

ASSYST HEART PROJECT for Mental Health in Humanitarian Emergencies

Ignacio (Nacho) Jarero & Nicolle Mainthow

AUGUST 2026





"We are all responsible for the world we live in. Worldwide, clinicians are forging bonds that transcend countries and ideologies. Bonds that can help heal the trauma and pain that lead to ongoing violence and suffering. To make a difference that affects generations to come—don't leave it to anyone else. We all have to take a part in it." —

Dr. Francine Shapiro.



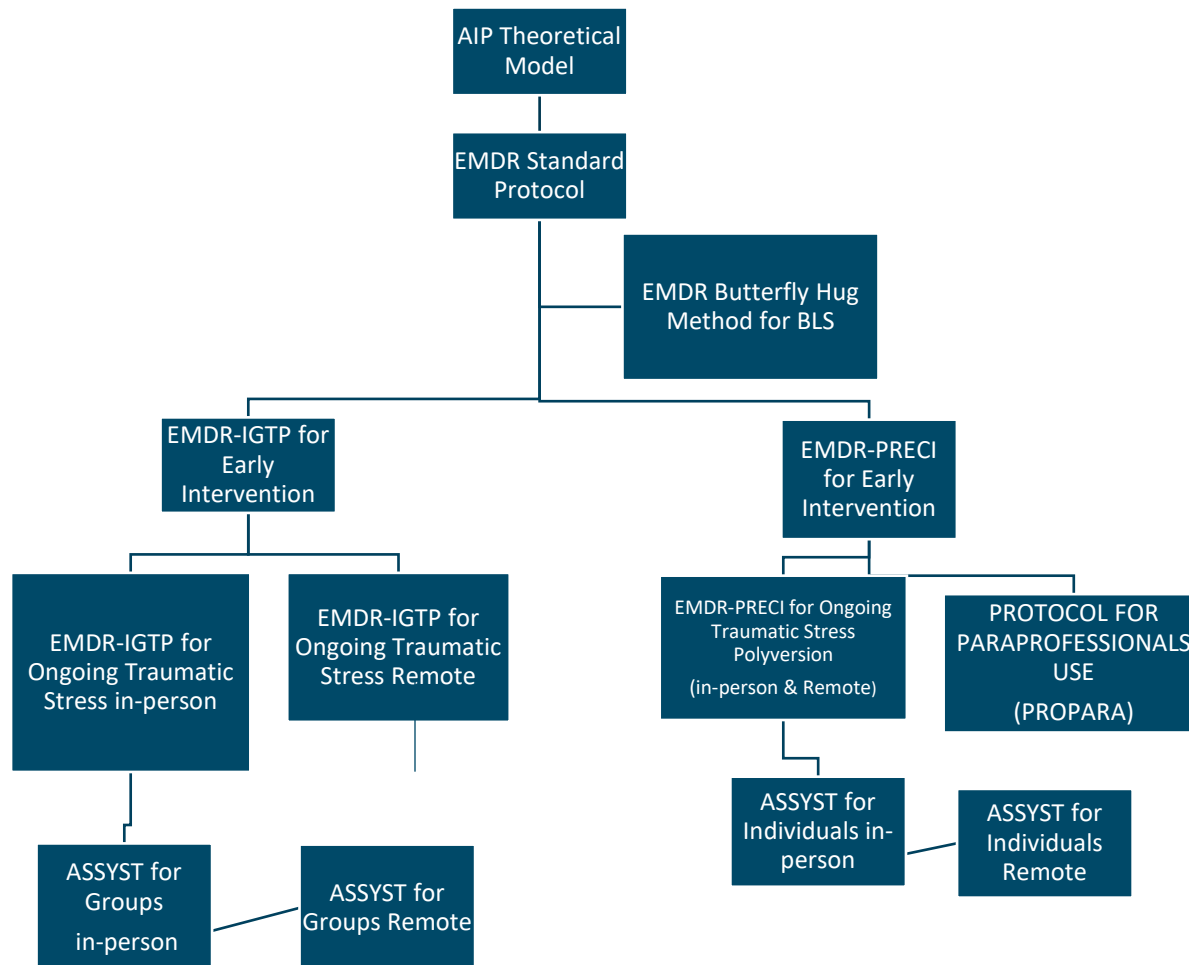
"We do not stand by in the presence of trauma and suffering" —

Dr. Ignacio (Nacho) Jarero.



WHAT IS THE ASSYST TREATMENT INTERVENTIONS FAMILY TREE?

OUR PROTOCOLS AND TREATMENT INTERVENTIONS FAMILY TREE
ALL OUR PROTOCOLS WERE BORN DURING HUMANITARIAN FIELDWORK
AFTER DISASTERS





**Who are the
developers of
these treatment
interventions and
protocols?**



Dr. Ignacio (Nacho) Jarero and Professor Lucina (Lucy) Artigas (the Butterfly Hug originator) are the developers, and also, the world pioneers in the provision of EMDR Therapy in a group format.



**What is the
research evidence
behind these
treatment
interventions and
protocols?**

AS OF JULY 2026,

**Our ASSYST Treatment Interventions,
Butterfly Hug method, and EMDR
Therapy protocols have**

**OVER 100 PEER-REVIEWED
PUBLICATIONS IN ACADEMIC
INTERNATIONAL JOURNALS**

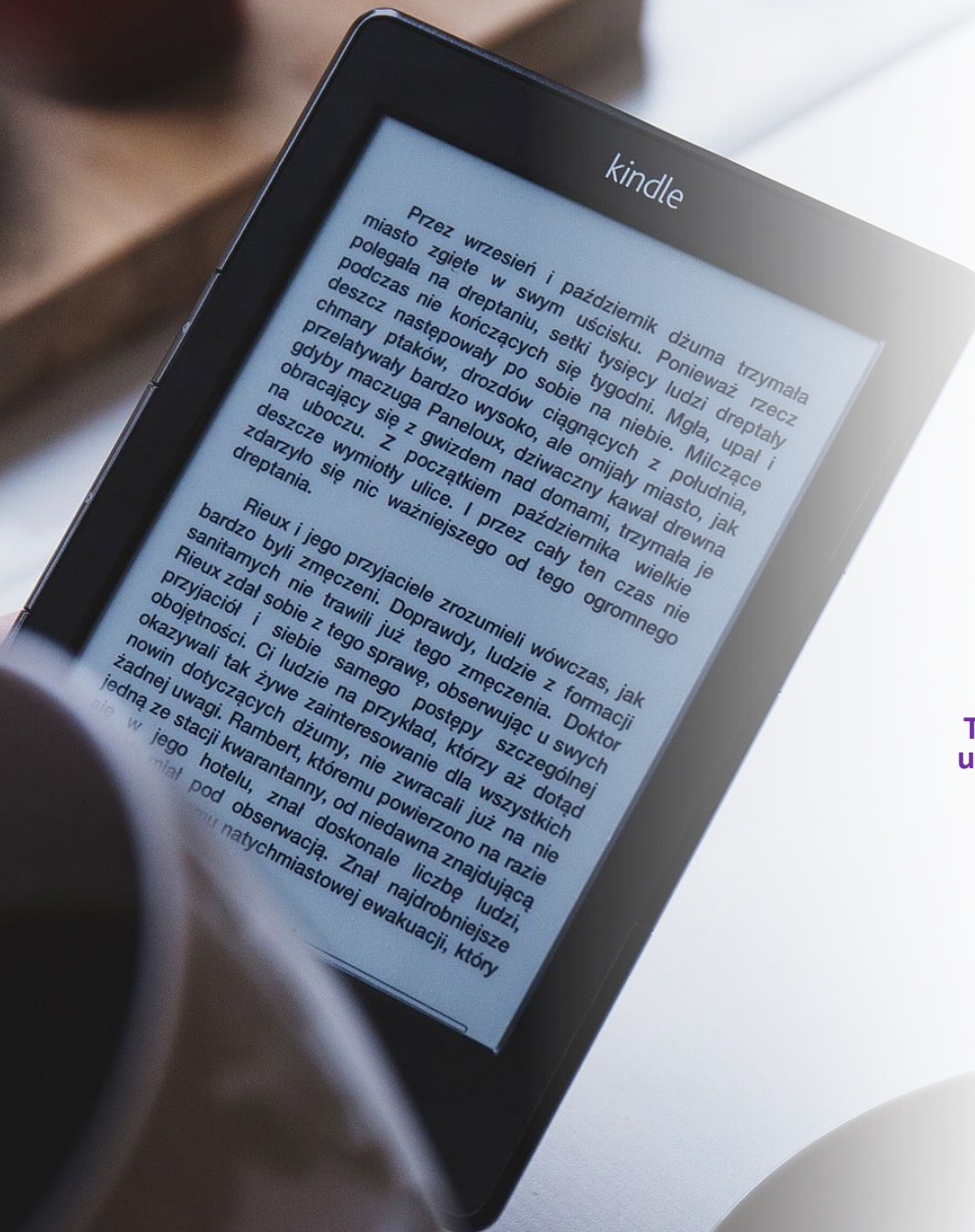
**SPANNING ON NEARLY 60 CLINICAL
POPULATIONS**

**No Posters, Conference Presentations, in-
press, or Newsletter publications are
included on this list.**

**This consolidates their position as the
undisputed world leaders in the EMDR
Early Intervention and Ongoing or
Prolonged Traumatic Stress field.**

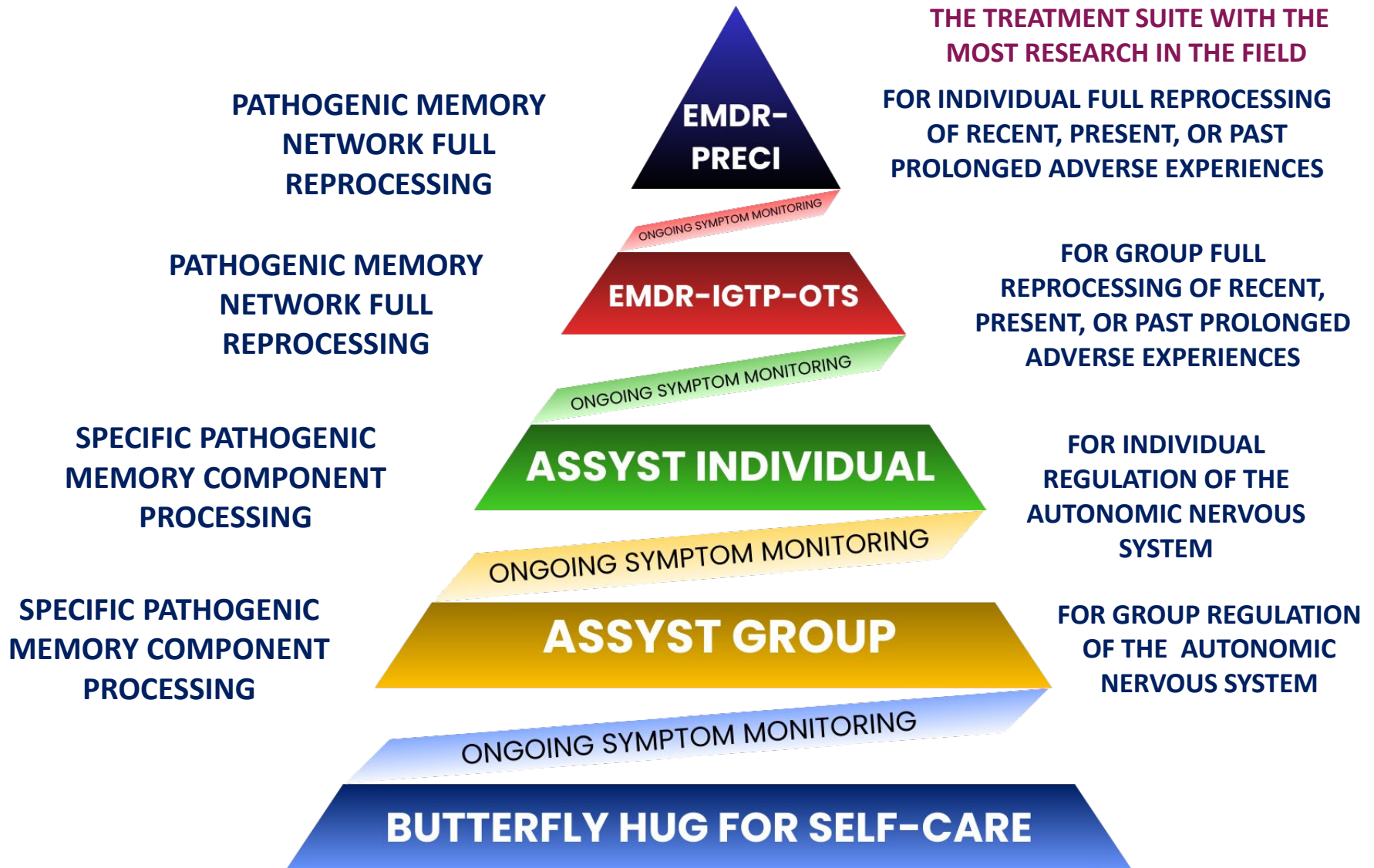
Follow the link to the Bibliography.

<https://tinyt.co/4edi>



**OUR SYMPTOM-
TRAJECTORY BASED
STEPPED CARE
APPROACH
TO ADVERSE
EXPERIENCES WITH OUR
SUITE OF TREATMENT
INTERVENTIONS AND
PROTOCOLS**

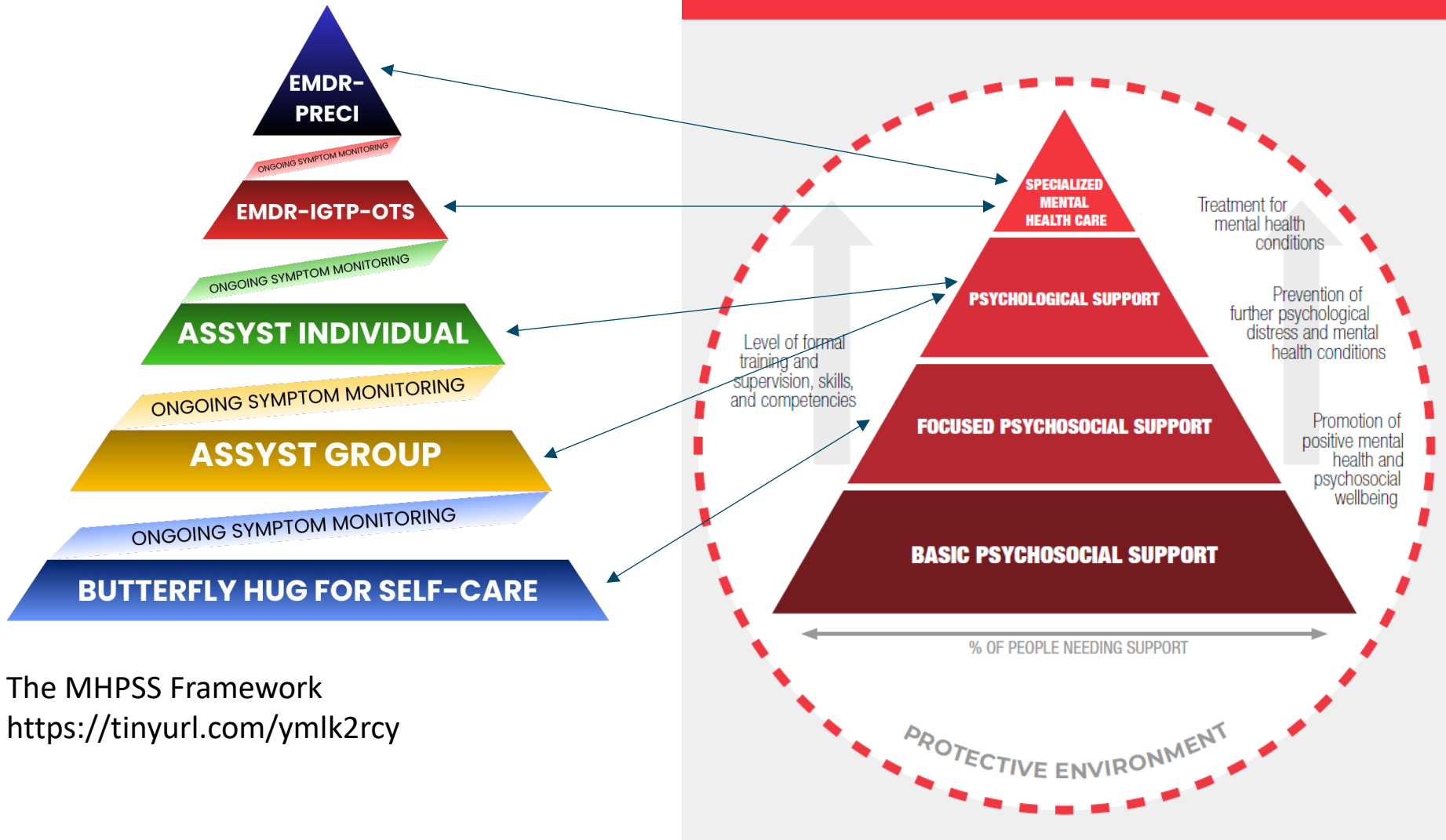
OUR SYMPTOM-TRAJECTORY BASED STEPPED CARE APPROACH TO ADVERSE EXPERIENCES
WITH OUR HIGHLY EFFECTIVE AND SAFE SUITE OF TREATMENT INTERVENTIONS



By Ignacio (Nacho) Jarero. All rights reserved

OUR APPROACH IS ALIGNED WITH

THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT'S MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT FRAMEWORK



The MHPSS Framework
<https://tinyurl.com/ymlk2rcy>

**OUR AIP & SYMPTOM
TRAJECTORY-BASED
STEPPED CARE APPROACH
MAIN OBJECTIVES**

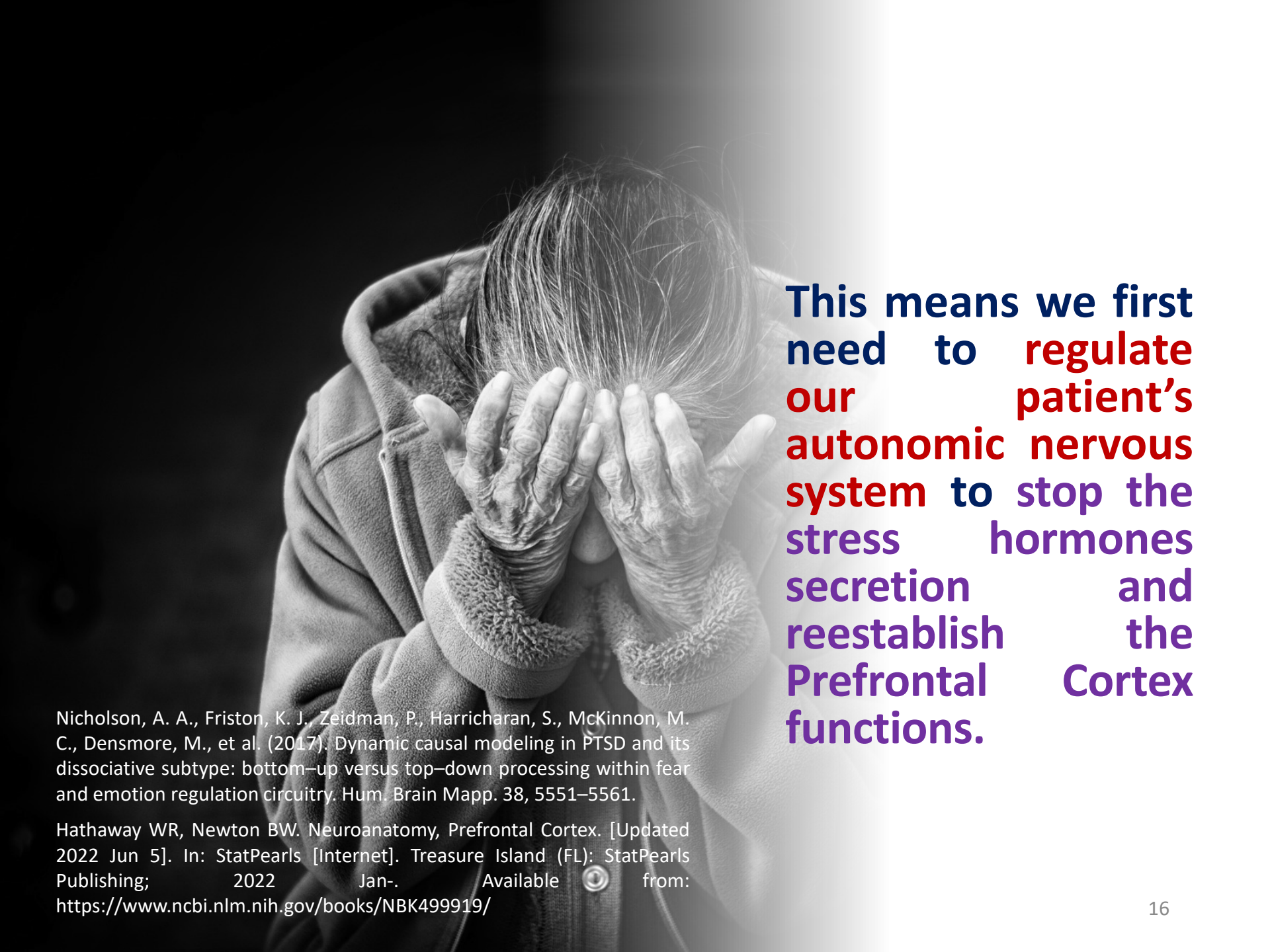
- Strategize treatment.
- Provide the treatment interventions according to the progression of the pathophysiology.
- Improve symptom relief and clinical outcomes.



**WHY IS OUR **FIRST
STEP** TO FOCUS ON
THE CLIENT'S
AUTONOMIC
NERVOUS SYSTEM
REGULATION?**

A black and white photograph of a person with long, dark, curly hair sitting on a window sill. They are looking down, and their hands are clasped together in their lap. The person is wearing a light-colored, long-sleeved shirt and patterned socks. The window behind them shows a blurred view of a city street. The text "Because we need to strategize treatment" is overlaid in yellow, with a white horizontal line underneath it.

Because we need to strategize
treatment



This means we first
need to **regulate**
our **patient's**
autonomic nervous
system to stop the
stress hormones
secretion and
reestablish the
Prefrontal Cortex
functions.

Nicholson, A. A., Friston, K. J., Zeidman, P., Harricharan, S., McKinnon, M. C., Densmore, M., et al. (2017). Dynamic causal modeling in PTSD and its dissociative subtype: bottom-up versus top-down processing within fear and emotion regulation circuitry. *Hum. Brain Mapp.* 38, 5551–5561.

Hathaway WR, Newton BW. Neuroanatomy, Prefrontal Cortex. [Updated 2022 Jun 5]. In: StatPearls [Internet]. Treasure Island (FL): StatPearls Publishing; 2022 Jan-. Available from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK499919/>

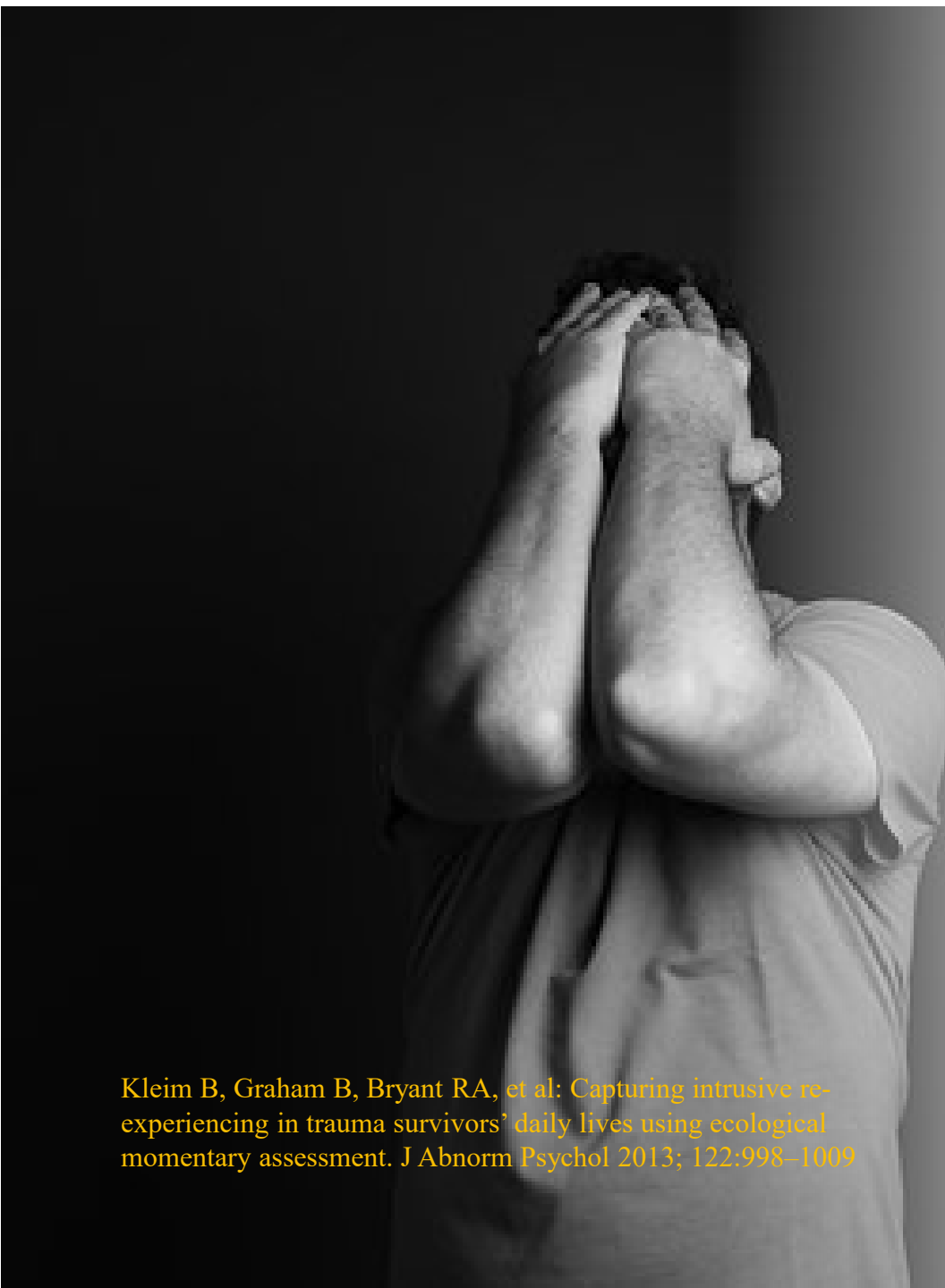


**WHICH OF OUR
AIP-INFORMED
PROCEDURES DO
WE CHOOSE TO
DO OUR FIRST
STEP?**

**We choose the
Acute Stress Syndrome
Stabilization (ASSYST)©
treatment
interventions.**



The ASSYST© treatment interventions were born during humanitarian fieldwork and are AIP-informed, carefully field-tested, evidence-based, and user-friendly psychophysiological algorithmic symptom-focused trauma-sensitive approaches...



**Intrusion symptoms
are a core ASD and
PTSD dimension.**

**Therefore, focusing
on this domain could
identify targets
specifically related to
trauma .**

Kleim B, Graham B, Bryant RA, et al: Capturing intrusive re-experiencing in trauma survivors' daily lives using ecological momentary assessment. J Abnorm Psychol 2013; 122:998–1009

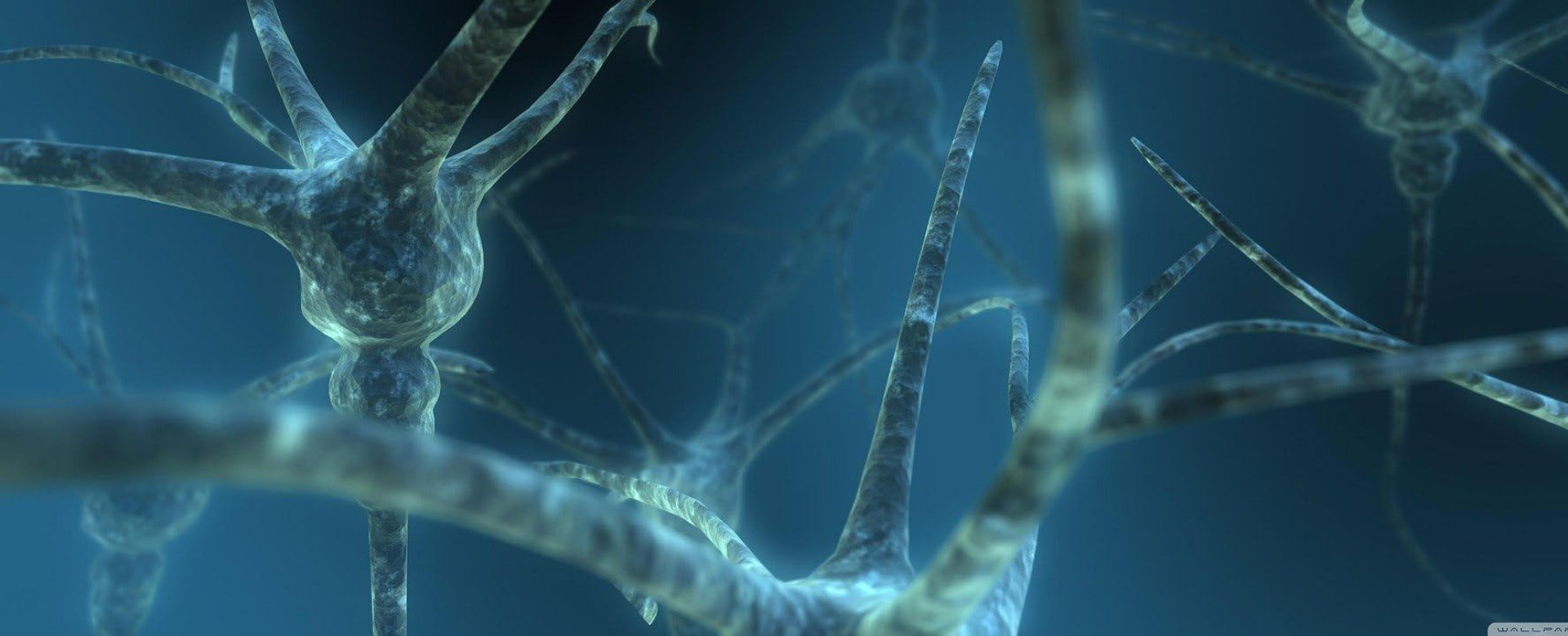


Reducing intrusion symptoms may have a generalizing effects on other PTSD symptoms, as they can impact other PTSD symptom clusters.

Astill Wright, L., Horstmann, L., Holmes, E.A. *et al.* Consolidation/reconsolidation therapies for the prevention and treatment of PTSD and re-experiencing: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Transl Psychiatry* **11**, 453 (2021).



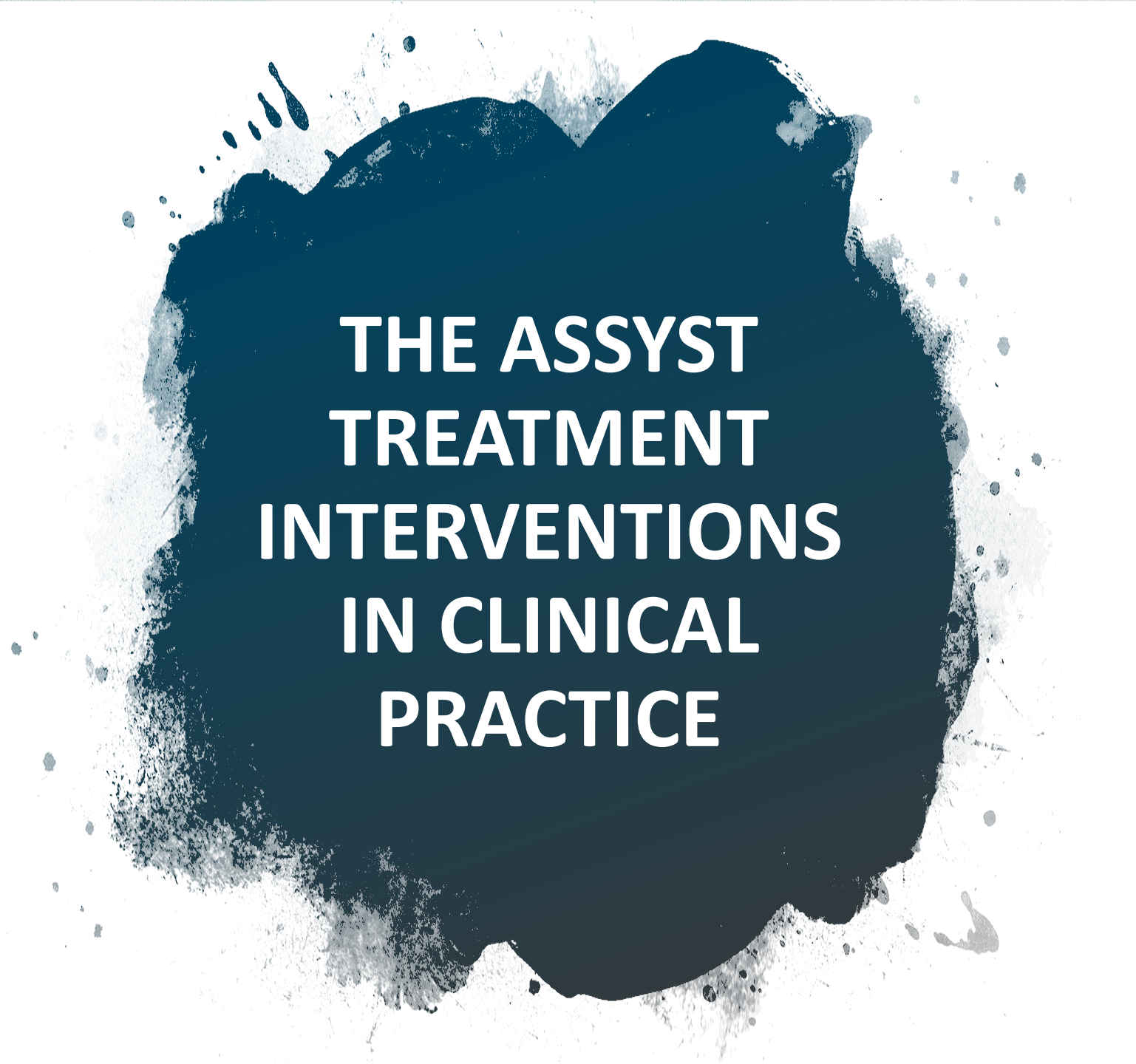
ASSYST TREATMENT INTERVENTIONS OBJECTIVE



The objective of these treatment interventions is focused on the **client's Autonomic Nervous System regulation** through the reduction or removal of the activation produced by the **components** of the pathogenic memories of the adverse experience(s)...



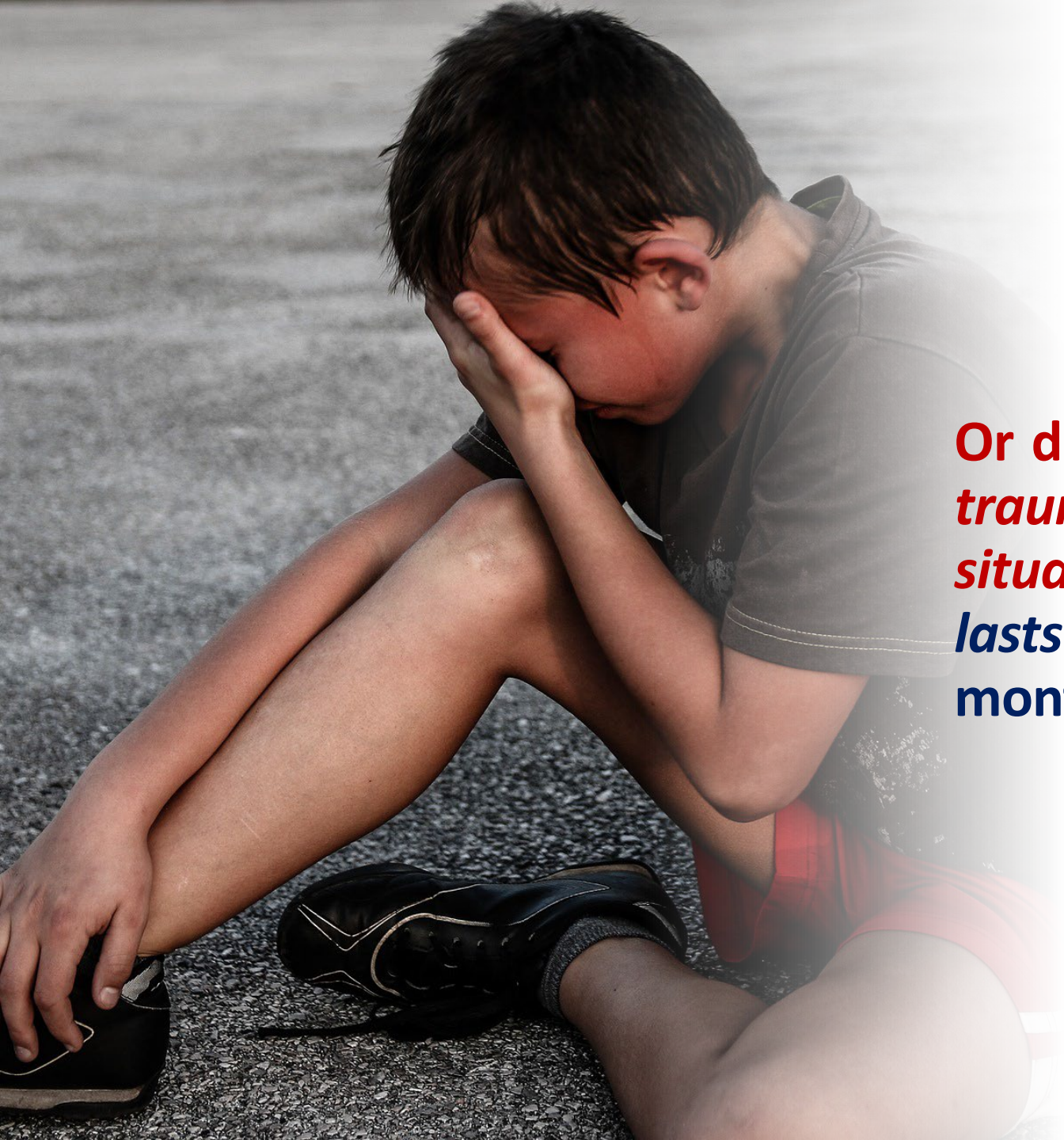
...to achieve optimal levels of the Autonomic Nervous System activation, stop the stress hormones secretion, and reestablish the Prefrontal Cortex functions; thus, facilitating the AIP-system, the subsequent adaptive processing of the information.



THE ASSYST TREATMENT INTERVENTIONS IN CLINICAL PRACTICE



The ASSYST© treatment interventions can be administered within the first hours (Critical Care**), days (**Rapid Response**), first three months (**Early Individual or Psychosocial Interventions**) after and adverse experience...**



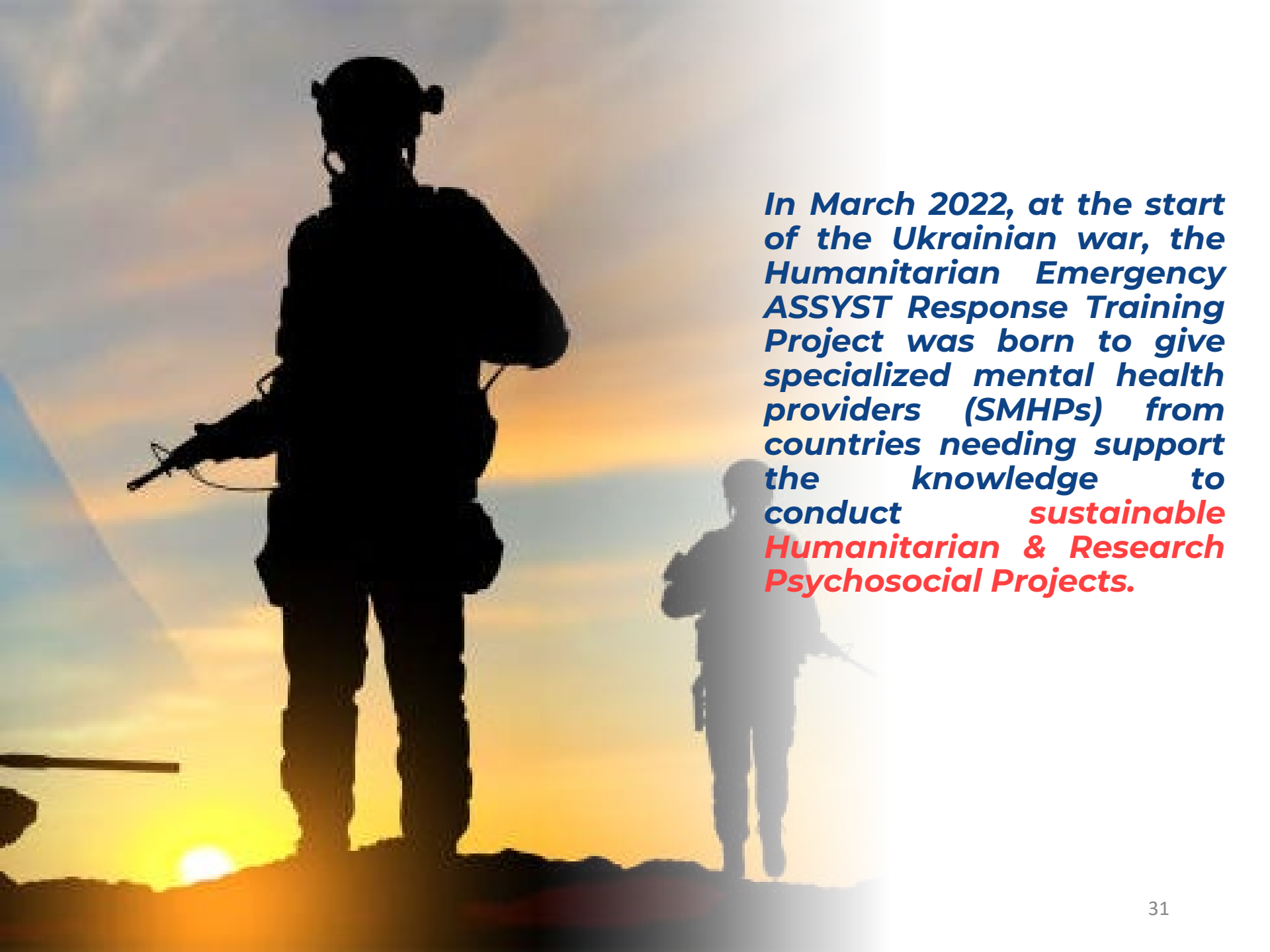
Or during *ongoing traumatic stress situations* that lasts more than 3 months.



These structured and time-limited treatment interventions must be administered within a symptom- trajectory based stepped-care approach after trauma exposure.



WHAT IS THE ASSYST HEART (HUMANITARIAN) PROJECT?

The background of the slide features a sunset sky with warm orange and yellow tones. In the foreground, the silhouettes of two soldiers are visible. The soldier on the left is larger and stands with their back to the camera, holding a rifle. The soldier on the right is smaller and further away, also holding a rifle. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

In March 2022, at the start of the Ukrainian war, the Humanitarian Emergency ASSYST Response Training Project was born to give specialized mental health providers (SMHPs) from countries needing support the knowledge to conduct sustainable Humanitarian & Research Psychosocial Projects.



WHAT IS THE ASSYST HUMANITARIAN HOME?



www.emdrmexico.org/assyst-heart



From March 2022 to July 2026, the ASSYST treatment interventions have been translated to **24 languages** and **over 12,000 SMHPs** from **62 countries** have been trained pro-bono and have provided support to thousands of children, adolescents, and adults in the following scenarios.



- Earthquakes.
- Wildfires.
- Wars.
- Mass shootings.
- School shootings.
- University suicide.
- Hurricanes and Tornadoes.
- Landslides.
- Floods.
- Gas explosion.
- General population during the Covid-19 Pandemic.
- Public sector workers and mental health professionals during the Covid-19 Pandemic.
- Mental Health professionals who provided services after a bomb exploded in Kabul.
- Adult population with non-recent pathogenic memories.
- Female Children polytraumatized by adverse childhood experiences, neglect, and maltreatment.
- Female adults with adverse childhood experiences.
- Female adults with breast or cervical cancer-related PTSD.
- Refugees and asylum seekers.



In July 2024, Dr. Zuzana Cepelíková received the highest award from the Czech Republic Ministry of Defense for the psychosocial support she organized after the Prague University mass shooting in December 2023.

She and her 87 EMDR therapist team provided support with the ASSYST treatment interventions to over 4,000 persons, many in group format and over 1,000 individual sessions.

**POPULATIONS
TREATED IN THE
ASSYST PUBLISHED
RESEARCH STUDIES**

**General Population
Living in Lockdown
and with Ongoing
Traumatic Stress
During the Covid-19
Pandemic**

**Mental Health
Professionals Working
During the Covid-19
Pandemic with Patients
Suffering From Trauma-
Related Disorders and
Stressors**

**General Adult
Population with Non-
Recent Pathogenic
Memories**

**TeleMental Health
Counseling After
Adverse Experiences**

**Syrian Refugees Living
in Lebanon**

**Female adults with
breast or cervical
cancer-related PTSD**

**Patients with Obsessive
Compulsive Disorder**

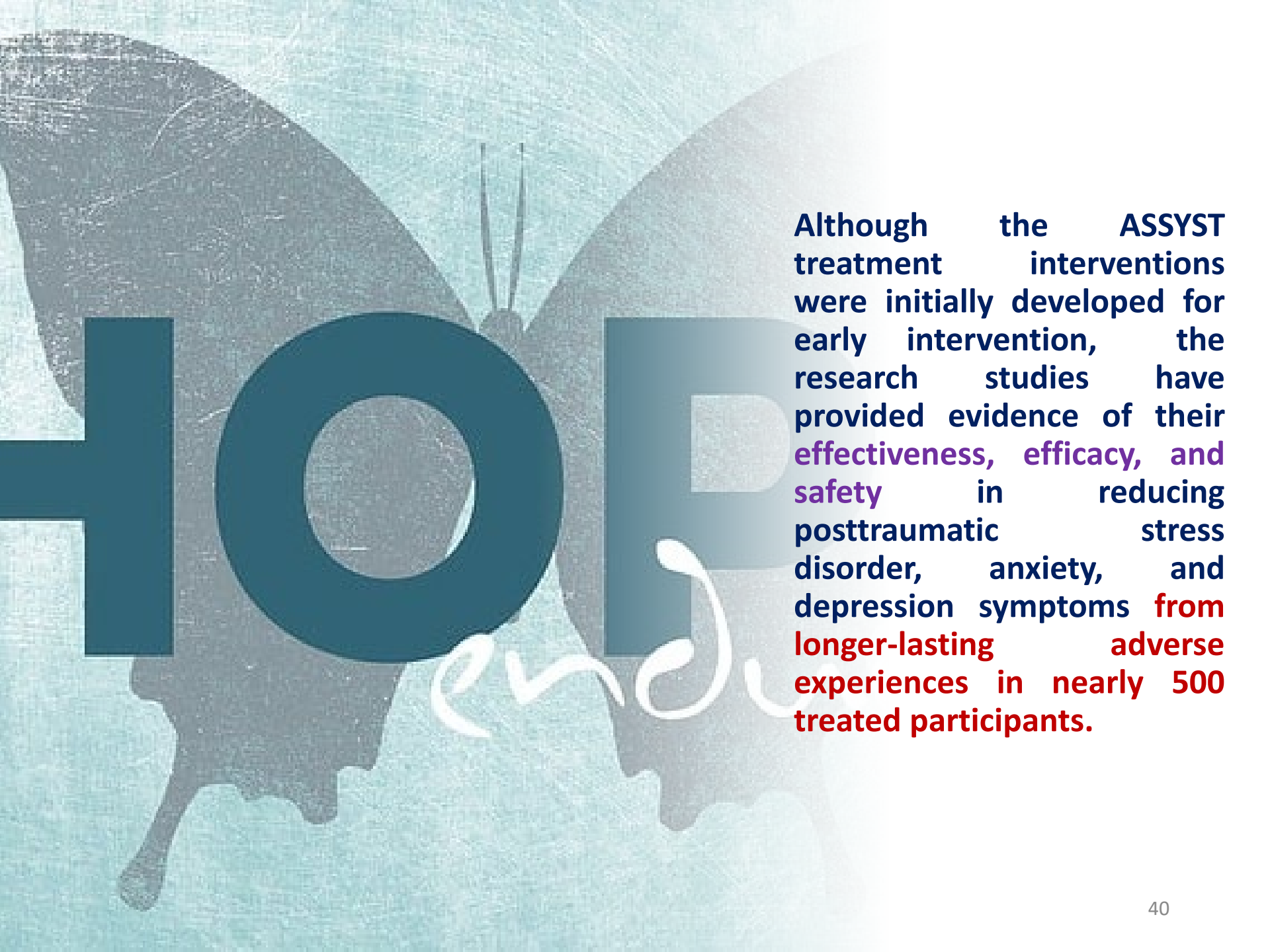
VICTIMS OF FLOOD

**Public Sector Workers
During the COVID-19
Pandemic**

**Female adults
with adverse
Childhood
experiences**

**Female Children
Polytraumatized by
Adverse Childhood
Experiences, Neglect
and Maltreatment**

**Refugees, Asylum-
Seekers, and Forcibly
Displaced People in
Transit through Mexico
to the US Border**



HOPE

Although the ASSYST treatment interventions were initially developed for early intervention, the research studies have provided evidence of their effectiveness, efficacy, and safety in reducing posttraumatic stress disorder, anxiety, and depression symptoms from longer-lasting adverse experiences in nearly 500 treated participants.



**WHAT ABOUT SAFETY
AND SYMPTOMS
WORSENING DURING AND
AFTER THE ASSYST
RESEARCH STUDIES?**



All of the ASSYST studies have **showed NO adverse effects** (e.g., symptoms of dissociation, fear, panic, freeze, shut down, collapse, fainting).

Or events (e.g., suicide, suicide attempts, self-harm, homicidal ideation) reported by the participants during treatment or at post-treatment follow-up.

Also, none of the participants have showed worsening/exacerbation of symptoms during the studies' time frame.

A large, dark, irregular ink blot with the word "END" in white capital letters in the center. The blot has a rough, splattered edge and is surrounded by a light gray, textured background that resembles ink splatters or a distressed surface.

END