



# Processing

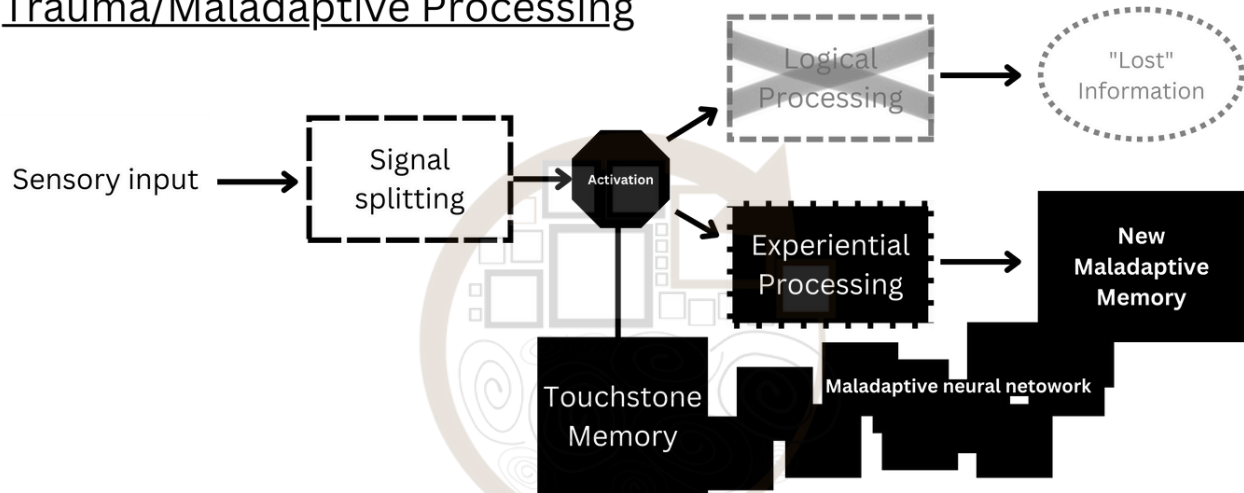


# Maldadaptive Processing

Trauma, or maldaptive processing, occurs when that naturally adpative system is disrupted, usually due to an adverse event or collection of experiences that is **overwhelmingly intense**.

This **activation** due to **overwhelmedness** results in altered memory storage and later retrieval, making it the source of what is known in treatment as **trauma**.

## Trauma/Maldaptive Processing



## Sources of overwhelming intensity can include

- Level of real or perceived threat to life, livelihood, or general stability, or **How dangerous it is.**

Most commonly this occurs when an event involves life threatening danger, injury, or death.

This is the first criteria for a DSM diagnosis of PTSD

- Amount and intensity of emotional and sensory information being received, or **How much there is.**

When there is an **“overwhelming amount”** of incoming information, the brain naturally will be concerned that information of **life threatening importance** may become lost, and therefore trigger a threat response.

- Age or maturity of the individual or **How old/developed.**

When the brain is less developed, there are less systems capable of modulating experiences through the use of executive functioning (ie. Prefrontal cortex)

This results in less capacity to consciously reduce intensity of sensations/experiences and a higher likelihood to interpret internal stimulation as an indicator of external danger.

NOTE: This reduced regulatory capacity is why children will always look to their parents/adults instinctively for regulatory help when overwhelmed.

