

- Immune regulation & healing

Mid-Floor: Sympathetic NS (Battlefield: Fight/ Flight)

- Inflammation, stress hormones surge

Basement: Dorsal Vagal – (Collapse& Shutdown)

- Immune suppression, perpetuate disease severity



Credit: Stephen Porges and Carrie DeJong (carriedejong.com)

Emotional Barriers To Treatment

- Emotional shock at diagnosis
- Shame, stigma, trauma
- Lack of clarity on expectations, SE
- No safe container to ask questions or express hesitations



Self-Inquiry: What Floor Are You On Right Now?

- **Ventral Vagal** (Penthouse) - Connected, grounded, socially engaged
- **Sympathetic** (Survival Floor) - Mobilized, anxious, restless
- **Dorsal Vagal** (Basement/Conservation)- Numb, frozen, disconnected

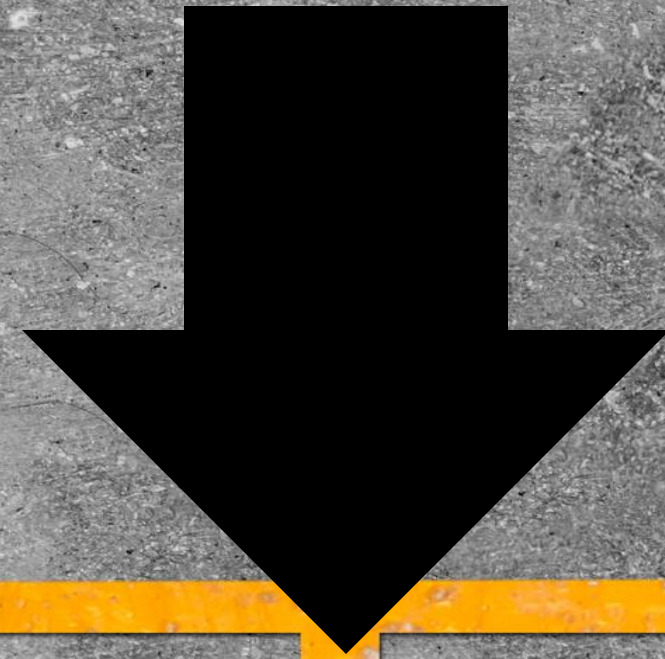


What sensations, breath patterns, or body cues informed your answer?

How Do We Get The Elevator Moving Again?



Shift From Danger

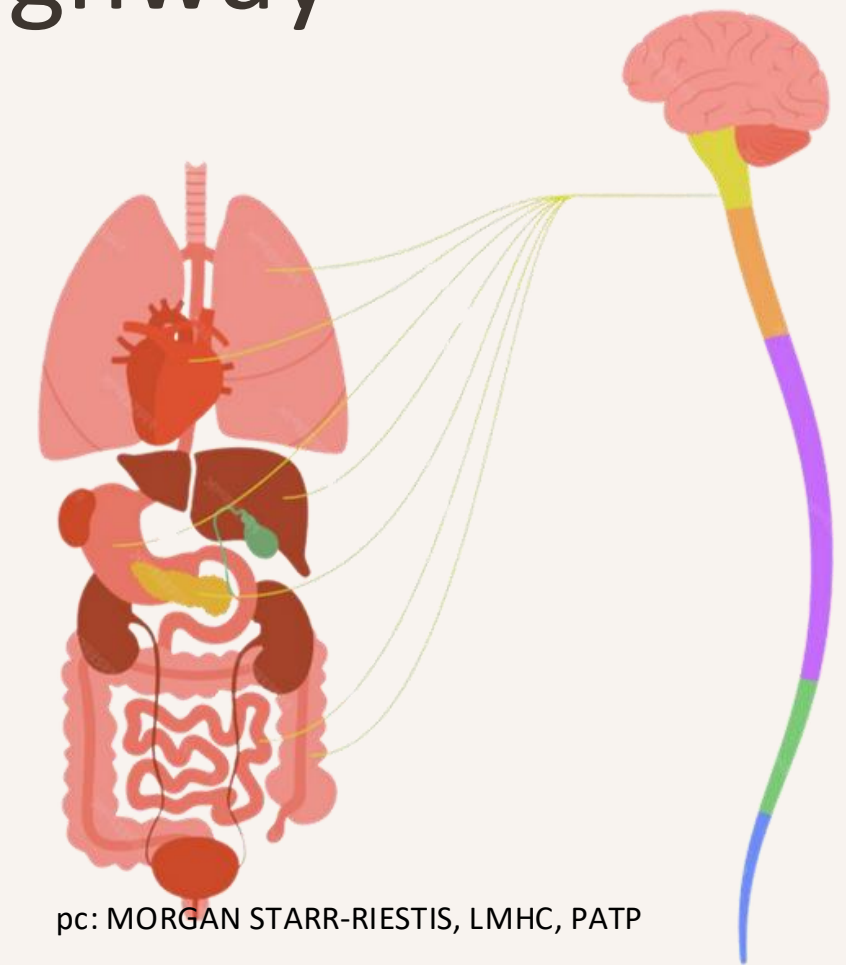


SAFETY

The Vagus Nerve:

Your Nervous System's Communication Superhighway

- Part of the parasympathetic nervous system (PNS)
- Runs from the brainstem through the face, ears, throat, heart, lungs, diaphragm, and gut
- Acts like a **motor for the elevator**, helping shift between sympathetic (SNS) and vagal states (ventral + dorsal)
 - **85%** of its fibers are sensory, carrying messages from the **BODY** to the brain
 - Regulates digestion, heart rate, hormones, and emotional state
- **Strong vagal tone** = smooth transitions, lower stress + inflammation, better emotional regulation
- **Weak vagal tone** = elevator gets stuck → stress reactivity, inflammation, emotional overwhelm

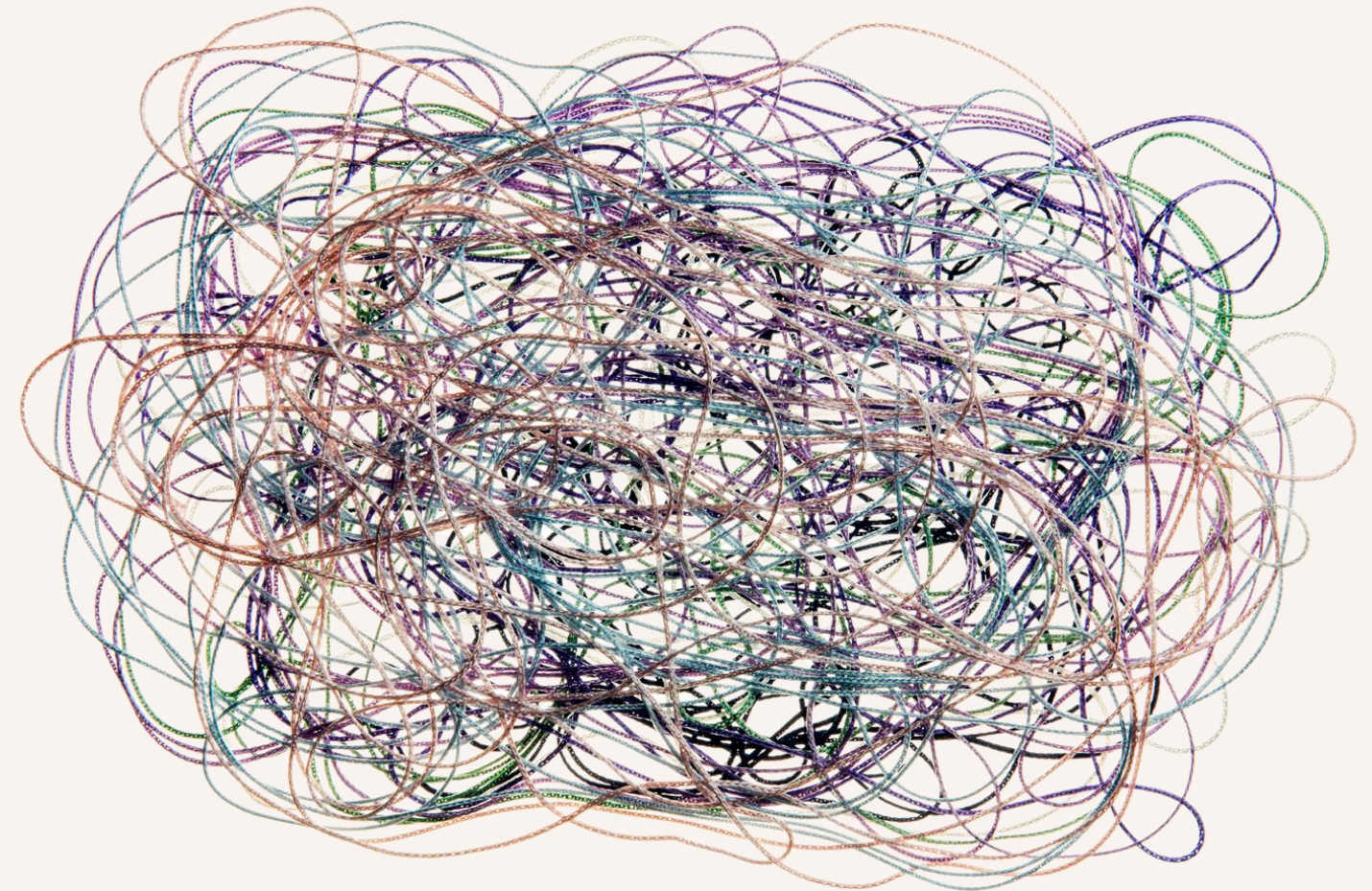


pc: MORGAN STARR-RIESTIS, LMHC, PATP



● If You're Stuck In Sympathetic (mid-floor)

- Try shaking out your hands
- Do 60 seconds of rhythmic movement
- Progressive Muscle Tension and Release
- Heel Raises



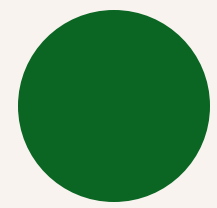
These help metabolize adrenaline and move energy that feels like “too much.”

● If Your Stuck In Dorsal Vagal (basement)

- Orient your eyes—look around the room, name colors or objects.
- Try humming to stimulate the vagus nerve.
- Gentle tapping, squeezing body or micro-movements like wiggling fingers and toes can help you feel the edges of your body again.



These help reawaken your awareness when the system has gone into freeze or collapse.



If You're In Ventral Vagal (penthouse)

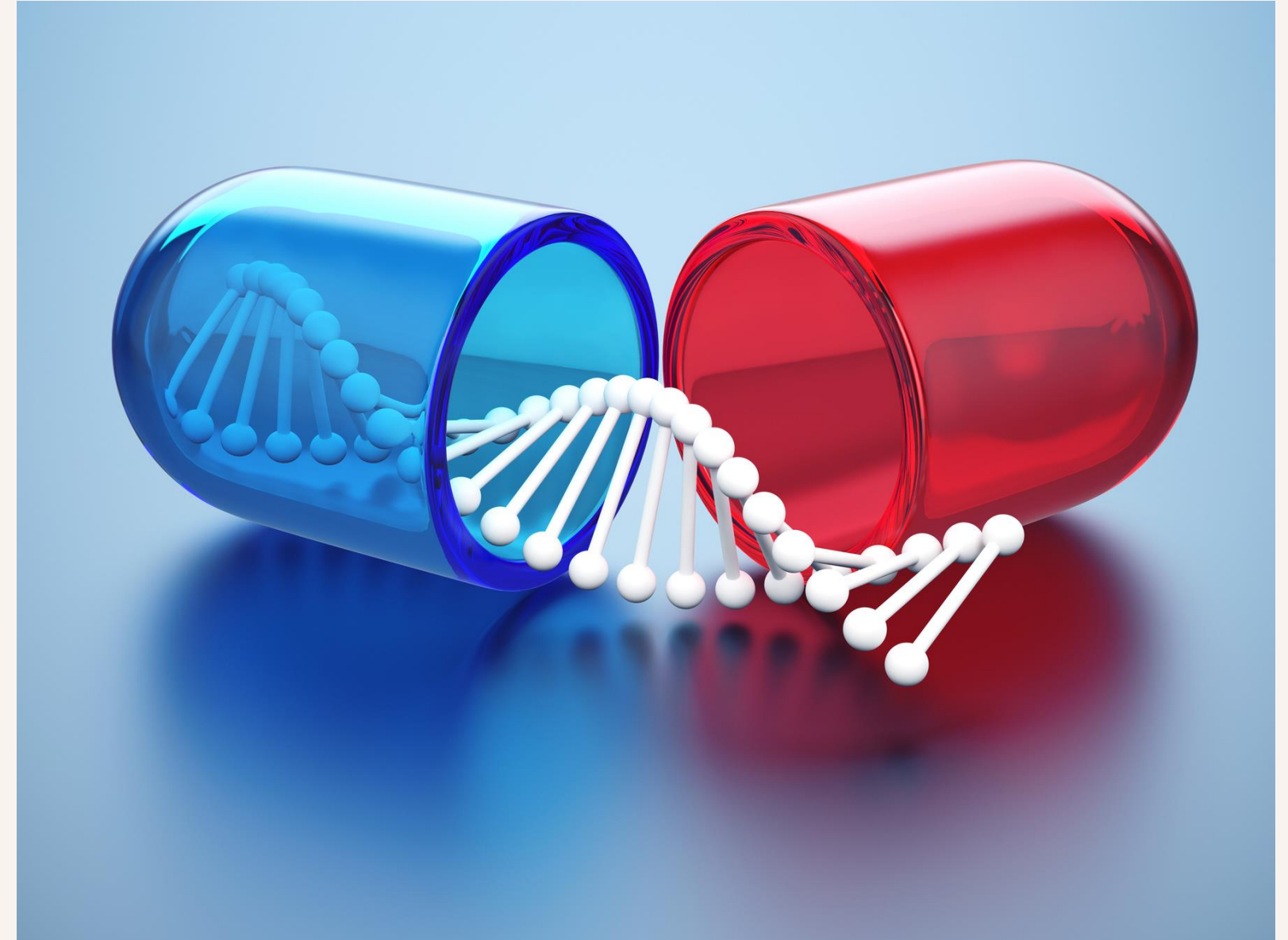
- Soft belly breathing
- Extended exhale
- Hand on heart + belly touch
- Savor the moment and stretch it—linger in safety



These build capacity and increase nervous system flexibility.

Co-Regulation: The Invisible Medicine

- Our nervous system is wired for connection
- Co-regulation is when your regulated state helps someone else feel safe enough to settle.
- Co-regulation precedes self-regulation



"I've learned that people will forget what
you said, people will forget what you did,
but people will never forget **how you
made them feel.**"

- Maya Angelou

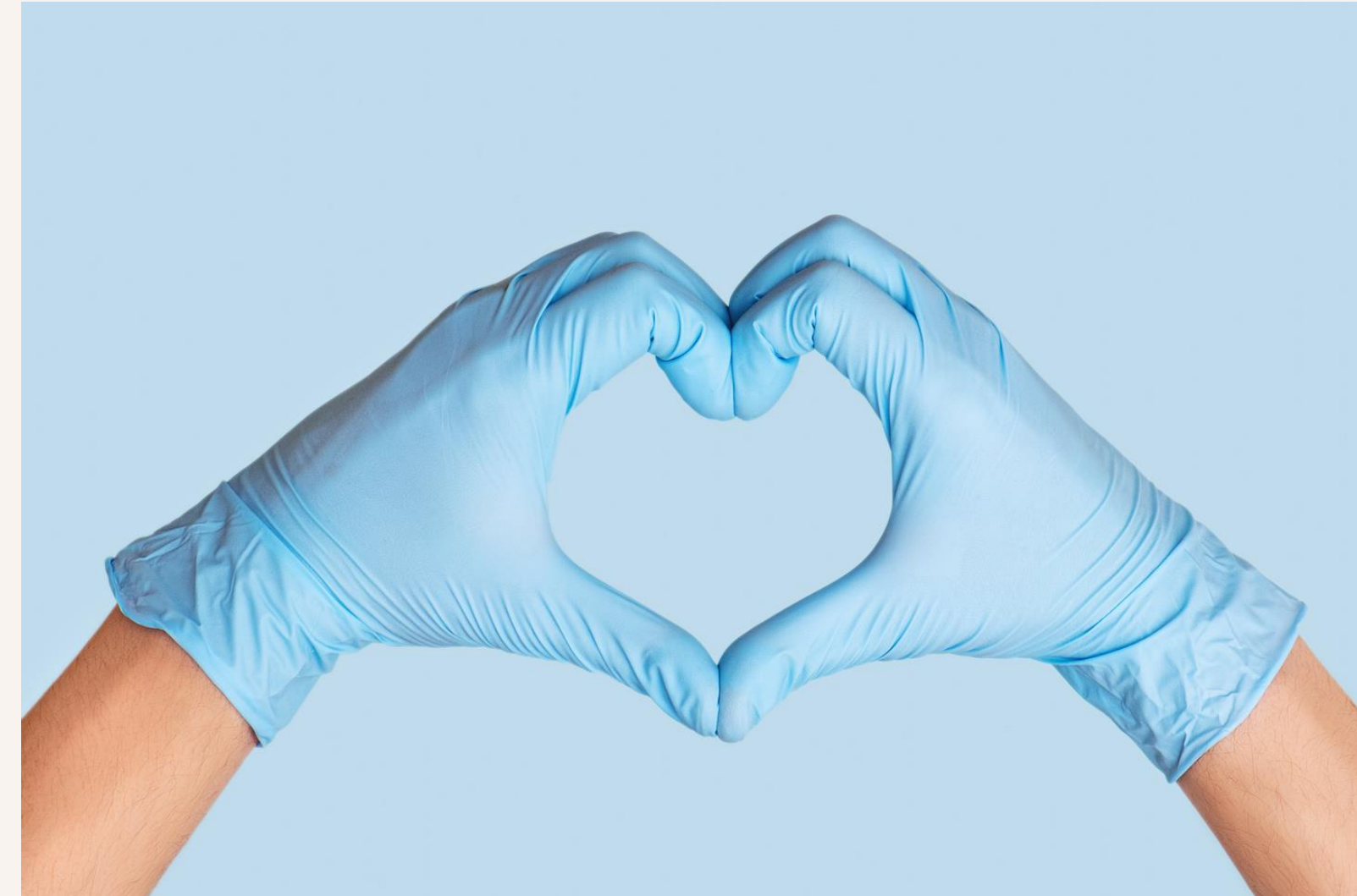
Check In: Before You Enter The Room

- **What floor am I on?**
 - Check in with the 3 pathways
 - **Inside** (body + mind)
 - What's happening in my breath, muscles, or thoughts?
 - Is there a welcome... or a warning?
 - **Outside** (physical environment)
 - What in my surroundings feels safe, overwhelming, or unsettled?
 - **Between** (relational)
 - What's happening in my connection to this person? Am I open... or guarded?



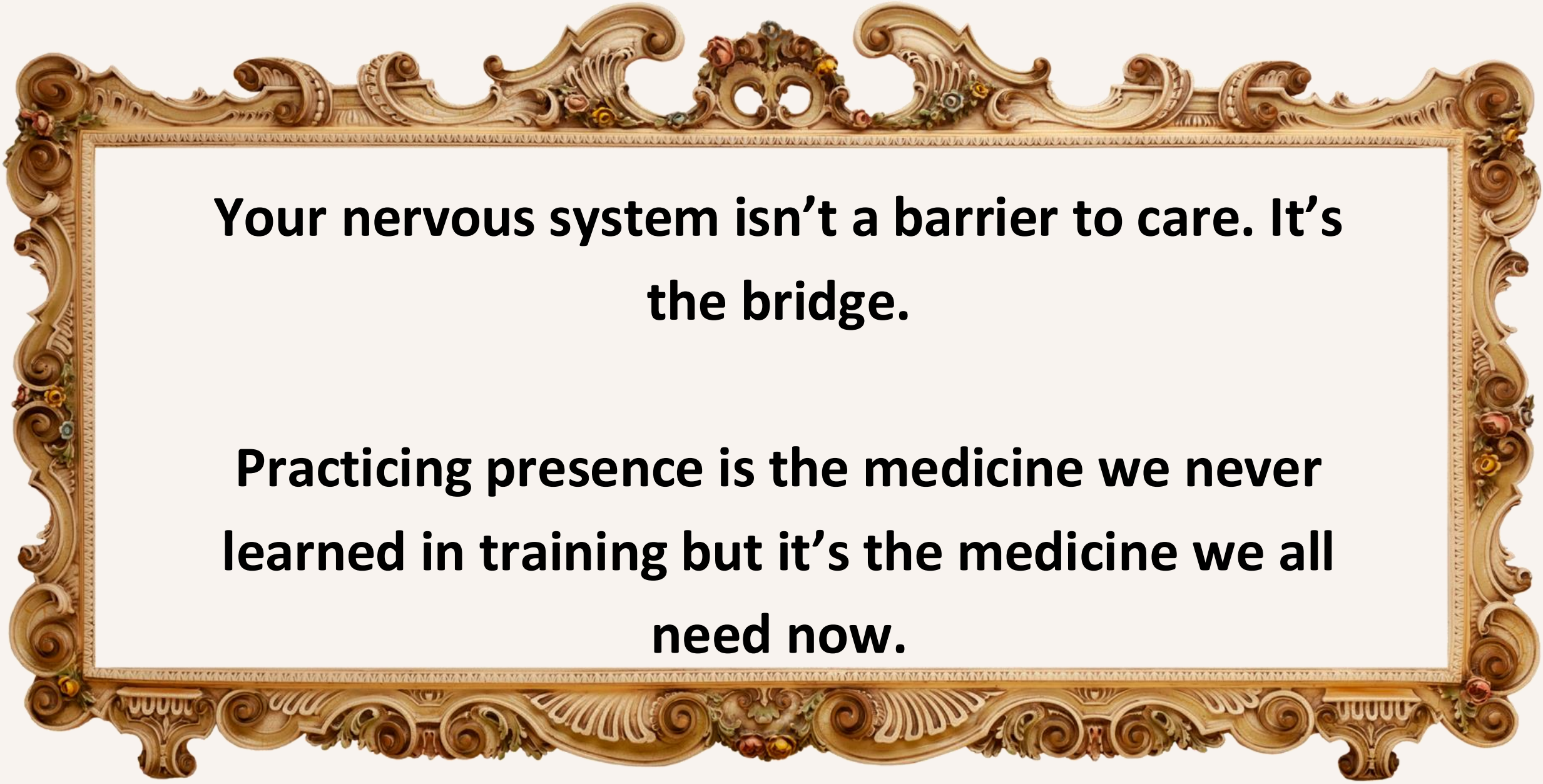
In Practice: Your Presence is Medicine

- **Anchor yourself first**
 - One steady breath before entering the room can shift your state—and theirs.
- **Let your body communicate safety**
 - Soften your gaze. Unfurl your spine. Soften your jaw. Use prosody and pacing of voice.
- **Be with, not just “fix”**
 - A moment of attunement: *“That sounds really hard”* can regulate more than rushing into recommendation
- **Use micro-moments**
 - Grounding before delivering difficult news, pausing your speech, or gently naming emotion can shift the entire energy of the encounter.
- **Remember: co-regulation isn’t extra**
 - It’s the invisible foundation that makes your care more effective, your patient more receptive, and your day more easeful.



Bigger Picture: Why This Really Matters

Our wellbeing relies on the flexibility and resilience of our nervous system

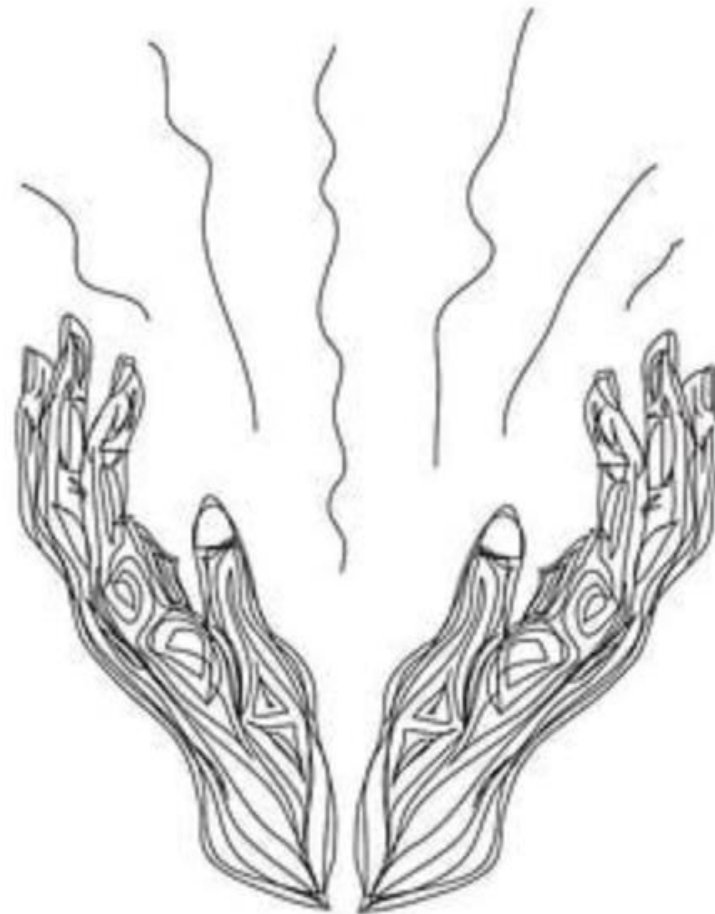


**Your nervous system isn't a barrier to care. It's
the bridge.**

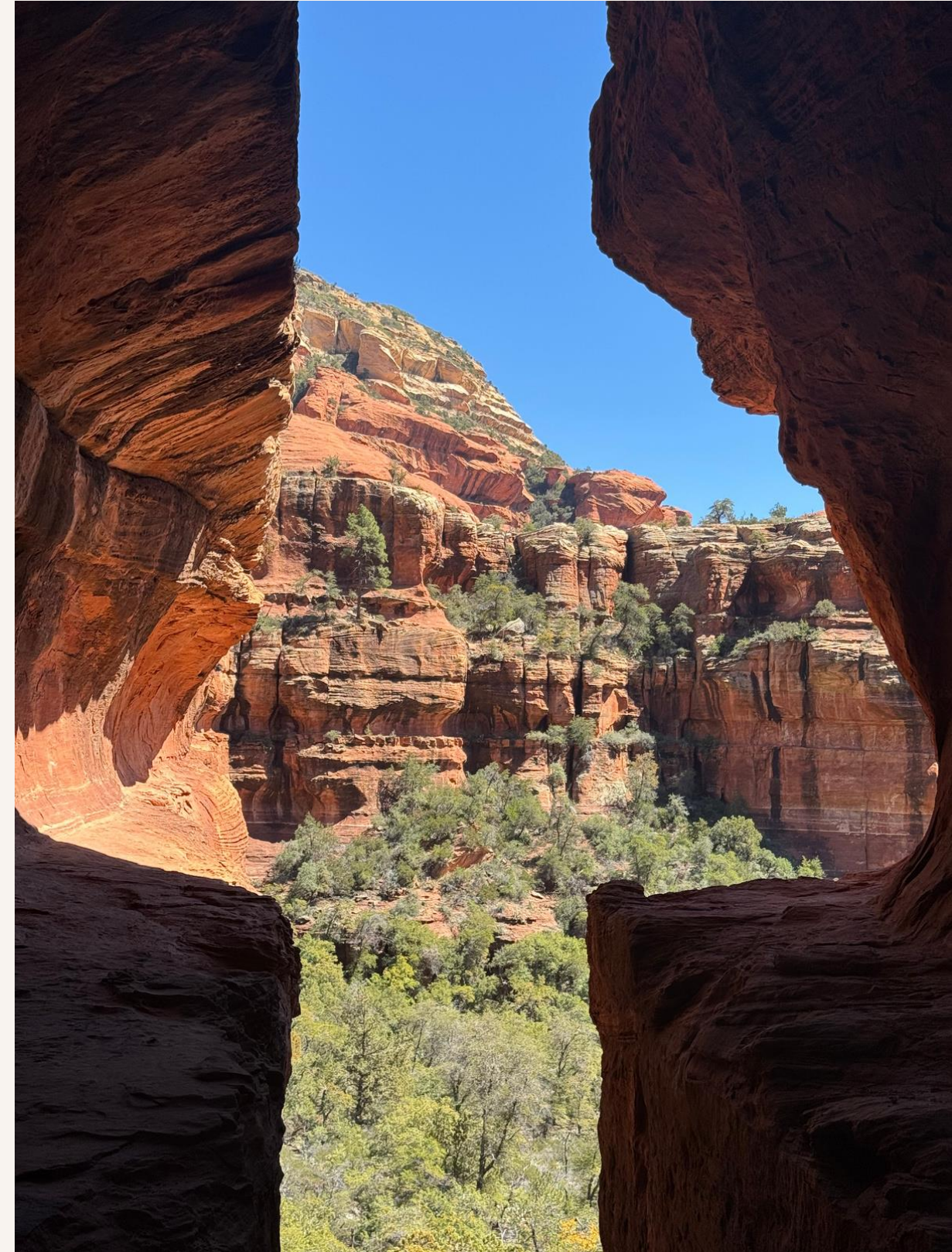
**Practicing presence is the medicine we never
learned in training but it's the medicine we all
need now.**

the world
gives you
so much pain
and here you are
making gold out of it

there is nothing purer than that - rupi kaur



Stress Relief Guide



Free Online Workshop

September 9th 10a PT



From Flare to Flow:
Why Your Skin Won't Calm Down
(and How to Finally Change That)

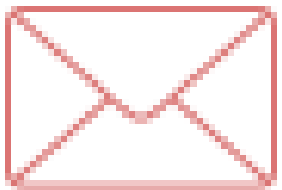




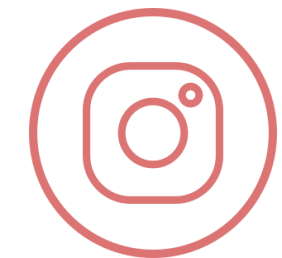
LET'S STAY CONNECTED



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