

COURSE 101

How to Handle Problematic Behavior and Enforce Rules

BY RYAN DOWD



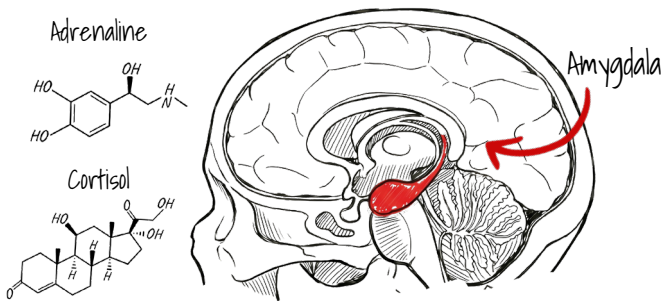
How Trauma and PTSD Changes a Person's Brain and the Way They Experience Conflict with You

TWO KEY BRAIN SYSTEMS INVOLVED WITH CONFLICT

RED SYSTEM

(Sympathetic Nervous System)

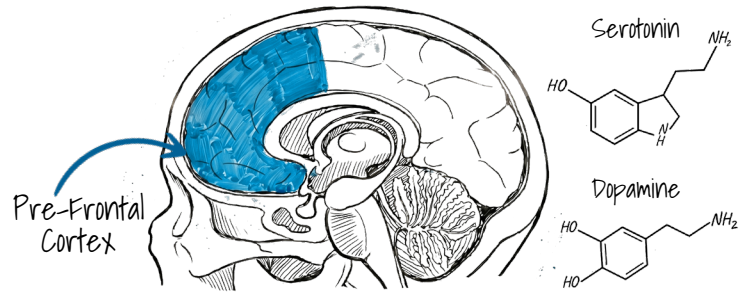
Primary Responsibility: FIGHT or FLIGHT



BLUE SYSTEM

(Parasympathetic Nervous System)

Primary Responsibility: Logical thought, social cooperation



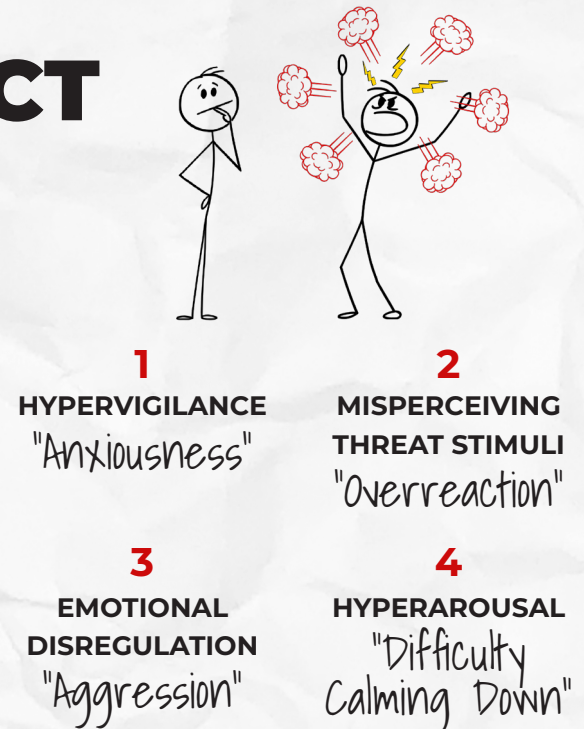
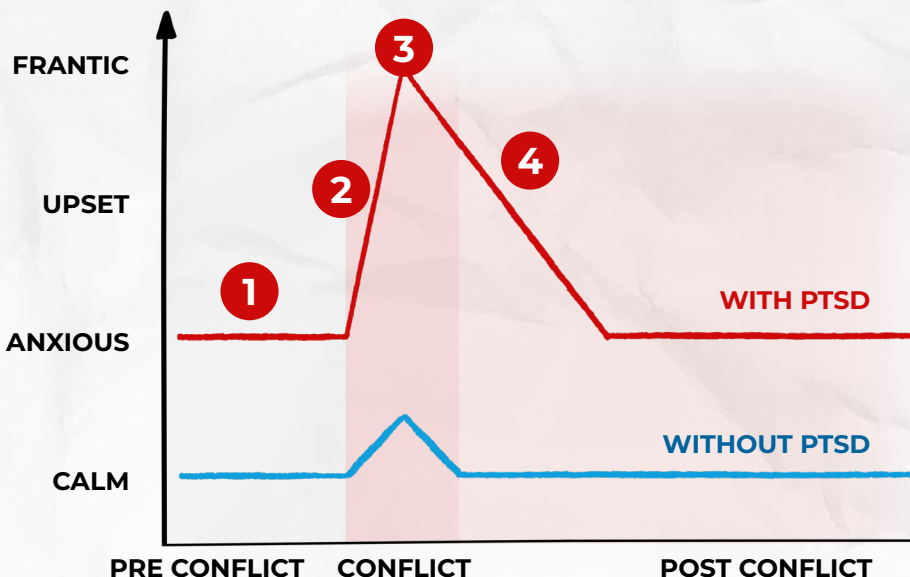
PTSD makes the **RED SYSTEM**
HYPERACTIVE

PTSD makes the **BLUE SYSTEM**
SUPPRESSED

1 in 2 chronically homeless individuals struggle with PTSD
(compared to 1 in 20 in the general population)



THE FOUR WAYS PTSD CHANGES HOW A PERSON EXPERIENCES CONFLICT



A Three-Step Approach to Set Boundaries and Enforce Rules

STEP #1



Approach the Person^{correctly}

Goal: Avoid activating the **RED SYSTEM**

Remember:

Don't approach from behind (if possible)

People with PTSD need more personal space.

If you must approach from behind

Cough, greet them, or announce yourself before getting close.

STEP #2



Show Respect^{in 5 seconds}

Goal: Intentionally activate the **BLUE SYSTEM**

Remember:

- ✓ Friendly greeting
- ✓ Alternate eye contact
- ✓ Offer your first name
- ✓ Ask their name



BONUS TOOL THE HANDSHAKE

A powerful way to **convey respect** in a short amount of time and is remarkably effective

STEP #2.5



Remove the Audience^{if necessary}

Goal: Prevent **PUBLIC HUMILIATION**

Remember:

Move the conversation 10-12 feet away so others can't easily hear.

If the space is tight, go as far as you can and lower your volume.

Stay visible to others. This is not about privacy - you should still be visible.

STEP #3



Enforce the Rule^{with sadness}

Goal: Prevent **"HOSTILITY BIAS"** and show you're not an **"EVERYDAY SADIST"**

Remember:

Hostility Bias (common in people with trauma, mental illness, substance use)
They may perceive a neutral/professional tone of voice as hostile.

Use a sad tone when enforcing rules

This shows you are not an "everyday sadist" who enjoys enforcing the rules.

How To Handle Pushback to the Rules

4 TOOLS

FOR WHEN SOMEONE CHALLENGES OR ARGUES AGAINST THE RULE

TOOL 1

Listen

- Conveys **respect**
- Must be
100% of your attention



TOOL 2

Explain the Rule

- Avoid **“because that’s the rule”**
- Explaining why you have the rule is the most **respectful way to handle a challenge**

TOOL 3

Blame the Rules

- It's not **them vs. you**, it's **them vs. the rules**
- Conveys 2 things:
 1. It's **not personal**
 2. You're not the **right person to argue with** about this

TOOL 4

Thank Them

When they agree to comply,
thank them genuinely

Thank you,
I really appreciate it.



BONUS TOOL

“They let me...”

Ask “Do you know
who you talked to?”

Signals 2 things:

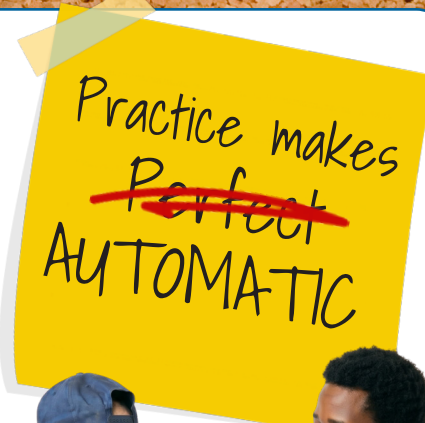
1. Staff communicate with each other
2. If they're lying, you'll find out

If they don't
remember:

“Okay, if you do remember let me know.
Unfortunately, today I can't let you do that.”

If they give a name:

“Great, I'll talk to them.
Unfortunately, today I can't let you do that.”



NOTES

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KEY POINT 1

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KEY POINT 3

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