



Trauma and Children: A Hero's Journey

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A stylized, dark grey leaf graphic with several pointed leaves, positioned in the upper left corner of the slide.

In your words...

WHO DO YOU THINK OF AS
A “HERO”?

HOW MANY OF THESE
HEROES HAD EASY LIVES?

The Hero's Journey

Trauma is central to
the hero's journey

PROTAGONIST LIVES IN
NORMAL LIFE

SOMETHING TERRIBLE OR
WONDERFUL HAPPENS

PROTAGONIST CONFRONTS
& OVERCOMES OBSTACLES

PROTAGONIST IS
REWARDED & STARTS A
NEW LIFE

What is Trauma?

- An **EVENT**
 - **EXPERIENCED** as distressing or overwhelming
 - That has an **EFFECT** on functioning



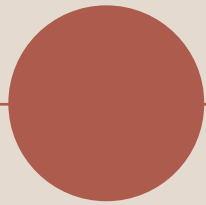
Trauma affects the body

- Our bodies are made to deal with stressful, life-threatening, or scary events. Like all animals, we respond with an automatic natural instinct:



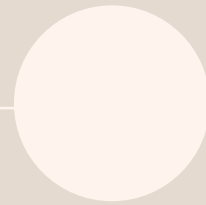
- The body's responses to stress and trauma are normal. Toxic stress and trauma keep our bodies stuck in these responses.

Trauma affects beliefs



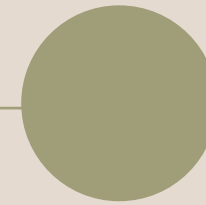
VIEW OF SELF

- I'm a bad kid
- Isolated
- Guilt and Responsibility
- Unlovable



VIEW OF OTHERS

- Others will hurt me
- Others cannot be trusted
- No one can keep me safe
- I have to hurt others before they hurt me



VIEW OF THE WORLD

- The world is a dangerous place
- The world is unpredictable
- I am alone in the world
- I am unsafe

Trauma Affects Behaviors

That are hard to manage

Reactivity to trauma cues

Reenacting

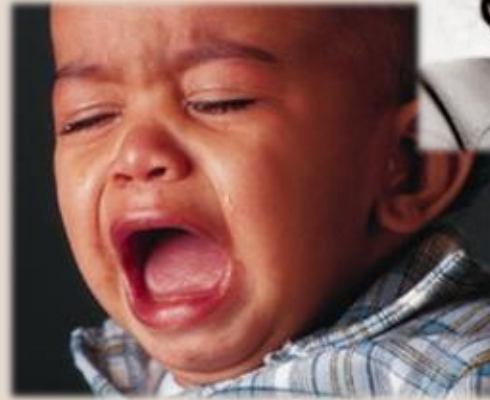
Flashbacks/dissociation

Tantrums/aggression

Hyperactivity

Angry mood

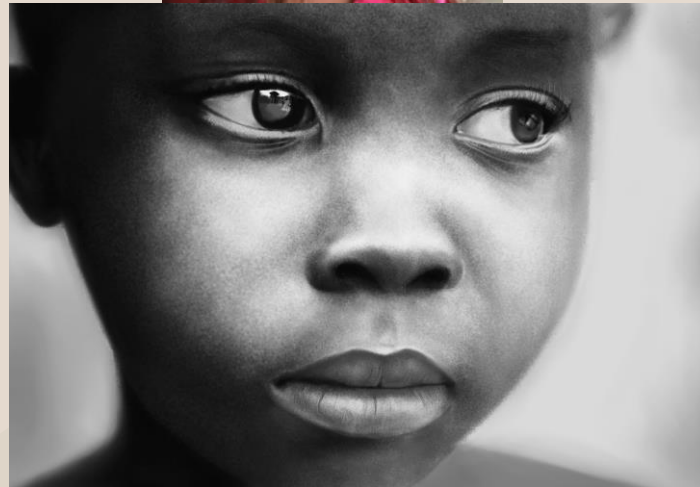
Sexual behaviors



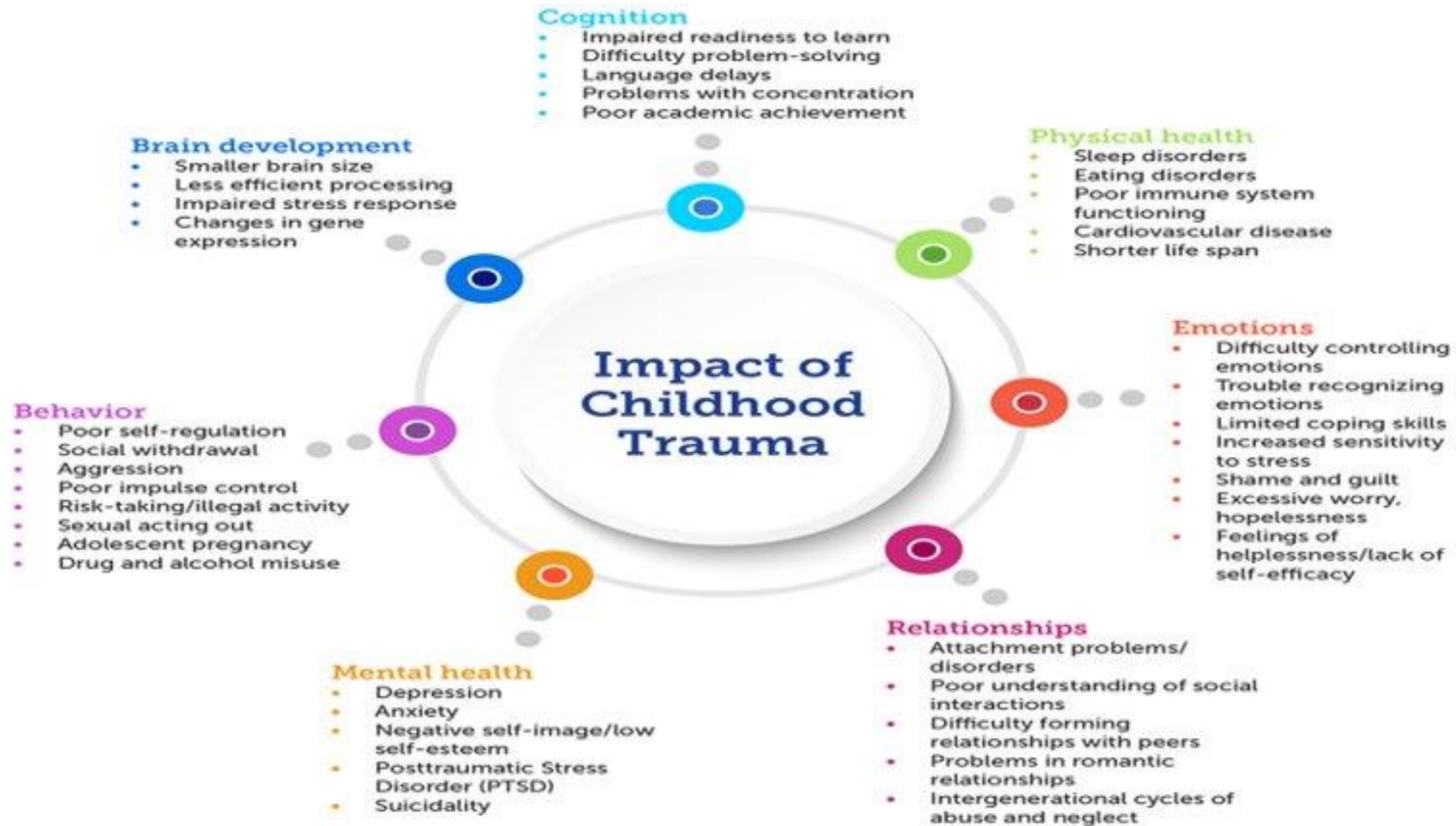
Trauma Affects Behaviors

That impact relationships

- Withdrawal
- Anhedonia
- Negative mood
- Avoidance
- Clinginess
- Saying mean things



Impact of Childhood Trauma



The Triple Trauma Paradigm

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

- Violence & death
- War
- Persecution
- Loss & grief
- Fear

"It's a really difficult situation [in Afghanistan] for boys that are 15 or 16," he said. "They [armed groups] can just come and say you need to be a soldier. If you say no, they can kill you." ~Jakey (savethechildren.org)

IN TRANSITION

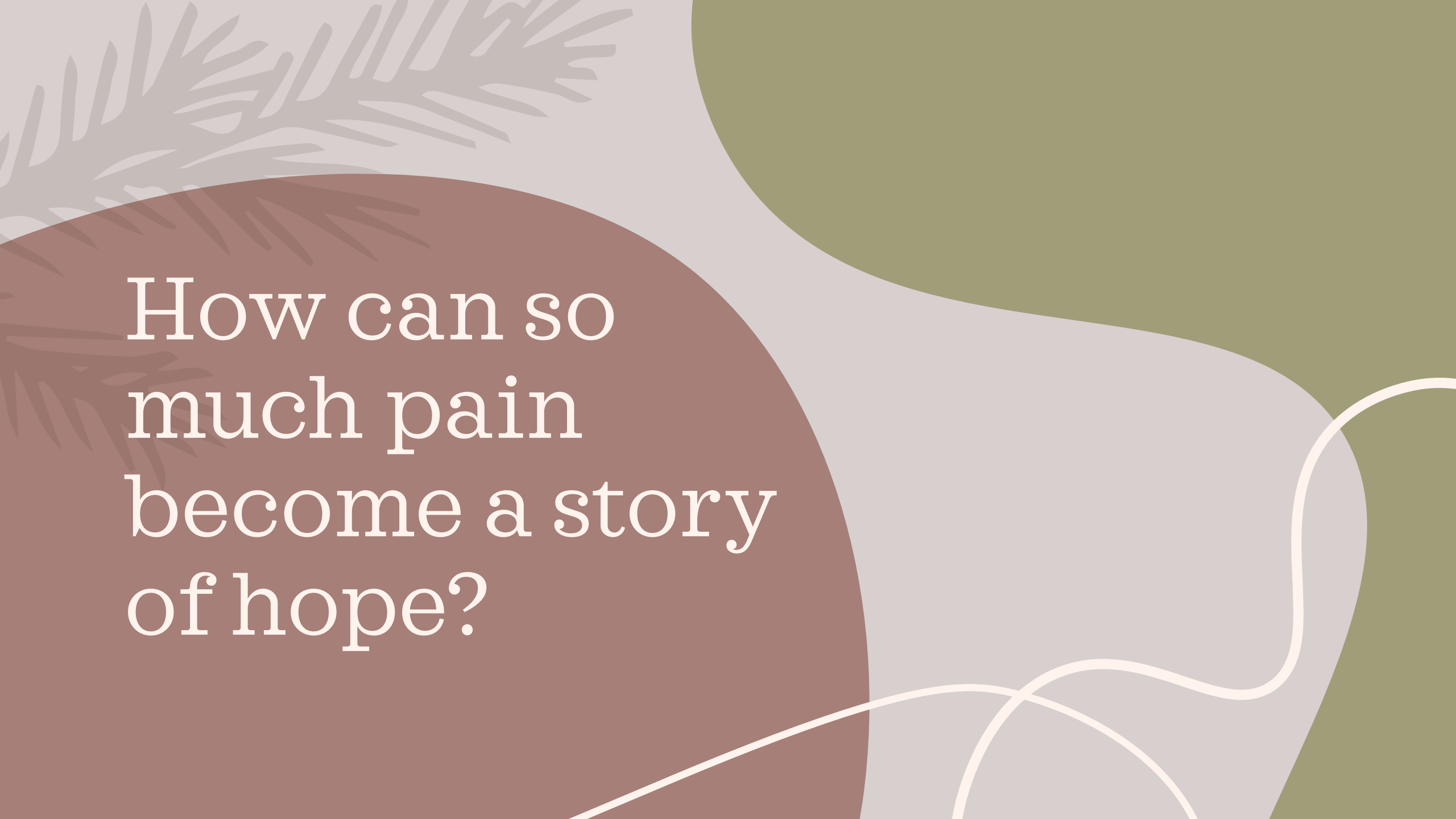
- Fleeing home
- Fear of persecution
- Unknown dangers
- Conditions in camps
- Trauma in transportation
- Lack of stability

It was so cold outside, that the puddles surrounding the leaking tents where 14-year old Azar and other Afghan refugees slept had frozen over. Despite the dire conditions at the refugee camp in Croatia, he remembered the mountainous journey as being even more dangerous. "Fear is constant in the mountains," he said. "There were also wolves. That's the scary part." ~Azar (savethechildren.org)

HOST COUNTRY

- Acculturation stress
- Xenophobia & discrimination
- Pressure for self-sufficiency
- Grief & loss
- Fear of deportation

Rohina [...] recalls being frightened after getting stuck on an escalator in the airport. She had never been on one before. She says that fear was replicated throughout her childhood and teen years as she faced bullying, family financial hardships and depression. (cnn.com - **'We're here to help you.' What Afghan Americans want refugees fleeing the Taliban to know**)

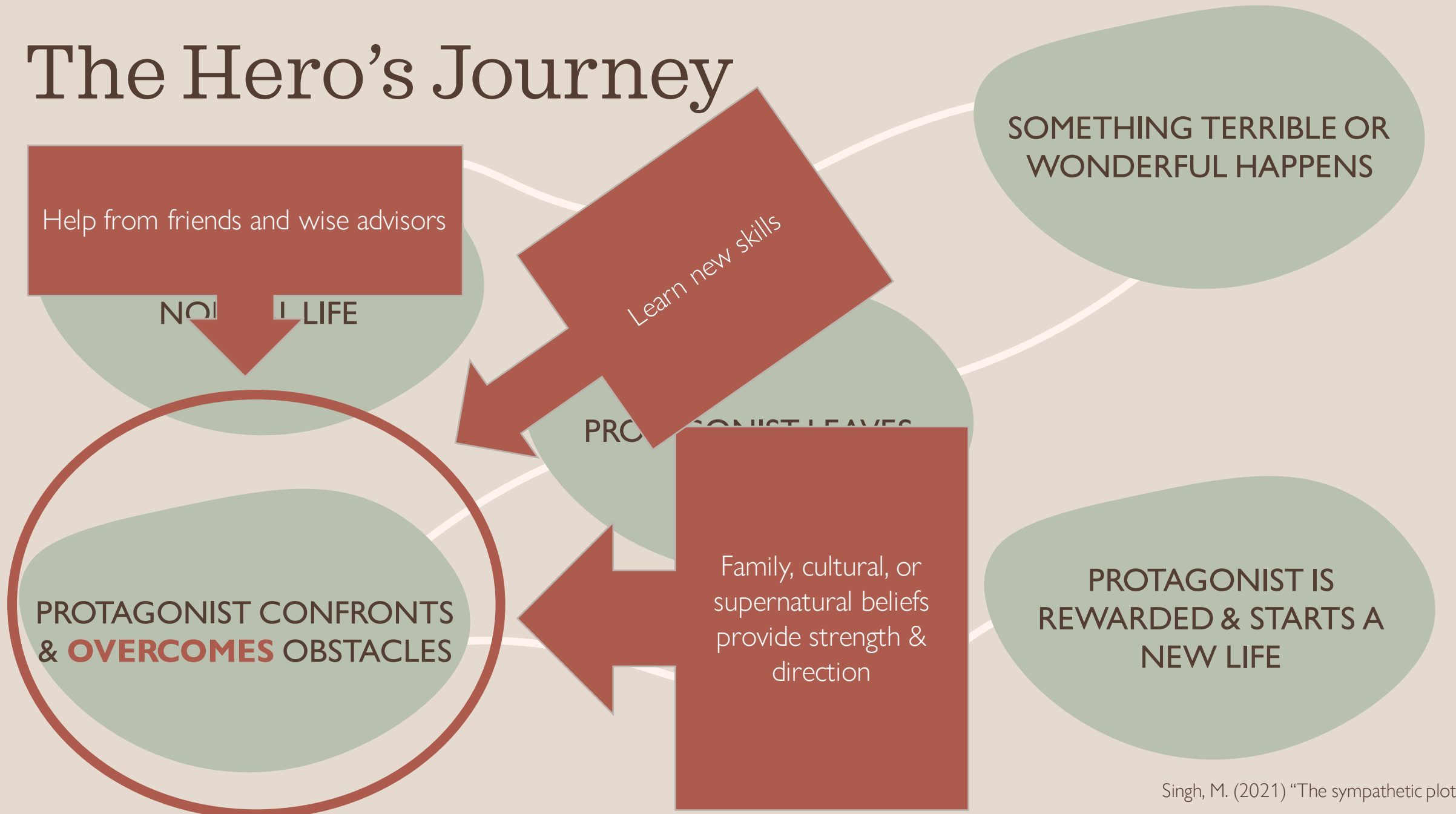
The background features a light grey base with large, overlapping organic shapes in muted green and brown. A white silhouette of a pine branch is visible in the upper left corner. A white wavy line runs across the bottom right. The text is centered within a dark brown circular area.

How can so
much pain
become a story
of hope?



MULTIFINALITY
&
EQUIFINALITY

The Hero's Journey



Protective factors are interventions

Supportive caregiver(s)

Close friend(s)

Comforting beliefs

Positive school experience

Caring teacher(s)

Good neighbors

Supportive adult

Opportunities for fun

Self-esteem

Predictable routine

Cultural beliefs & activities

Community support

Finding the hero's journey

- All refugee children have experienced multiple complex traumas
- Trauma affects all aspects of a child's life
 - That does NOT have to be their story
- All good heroes experience trauma
 - What is this child's story?
 - Where is their hero's journey leading?
 - How is their trauma affecting their body, beliefs, and behaviors in this chapter?
 - What protective factors do they have and need to make it through this part of the story?



thank you

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