

DISSECTING DISSOCIATION: MORE THAN MULTIPLE PERSONALITIES

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AGENDA

- Define dissociation
- Explore dissociation as a symptom vs. dissociation as a disorder
- Identify the six domains affected by dissociative experiences
- Understand how dissociation shows up in unexpected places
- Q&A





THEORETICAL ORIENTATION *and* DISCLAIMER



*Ideas included in this
presentation are my own*

WHAT IS DISSOCIATION?



THE OFFICIAL LIST OF DIAGNOSES

DSM-V

- Dissociative Identity Disorder
- Dissociative Amnesia
- Depersonalization/
Derealization Disorder (DPDR)
- Other Specified Dissociative Disorder (OSDD)
- Unspecified Dissociative Disorder
- Post-traumatic Stress Disorder, Dissociative Subtype

ICD-11

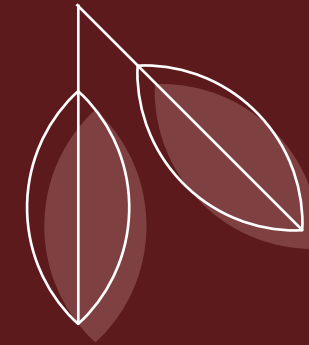
- Dissociative neurological symptom disorder
- Dissociative amnesia
- Trance disorder
- Possession trance disorder
- Dissociative identity disorder
- Partial dissociative identity disorder
- Depersonalization-derealization disorder
- Other specified dissociative disorders
- Dissociative disorders, unspecified

YEAH, BUT WHAT IS IT?

"Dissociation is a word that is used to describe the disconnection or lack of connection between things usually associated with each other.

Dissociated experiences are not integrated into the usual sense of self, resulting in discontinuities in conscious awareness."

International Society for the Study of Trauma and Dissociation,
Dissociation FAQs: <https://www.isst-d.org/resources/dissociation-faqs/>

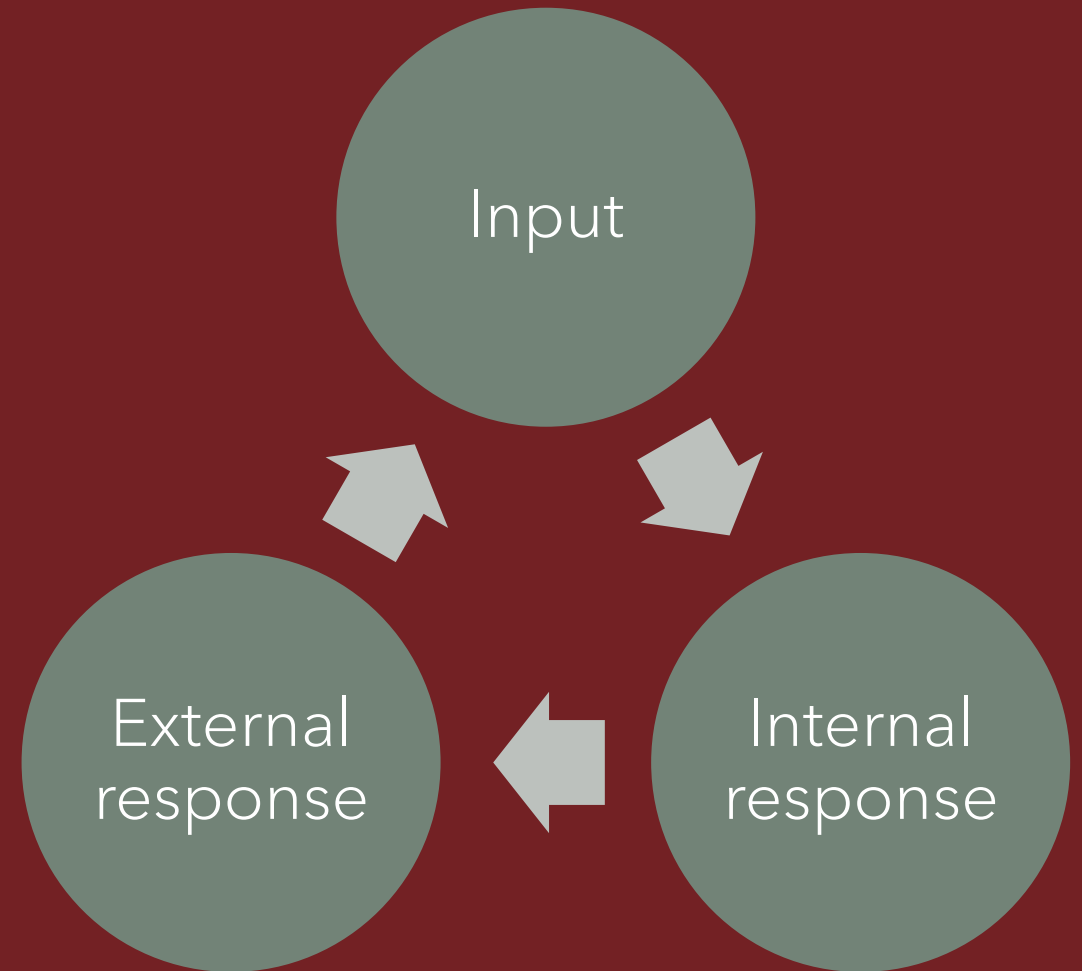




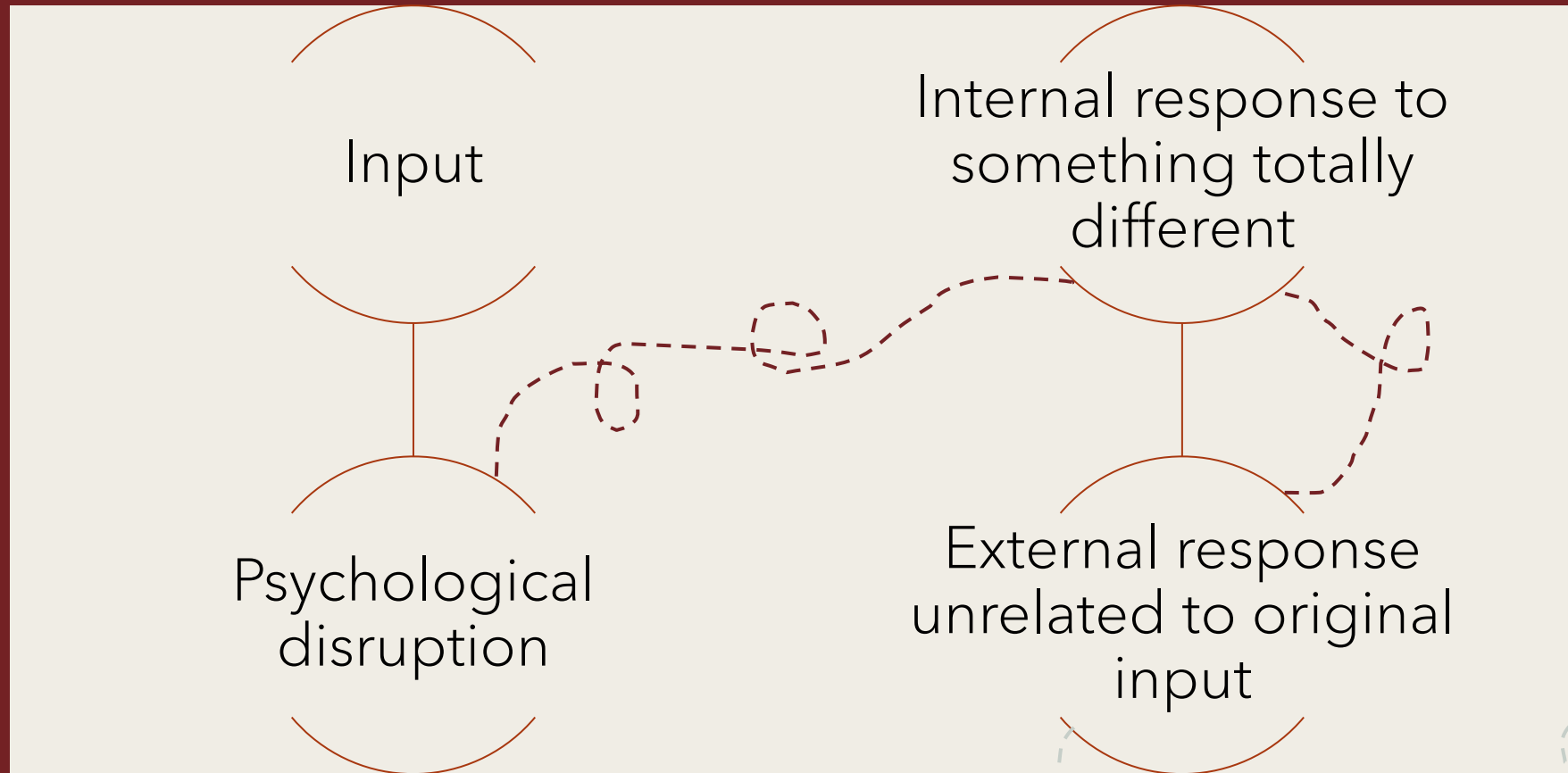
DISORDER vs SYMPTOM

- Fight/Flight/Freeze gone wrong
- Definition of trauma is an event which overwhelms our ability to effectively cope
- When we can't *fight* and we can't *flee*, we FREEZE
- Dissociation is one presentation of the freeze response

“NORMAL”
CONSCIOUSNESS



INTERRUPTED CONSCIOUSNESS



HOW DO YOU SEE
SOMETHING THAT
YOU CAN'T KNOW?





SIX AREAS WHERE DISSOCIATION DOES ITS THING

Surroundings: Where am I?

Feelings: What am I feeling (if anything)?

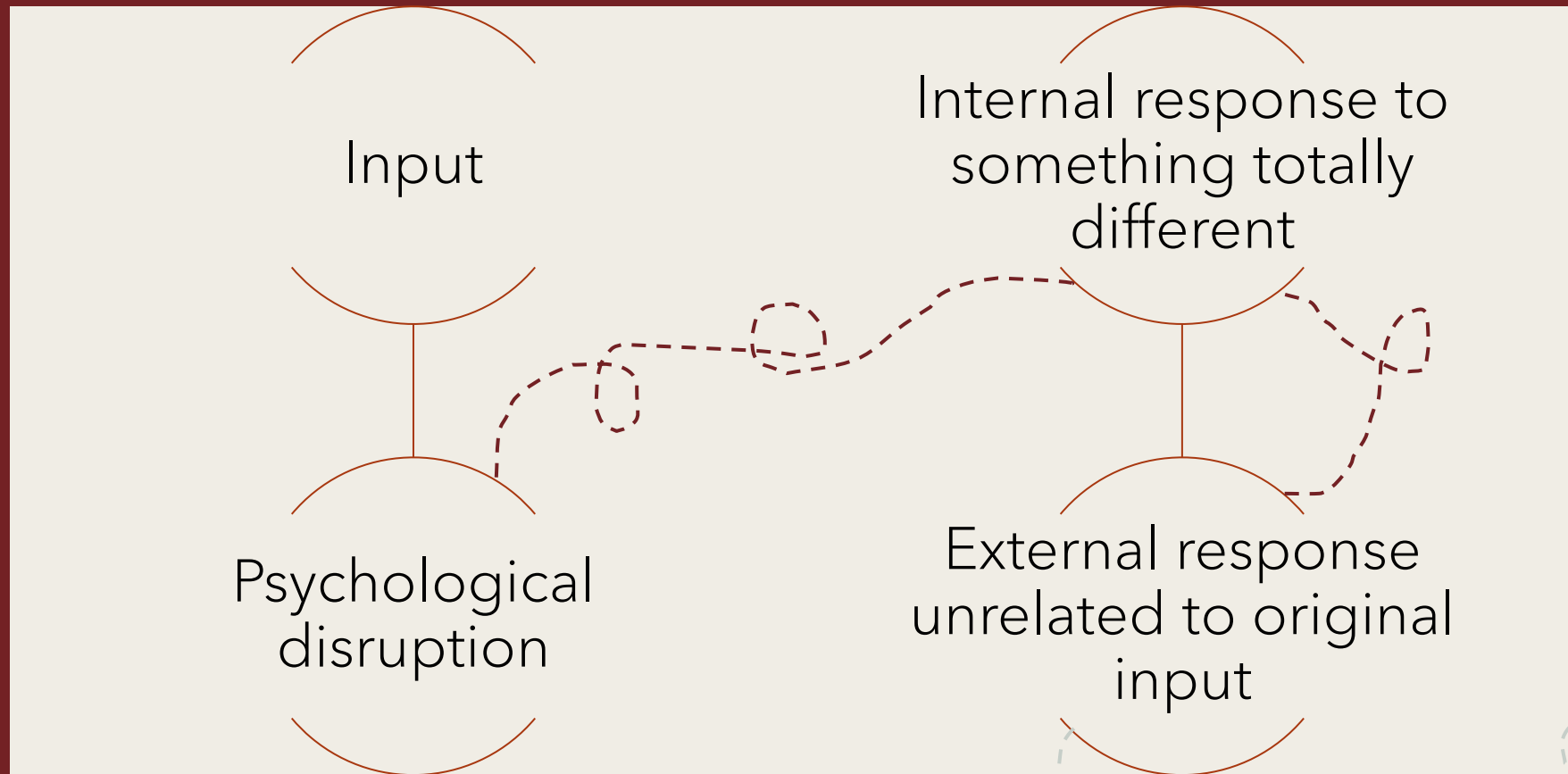
Thoughts: What am I thinking (if anything)?

Time: What time/day/year is it?

Memories: Missing, interrupted, or incomplete?

Sense of self: Who am I?

INTERRUPTED CONSCIOUSNESS REVISITED



INTERRUPTED CONSCIOUSNESS: SURROUNDINGS





Input leading to discomfort: Parent yelling



Psychological disruption: Remove self (depersonalization)



Internal response to *that*: This is not that bad!

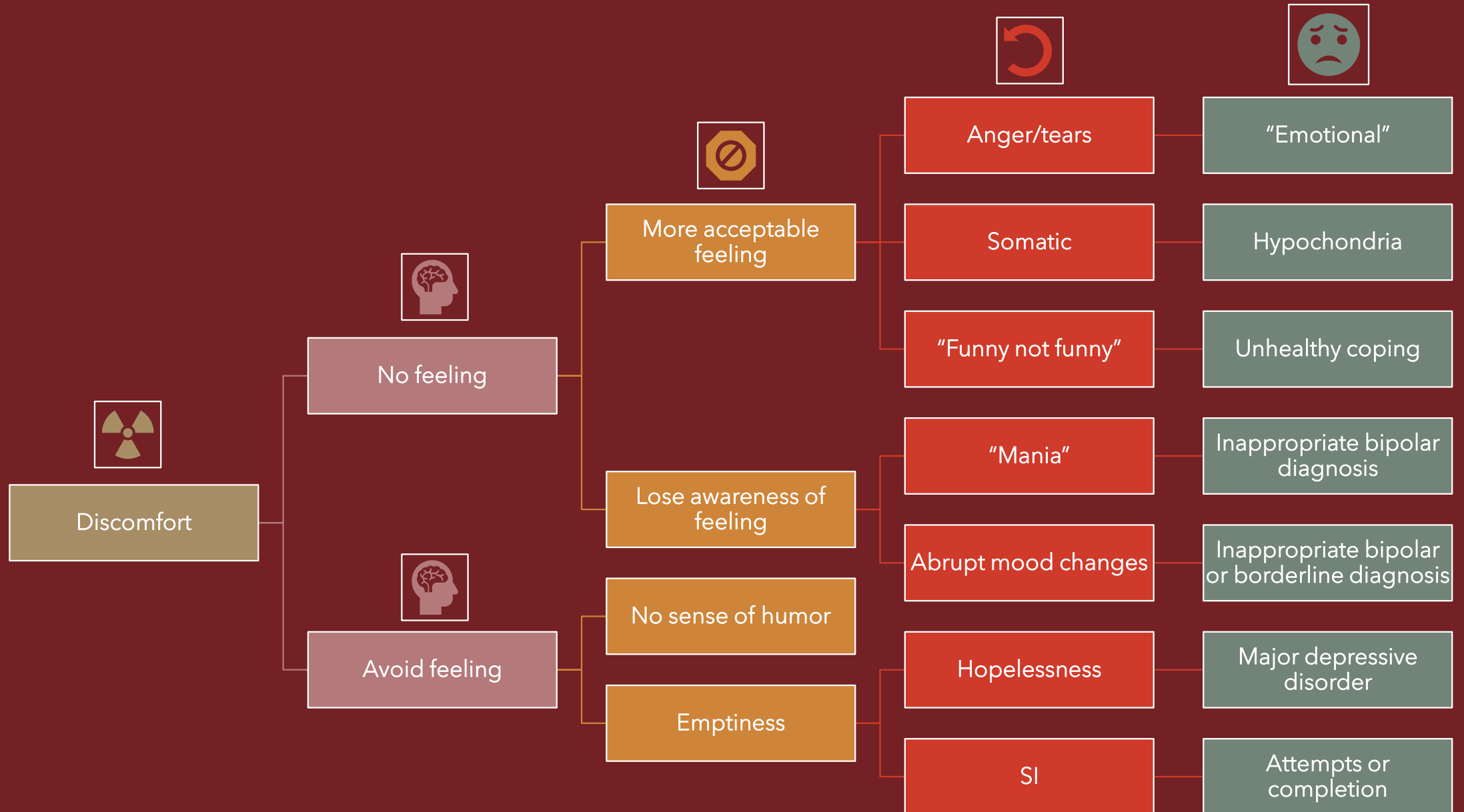


External response: Blankness or easy acquiescence



Emotional complaint: Depression, people pleasing

INTERRUPTED CONSCIOUSNESS: FEELINGS





Input leading to discomfort: Regret/guilt over behavior



Psychological disruption: No feeling (guilt = overwhelm)



Internal response to *that*: Anger at being “accused”!

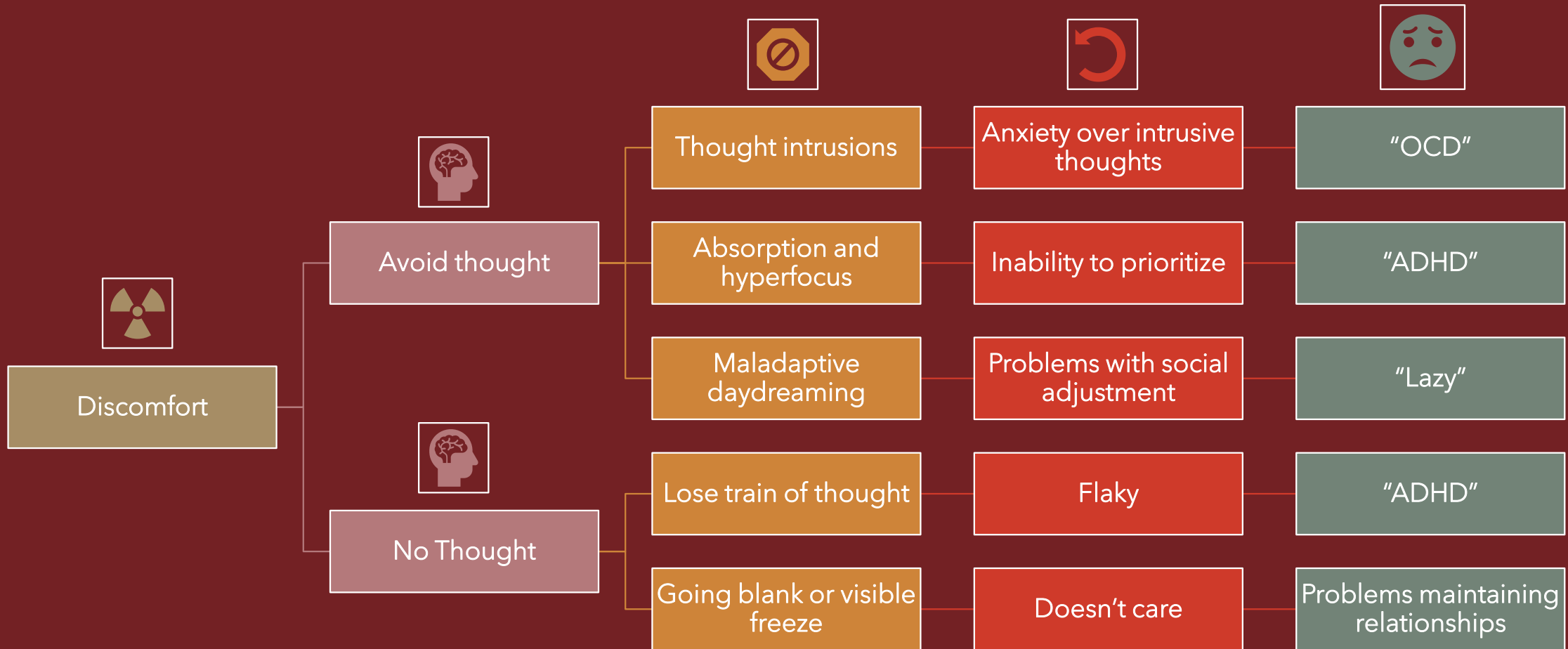


External response: Lashing out, angry blaming of others



Emotional complaint: Overreacting, can't hold relationships

INTERRUPTED CONSCIOUSNESS: THOUGHTS





Input leading to discomfort: Anxiety about project



Psychological disruption: Avoid thought



Internal response to *that*: TIME TO CLEAN WHOLE HOUSE!



External response: Avoiding project through cleaning



Emotional complaint: "I think I have ADHD"



INTERRUPTED CONSCIOUSNESS: TIME





Input leading to discomfort: Repeating trauma without possibility of escape



Psychological disruption: Time disappears



Internal response to *that*: Hopelessness

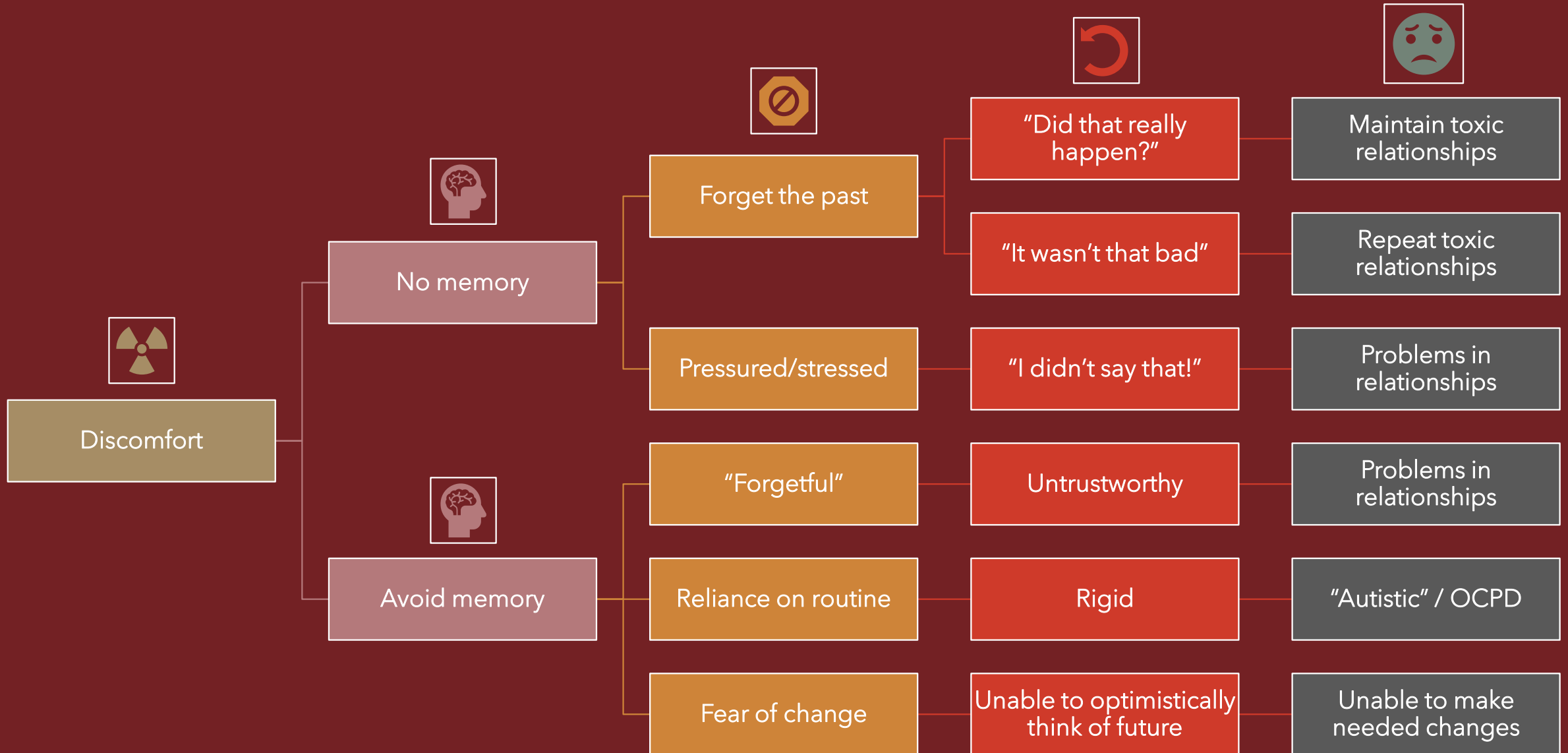


External response: Cannot perceive and end to the emotional torment



Emotional complaint: Excessive unhealthy coping/NSSI/SI

INTERRUPTED CONSCIOUSNESS: MEMORY





Input leading to discomfort: Partner invalidates feelings



Psychological disruption: Forget the past



Internal response to *that*: It wasn't that bad



External response: Repeat accepting chronic invalidation



Emotional complaint: Repeated toxic relationships

INTERRUPTED CONSCIOUSNESS: SENSE OF SELF





Input leading to discomfort: Coworkers' perceived dislike



Psychological disruption: No self (Be someone likeable)



Internal response to *that*: Change behaviors in ways which coworkers will hopefully like



External response: Fake, inconsistent, "untrustworthy"



Emotional complaint: Problems in relationships

THE QUESTION REMAINS:



How do we see something that
doesn't exist ?

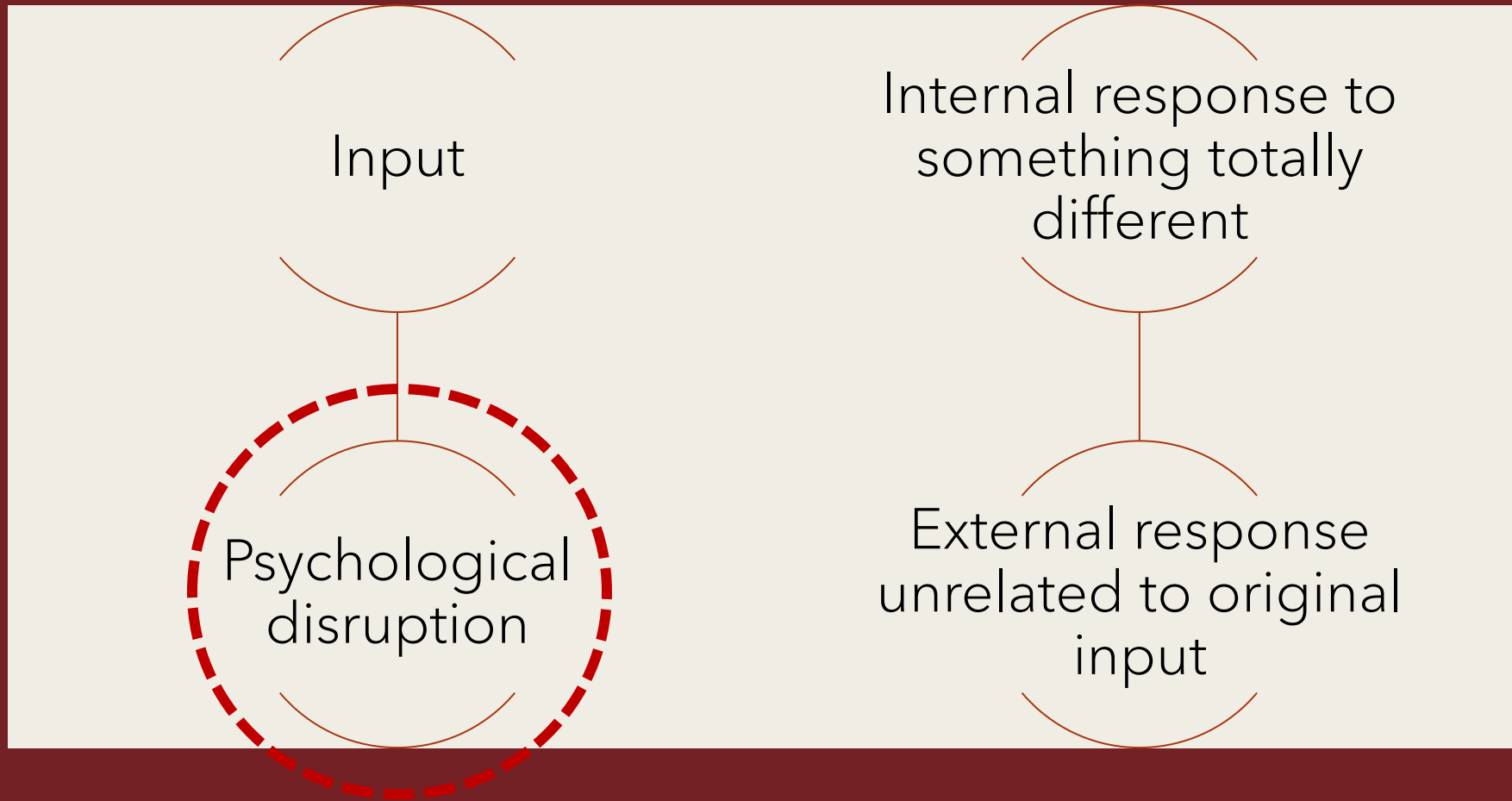




MIND THE GAPS

- Gaps in logic
- Gaps in chronology
- Gaps in response to approved interventions
 - *Medication is ineffective*
 - *Calming skills are ineffective*
- Gaps in external presentation
- Gaps in when symptoms appear

INTERRUPTED CONSCIOUSNESS CAN BE IDENTIFIED BY THE GAP



HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT

- Disruptions in psychological continuity
- Purpose: numb intolerable affect/feeling
- Non-pathological dissociative symptoms or experiences

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1. Complex trauma
 2. Borderline personality disorder
 3. Somatic disorders
 4. Other personality disorders
 5. Neurodivergent masking
 6. Code switching or other required behaviors for marginalized populations

THANK YOU



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