

**BAD STUFF HAPPENS**

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AGAIN

**BAD STUFF HAPPENS**

BUT IT WILL BE HOW WELL THE PATIENT IS ABLE TO PROCESS, INTEGRATE, AND ADAPT TO ITS IMPACT PSYCHOLOGICALLY, PHYSIOLOGICALLY, AND ENERGETICALLY THAT WILL MAKE OF IT

**EITHER A GROWTH – DISRUPTING TRAUMA** THAT OVERWHELMS BECAUSE IT IS “TOO MUCH”  
**“TRAUMATIC STRESS”**

OR A GROWTH – PROMOTING OPPORTUNITY THAT MAKES POSSIBLE TRANSFORMATION AND RENEWAL  
**“OPTIMAL STRESS”**

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**THE GOLDILOCKS PRINCIPLE**

**TOO MUCH CHALLENGE**  
WILL OVERWHELM AND PLUMMET THE PATIENT INTO FURTHER DECLINE BECAUSE IT WILL BE “TOO MUCH” TO BE PROCESSED AND INTEGRATED  
**TRAUMATIC STRESS**

**TOO LITTLE CHALLENGE**  
WILL OFFER “TOO LITTLE” IMPETUS FOR TRANSFORMATION AND GROWTH, SERVING INSTEAD SIMPLY TO REINFORCE THE (DYSFUNCTIONAL) STATUS QUO

**BUT JUST THE RIGHT AMOUNT OF CHALLENGE**  
WILL PROVIDE “JUST THE RIGHT AMOUNT” OF LEVERAGE NEEDED TO PROVOKE, AFTER INITIAL DISRUPTION, EVENTUAL RECONSTITUTION AT A HIGHER LEVEL OF INTEGRATION, FUNCTIONALITY, AND ADAPTIVE CAPACITY  
**OPTIMAL (NONTRAUMATIC) STRESS**

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WITH THE THERAPIST'S FINGER  
EVER ON THE PULSE OF THE  
PATIENT'S LEVEL OF ANXIETY  
AND CAPACITY TO TOLERATE  
FURTHER CHALLENGE

THE THERAPIST WILL THEREFORE REPEATEDLY

CHALLENGE WHENEVER POSSIBLE  
BY DIRECTING THE PATIENT'S ATTENTION  
TO WHERE THE PATIENT IS NOT  
DISRUPTIVE ATTUNEMENT

AND SUPPORT WHENEVER NECESSARY  
BY RESONATING EMPATHICALLY  
WITH WHERE THE PATIENT IS  
HOMEOSTATIC ATTUNEMENT

SALMAN AKHTAR (2012) 4

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ALL WITH AN EYE TO CREATING  
JUST THE RIGHT LEVEL  
OF DESTABILIZING ANXIETY  
AND INCENTIVIZING STRESS

– OPTIMAL STRESS –

THEREBY OPTIMIZING THE  
PATIENT'S POTENTIAL FOR  
TRANSFORMATION AND GROWTH

NECESSARY BECAUSE ...

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WHETHER FUNCTIONAL OR DYSFUNCTIONAL

SELF – ORGANIZING  
(CHAOTIC) SYSTEMS

SUCH AS THE PATIENT'S LONG – ESTABLISHED AND  
DEEPLY ENTRENCHED "DEFENSIVE STRUCTURES"

ARE INHERENTLY  
RESISTANT TO CHANGE

AFTER ALL

"SELF – ORGANIZING SYSTEMS  
RESIST PERTURBATION"

CHARLES KREBS (2013) 6

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I AM HERE REMINDED OF PORTIA NELSON'S  
**AUTOBIOGRAPHY IN 5 SHORT CHAPTERS**  
 WHICH SPEAKS TO BOTH OUR INTENSE ATTACHMENT  
 TO THE "DYSFUNCTIONAL STATUS QUO"  
 AND OUR CAPACITY ULTIMATELY TO CHANGE

**CHAPTER 1**  
 I WALK DOWN THE STREET  
 THERE IS A DEEP HOLE IN THE SIDEWALK  
 I FALL IN  
 I AM LOST ... I AM HELPLESS  
 IT ISN'T MY FAULT  
 IT TAKES FOREVER TO FIND A WAY OUT

**CHAPTER 2**  
 I WALK DOWN THE SAME STREET  
 THERE IS A DEEP HOLE IN THE SIDEWALK  
 I PRETEND I DON'T SEE IT  
 I FALL IN AGAIN  
 I CAN'T BELIEVE I AM IN THE SAME PLACE  
 BUT IT ISN'T MY FAULT  
 IT STILL TAKES A LONG TIME TO GET OUT

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**CHAPTER 3**  
 I WALK DOWN THE SAME STREET  
 THERE IS A DEEP HOLE IN THE SIDEWALK  
 I SEE IT IS THERE  
 I STILL FALL IN ... IT'S A HABIT  
 MY EYES ARE OPEN  
 I KNOW WHERE I AM  
 IT IS MY FAULT  
 I GET OUT IMMEDIATELY

**CHAPTER 4**  
 I WALK DOWN THE SAME STREET  
 THERE IS A DEEP HOLE IN THE SIDEWALK  
 I WALK AROUND IT

**CHAPTER 5**  
 I WALK DOWN ANOTHER STREET

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I AM ALSO HERE REMINDED OF  
 A SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE SKIT IN WHICH  
 TWO MEN ARE SEATED AROUND A FIRE  
 CHATTING AND ONE SAYS TO THE OTHER –

**"YOU KNOW HOW WHEN YOU STICK  
 A POKER IN THE FIRE AND LEAVE IT IN  
 FOR A LONG TIME,  
 IT GETS REALLY, REALLY HOT?  
 AND THEN YOU STICK IT IN YOUR EYE,  
 AND IT REALLY, REALLY HURTS?  
 I HATE IT WHEN THAT HAPPENS!  
 I JUST HATE IT WHEN THAT HAPPENS!"**

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**A POPULAR SONG**  
THAT SPEAKS TO THE NEED  
SO MANY OF US HAVE  
TO RECREATE THAT WITH WHICH  
WE ARE MOST FAMILIAR  
AND THEREFORE MOST COMFORTABLE  
IS A ROCK SONG BY  
THE LATE WARREN ZEVON (1996)  
ENTITLED  
"IF YOU WON'T LEAVE ME  
I'LL FIND SOMEBODY WHO WILL"

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AGAIN  
**"SELF – ORGANIZING SYSTEMS  
RESIST PERTURBATION"**  
WHAT THIS MEANS IS THAT  
UNLESS A "CHAOTIC" SYSTEM  
IS SUFFICIENTLY "PERTURBED"  
– SUFFICIENTLY "STRESSED" –  
BY INPUT FROM THE OUTSIDE  
THEN IT WILL MAINTAIN ITS STATUS QUO  
AND AS THIS RELATES TO THE PATIENT  
UNLESS THE PATIENT'S  
"DYSFUNCTIONAL DEFENSES"  
ARE SUFFICIENTLY "CHALLENGED"  
BY THE THERAPIST  
THEN THERE WILL BE INSUFFICIENT  
IMPETUS FOR THEIR DESTABILIZATION  
– AND THUS LITTLE INCENTIVE FOR GROWTH –

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