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## DISCLOSURES

- **Mary Coughlin**  
Is the president and founder of Caring Essentials Collaborative, LLC  
Is a member of the Executive Council of the Family-Centered Care Task Force
- **Jessi Barnes**  
Is a member of the Executive Council of the Family-Centered Care Task Force

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## REFLECTIVE INTERACTIVITY

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### WHY THIS MATTERS

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Statistic</i>
Impact of Adversity	Maternal ACEs raise NICU risk and affect long-term neural development
Staff Well-Being	Up to 70% of stress in NICU nurses stems from emotional burnout; ~70% experience PTSD-like symptoms
Parent Mental Health	3 in 4 NICU mothers and nearly half the fathers face depression, anxiety, or stress during hospitalization

Bozdog et al., 2024; Bua et al., 2024; Butcher et al., 2024; Ravaldi et al., 2023; Klawetter et al., 2022; Malave et al., 2022

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## LEARNING INTENTIONS

At the end of this session participants will be able to:

1. Describe the association between early life experiences and nervous system regulation over the lifespan.
2. Identify at least two concrete approaches to enhance relational safety in daily clinical interactions.
3. Consider how caring with intention shapes their practice, sense of purpose, and the well-being of those they serve and serve with.

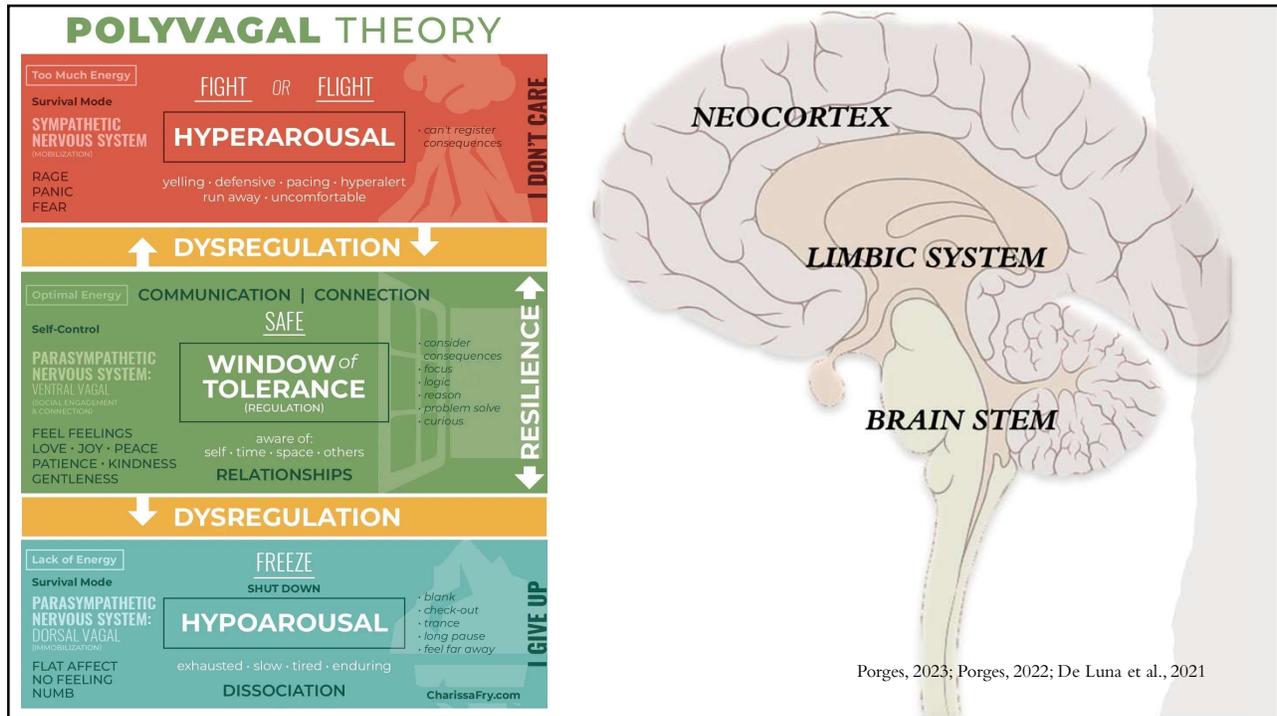
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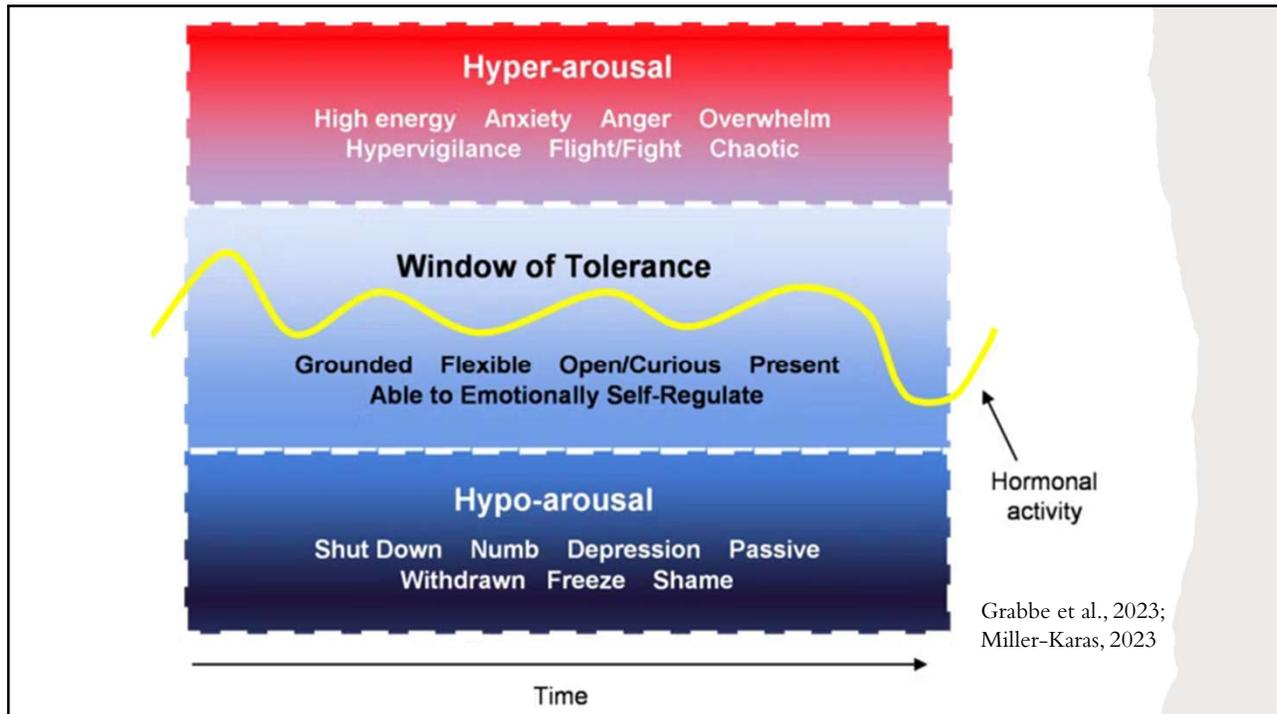
*“IN RECOGNIZING THE HUMANITY OF  
OUR FELLOW BEINGS, WE PAY  
OURSELVES THE HIGHEST TRIBUTE.”*

Thurgood Marshall

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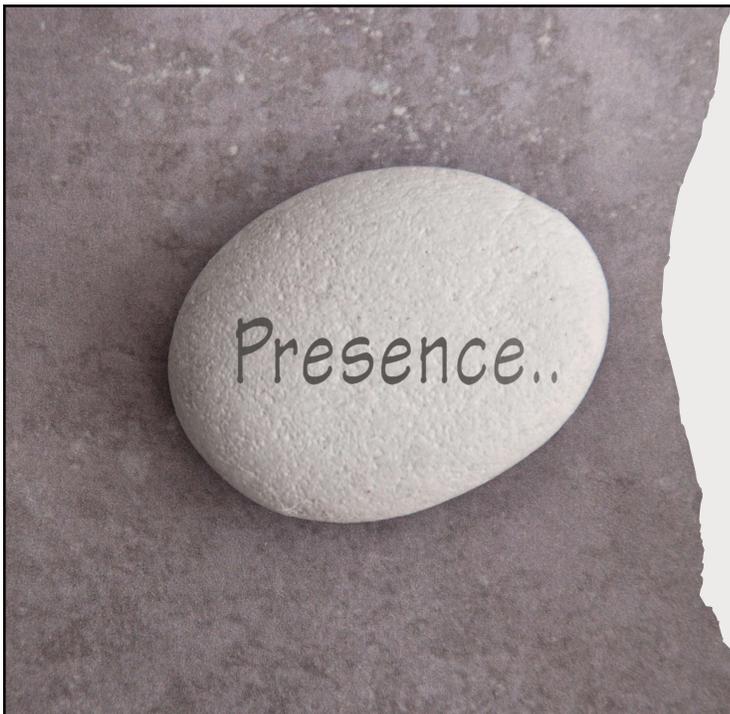


## THE ROLE OF FAMILIES AS BUFFERS

1. Family-centered care  $\neq$  family-tolerated care
2. Clinician as facilitator, coach and mentor

Loutfy et al., 2024; DiBari & Rouse, 2023;  
Spence et al., 2023; Sanders & Hall, 2018;

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## INTENTIONAL PRESENCE

*"The way you greet a parent may be the most healing moment of their day."*

1. Ask before you act — and follow through
2. Honor names, routines, and rhythms
3. Keep your tone grounded and gentle
4. Notice the room — not just the monitors
5. Receive feedback as a gift for growth

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## THEY ARRIVE WITH STORIES



*“Mothers and nurses often live in different moral worlds: one personal, one professional — both deeply human”*

Hall et al., 2012

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## NICU AS THE CRUCIBLE

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### ***CASE STUDY VIGNETTE PART 1: DISCONNECTION***

- A parent returns to the bedside after lunch.
- They are excited to plan the afternoon with their baby's nurse: holding skin to skin, lactation consult, something else?
- They hear their baby's nurse approaching saying: "I haven't even had lunch yet, and the way things are shaping up, I won't be going any time soon. This is ridiculous."
- The nurse turns to see the parent at the bedside and looks away.

### ***REFLECTION PROMPTS***

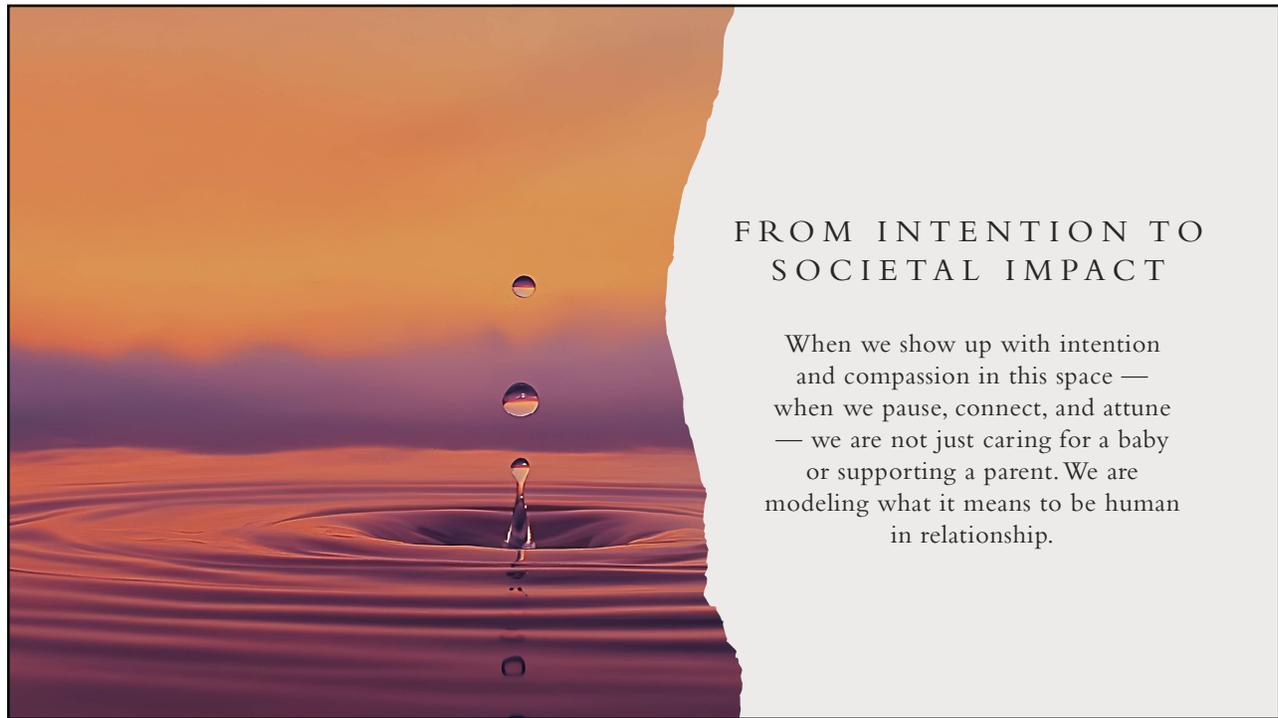
- What was happening in their inner worlds?
- Parent: seeking connection and partnership, excitement, disappointed, possibly activated (fawn)
- Nurse: hungry, likely tired/in need of a break, embarrassed
- Emotional tone: misinterpretation, tension, vulnerability

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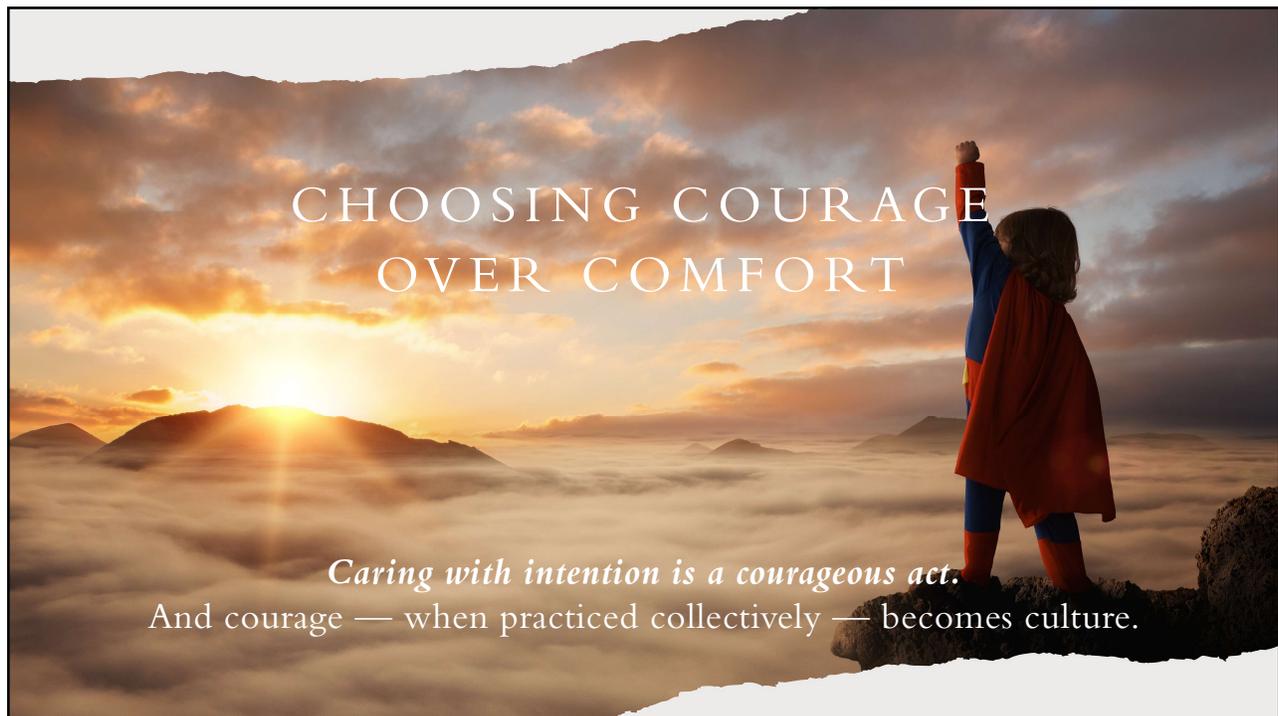
### ***CASE STUDY VIGNETTE PART 2: RECONNECTION***

- The nurse looks away and takes a deep breath.
- She had forgotten about the lactation consult and the parent returning after getting lunch.
- She apologizes to the parent and explains that their pod is getting two admissions soon and she's not sure when she's going to fit in a break around everything.
- The parent acknowledges that it sounds like a lot is going on and they are okay to reschedule their skin-to-skin session.
- The nurse reassures them that it can all still happen.
- They agree to do skin to skin now while a colleague watches over her assignment so both needs can get met before the hustle and bustle of a new admission.
- Clinician shift: regulates self, returns, makes room for family story

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## THIS IS HOW WE CHANGE THE WORLD

- Relational safety is built in small, intentional moments
- Caring with intention is a courageous act
- Micro-moments of compassion ripple into societal impact

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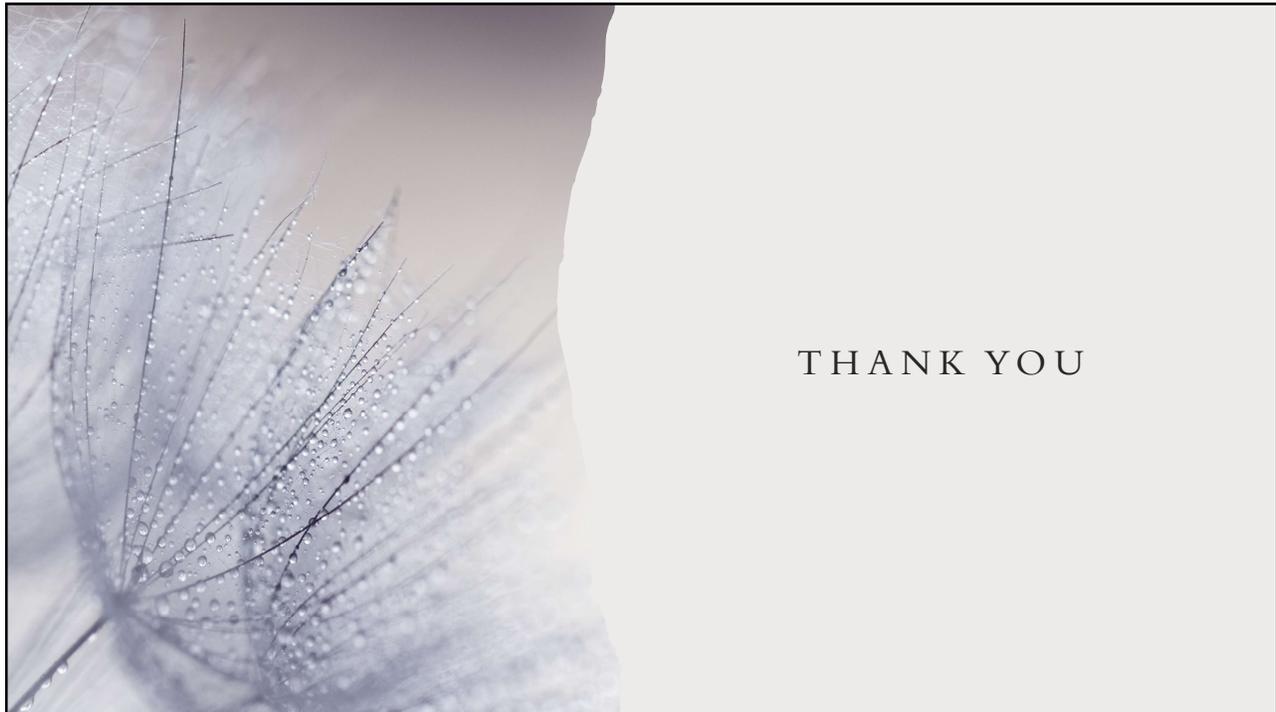
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THANK YOU

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