



Erin
Gilmore
PHOTOGRAPHY

Navigating Emotions and Behavior

Creating a Supportive Learning Environment in Equestrian Lessons

By: Paul Haefner PhD and Heather Henken



1

Understanding
Emotions and
Behavior



2

Creating an
Optimal Learning
Environment



3

Instructor
Strategies



Role of a Riding Instructor

Teach Riding and Horsemanship Skills In A Safe Supportive Environment



The Challenge is Real



Lesson



What have you experienced?

| | | | | |
|--|------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| Reluctance or refusing to mount | Joyful laughing | Braced body not related to diagnosis | Sudden shift in demeanor | Fixated on a particular volunteer or horse |
| Frequently saying "I Can't/ don't want to" | Excessively apologetic | Bailing out or jumping off the horse | Upset hitting self, volunteer or horse | Very High Energy |
| Disruptive Stemming | Blames the horse | Happy Motivated Rider | Not listening or responding to directions | Acting out |
| Overly confident | Eager to try | Resisting Changes | Adoringly petting or loving their horse | Refusing to participate |
| Crying | Shut Down | Asking thoughtful questions | Excessively Distracted | Lays down or clings on the horse's neck |

Impact of Emotion on Behavior

The Importance Regulation

Negative Emotions

Rigidity

Disorganization

Communication

Positive Emotions

Motivation

Engagement

Regulation

Regulation - Neurological and Social Basis

Understanding
Emotion-Based
Activation

Understanding
Regulation

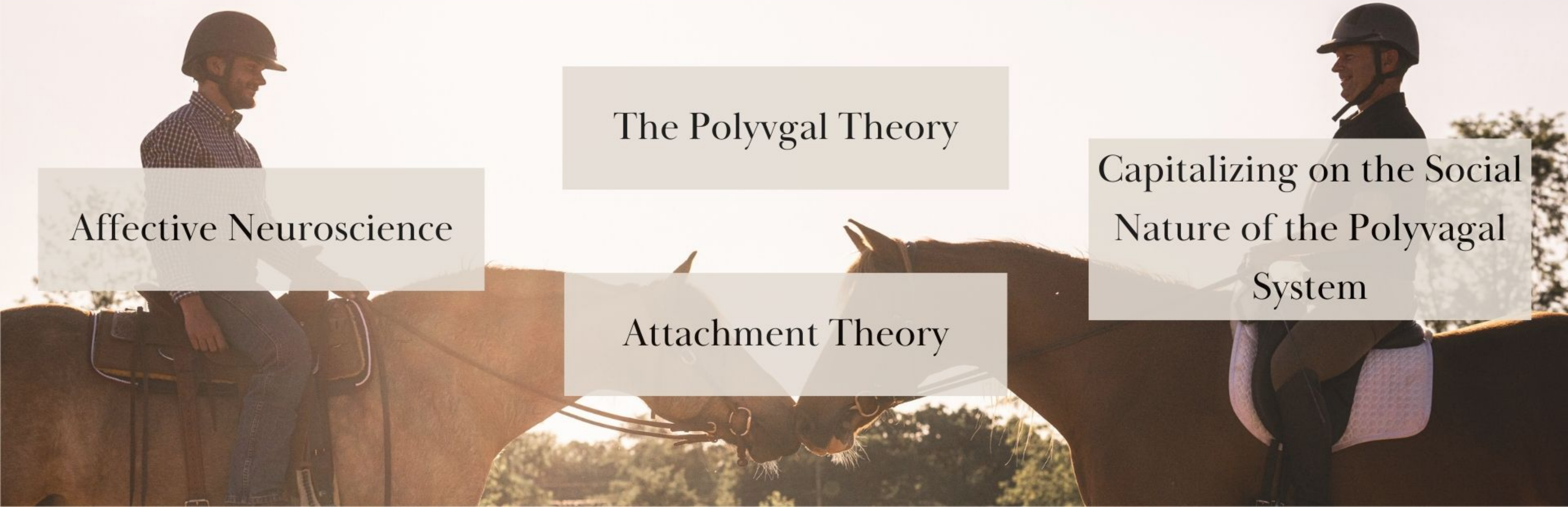
Leveraging
Neurobiology for
Optimal Regulation

The Polyvagal Theory

Affective Neuroscience

Capitalizing on the Social
Nature of the Polyvagal
System

Attachment Theory



Understanding Emotion-Based Activation from the Bottom Up: Affective Neuroscience

- Grounded in Subcortical Regions
- Genetically Encoded
- Evolutionarily Preserved

- 7 Primary Emotional Systems
- Fear - Anger - Grief
- Play - Care - Lust
- Seeking



Regulation - Neurological and Social Basis

Understanding
Emotion-Based
Activation

Understanding
Regulation

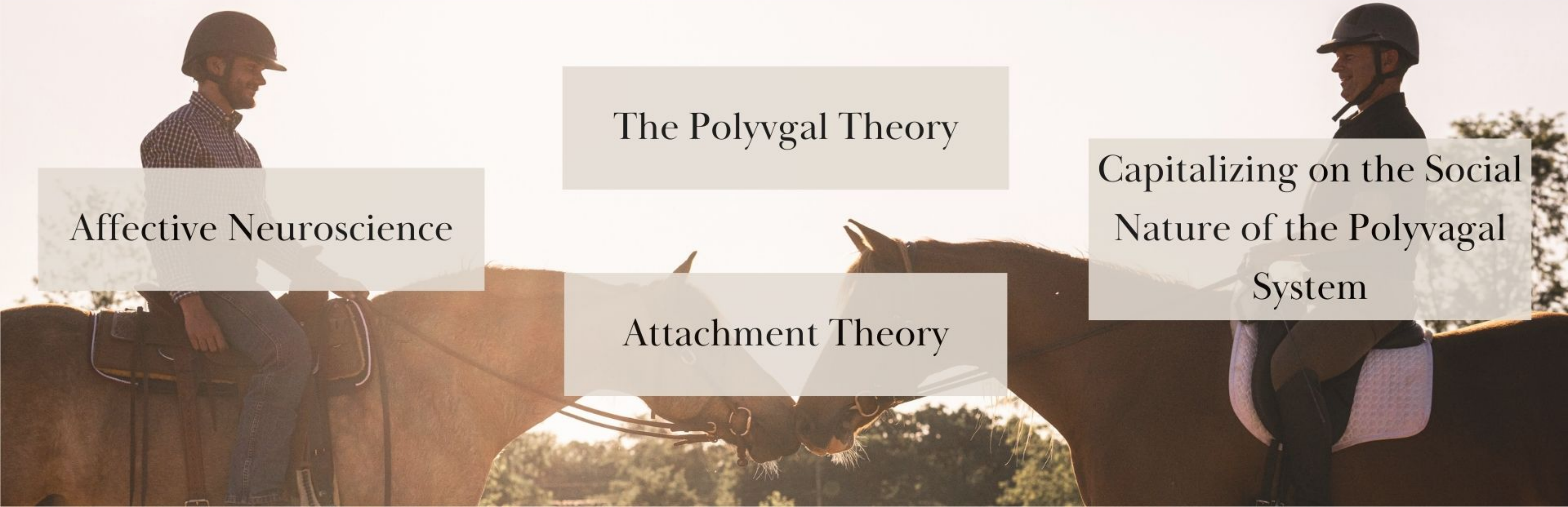
Leveraging
Neurobiology for
Optimal Regulation

The Polyvagal Theory

Affective Neuroscience

Capitalizing on the Social
Nature of the Polyvagal
System

Attachment Theory



Understanding Emotional Regulation

- Polyvagal Theory
 - Sympathetic
 - Parasympatheic
 - Ventral Vagus

- Attachment Theory
- Secure vs. Insecure



Regulation - Neurological and Social Basis

Understanding
Emotion-Based
Activation

Understanding
Regulation

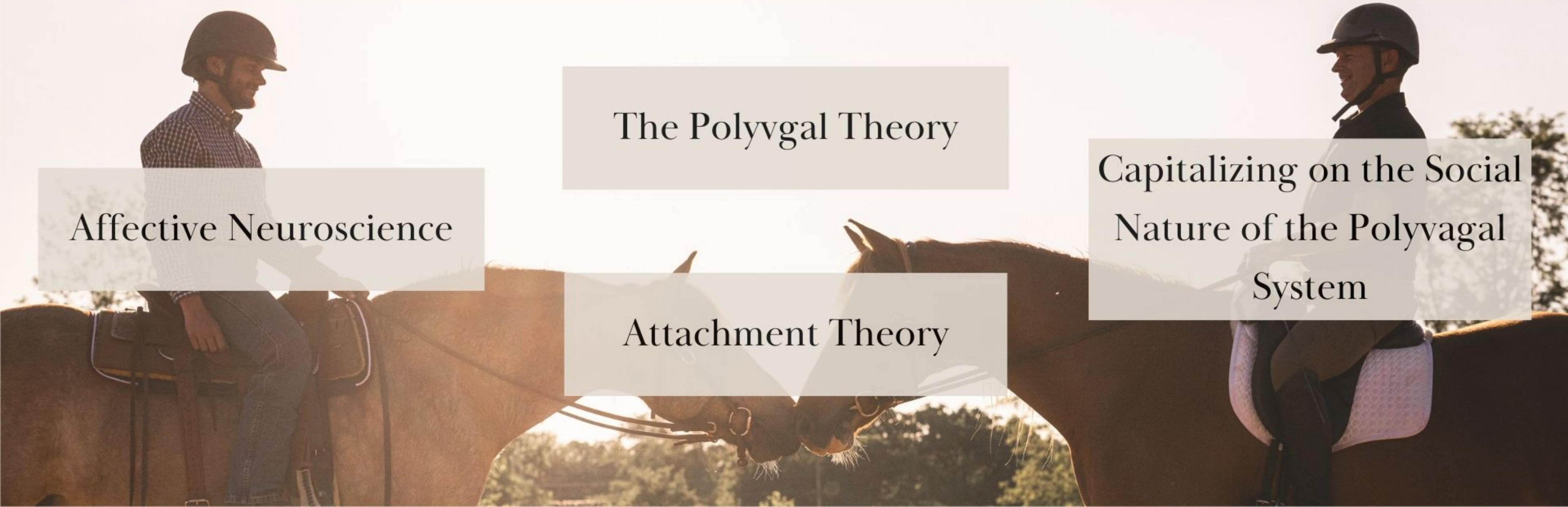
Leveraging
Neurobiology for
Optimal Regulation

The Polyvagal Theory

Affective Neuroscience

Capitalizing on the Social
Nature of the Polyvagal
System

Attachment Theory





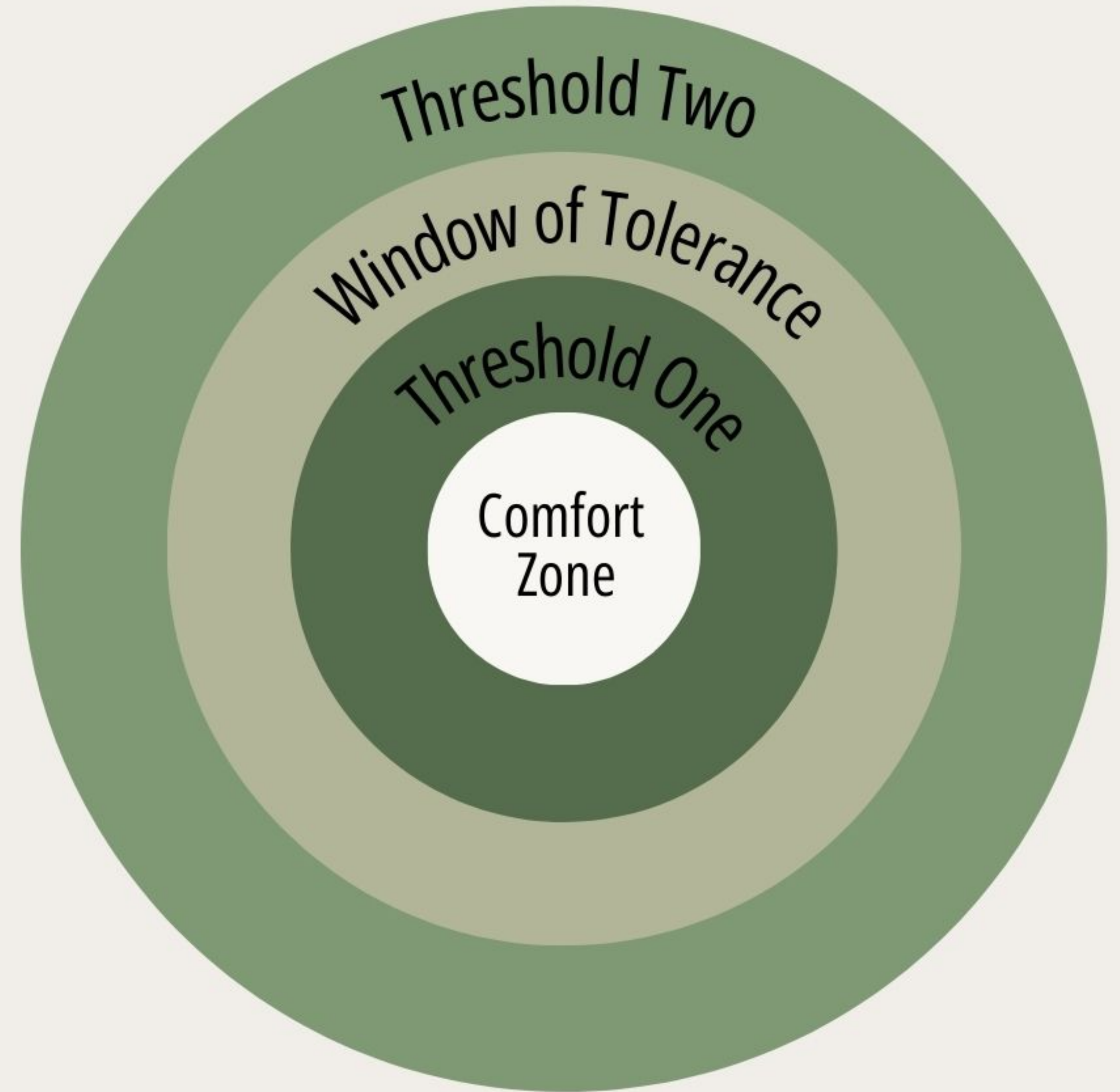
Connection = Regulation

Build Psychological Safety and Trust

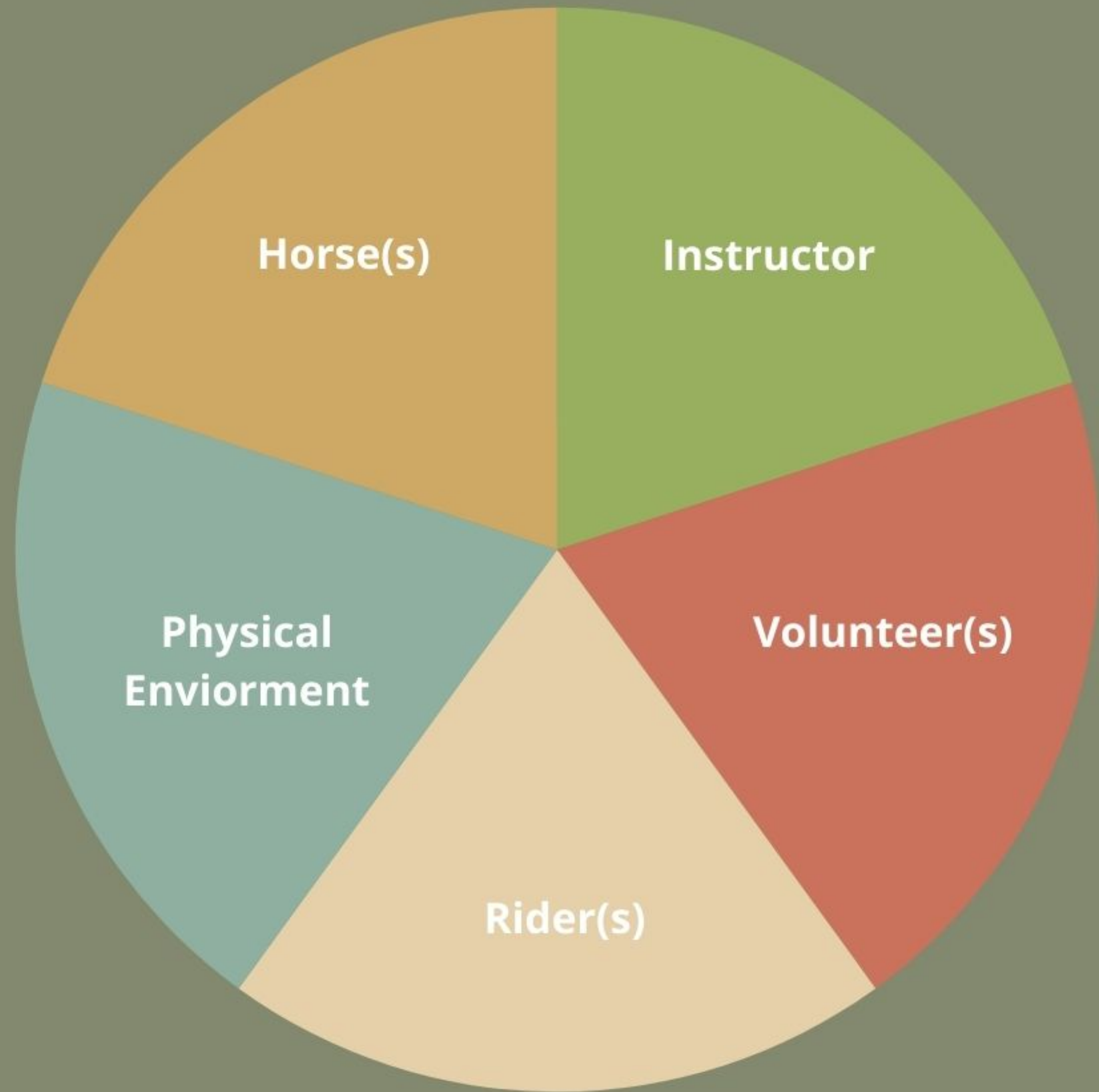
- Establish Open Communication
- Create a supportive learning environment

Assessment Emotional or Physical

- Duration
- Intensity
- Frequency



Learning Environment



- Physical Space
- Social Environment
- Psychological and Physiological Environment



The Makings of Successful Lessons



Observe

Environment

Body Language

Tone



Observe

Engage

Encourage

Adapt

Reflect

Engage and Question

Use Active Listening



Observe

Engage

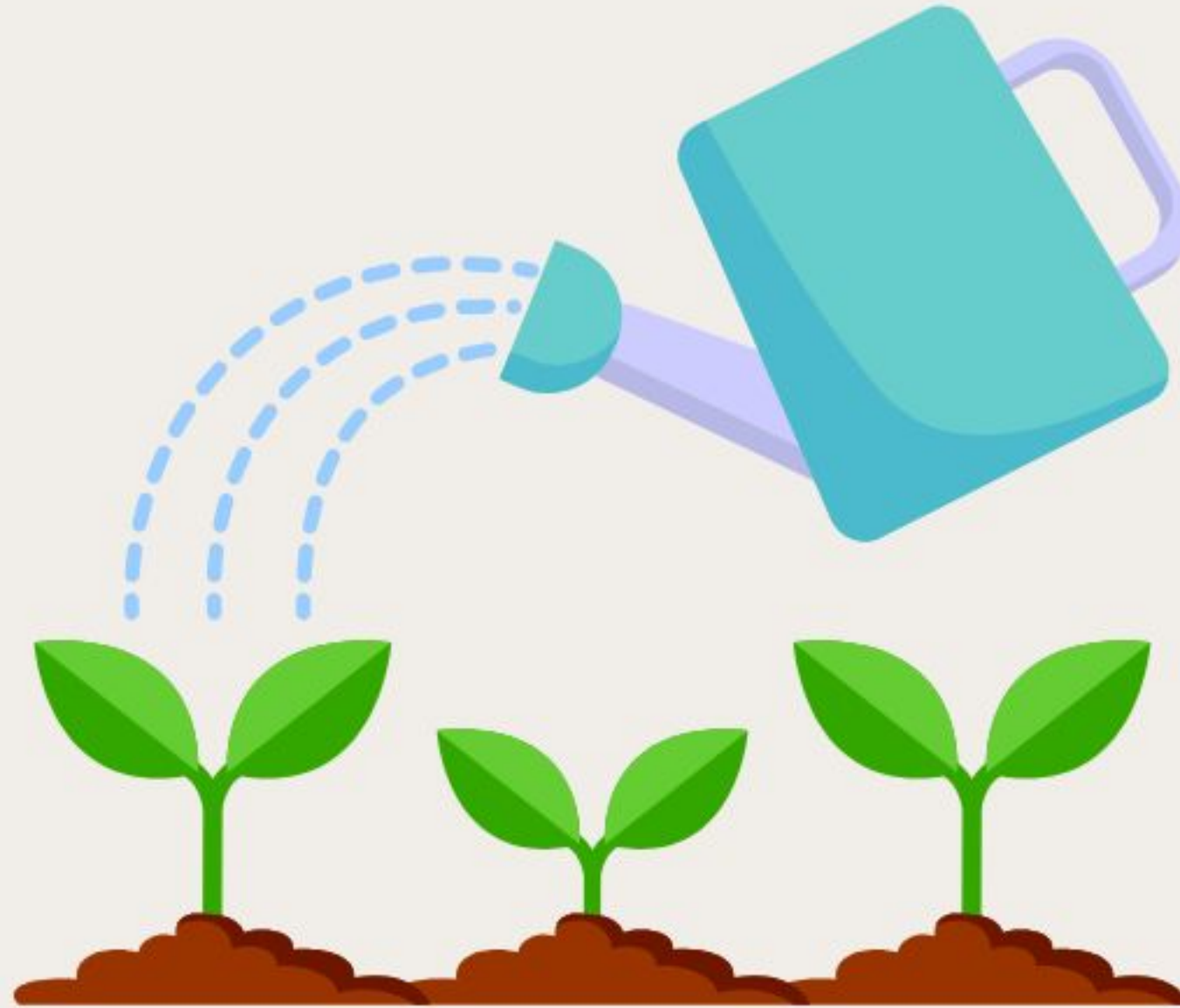
Encourage

Adapt

Reflect

Encourage

- Motivate
- Empathize
- Specific Praise



Observe

Engage

Encourage

Adapt

Reflect

Adapt



Observe

Engage

Encourage

Adapt

Reflect

Body Up Regulation



**Synchronous
Connection**



Movement



**Sensory
Grounding**



Breathwork

Reflect

- Review
- Consult
- Continue learning
- Recycle



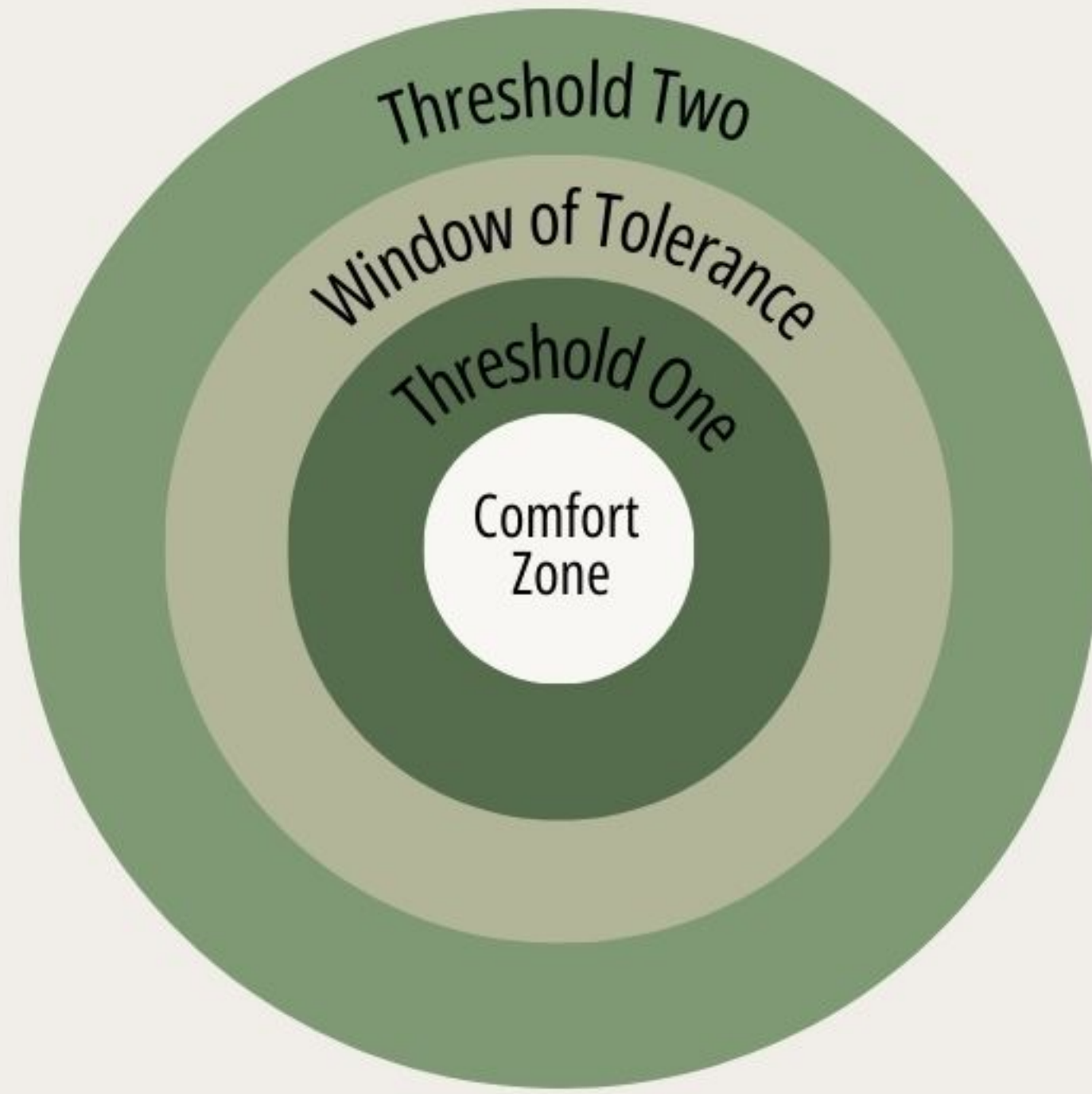
Observe

Engage

Encourage

Adapt

Reflect



Easy as PIE



Purposeful

Impactful

Enjoyable

Communication



Relationship

“Connection is why we’re here. It gives purpose and meaning to our lives.”

~ Brené Brown

