



*Treating Trauma  
through*

# POLYVAGAL WISDOM

PRESENTED BY ADRIENNE LOKER, LCSW

# 25TH FALL PSYCHIATRIC SYMPOSIUM

**TREATING TRAUMA THROUGH POLYVAGAL WISDOM**

PRESENTED BY ADRIENNE LOKER, LCSW

*Disclosure Information*

- I have no relevant financial relationships to disclose.
- I will not discuss off label use or investigational use in my presentation.

# OBJECTIVES

- Develop a functional definition of trauma
- Learn the Triune Brain model
- Understand the two branches of the Autonomic Nervous System
- Understand the two branches of the Parasympathetic Nervous system
- Comprehend the role of the Ventral Vagus in treating trauma
- Name two functions of the Ventral Vagus
- Understand the role of the Sympathetic Nervous System in the fight or flight response
- Understand the role of the Dorsal Vagus in the freeze response





# HELLO, *I'm Adrienne*

---

- EMDR (2017)
- Psychodrama (2018)
- Somatic Experiencing (2020)
- Brainspotting (2020)



WHAT IS

*Trauma?*

"TRAUMA IS NOT  
WHAT HAPPENS TO US,  
**BUT WHAT WE HOLD INSIDE..."**

*- Peter Levine, PhD*

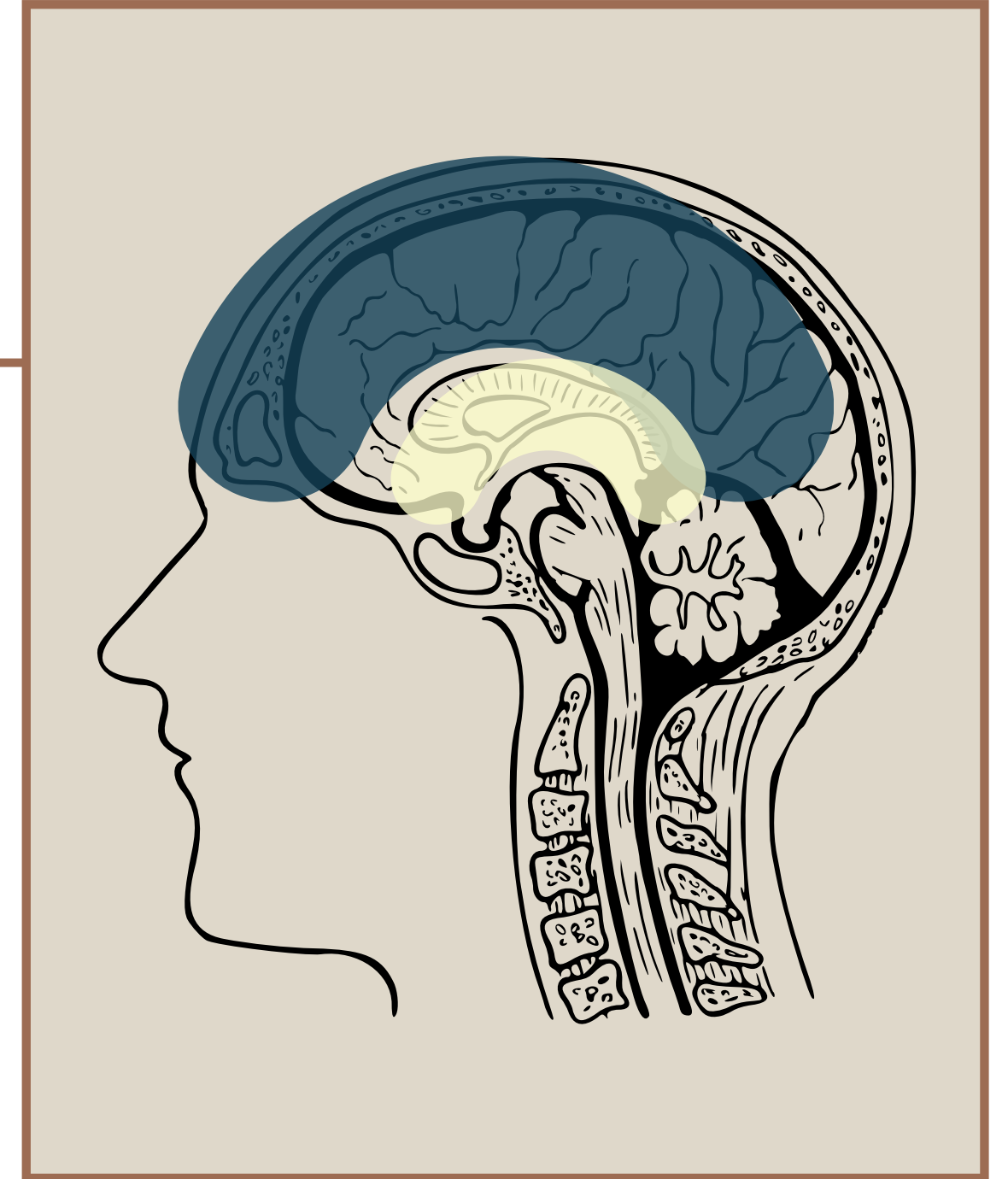
# HUMAN *Brain*

- Neo Cortex
- Executive functions
- Fully develops in adulthood
- "Does this make sense?"



# MAMMALIAN *Brain*

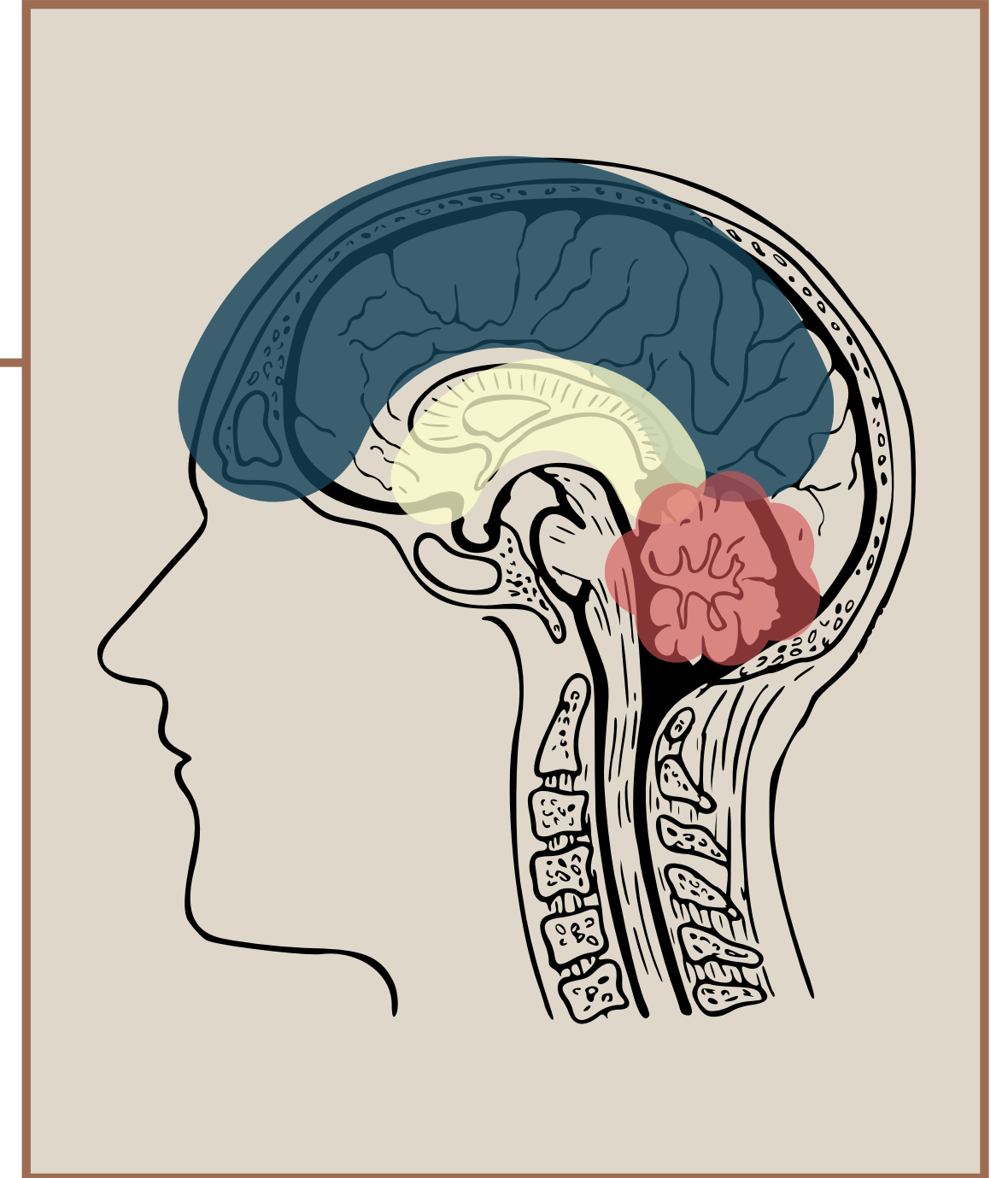
- Limbic System
- Emotional
- Belonging to herd
- "Am I loved?"





# REPTILIAN *Brain*

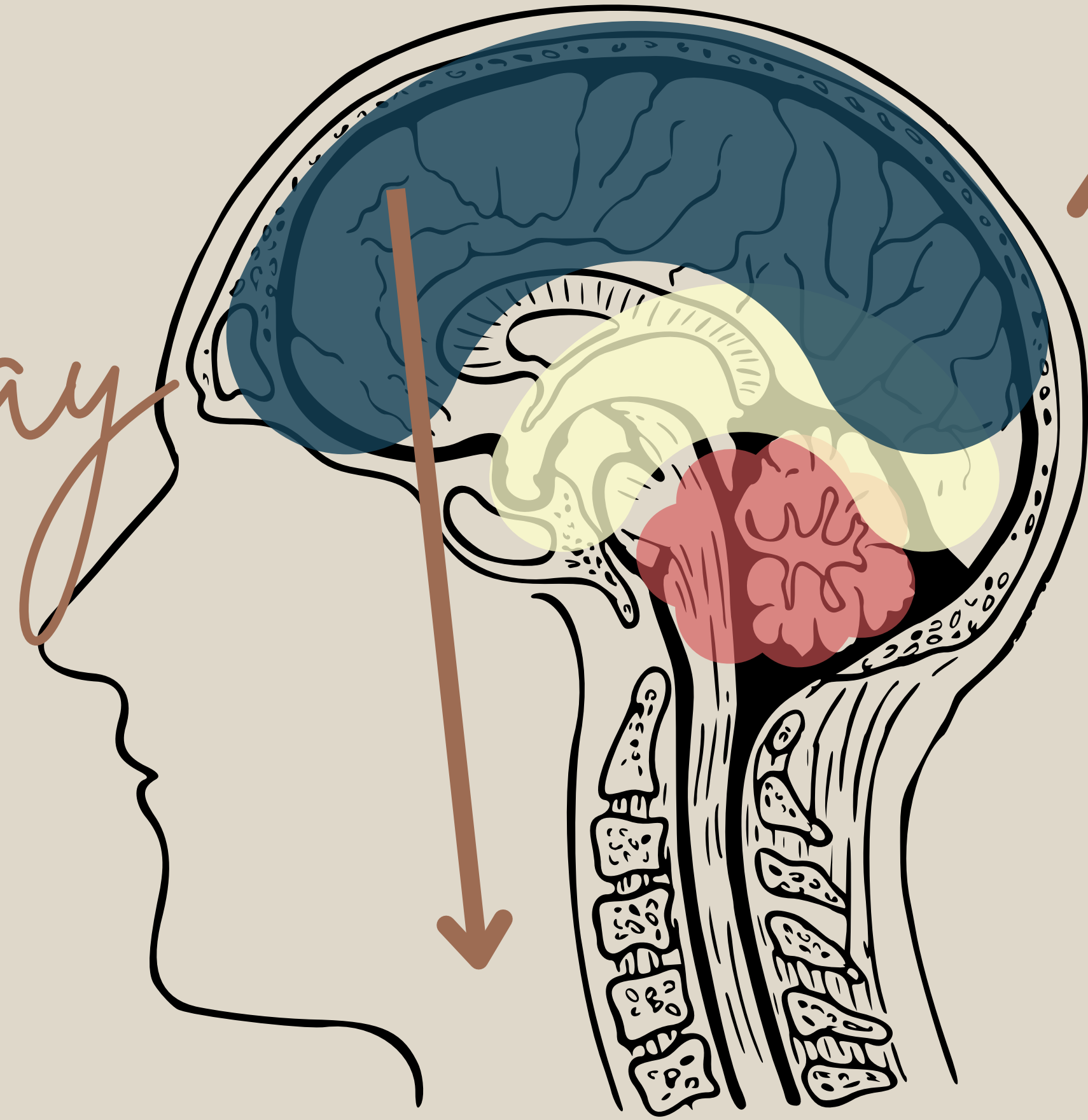
- Mostly developed at birth
- Survival functions
- Autonomous
- Unconscious
- "Am I safe?"



# 5 LANE

# Highway

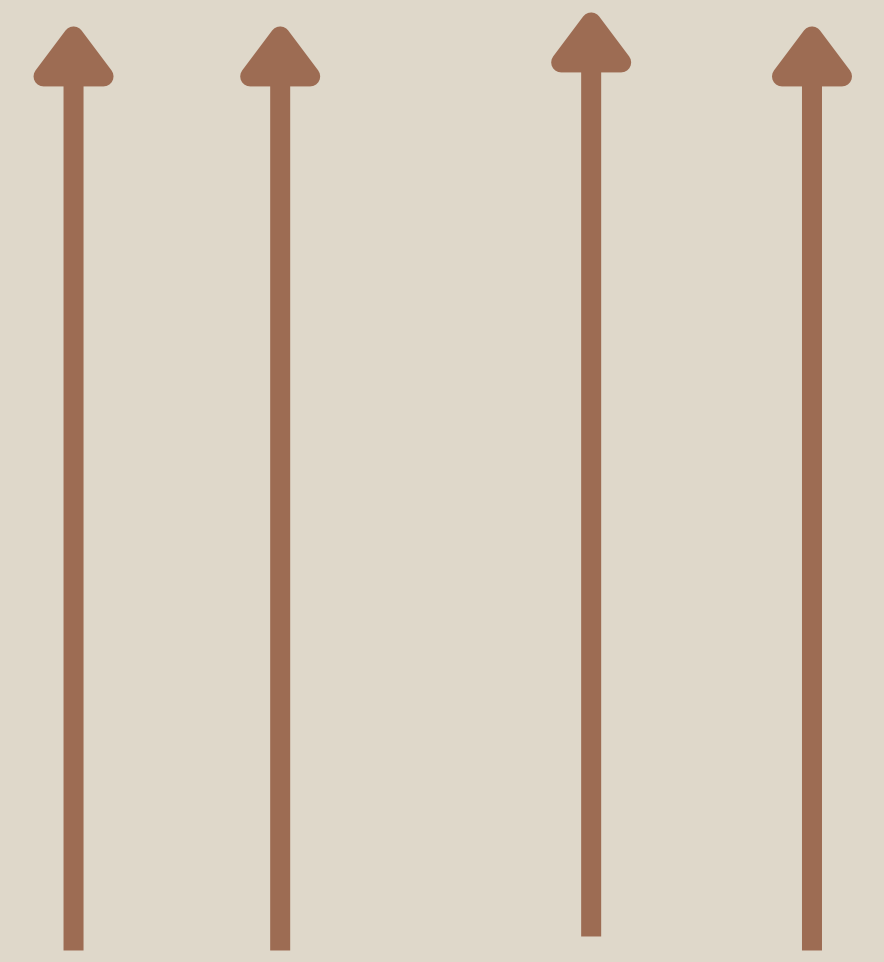
- Reptilian
- Mammalian
- Human





**BODY**

*Temperature*

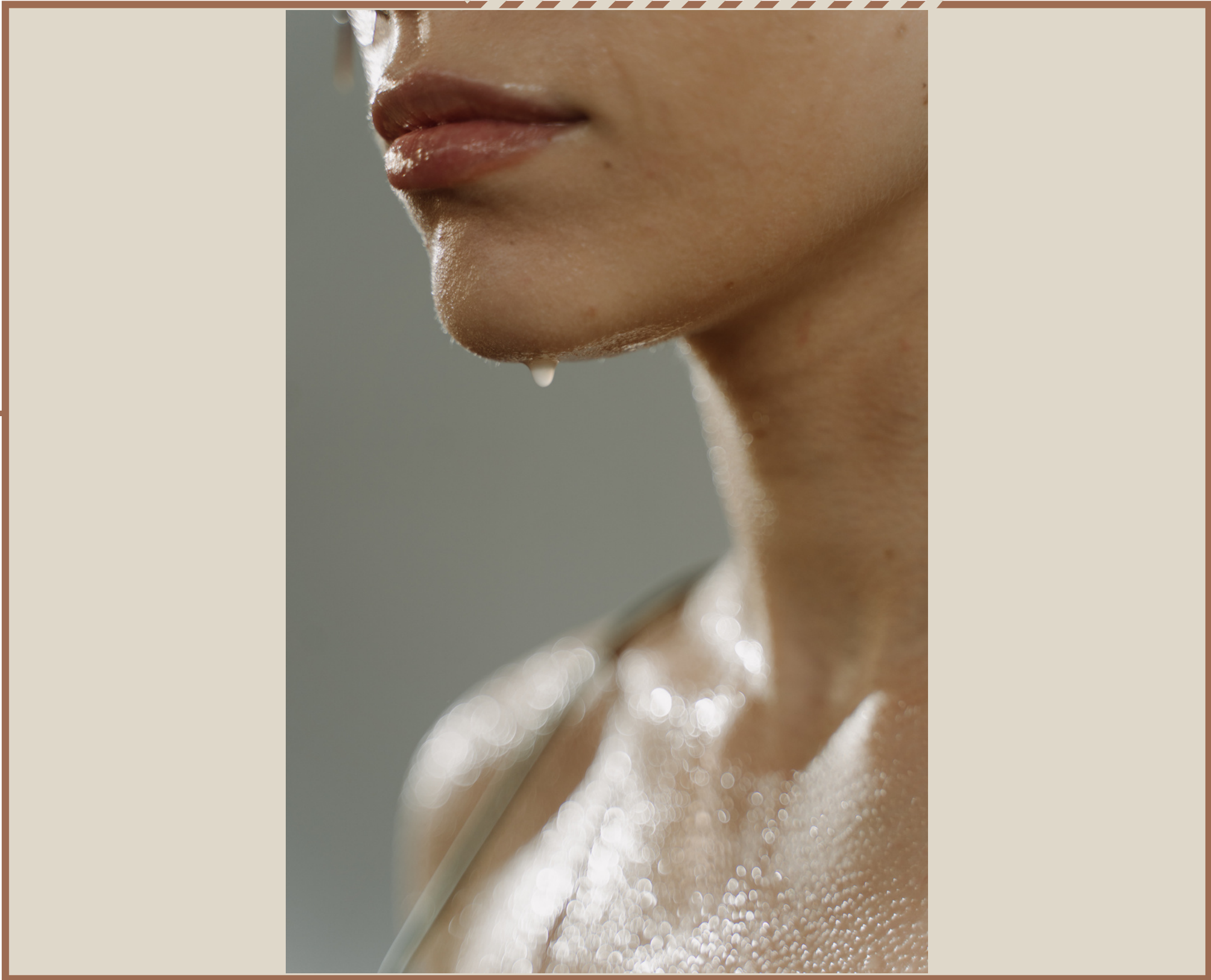




BODY

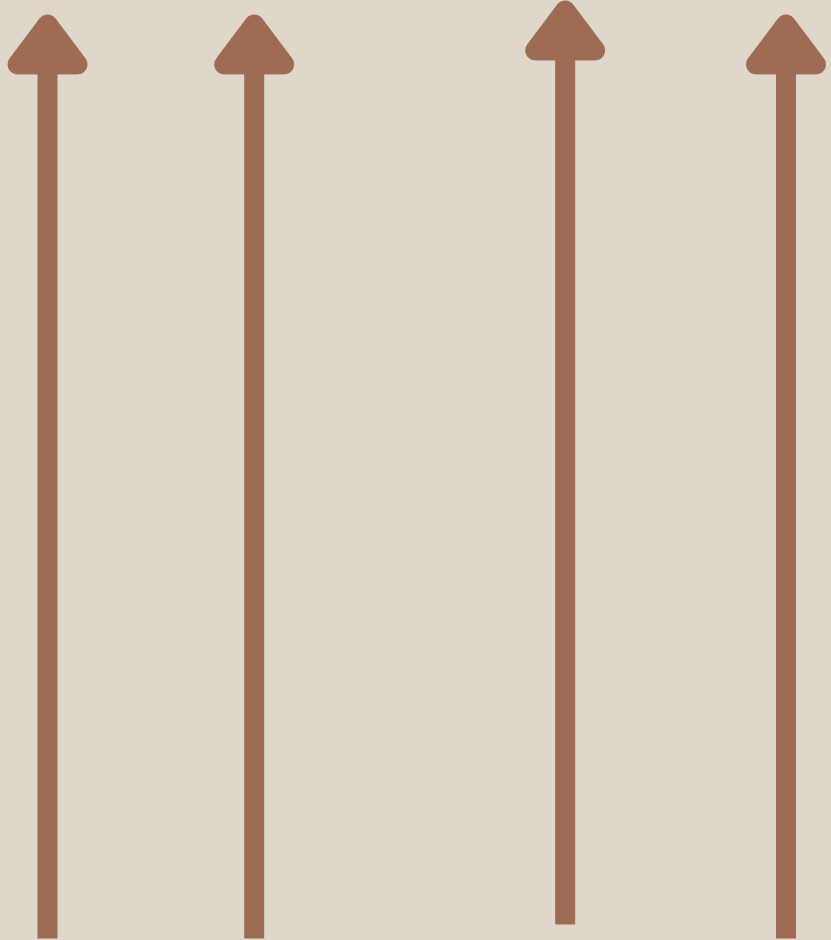
*Temperature*





# BODY

*Temperature*





**BODY**

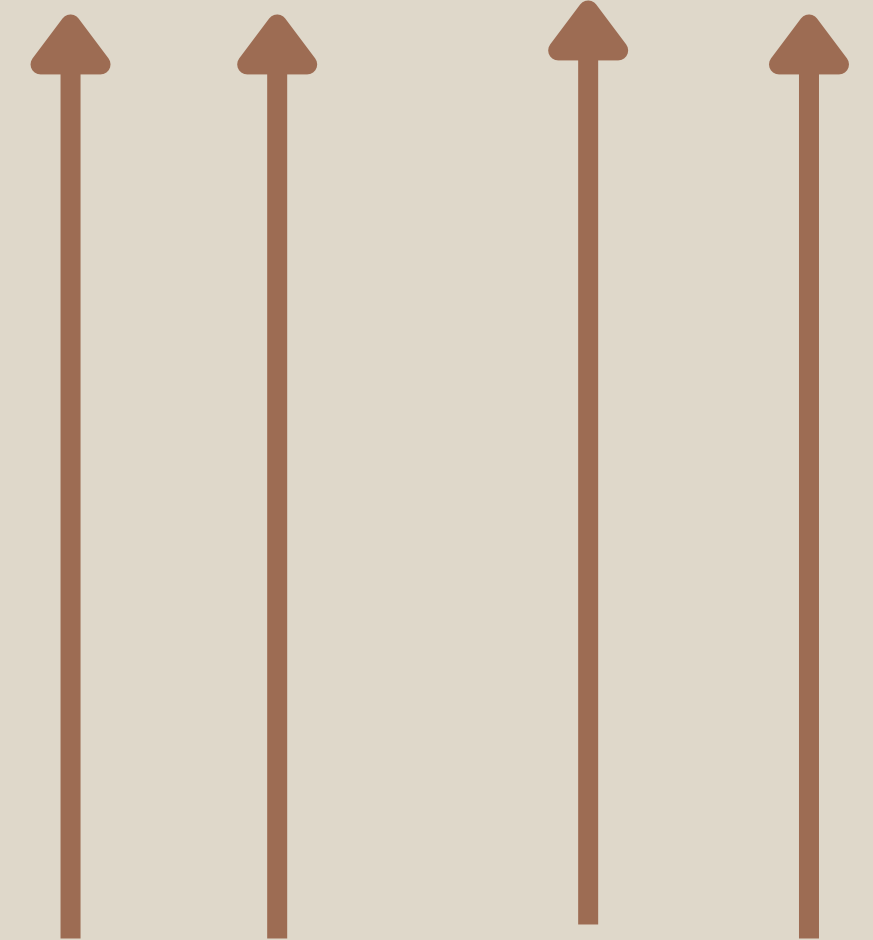
*Temperature*





# HUNGER

*Cues*





HUNGER

*Cues*



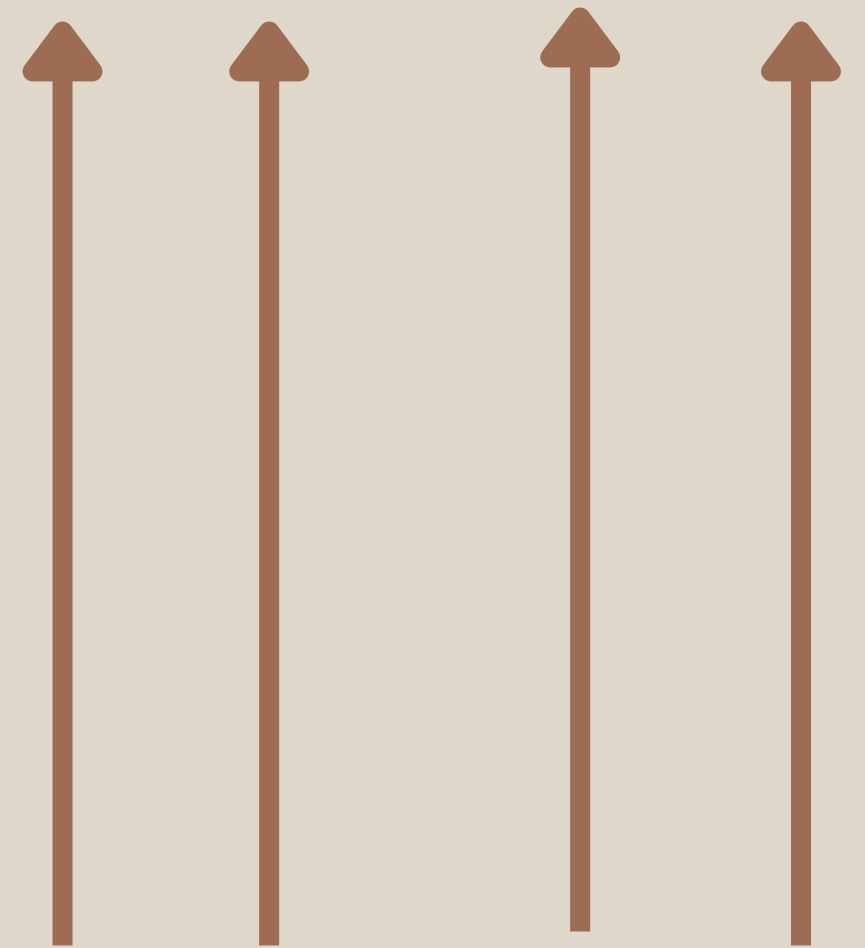


*Neocortex overrides*

**OUR BEHAVIORS  
AND  
OUR NARRATIVE**



# CHEST *Pain*





# CHEST

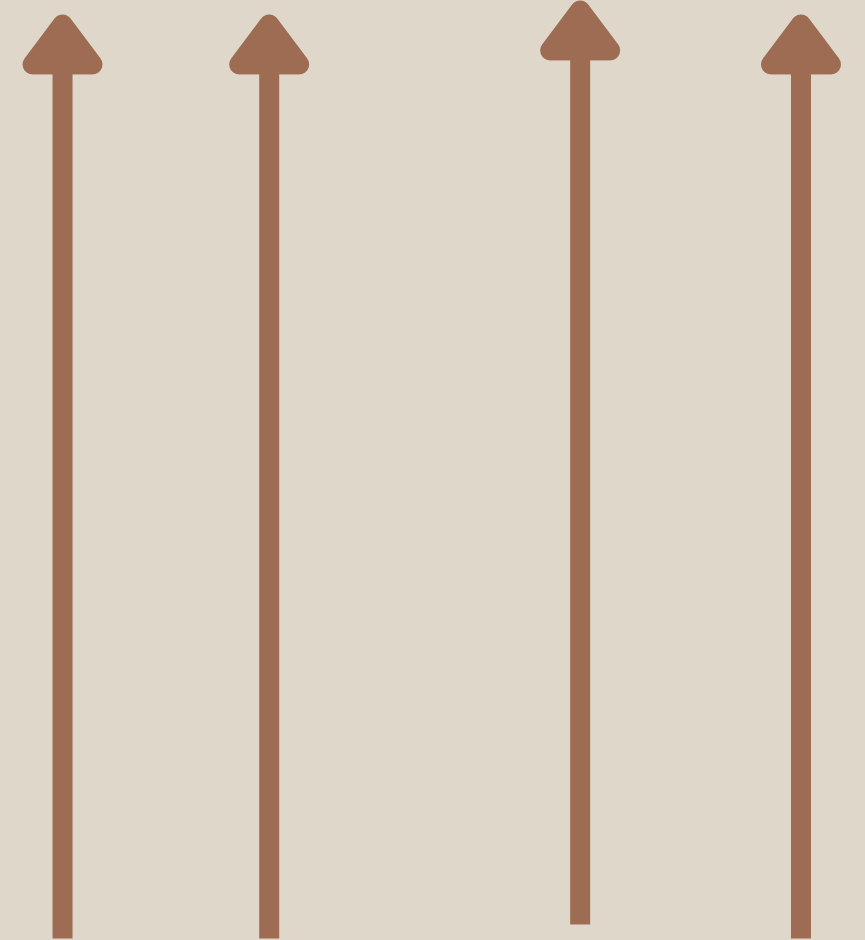
*Pain*

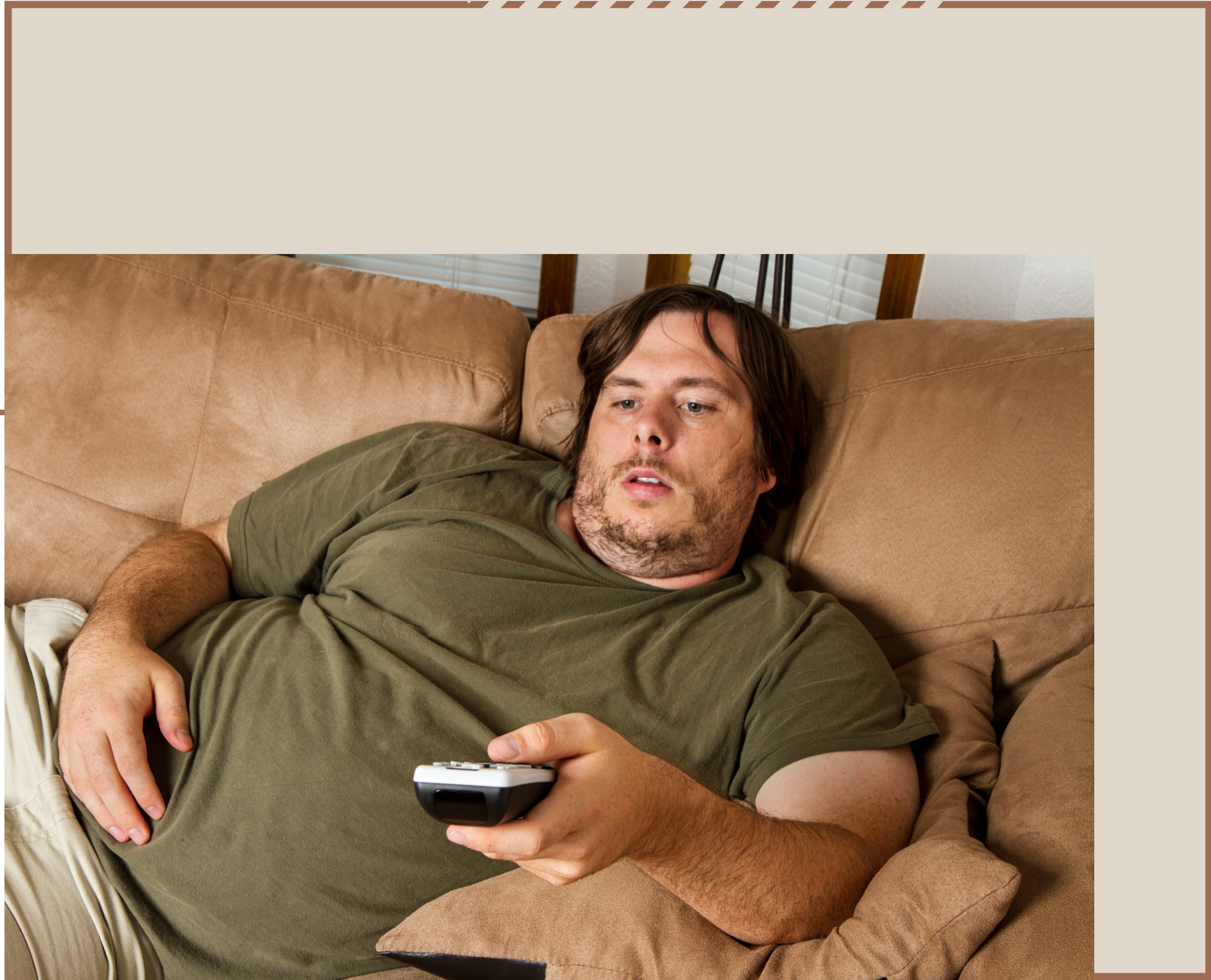




# LETHARGY

+ *Fatigue*

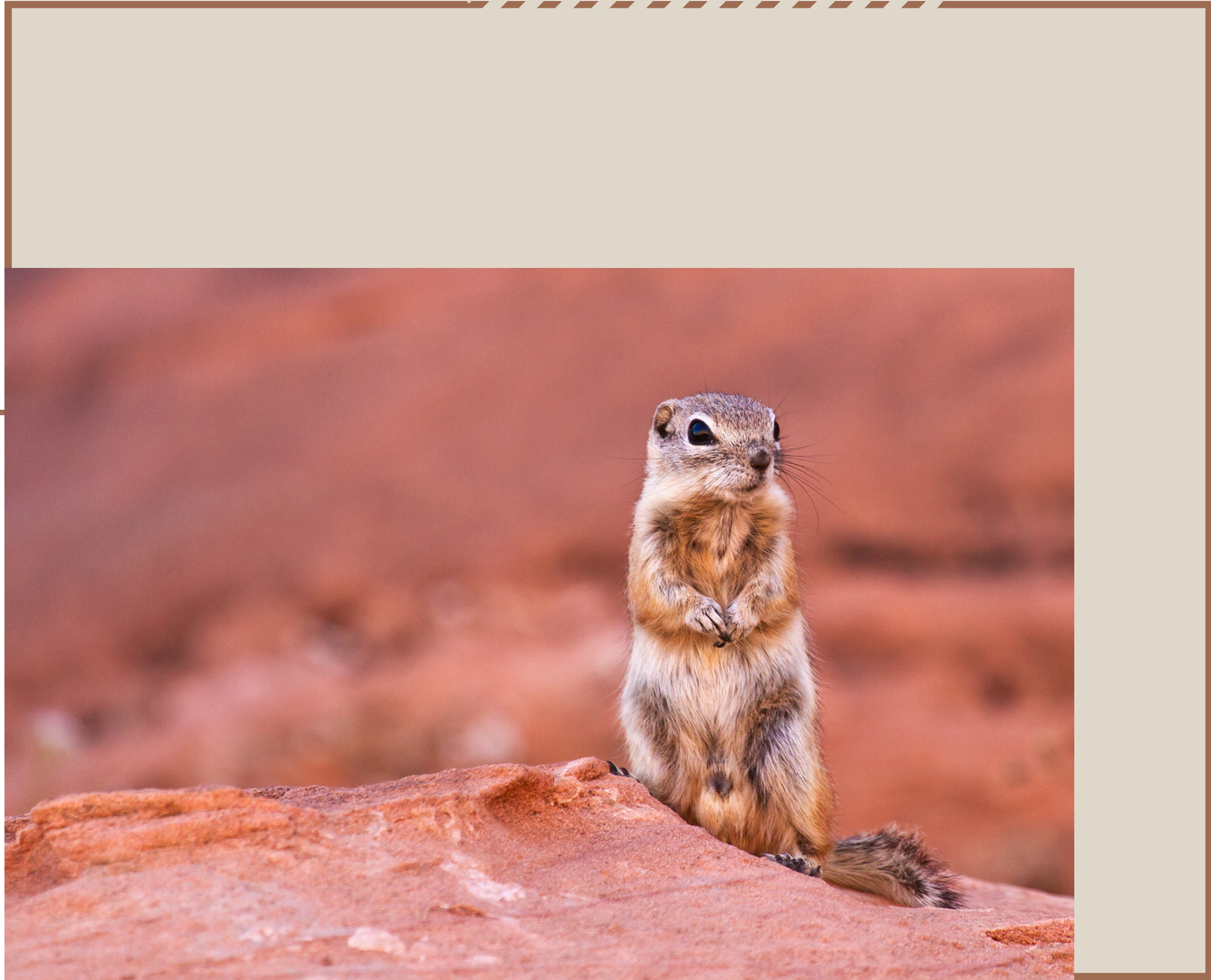




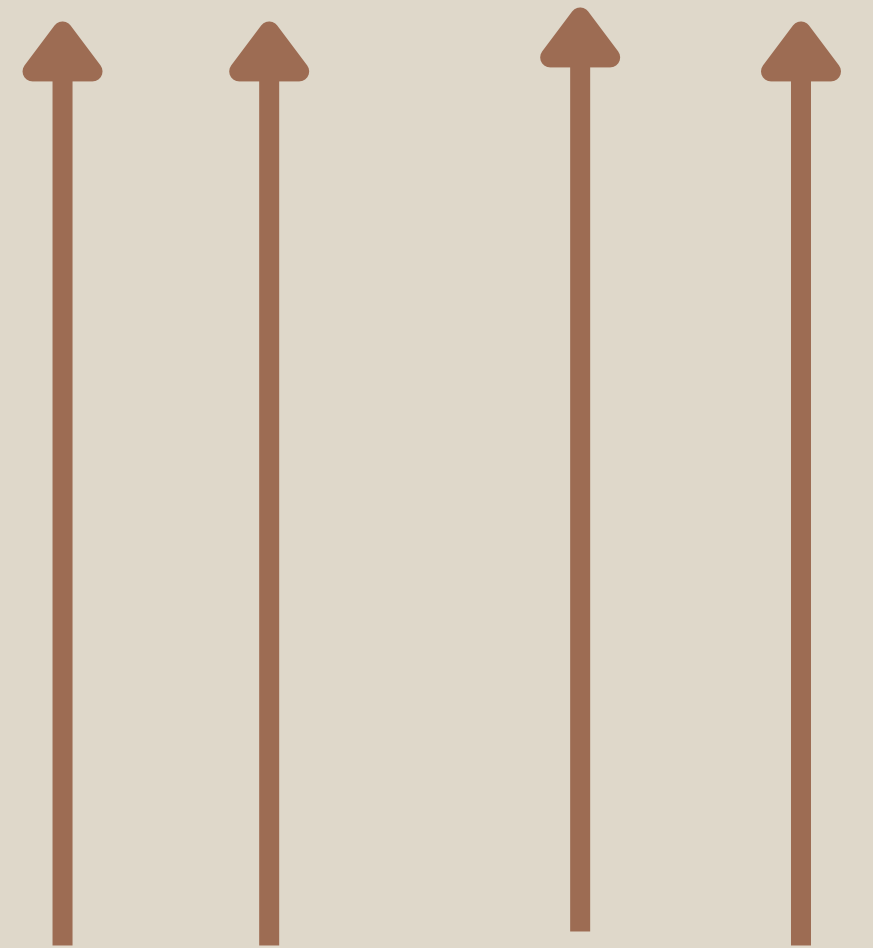
# LETHARGY

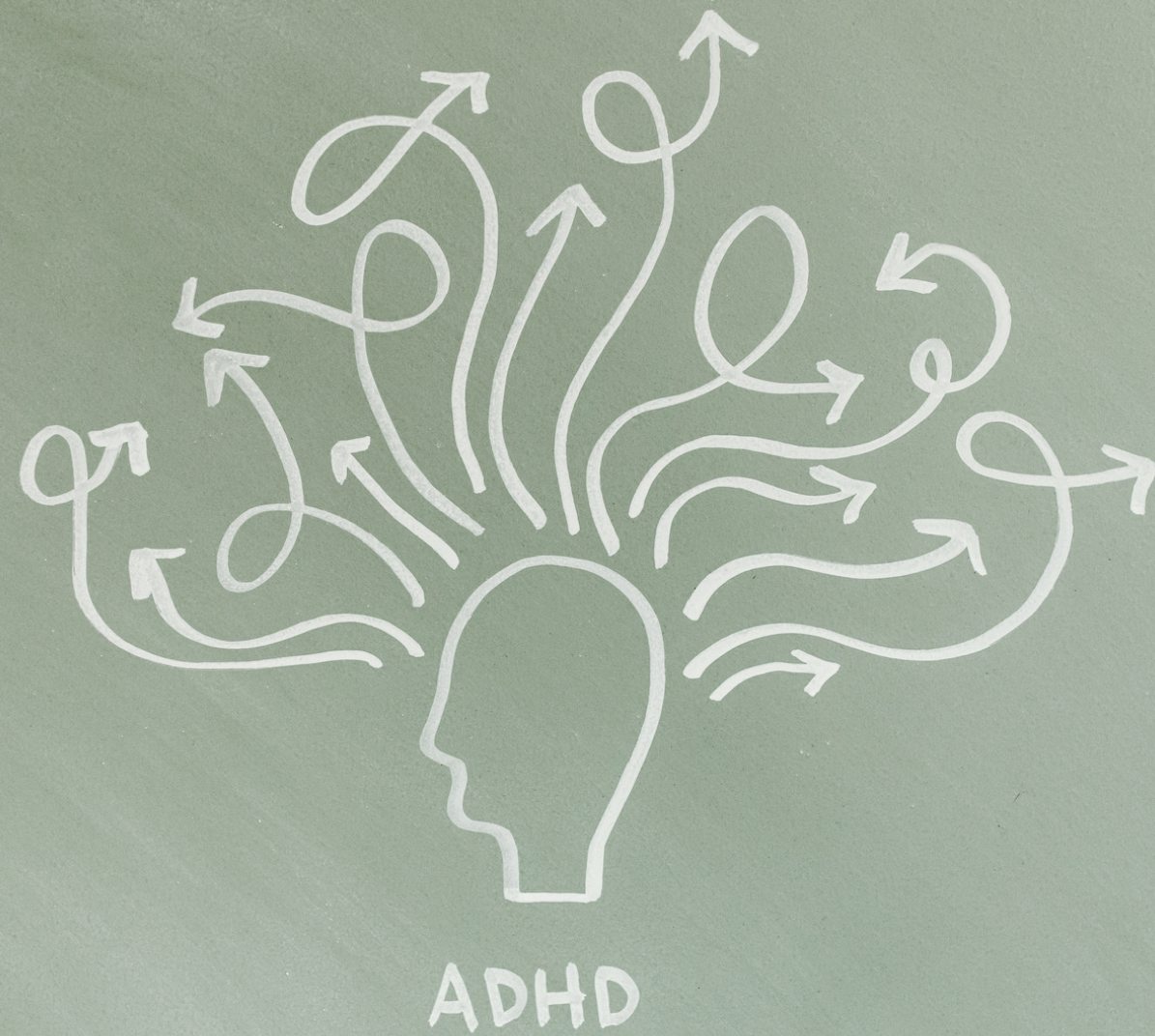
+ *Fatigue*





# HYPER- *vigilance*





**HYPER-**  
*vigilance*



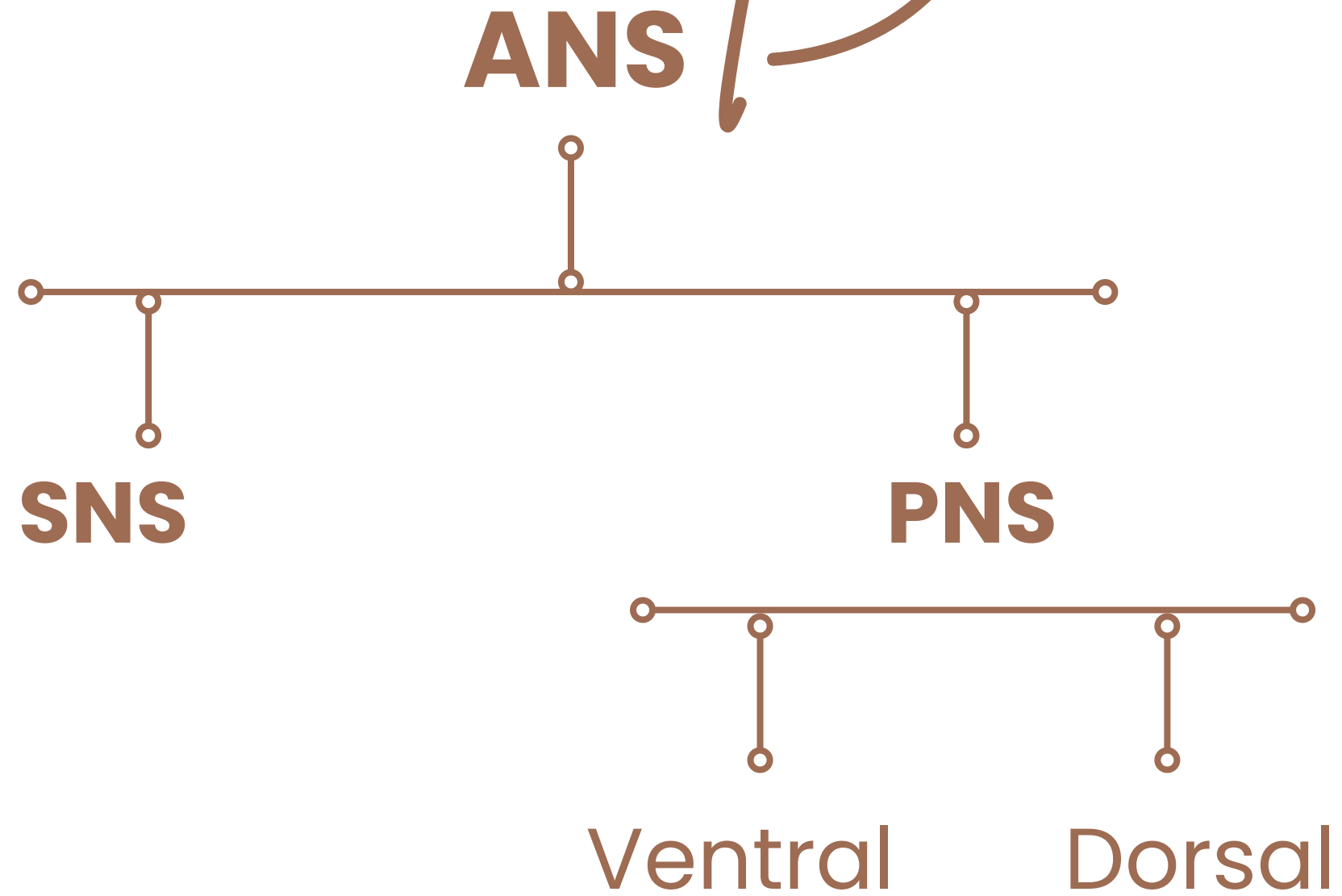
*ADHD*

# *The Nervous System*

**TELLS A  
DIFFERENT  
STORY**

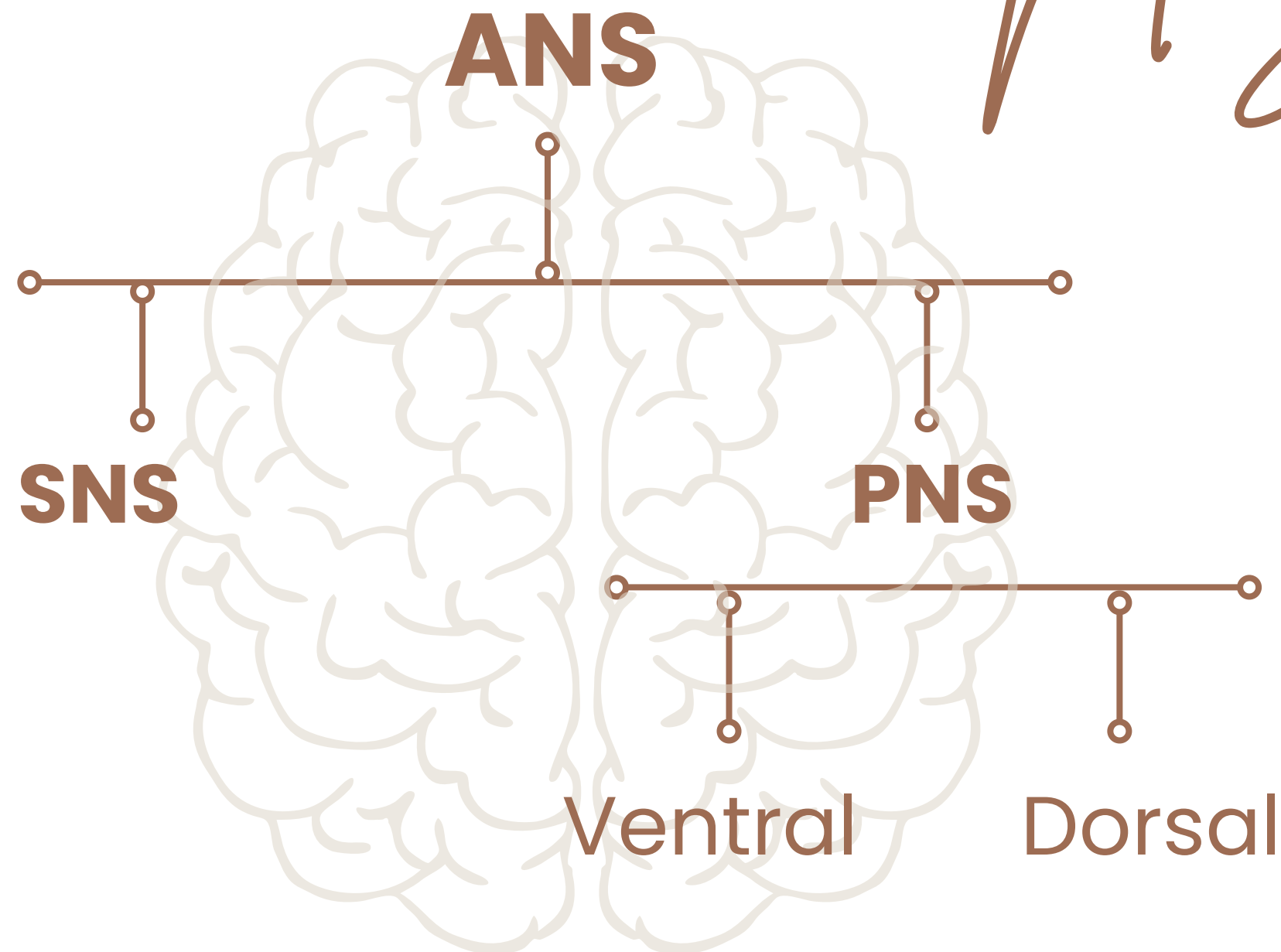


# REPTILIAN *Brain*



# SYMPATHETIC

*ANS*

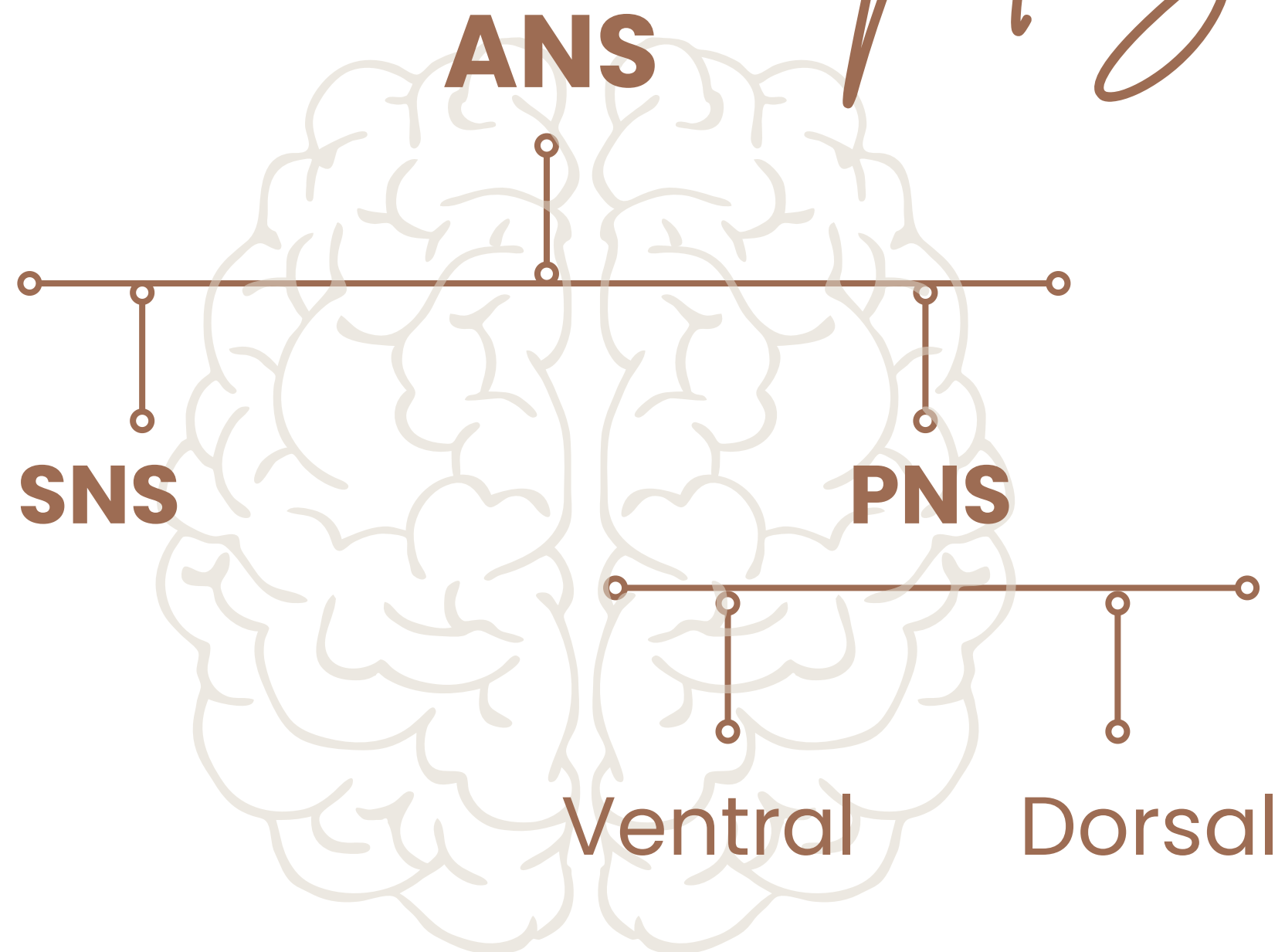


SNS + Safety =  
PLAY

SNS + Threat =  
FIGHT/FLIGHT

# PARASYMP.

*MS*



## Ventral Vagus:

- Connection
- Curiosity
- Creativity
- Compassion

## Dorsal Vagus:

- DV + Safety = REST
- DV + Threat = Freeze/collapse

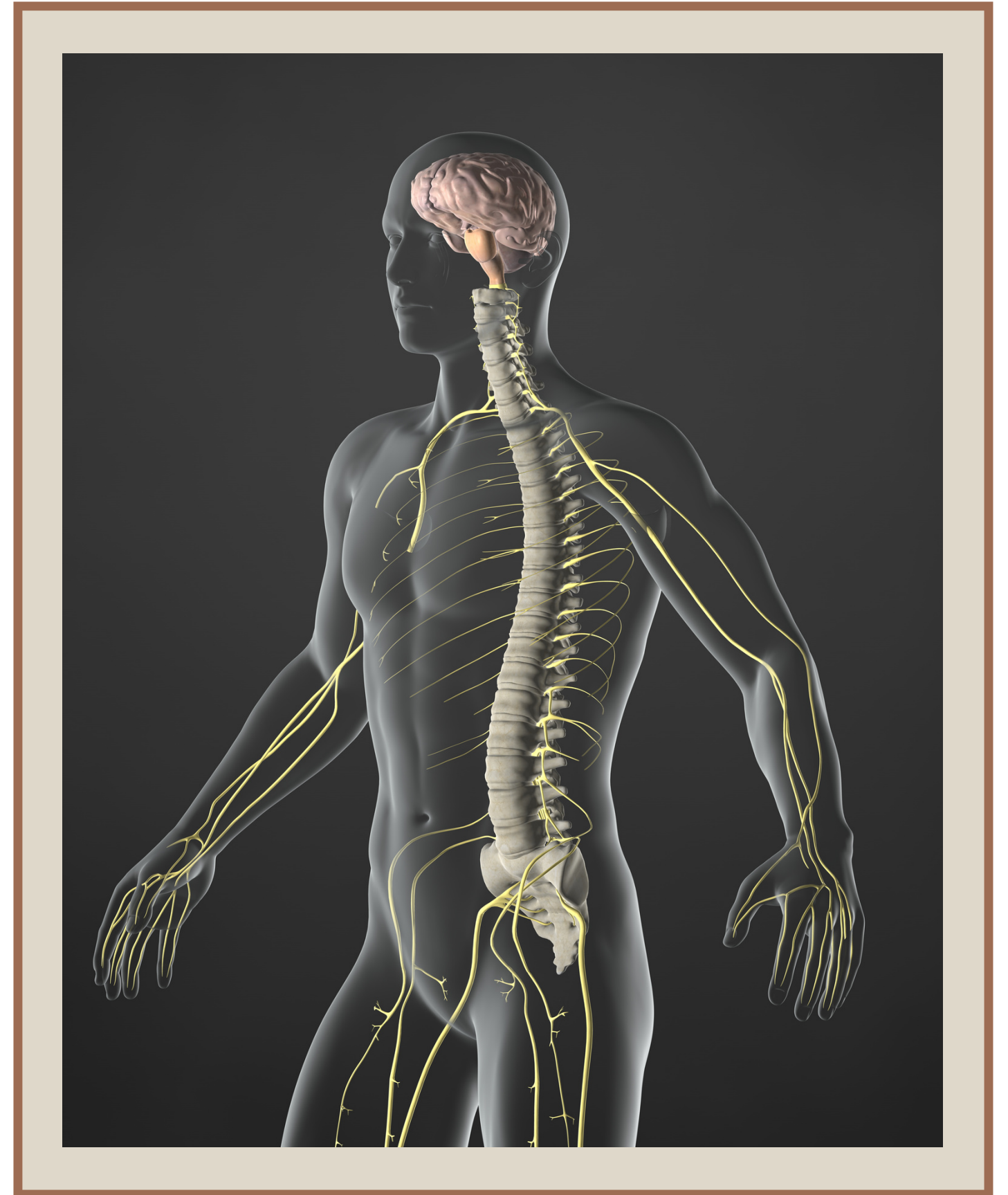
# POLYVAGAL

*Ladder*

Ventral Vagus

Sympathetic NS

Parasympathetic NS



# SELF-PROTECTIVE DEFENSE CYCLE

1. STARTLE
2. ORIENT
3. EVALUATE
4. RESPOND
  - A. SOCIALLY ENGAGE
  - B. FLEE
  - C. FIGHT
  - D. FREEZE
5. GO ON WITH LIFE



# WAYS WE GET STUCK IN THE CYCLE

- Neocortex judges response
- Our attempts are thwarted
- We never discharge our freeze energy



DO YOU  
REMEMBER  
OUR DEFINITION  
OF...

*Trauma?*

# TYPES OF TRAUMA

**Shock**



**Relational**



**Developmental**





# TREATING TRAUMA WITH POLYVAGAL WISDOM

- Enter through VV – start with a resource
- Widen VV
- Stay with body, not story
- Use own body to co-regulate
- Don't go to SNS or DV without VV





GET IN  
*Touch*

[ALoker@SeekingDepthToRecovery.com](mailto:ALoker@SeekingDepthToRecovery.com)

[www.SeekDepthToRecovery.com](http://www.SeekDepthToRecovery.com)

804-396-4668