



UNIVERSITY OF
LEICESTER

WORKING WITH TRAUMA IN THE REFUGEE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM



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1. LANGUAGE LEARNING AND THE SELF: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES
2. TRAUMA IN THE REFUGEE CONTEXT
3. POST-TRAUMATIC GROWTH
4. FACILITATING PTG IN THE CLASSROOM
5. SO ... WHAT IS OUR ROLE?

1. LANGUAGE LEARNING AND THE SELF: OPPORTUNITIES



to function in daily life - doctor, shopping, school, finance, travel, form-filling, telephoning, etc

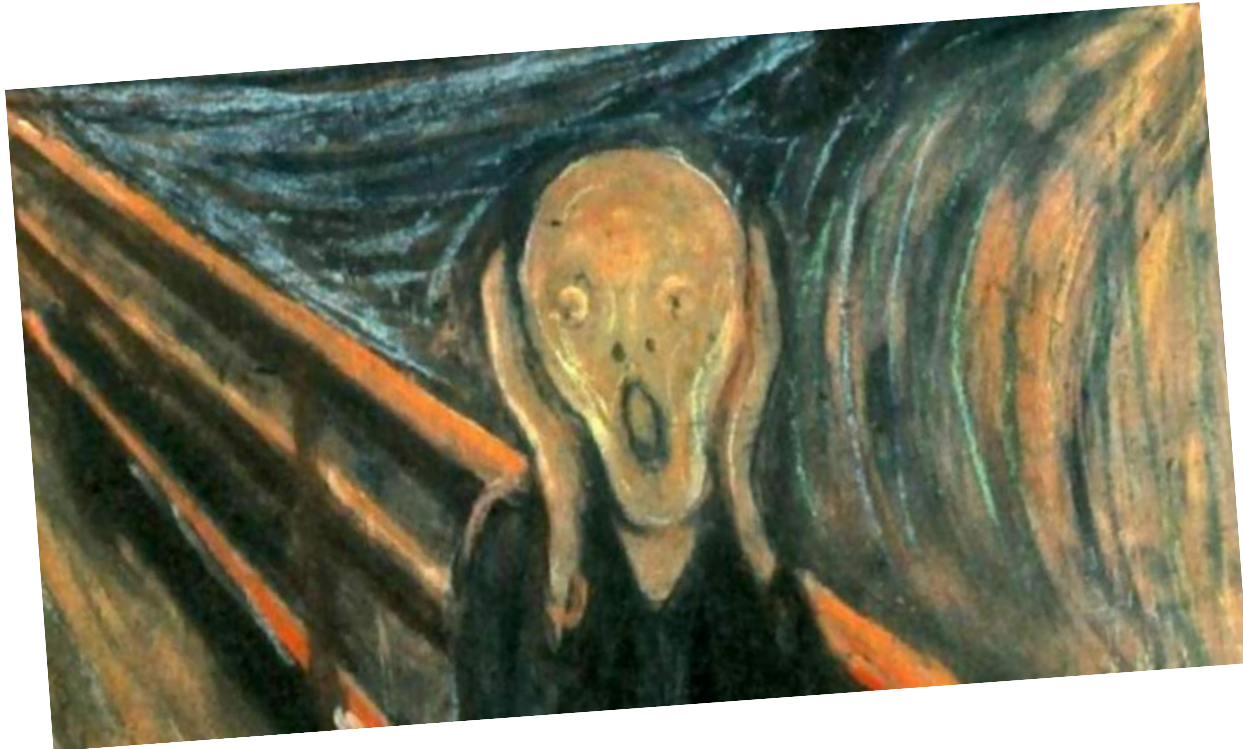
for fun

for (future) work, study or training

to make friends, to socialise, to communicate with people with other L1s

to "broaden one's horizons"

1. LANGUAGE LEARNING AND THE SELF: CHALLENGES



Foreign Language
Anxiety in around a
third of L2 learners
(Horwitz, Horwitz &
Cope, 1986)

prompts shifts in one's
self-concept (Yeung
& Wong, 2004)

"a profoundly unsettling
psychological proposition"
(Guiora, 1983)

2. TRAUMA IN THE REFUGEE CONTEXT



1 **Exposure** to a Potentially Traumatic Event (PTE)



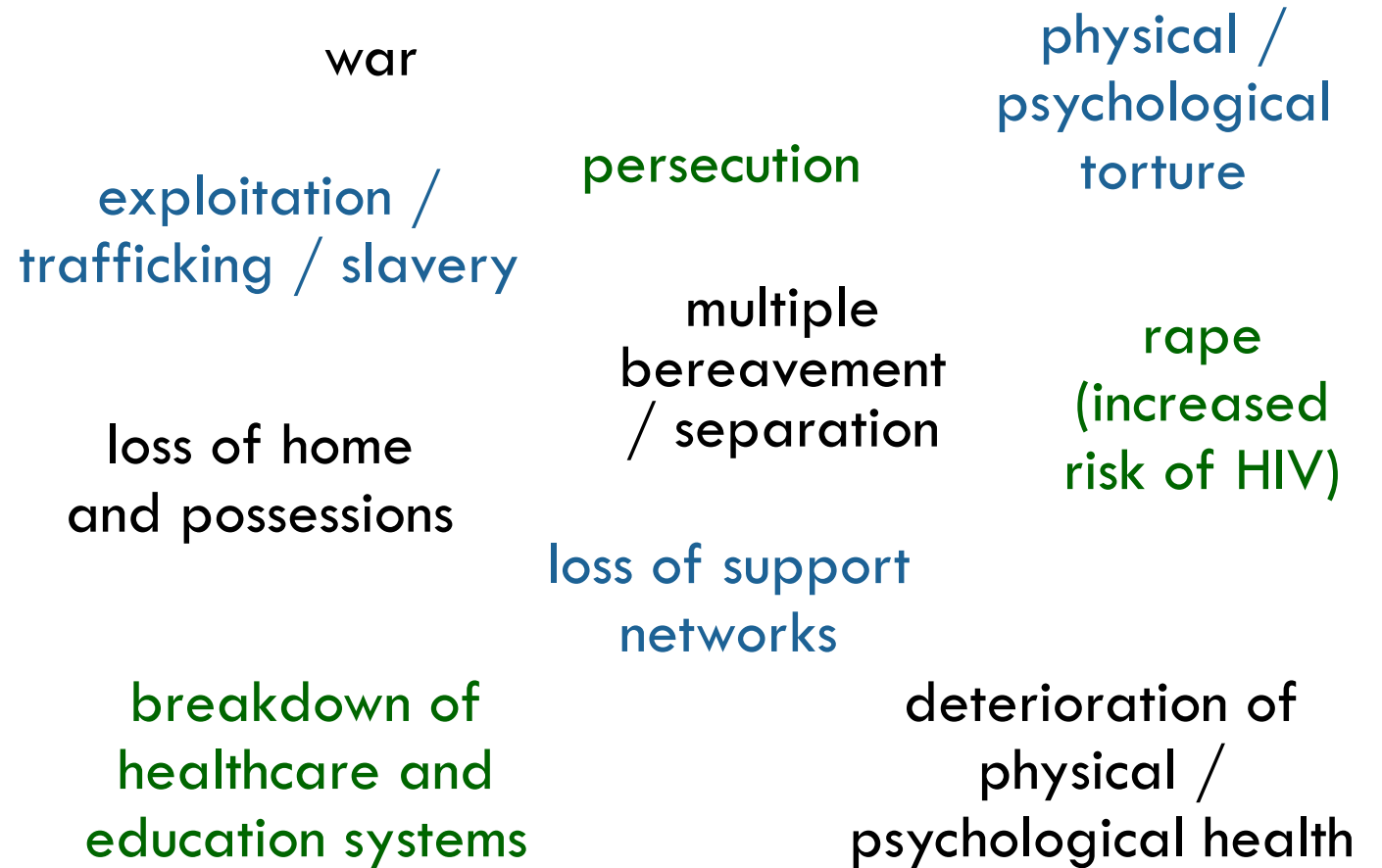
2 May develop **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder** (PTSD)

2. TRAUMA IN THE REFUGEE CONTEXT

PTEs AND COMPOUNDING FACTORS



BEFORE THE UK



2. TRAUMA IN THE REFUGEE CONTEXT

PTEs AND COMPOUNDING FACTORS



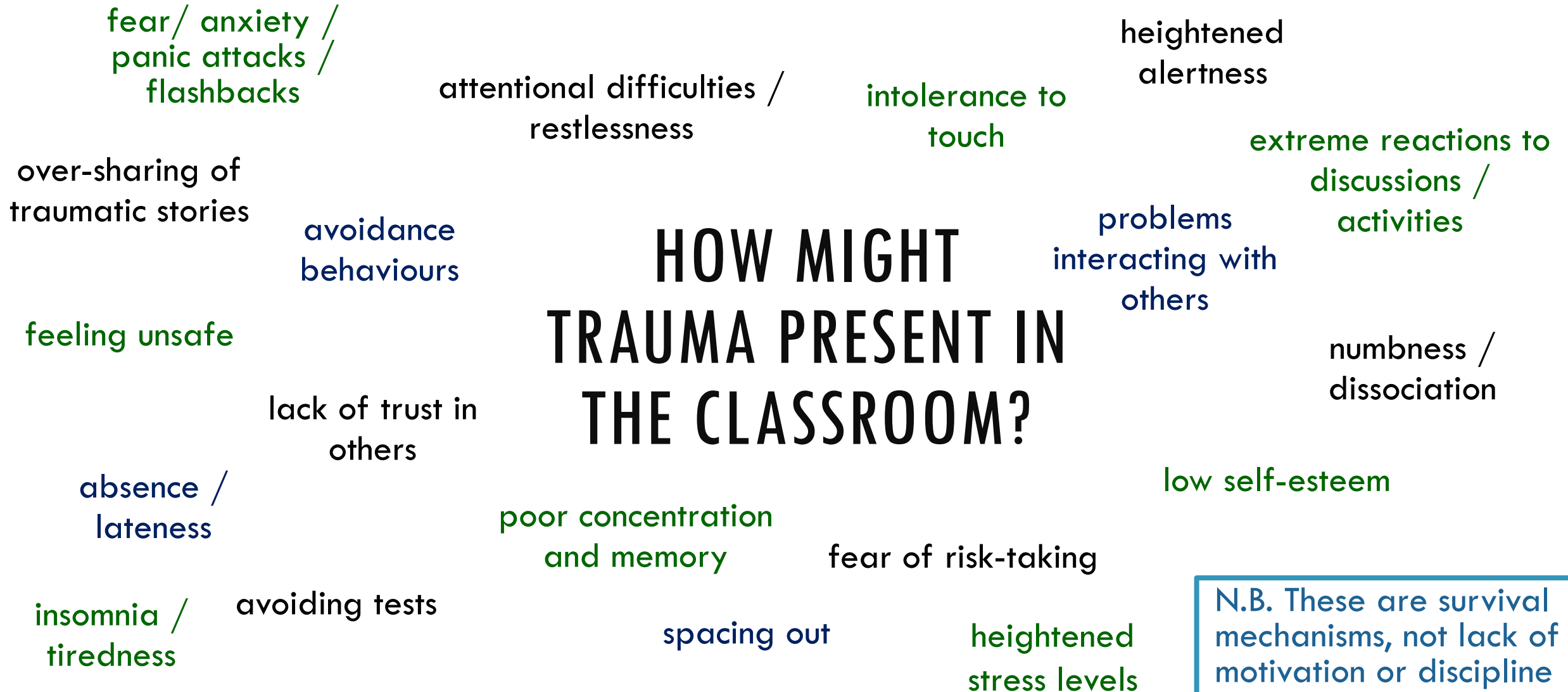
IN THE UK

anxiety about family back home
separation from family
risk of exploitation
negotiating complex legal system
difficulty accessing health care and education

destitution / homelessness
move at short notice
stigma / discrimination / hate crime
detention

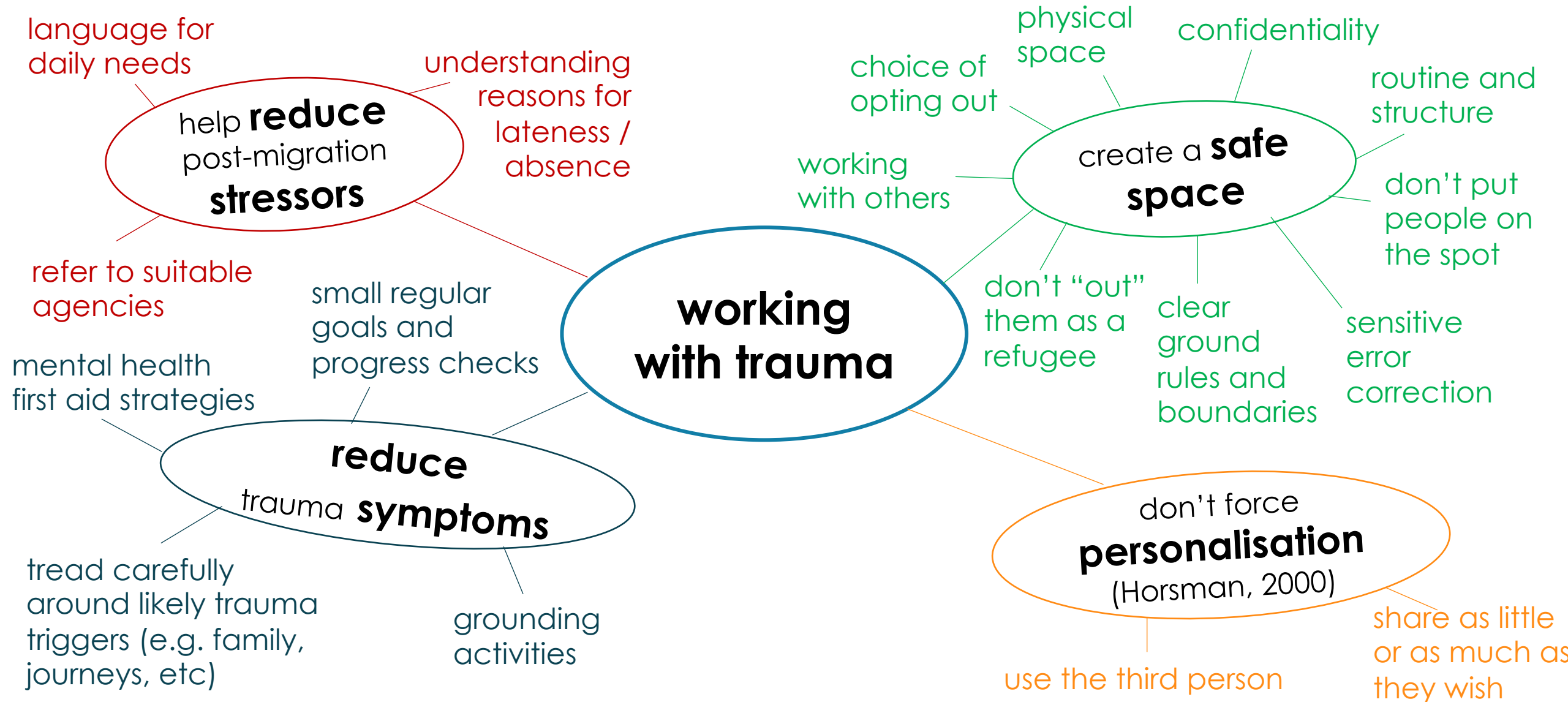
loneliness
stress of adjusting to a new society
language barrier
limbo / delays
poverty / inadequate housing
change of identity (e.g. from professional careers to unemployment)

2. TRAUMA IN THE REFUGEE CONTEXT



N.B. These are survival mechanisms, not lack of motivation or discipline problems (Kerka, 2002)

2. TRAUMA IN THE REFUGEE CONTEXT

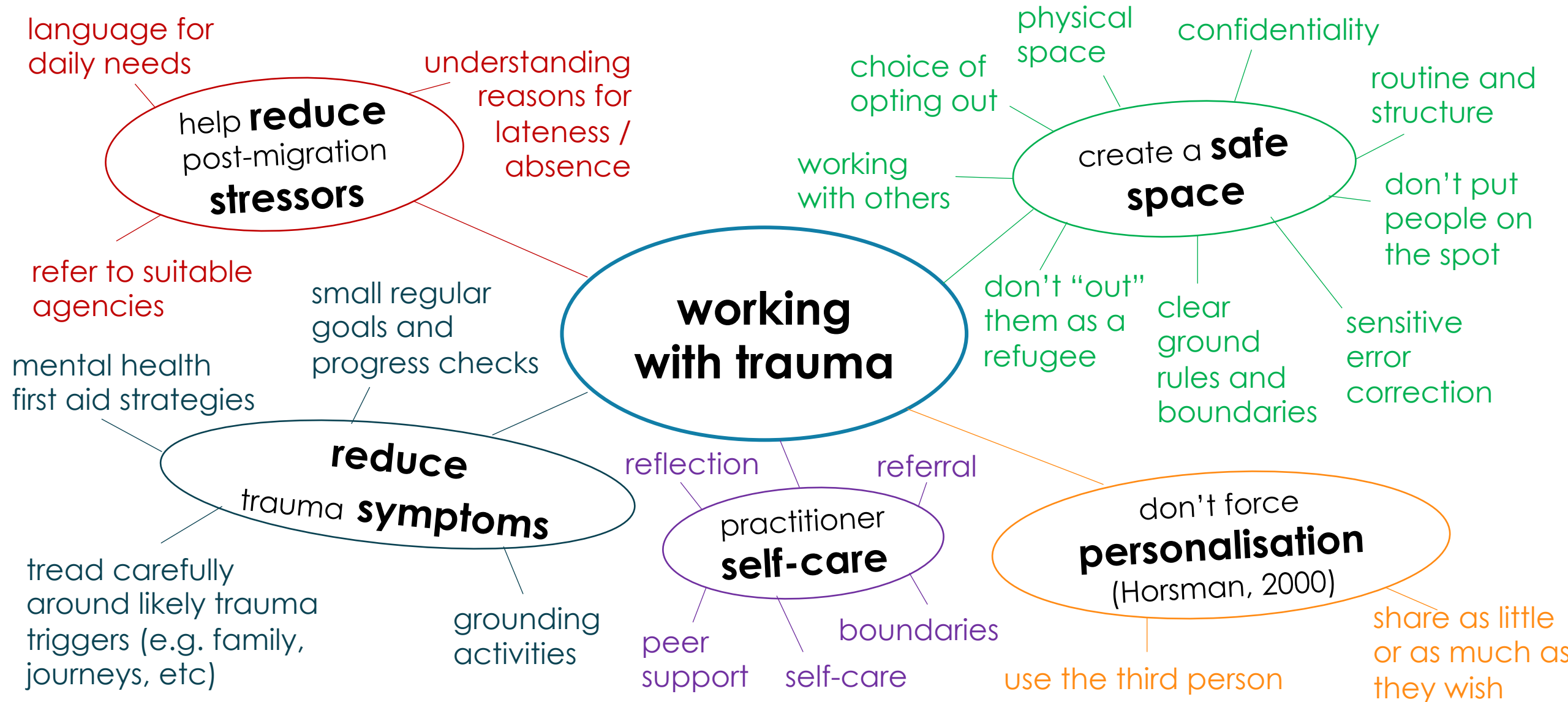


2. TRAUMA IN THE REFUGEE CONTEXT

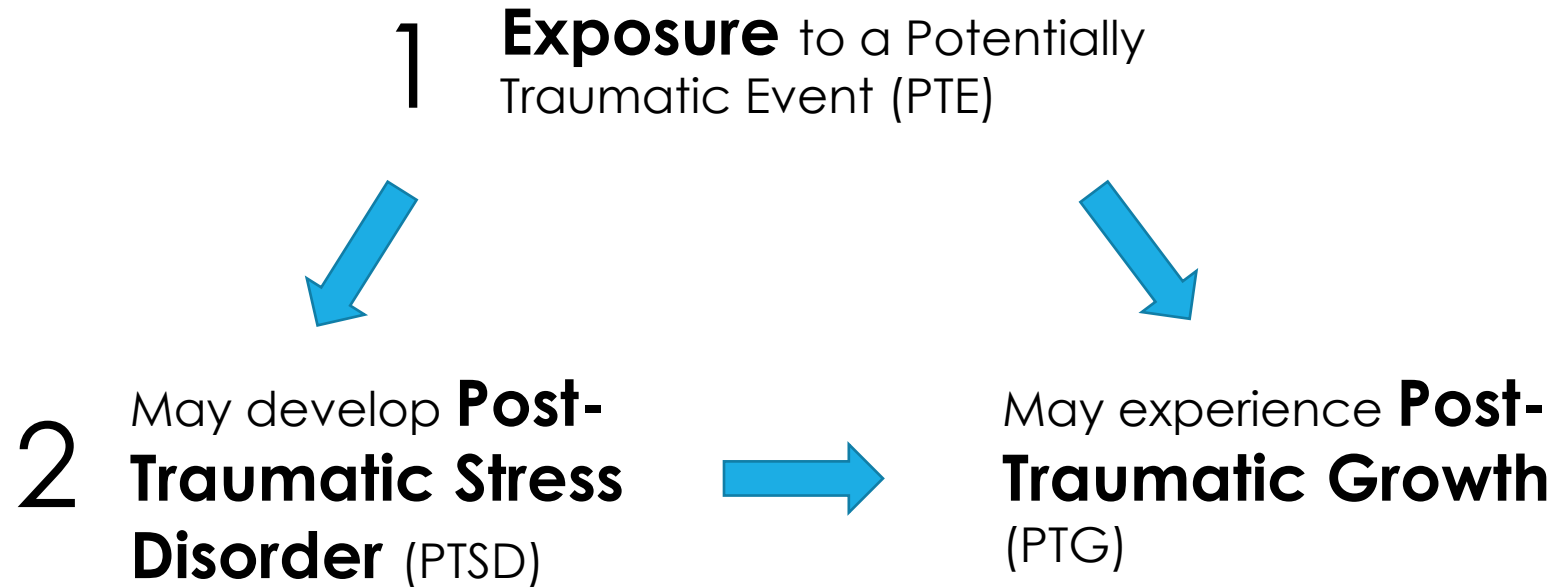
Siebert & Pollheimer-Puhringer
(2016, in UNHCR, 2017:4)

1. Take **deep breaths** and remain **calm**
2. Make **eye contact** with student whilst **moving slowly** and **giving them space**
3. **Re-orient them** by:
 - saying their **name**
 - telling them they are **safe**
 - remind them of **date** and **who you are**
4. If required, create **stronger sensory stimulus**. E.g.
 - speak more **loudly**
 - **let them know** you'll **touch them on the arm**
5. When they are back in **present moment**:
 - **explain** what happened to them
 - let them know they are **safe**
 - ask them if they need **time out**
 - offer them a **drink** and a **sweet snack**
 - ask them privately if they would like to **explain to the class what happened** (or if they want you to do this)

2. TRAUMA IN THE REFUGEE CONTEXT



2. TRAUMA IN THE REFUGEE CONTEXT



3. POST-TRAUMATIC GROWTH

Post-Traumatic Growth

PTG is a **positive transformation** as a result of a **major crisis**. Survivors **develop beyond** their pre-crisis level of adaptation and psychological functioning

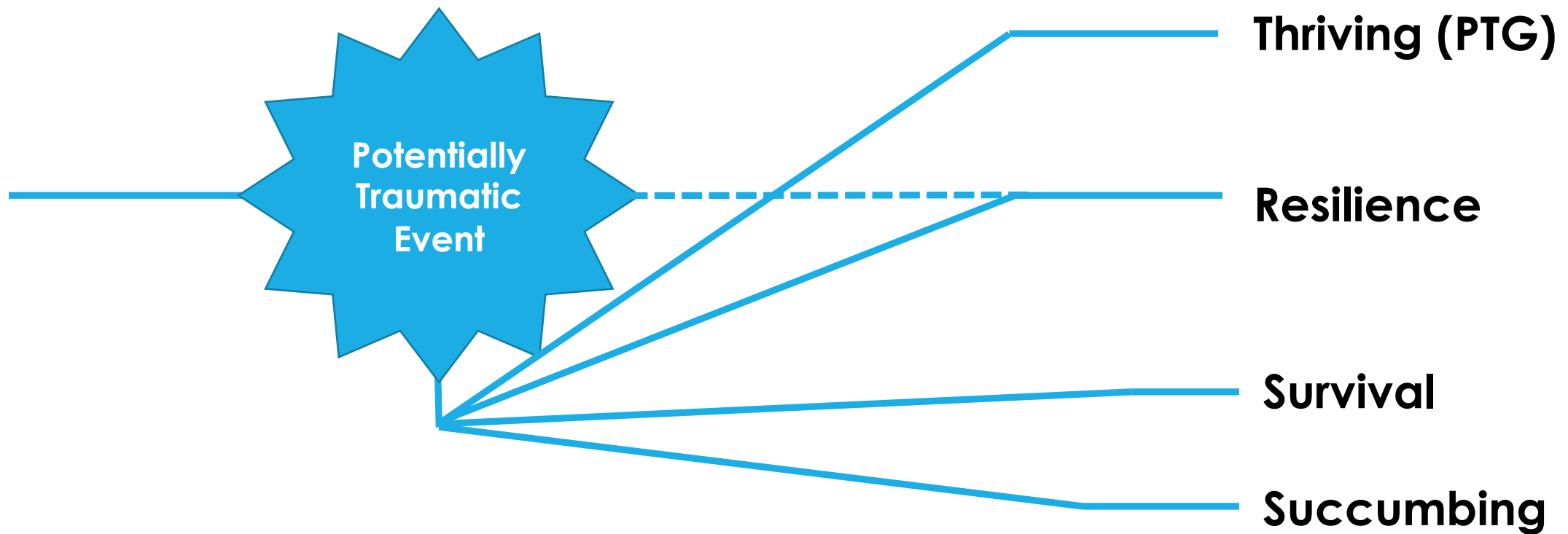
(Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996)

3. POST-TRAUMATIC GROWTH



Kintsugi – the Japanese tradition of mending broken pottery with gold or silver lacquer, and understanding that the piece is more beautiful for having been broken

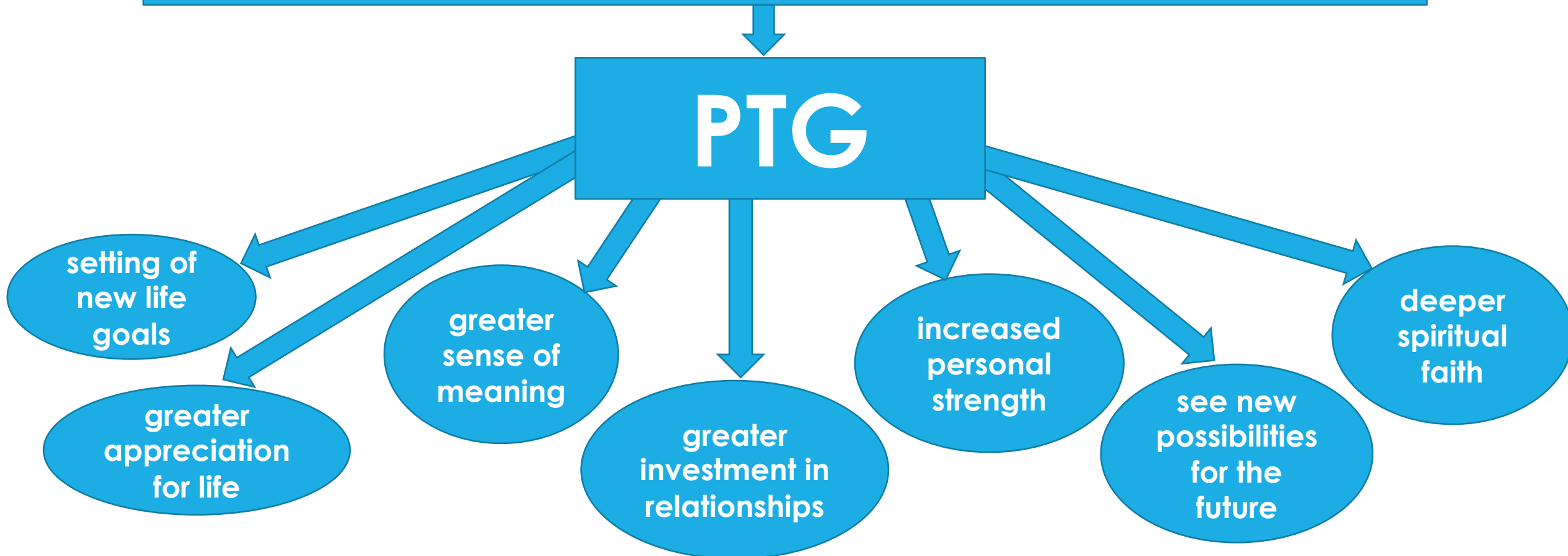
3. POST-TRAUMATIC GROWTH



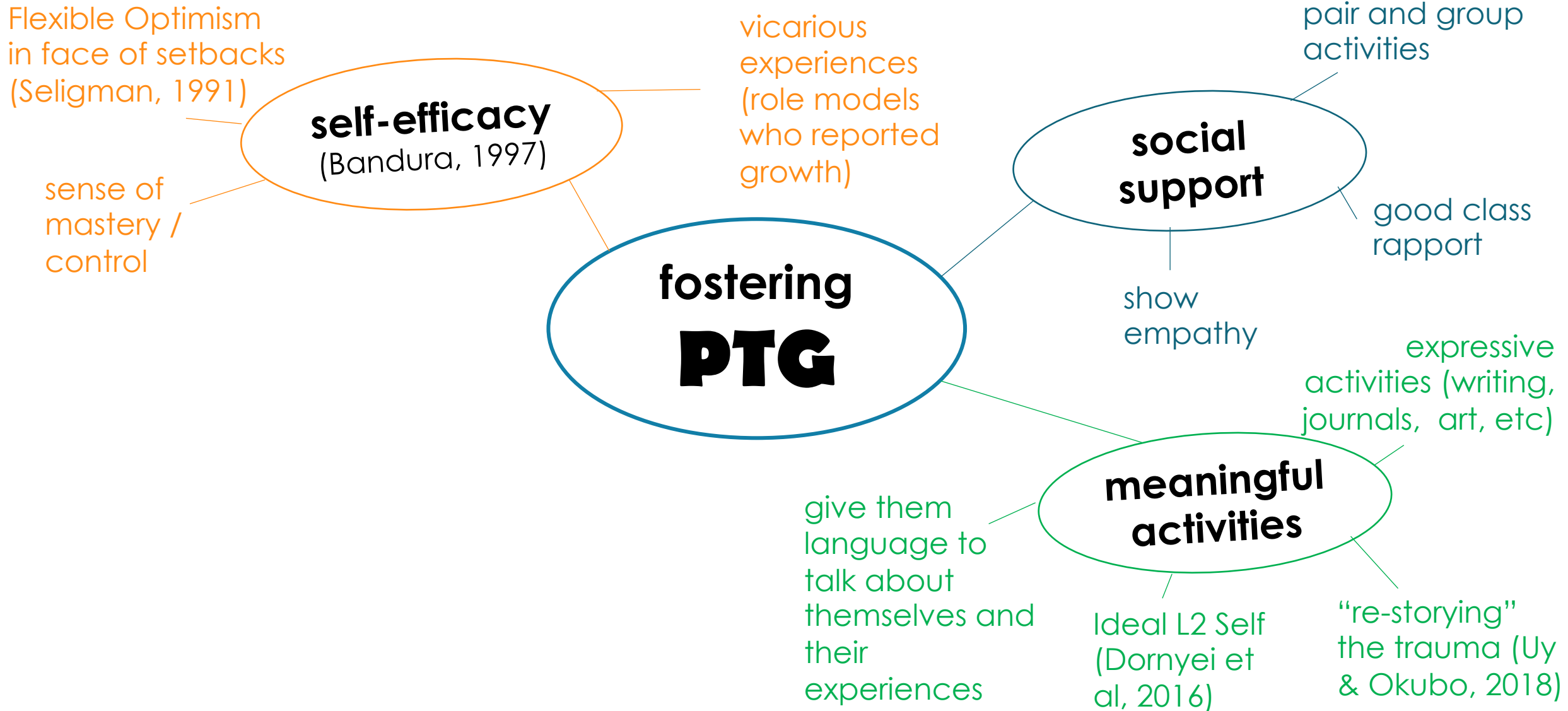
Carver (1998); O'Leary & Ickovics (1995)

3. POST-TRAUMATIC GROWTH

core schemas are disrupted and restructured (Chan, Young & Sharif, 2016), so the individual struggles to find meaning and overcome trauma (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996)



4. FACILITATING PTG IN THE CLASSROOM



Imagine it is the **future** and your English language ability is at the level you want it to be. Being able to use English has helped you achieve your dreams. Think about the following questions:

What are you doing?

What are you using English for?

What are you thinking?

How are you following your passions?

How are you feeling?



What are you saying?

How has your improved English ability changed your life?

What can you see / hear / feel / smell / taste?

Imagine it is the **future** and your English language ability is at the level you want it to be. Being able to use English has helped you achieve your dreams. Think about the following questions:

What are you doing?

I am a teacher at the British language school in Dubai teaching young learners.

What are you using English for?

Living in Dubai, I don't know Arabic, so the English language helps me vastly.

What are you thinking?

I am thinking about promoting the English language skills of the young minds

How are you following your passions?

I am dedicating more of my time to teaching and reading.

How are you feeling?

I am feeling very satisfied because I am pursuing my dream

What are you saying?

If we learn the English language, we can have good communication with many people around the world ...

What can you see / hear / feel / smell / taste?

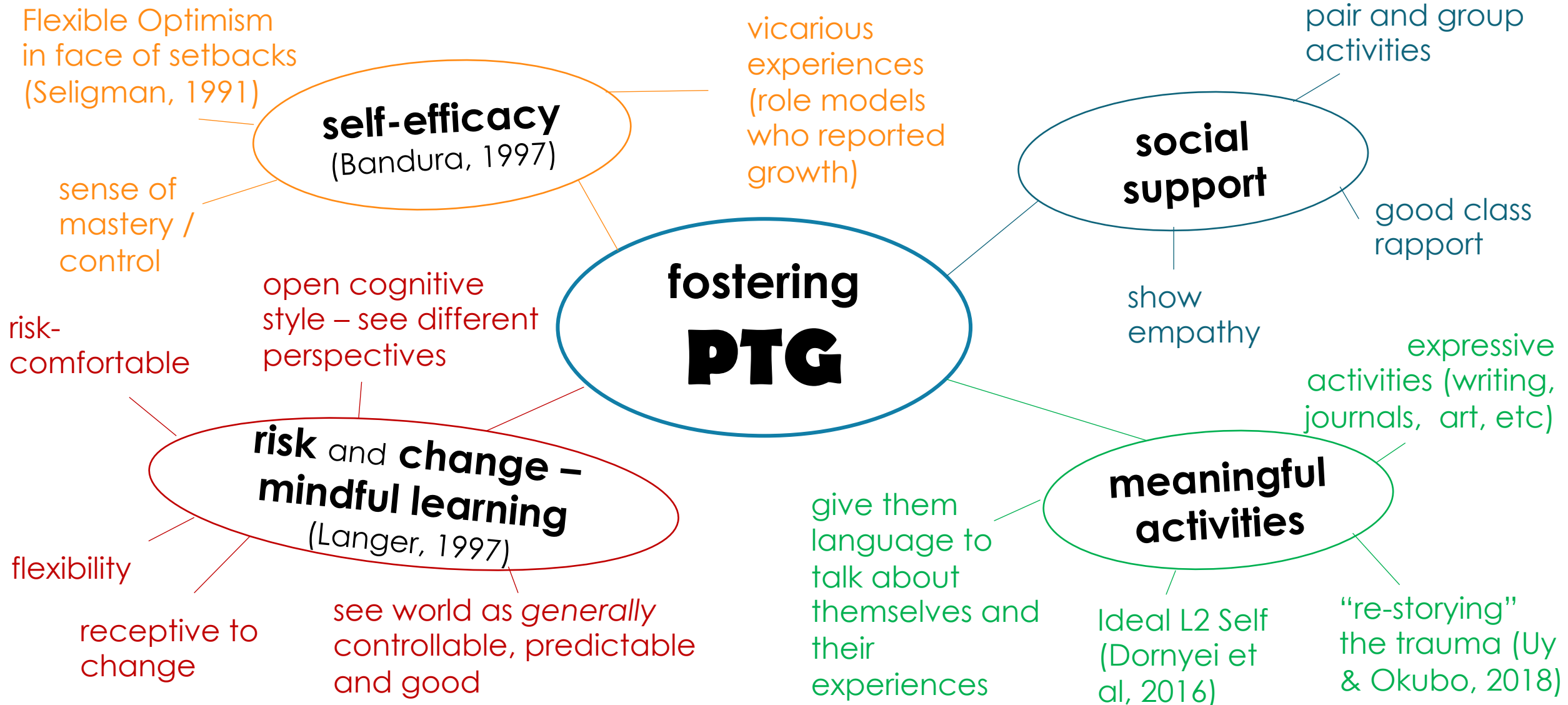
I can see the hope in the little eyes of my students, and I hear their whispers about what they want to be in the future.

How has your improved English ability changed your life?

I am much happier because I am pursuing my dream.



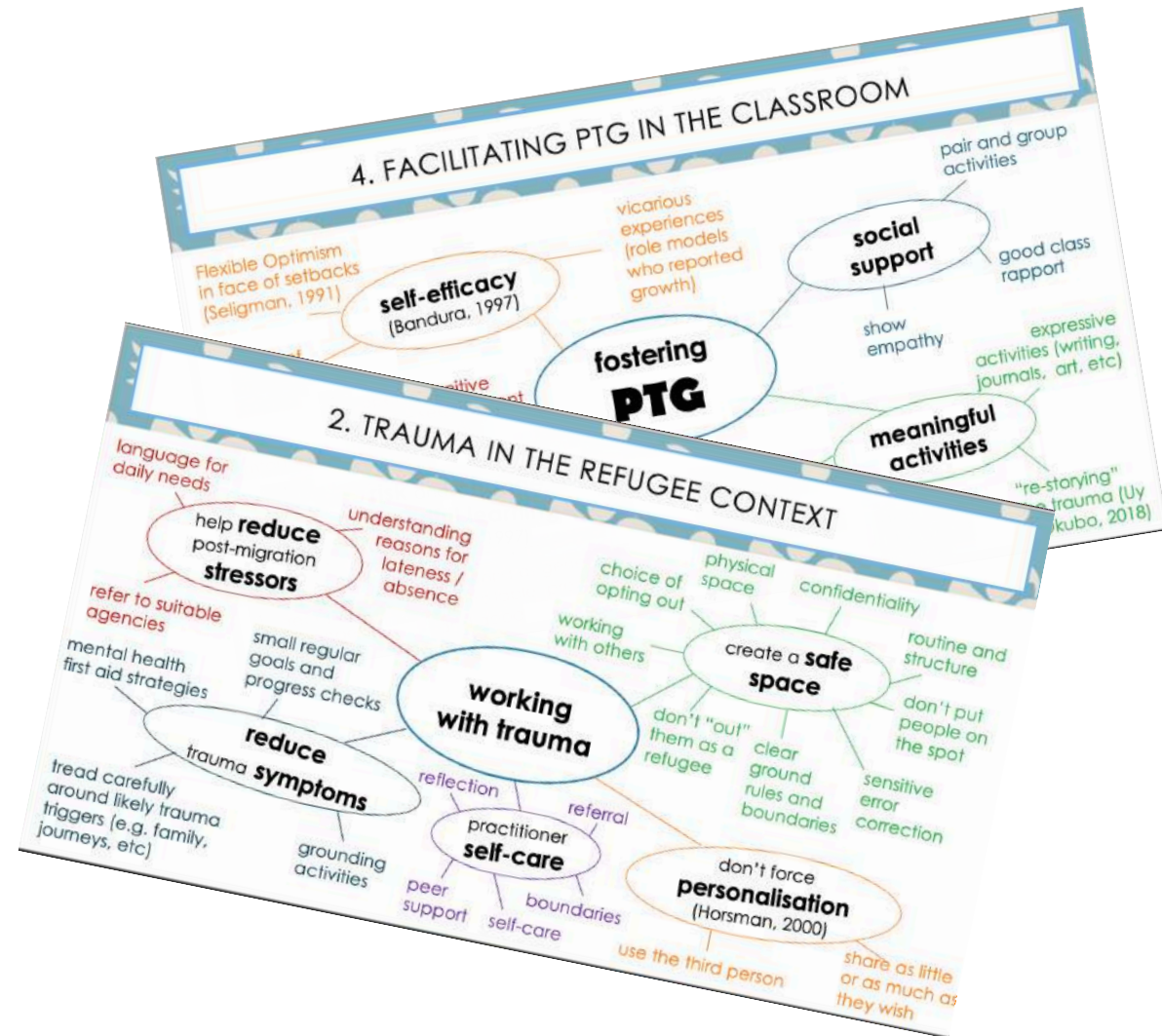
4. FACILITATING PTG IN THE CLASSROOM



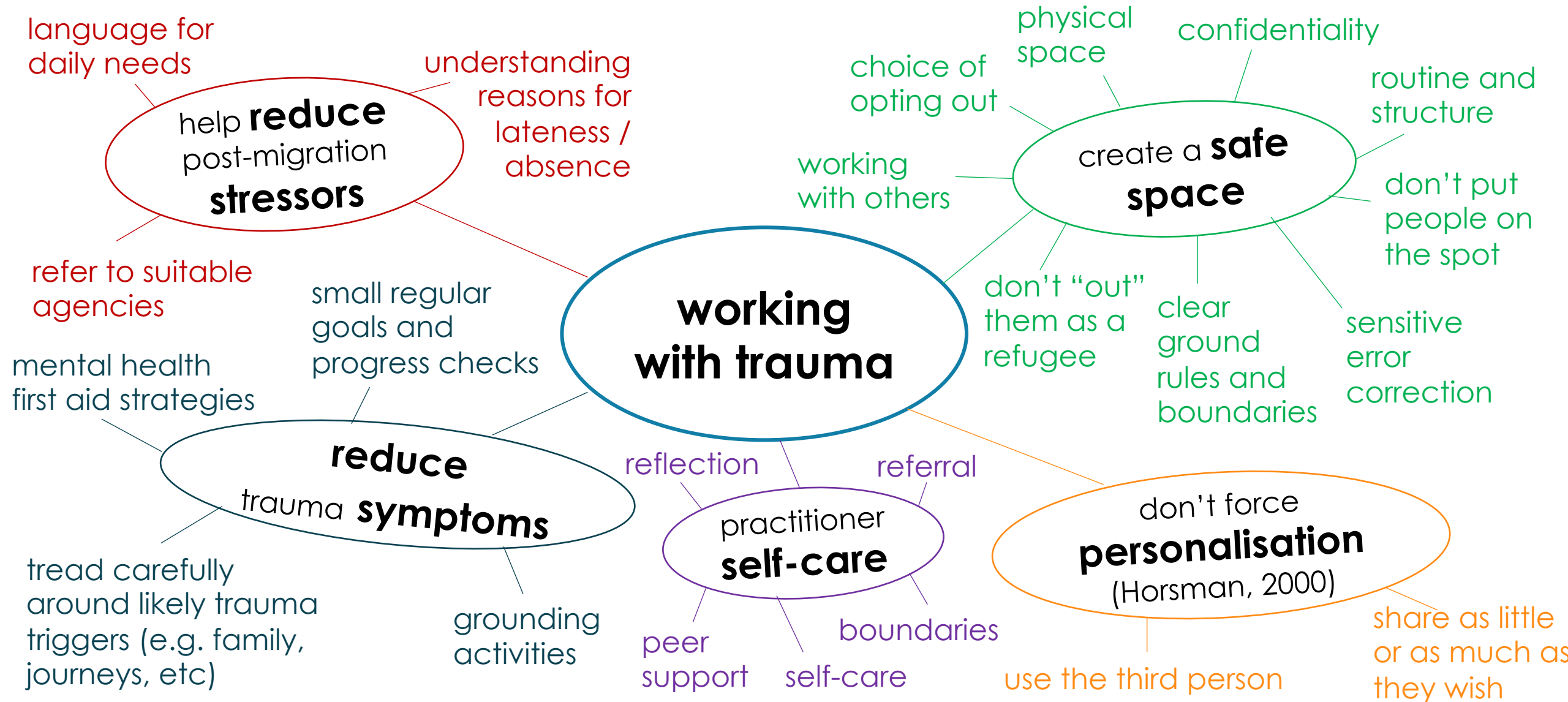
5. SO ... WHAT IS OUR ROLE?

Group discussions

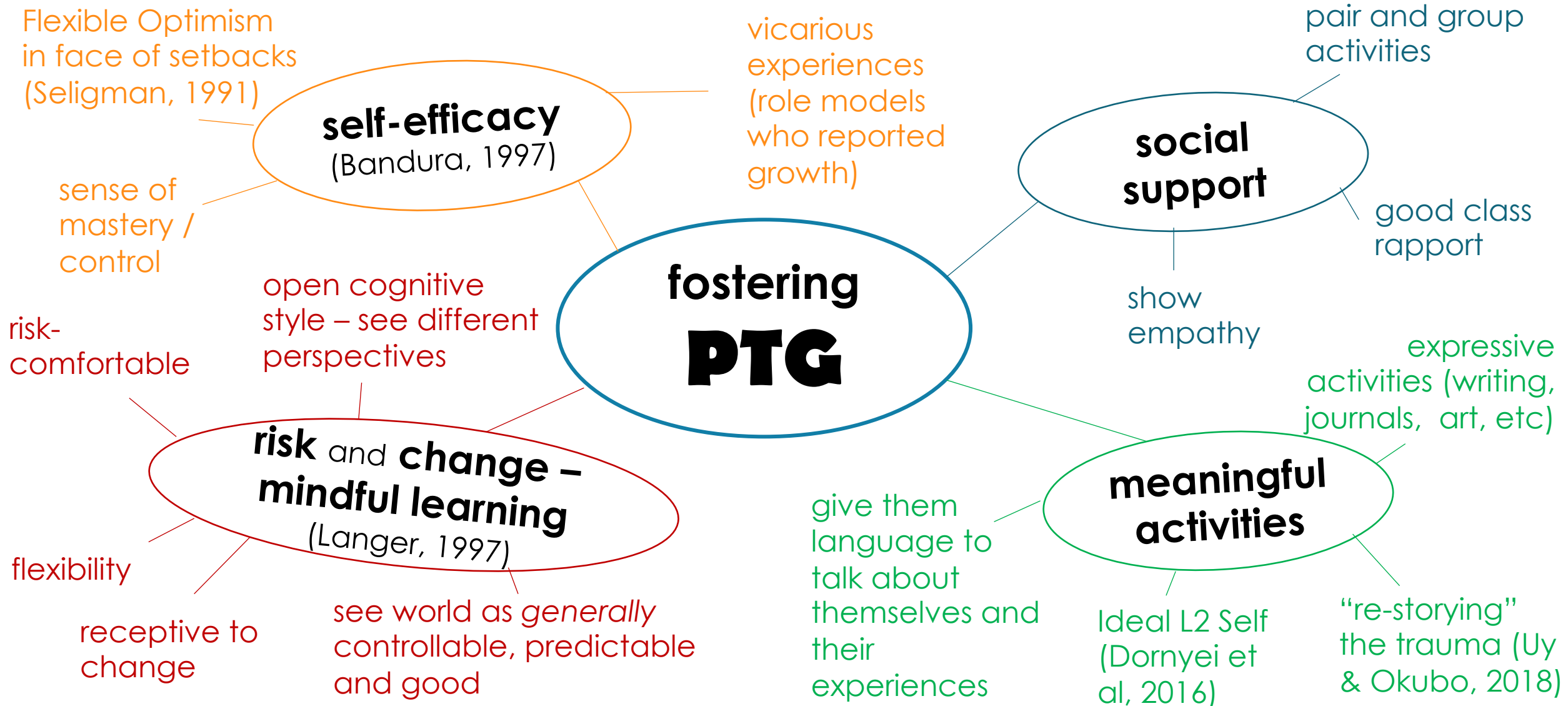
- Can any of these strategies be applied to your contexts?
- How?
- Are there any barriers to this?
- Are there any other effective strategies that you use (or could use)?



2. TRAUMA IN THE REFUGEE CONTEXT



4. FACILITATING PTG IN THE CLASSROOM



5. SO ... WHAT IS OUR ROLE?

Teaching

Therapy

A thick blue diagonal line runs from the bottom-left corner towards the top-right corner of the slide, representing a spectrum or continuum between the two concepts.

5. SO ... WHAT IS OUR ROLE?



Teaching
Therapy

6. FURTHER READING

An article expanding on today's workshop:

Palanac, A. (2020). Towards a trauma-informed ELT pedagogy for refugees. *Language Issues*, 30(2), pp. 3-14

A blog post relating trauma-informed ELT to online classes

Palanac, A. (2020) 'A "'safe space"' in "cyberspace"? Refugee students in synchronous online EAP classes', *EAP for Social Justice*, 14 May. Available at: <https://eap4socialjustice.net/2020/05/14/a-safe-space-in-cyberspace-refugee-students-in-synchronous-online-eap-classes/>

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- Carver, C.S. (1998) Resilience and Thriving: Issues, Models and Linkages. *Journal of Social Issues*, 54, 245-266
- Chan, K.J., Young, M.Y. & Sharif, N. (2016) Well-Being after Trauma: A Review of Posttraumatic Growth among Refugees. *Canadian Psychology*, 57, 4
- Dornyei, Z., Henry, A. & Muir, C. (2016) *Motivational Currents in Language Learning* Oxon: Routledge
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- Horsman, J. (2000) *Moving Forward: Approaches and Activities to Support Women's Learning* [online]. Available: www.jennyhorsman.com/Movingforward.pdf [Accessed: 20/9/17]
- Horwitz, E.K., Horwitz, M.B. & Cope, J.A. (1986) Foreign language classroom anxiety. *The Modern Language Journal* 70 (2), 125-132.

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O'Leary, V.E. & Ickovics, J.R. (1995) Resilience and Thriving in Response to Challenge: An Opportunity for a Paradigm Shift in Women's Health. *Women's Health: Research on Gender, Behaviour and Policy*, 1, pp.121-142

Seligman, M.E.P. (1990) *Learned Optimism*. New York: Pocket Books

Tedeschi, R.G. & Calhoun, L.G (1996) The Post-Traumatic Growth Inventory: Measuring the Positive Legacy of Trauma. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 9, 455-471

UNHCR (2017). Teaching about refugees: Guidance on working with refugee children struggling with stress and trauma [online]. Available: www.unhcr.org/uk/59d346de4.pdf

Uy, K.K. & Okubo, Y. (2018) Re-Storying the Trauma Narrative: Fostering Post-Traumatic Growth in Cambodian Refugee Women. *Women & Therapy*, DOI: 10.1080/02703149.2018.1425025

Yeung, A.S. & Wong, E.K. (2004) Domain specificity of trilingual teachers' verbal self-concepts. *Journal of Educational Psychology* 96 (2), 360-368



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