

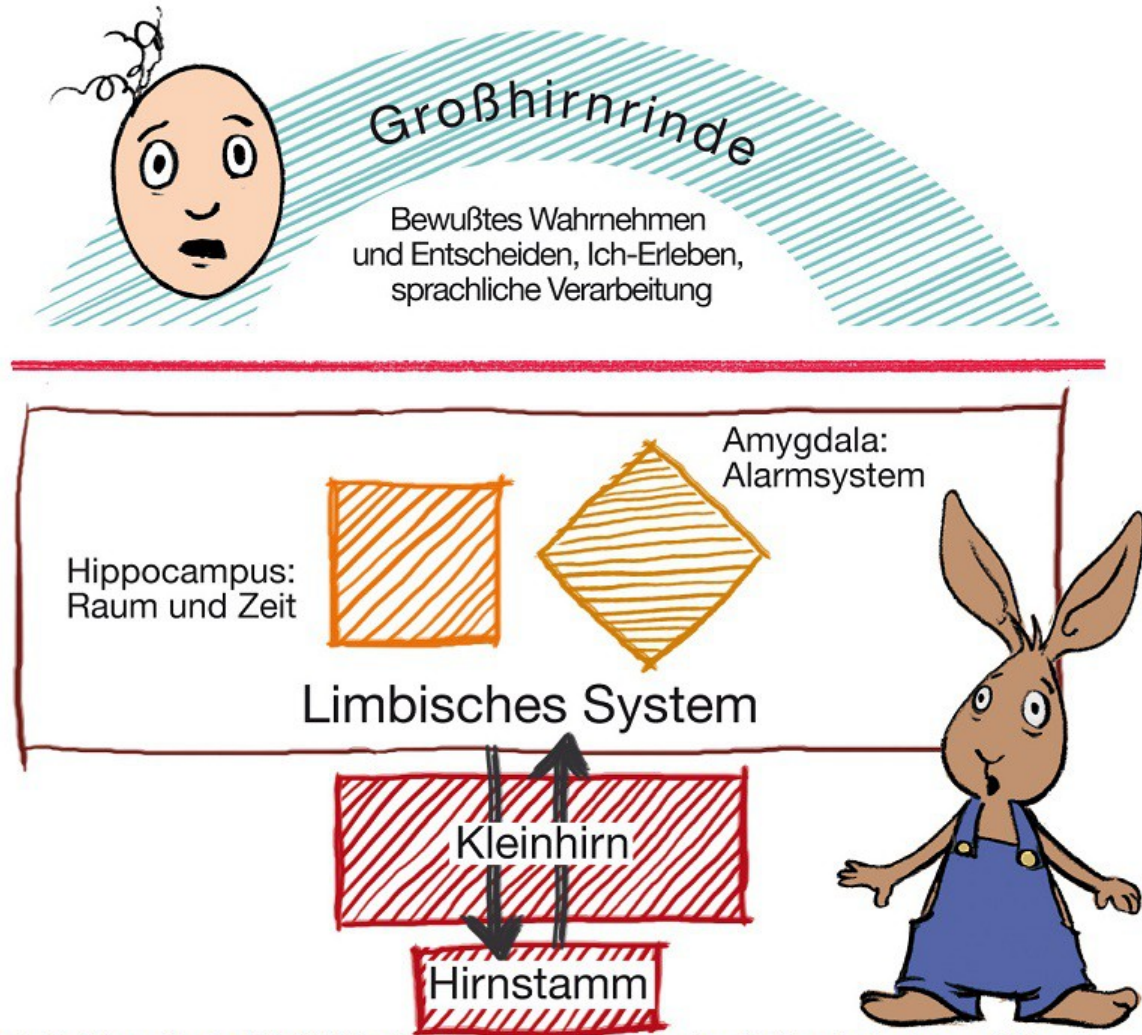
Lydia Hantke

What do we call „trauma“?

Illustrations by Kai Pannen
www.illustrationsbuero.de

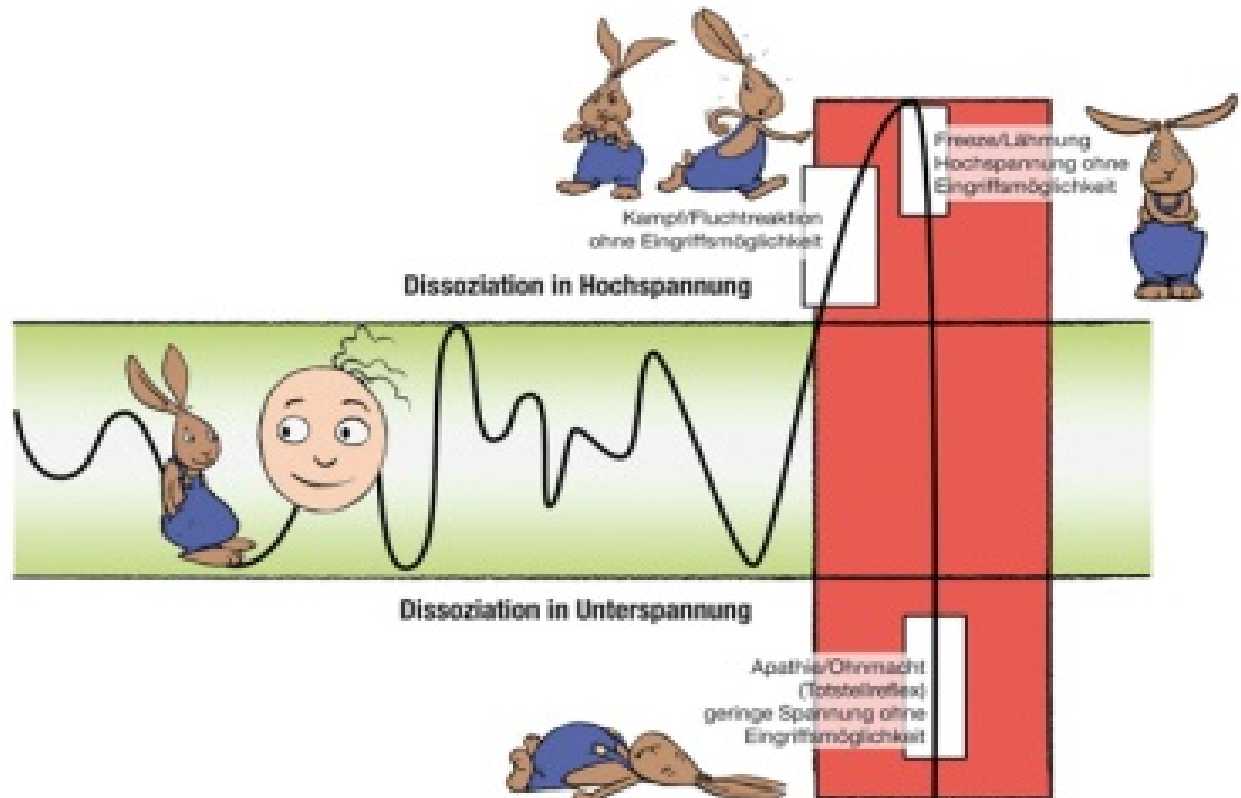
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Hantke, Lydia / Görges, Hans-Joachim 2012: Handbuch Traumakompetenz. Basiswissen für Therapie, Beratung und Pädagogik. Paderborn: Junfermann. Grafiken von Kai Pannen, mit freundlicher Genehmigung des Junfermann-Verlages

What does „trauma“ mean?



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It's a little bit complicated, and if you have any further questions, please have a look at „Handbuch Traumakompetenz“ by Lydia Hantke and Hans-Joachim Görges published in 2012. All figures are taken from this book with permission of the editor. For additional figures and further information, see www.be-here-now.eu

This is a human
being

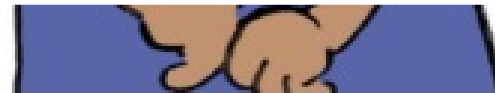


We think this is a human being, but it is only one part of it. It is our frontal cortex, let's call it the "Thinker". This is the one that wants to decide, to have influence, as well as to control, plan and structure our future.

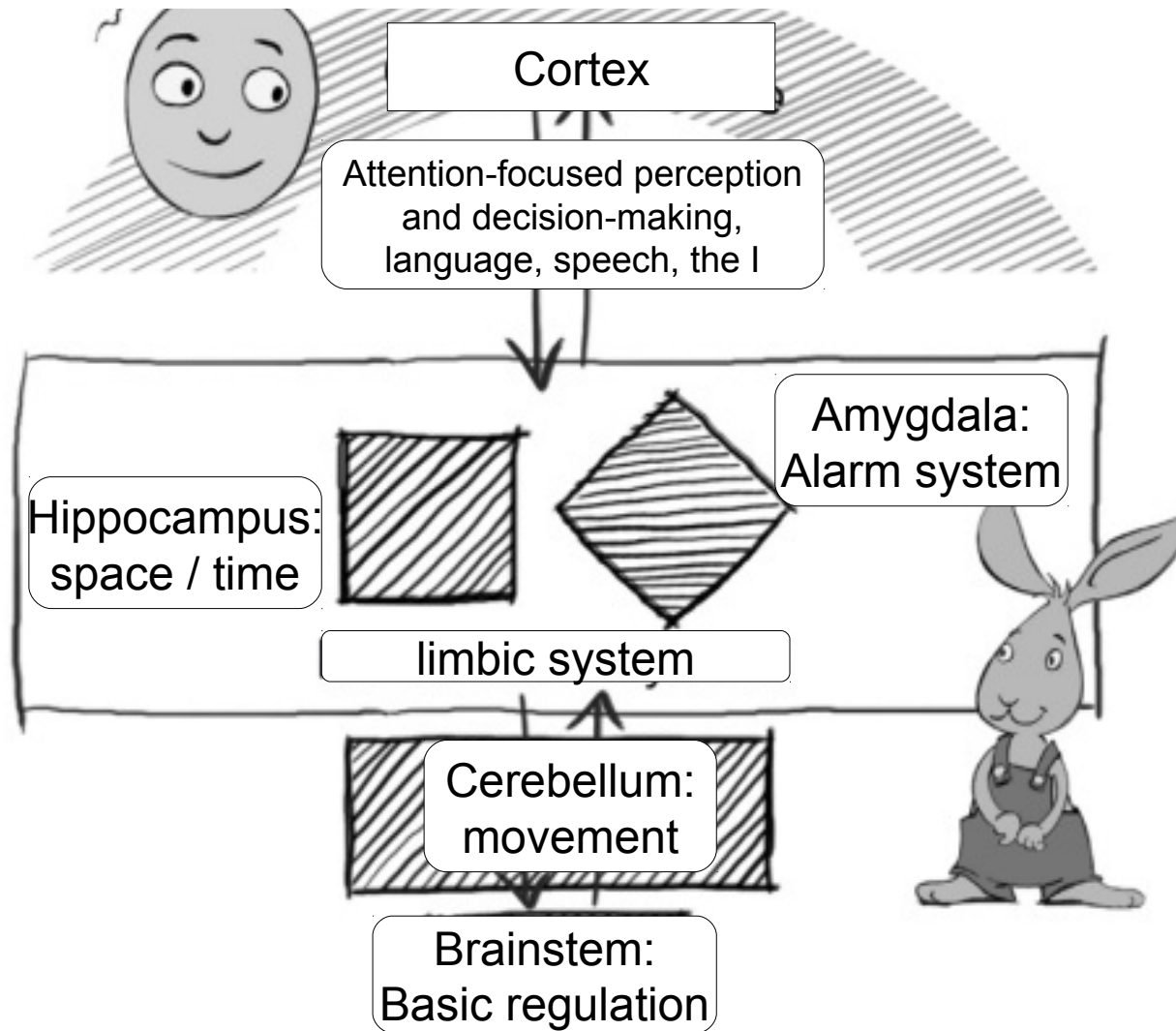
But there is still something else...



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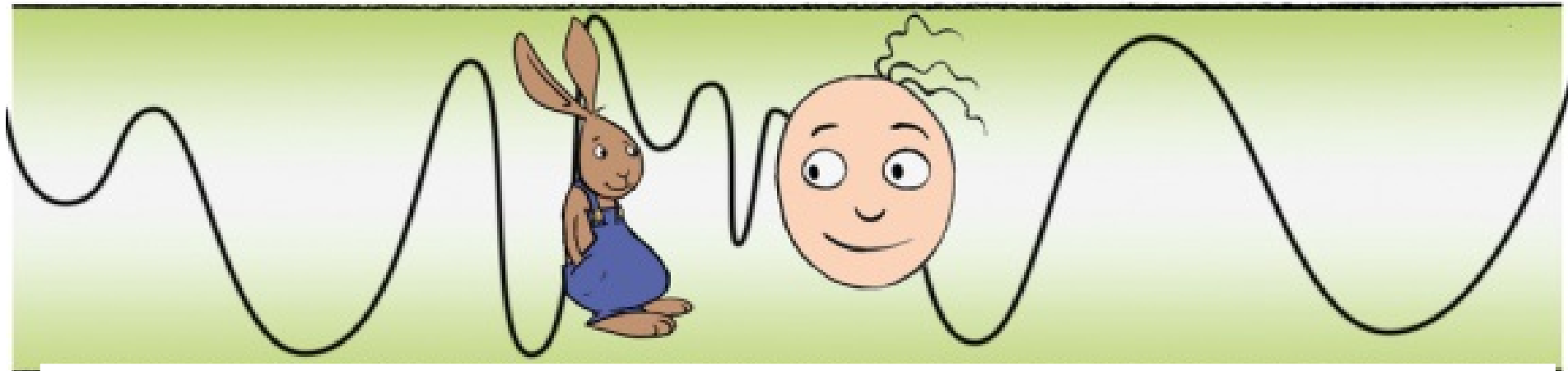


...and this is important when we want to understand symptoms and dynamics of traumatization. It is our human body, which is quite similar to any other mammal. It would say, I am controlling myself. I do not need the Thinker. I am working very well automatically.



The Rabbit says: I am adapting my body to the environment; I am controlling my heart rate, body-tension as well as my breath. I don't need the Thinker to do so. But if we work together, we have access to everything we have learned.

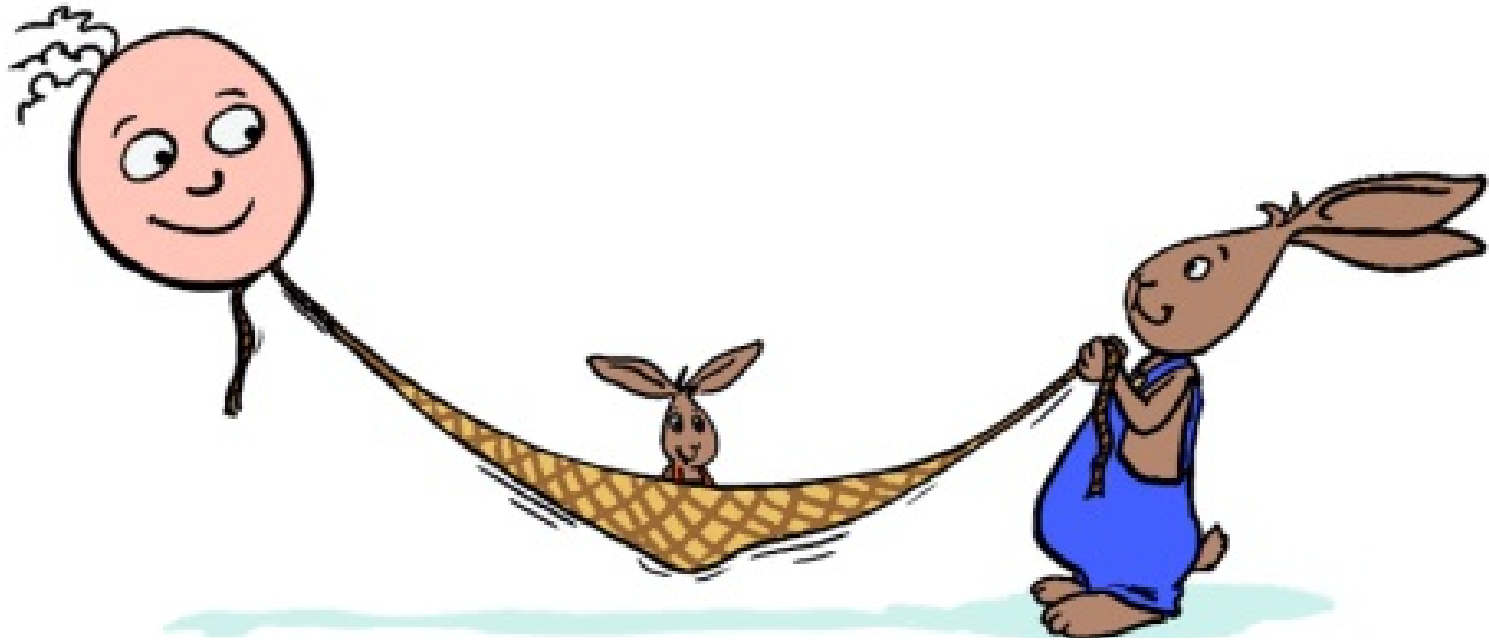
Frame of resources



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If body and mind, Rabbit and Thinker work together well, we can relax or get tense - just as we like. We are flexible in our thinking, acting, and adapting to the world. We are within the framework of our resources. Even if needs are high, we are still able to think and to decide balancing our body, and handling stress and strong emotions. Being within the framework of our resources means that Rabbit and Thinker are friends.

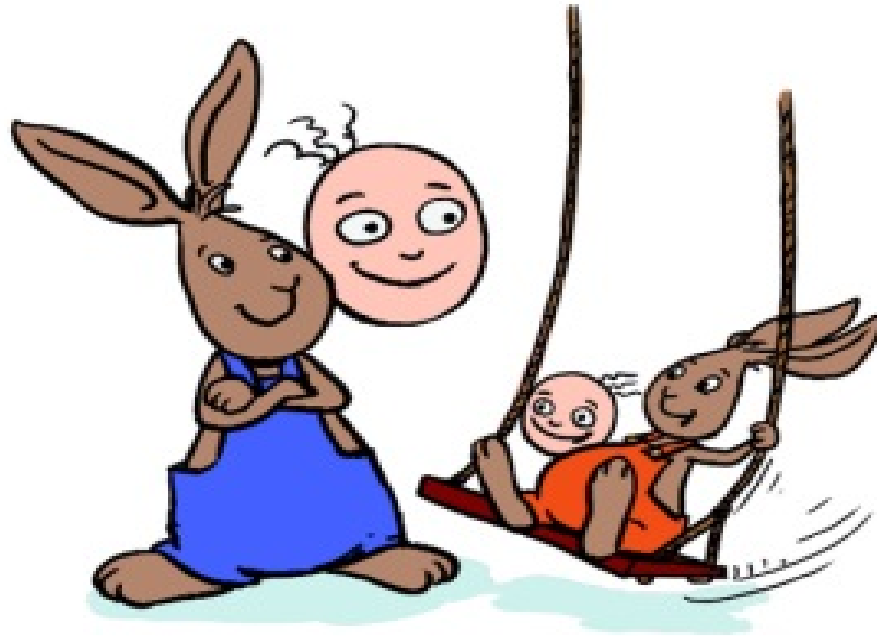
We have to learn to balance our emotions and body-needs



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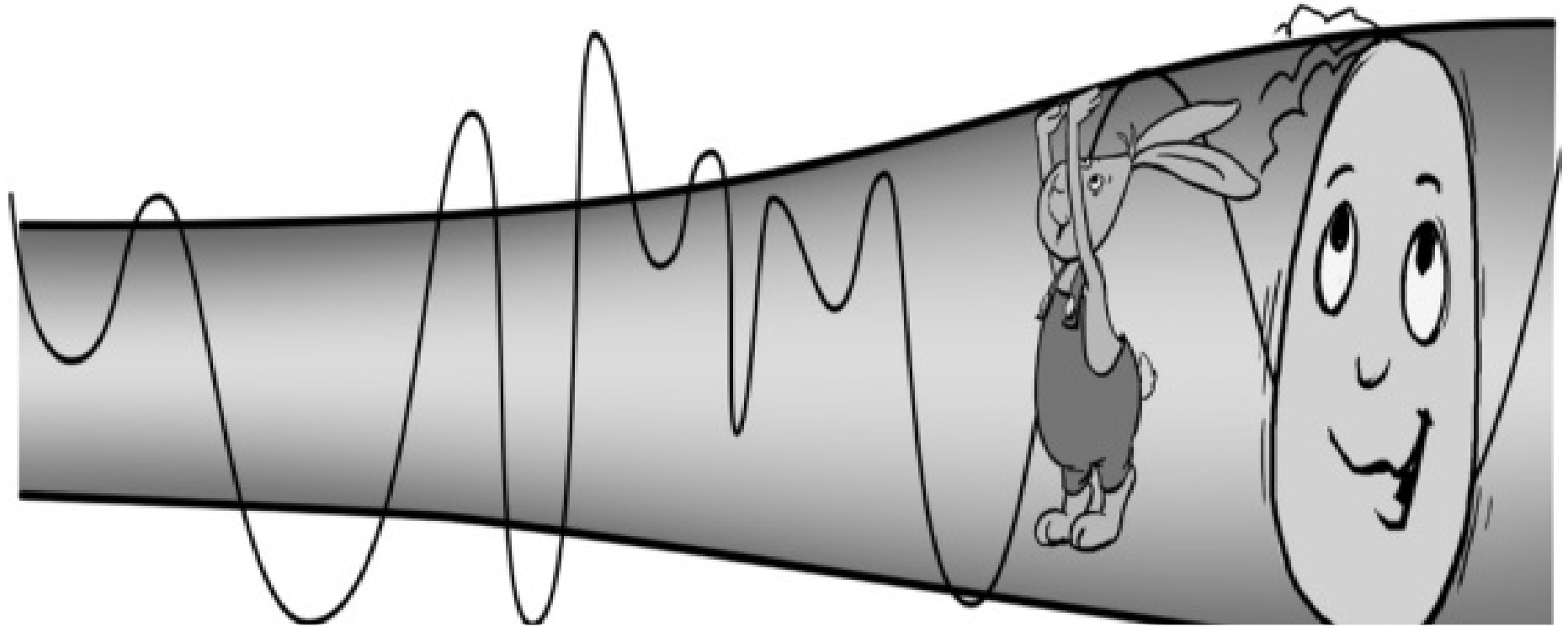
Babies are unable to do so. They need to be cared for, they need to be eased. Their bodies are not yet able to balance their needs. They still have to develop the ability to think, to understand and to regulate their mind. Their parents' role is to teach them how mind and body can be balanced.

Examples and exercise



Examples and exercise are crucial to learn how to take care for oneself, how to handle fear, how to support issues that hurt or are difficult to master. If a child sees how adults handle these difficulties, she will learn to do it herself. The body learns imitating, even without any conscious awareness. Just by adapting to the energy of others - as kids do.

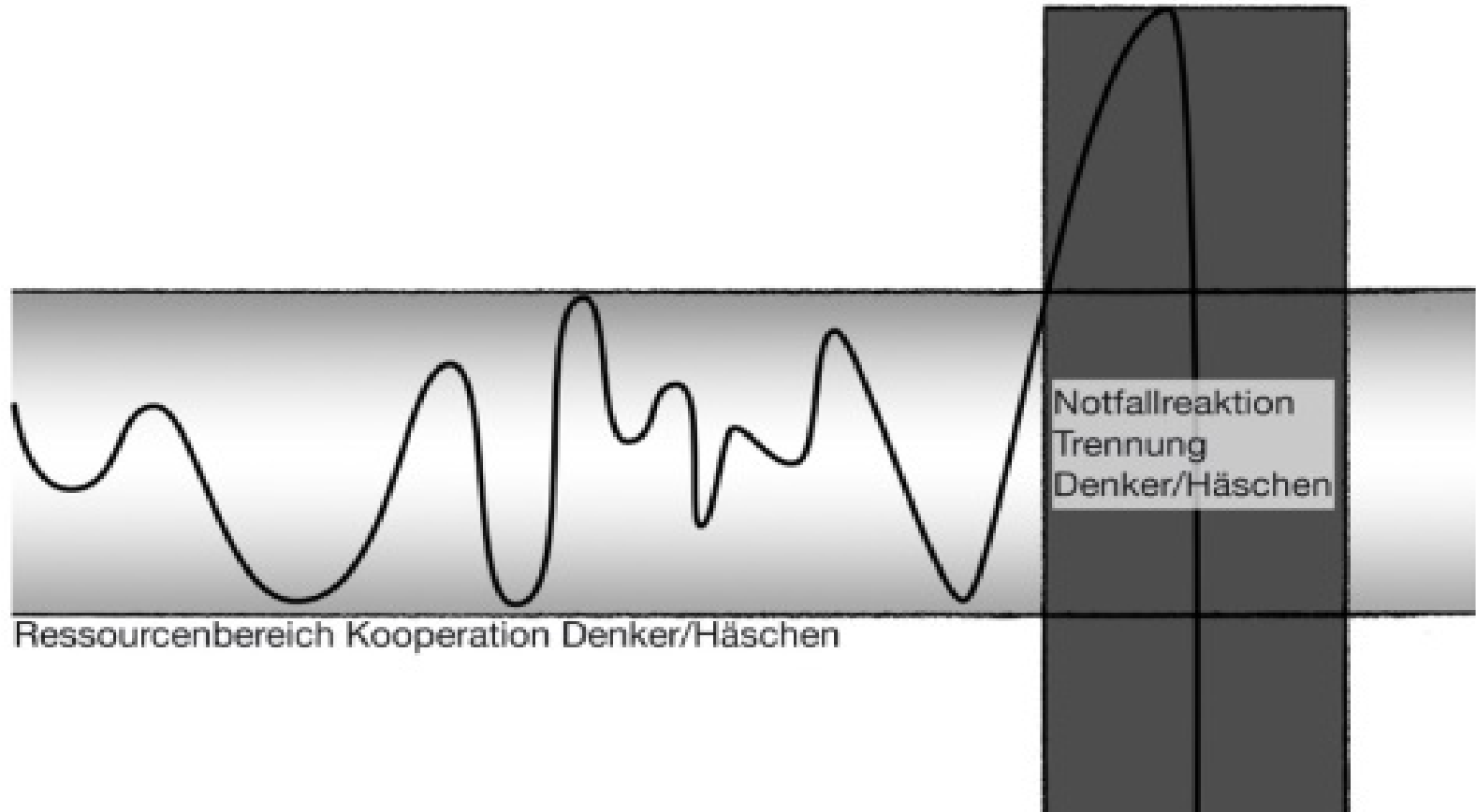
Until you can do it well



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We have to adapt our framework of resources throughout our lives learning to cope with new challenges - good and bad ones. It is crucial to be able to manage tension within the body, otherwise emotions will be overwhelming.

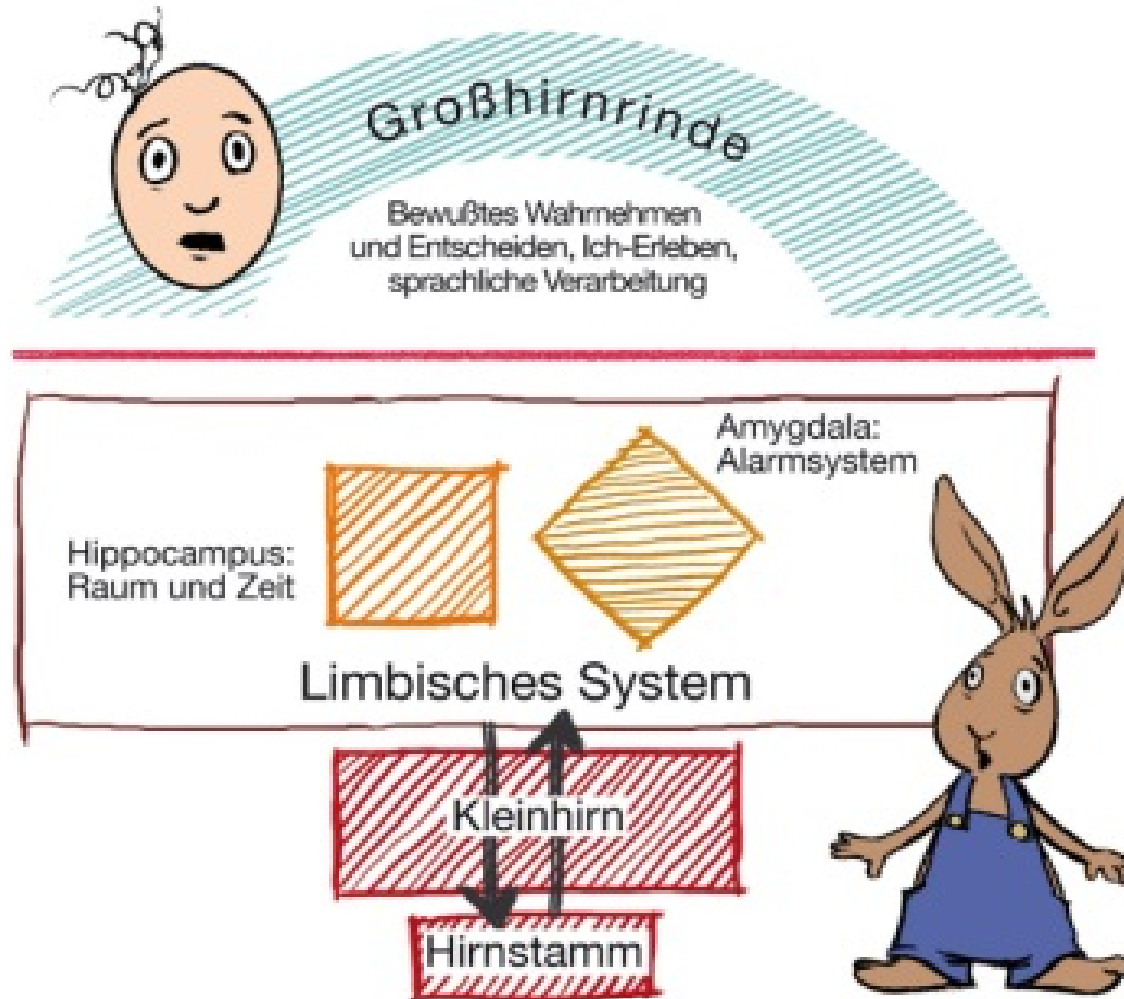
In case of emergency the Rabbit takes over



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Flexibility gets lost in the very moment of danger or threat. We must react immediately to enable flight, fight or freeze, if nothing else works. For a fast response, a border is established between the older part of the brain and neocortex activities. This inhibits the intervention of the thinking mind and helps mobilizing body-strength.

Integration is inhibited

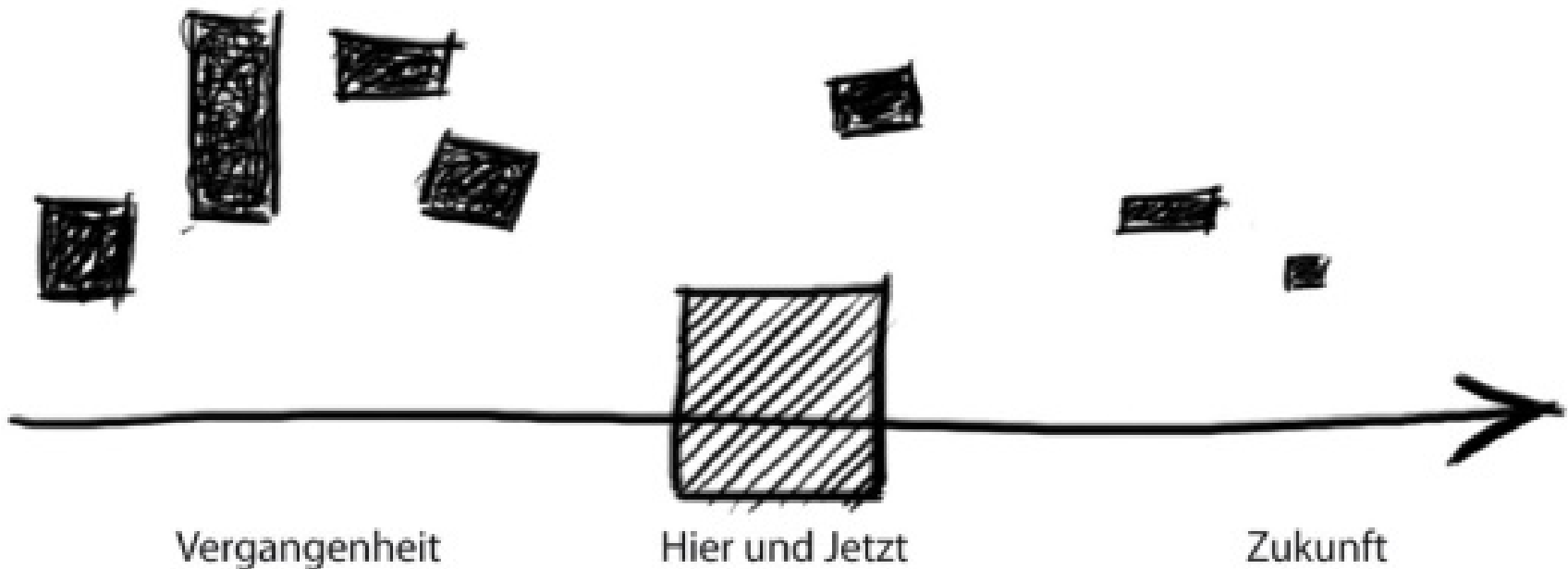


Throughout millions of years of evolution our mammalian body has adapted to survive. In situations of danger the controlling activity of the neocortex is inhibited. The thinker may be watching, but cannot control or intervene.

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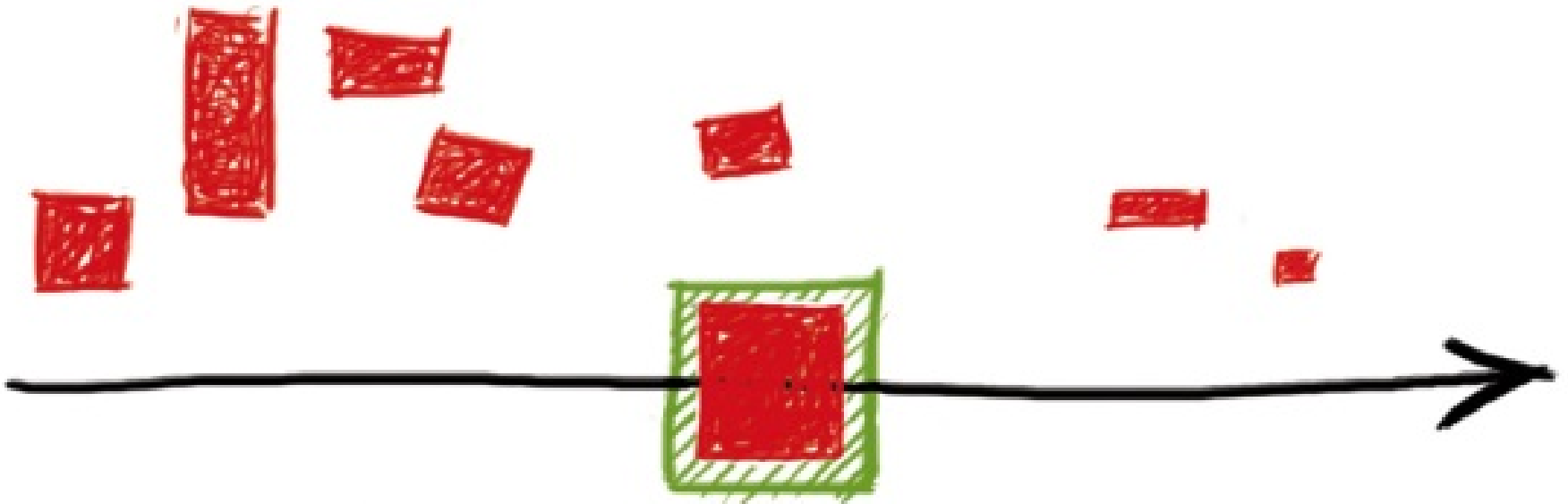
Memories have not been built

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The dissociative separation between Rabbit and Thinker blocks integration. Horrifying situations are not flagged with normal feelings, e.g. such as when we say: „okay, that was yesterday“ or „I know it's not now“. Normally, feelings of the past are a result of the integration between both parts, Thinker and Rabbit. One can think about memories. Flashbacks, however, linger through time and space, waiting to jump out at any trigger.

Trigger-based reactions

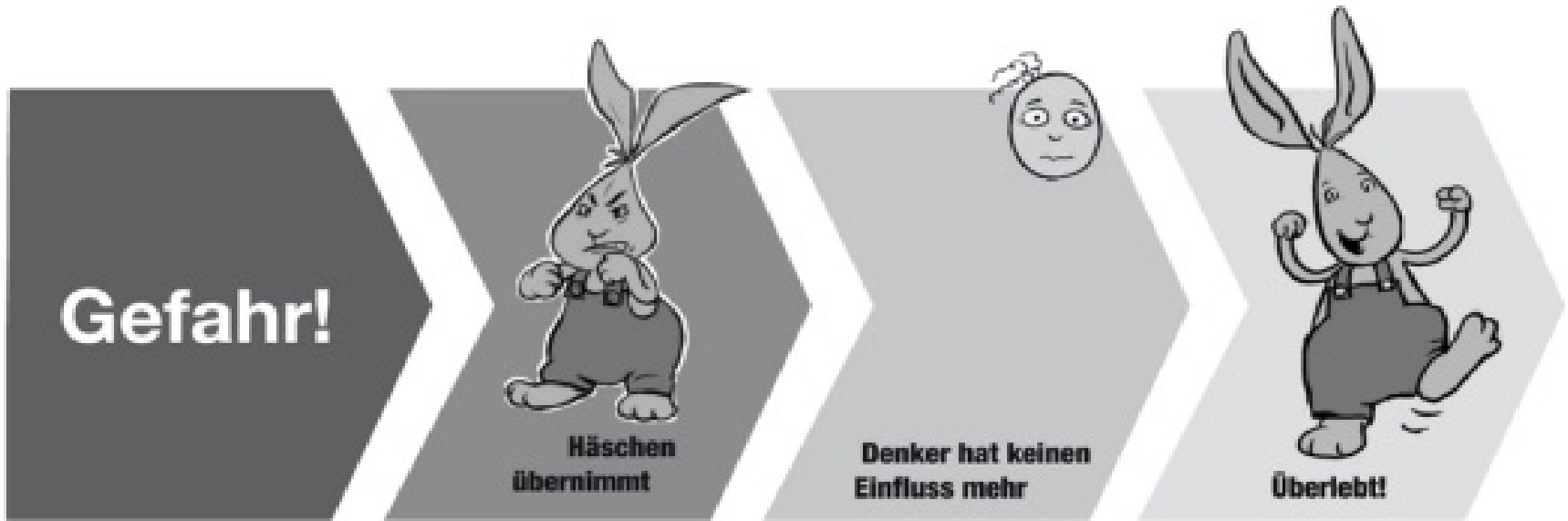


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The Rabbit inside us has learned that our past reaction saved our lives. To him, it does not matter that the mind does not understand it or even wants to change this reaction. Rabbit repeats what did help once, and the Thinker cannot intervene, because survival is first priority.

Because I survived my body will repeat the reaction

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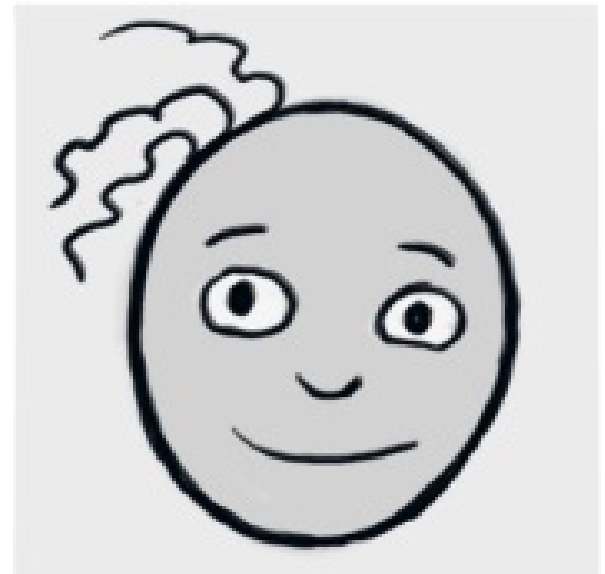


The Rabbit inside us has learned that our past reaction saved our lives. To him, it does not matter that the mind does not understand it or even wants to change this reaction. Rabbit repeats what did help once, and the Thinker cannot intervene, because survival is first priority.

Help him understand



→
Normalisierung



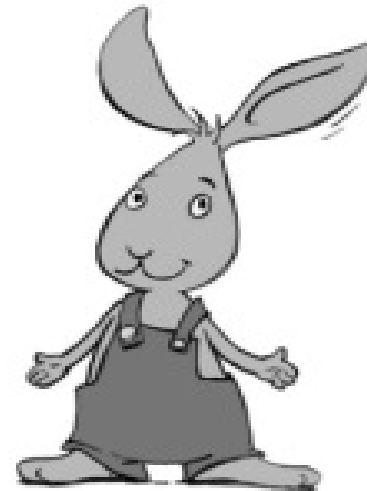
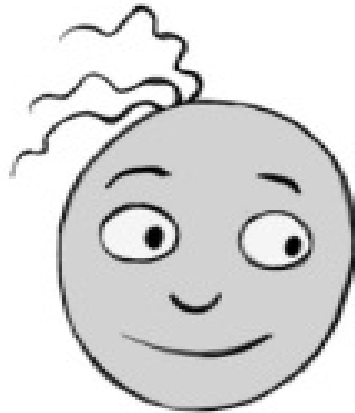
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Working with traumatized people means in the very first place to explain what happened during trauma. People need to know why they reacted the way they did and why even afterwards everything is different. Not enough that everything has changed, but also the mind and body work in a different, unknown, often uncontrolled manner. Explaining that PTSD symptoms are very normal often reduces already half of the chronification.

Notice and learn to read „each other“

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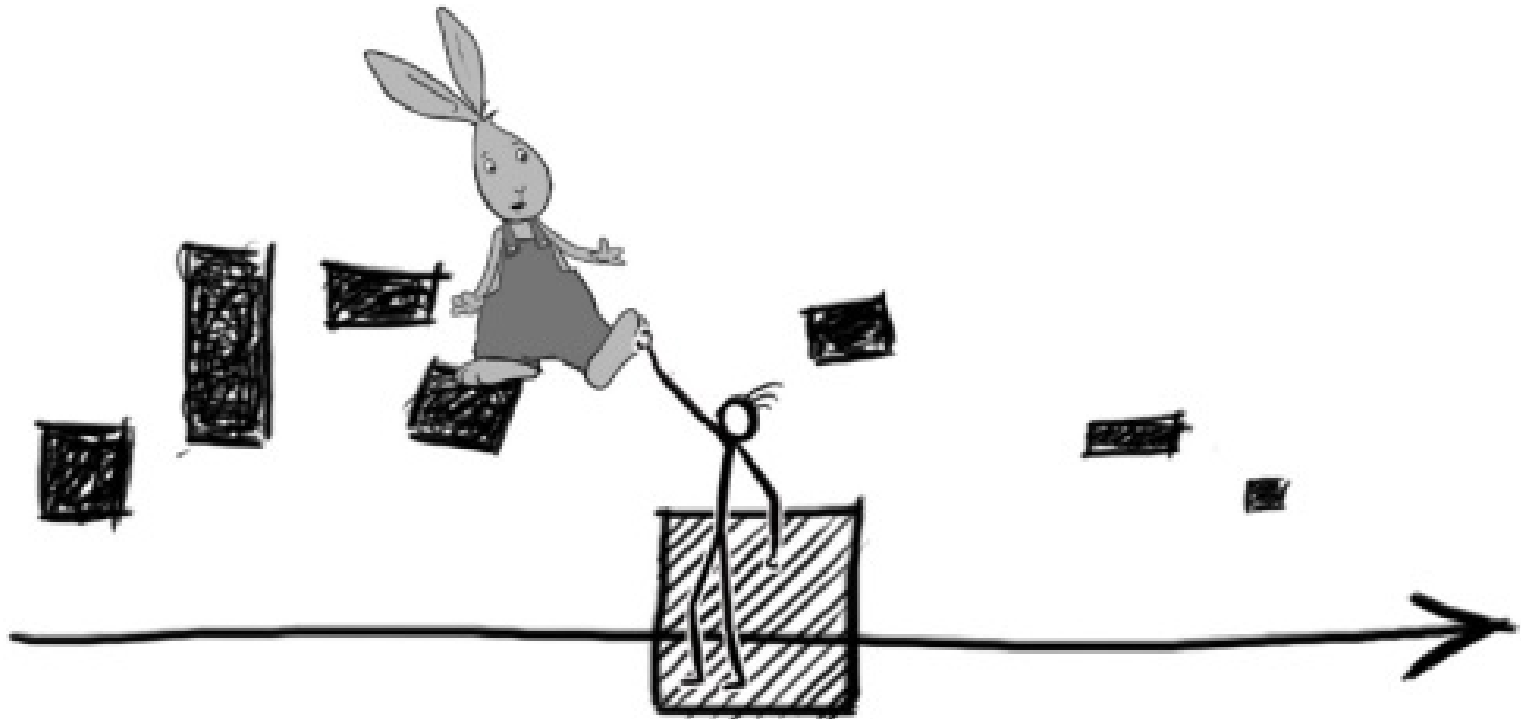
Perception of
Body
Space
Time
Age
...



Breath
Muskel tension
Heartrate
Pressure
...

Our thinking and perceiving part needs to slowly find access to a body that seems totally out of order, out of control with totally inexplicable symptoms such as palpitation, rage, nervous breakdowns, nightmares, paralysis and pain. If we know what happens to our body, the Thinker will be more patient and cooperation will be easier to realize.

Anchor here and now



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A small stone in your shoe, a flower in front of you, a pencil in your hand, the earth under your feet: it is essential to make a difference for a Mind that does not know where to find a hold in time and space. You have to stop reenactment of past feelings and situations, and first and foremost we as teachers have to set an example. Think of a child you want to ease, to forget about the pain or mourning for a moment. What can you do to calm down the Rabbit?

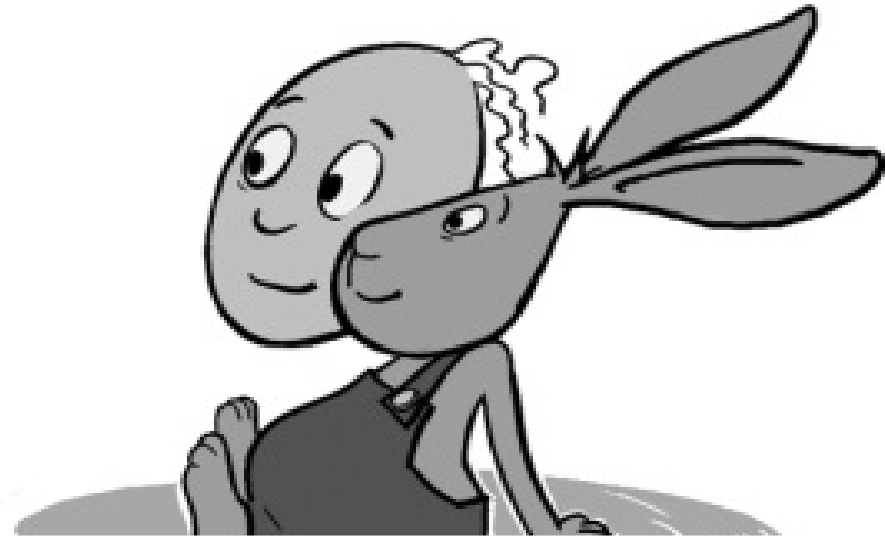
Find out whats good here and now



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Only you define some little differences here and now the Mind will start zu make a distinction between the horror then and some small possibilities now. Don't let yourself immerse into past and hopelessness - you make a difference! This does not mean that you could substitute any of the losses, you can't. But its a crucial for our Mind to make a difference in time and space to start integration.

Distance is essential for integration



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Distance is essential for integration. Often we want to enable narrations of the past moments, and sometimes even our clients seem to want to talk about it. Sometimes it may be convenient, most of the times it is not yet appropriate. We need a lot of resources and distance to cope with all the overwhelming experiences, and often it will need a lifetime. Focus on stress-regulation, self-efficacy, a new sense for possibilities and organization!

Reestablish timelines



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This is how, one step at a time, Body and Mind, Rabbit and Thinker can join again, live in the present, realize the past as past end develop plans for the future...

See more: www.be-here-now.eu (in German - translate it to your language...)