Scam Resistance

How scammers try to hijack your safety/danger system: and how you can outsmart them!

Scam Resistance Workshop Slides
Meet the team

Amy Mabery

- Assistant Director, ISSO
- Hobbies include:
  - My dog
  - Learning about the body’s safety/danger system

Photo: Me trying to work from home and help my dog feel safe during a thunder storm.
Background Info

- The presentation is based on concepts from the field of relational neuroscience
- I am an “armchair researcher”, not an expert
- Presenting big ideas in a simplified way

Workshop Overview

- Scams impact on UNC Charlotte
- Your nervous system’s safety/danger response
  - How scammers try to hijack it
- The body battery
  - How you can strengthen your nervous system
- Putting it into practice
Scams
A big problem

Definition:

• Scam - A deceptive scheme or trick used to cheat someone out of something, especially money.
The Numbers Game

- If a scammer makes 10,000 calls per month
- With a success rate of 0.0005%
- And cheats each victim out of $1000
- What is the scammer’s monthly income?
  Answer: $5000

How does this impact you & me?

- Four times a semester
  - Students ask ISSO for feedback on a job offer that just doesn’t feel right.
- Three times a day
  - ISSO staff members report receiving scam phone calls on their personal phones
- Twice a semester
  - Students report receiving scary phone calls or emails saying they are in trouble with the U.S. government.
- Once a semester
  - A student reports losing money to a scam.
- Fall 2021 – reported loss, $4000
Why do smart people sometimes fall for scams?

Understanding the brain’s fast track safety / danger response

The brain’s two processors

Words & Logic Processor
- Conscious Thought
- Logic
- Words & speech
- Problem solving
- Stories
- Slow track (speed of conscious thought)

Sensory Processor
- Relational & emotional connections
- Assessing good, bad, or scary
- Individual & group identity
- Fast track (faster than conscious thought)
Faster than conscious thought

- The brain’s slow track needs help noticing fast track processes:
  - Facial recognition
  - Reading other’s emotions
  - Assessing safety & danger

Noticing the body’s fast track safety / danger system

- Polyvagal Theory, Dr. Stephen Porges
- 3 states of your autonomic nervous system
  - Not a conscious choice
  - Your body’s response to stress
Safety / Danger State - Green

- Ventral, “Green”
  - A state of safety and connection
  - Relational skills are online
- Car
  - Can go fast or slow
  - Is able to problem solve

Polyvagal Theory, Dr. Stephen Porges

Safety / Danger State - Red

- Sympathetic, “Red”
  - Mobilization in response to fear, danger
  - Relational skills are dimmed or offline
- Car
  - It is hard to go slow or stop
  - Problem solving is ‘running over’ or ‘running away’

Polyvagal Theory, Dr. Stephen Porges
Safety / Danger State - Blue

- Dorsal, “Blue”
  - Immobilization in response to fear, danger
  - I can’t get away from the danger, so I shut down
  - Relational skills are dimmed or offline
- Car
  - Difficult to even move
  - Problem solving is ‘going into my shell’

Polyvagal Theory, Dr. Stephen Porges

Is green the ‘best’ state?

Do we want to always be in “green” (ventral) to be in the driver’s seat?

The goal is flexibility, being able to move freely between states without getting stuck.
Adaptive Green

Can move fast and slow down as needed.

Adaptive Red

- Jerk hand away from a hot kettle
- Respond quickly to a project due
Adaptive Blue

- Slowing during illness
- Shock, the body protects essential functions

Stuck in Red

Moving fast, get out of the way!

Tomorrow
Fri 7
Project Due! 8 AM
Manipulating Red

- Scammers try to read your state
- They try to push you into “a little more red”
- Message – “Act Now”

If you act **RIGHT NOW**, you can pay the fine and avoid being arrested.

Stuck in Blue

Overwhelmed & slowing or shut down.

Tomorrow
Fri 7
Project Due! 8 AM
Manipulating Blue

- Scammers read your blue
- And push you into “a little more blue”
- Message – “Follow my instructions”

How Can We Put Green in the Driver’s Seat?
The Body Battery

Growing capacity and green strength

The Body Battery

• Green - Operating at a full battery/capacity
• As the battery drains, it goes through green, red and blue
Gauging Your Capacity

- How many challenges can you handle while remaining green?
- How quickly can you return to green from red or blue?

Growing Capacity Over a Lifetime

- Infant - Baby cries, caregiver feeds it
- Adult - When hungry, feeds themselves
- Elder - Feeds themselves, helps feed the community
Energy Balance, Building Capacity

Energy Outputs Include
- Thinking
- Physical movement
- Adapting to a new environment
- Navigating relationships
- School projects
- & more

Energy Inputs Include
- Nutritious food
- Quality sleep
- Activities that ‘bring life’
  - Specific for each person: Running? Pets? Cooking?
  - Capacity “super boost”

Capacity super boost – relational joy

Relational Joy
- One nervous system communicates to another “I am glad to be with you”
- Joy creates an amplification feedback loop
  - Joy/Rest cycles grow capacity
  - Both charges the battery & grows the battery
- Cannot be faked
  - Your brain can tell the difference between authentic joy and “smiling for the camera”
- Researchers: Ed Tronick, Alan Schore, and others
Building ‘joy strength’ increases capacity

Even seemingly small ‘glad to be with you’ moments increase our capacity. We can use ‘glad to be with you’ strength to recover from very unhappy circumstances (students grieving together after a campus shooting).

Coregulation – sharing green strength

- One nervous system communicates to another
  - I see you, I understand how big this is for you
  - I am GLAD TO BE WITH YOU, even in your distress
- Your green can help someone else return to green
Strengthening Your Nervous System

Activities to grow green strength

Creating A “Pause”

When experiencing sudden pain, say out loud “Pain, Pain, Pain, Pain.”

The words bring awareness to the discomfort before we act to minimize the pain.
Creating A “Pause”

Breathing, Lazy 8

Inhale & Exhale slowly

Yawning, Left, Right

Seek opportunities for positive connection

• Campus events
  • ISSO orientation events
  • FACE, Coffee Hour, Final Friday’s Lunches
• Student orgs
• Offer “I see you” to others
Appreciation - indirectly growing joy

Appreciation exercise
- Remember something you are grateful for
- Relive the experience while recalling as many sensory details as possible
- Goal – stay in “appreciation” for 5 min
- Bonus: Share the experience with someone else

Coregulating to share green strength

A. Thank you!
B. #$%^@!!
C. Ok, thanks.

I was just scammed out of $500
Coregulating to share green strength

I see you
I hear you
I am happy to be with you.

In the state of coregulation, we can share our nervous system resources

Putting it into practice
Example 1 – Scam Call

Social Security Administration
1-888-222-4444

Example 2 – Your friend lost $500
Wrap up

• Our body has 3 stress response states: Green, Red, Blue
  • Scammers ‘see them’ and manipulate them
  • We can ‘see them’ and invest in strengthening green
• As adults, we are in charge of:
  • Taking care of our bodies (sleep, nutrition, exercise)
  • Investing in “glad to be with you” relational connections

References

Polyvagal Theory

• Stephen Porges and Rick Hanson on Resilience - https://youtu.be/UeN4mWATl9g
• Deb Dana describes Polyvagal Theory. - https://youtu.be/JXGy7M4kvaY
• Using colors to describe polyvagal states - Beyond Behaviors: Using Brain Science and Compassion to Understand and Solve Children's Behavioral Challenges. By: Mona Delahooke
References, continued

Allan Schore’s neurological explanation of the Tronick Still Face Experiment (the importance of relational joy)
  • The First 1000 Days - Importance of Face-to-Face Contact - https://youtu.be/OIEIJxOd-Co

Direct relationship between gratitude and joy
  • The Gifts of Imperfection: Let Go of Who You Think You’re Supposed to Be and Embrace Who You Are. By: Brené Brown

Right/left brain gratitude as a neurologically informed spiritual practice
  • Passing the Peace with Kitty Wilder, https://youtu.be/qyOg1KHSPak

References, continued

• How safety and resilience are grown in the brain
  • What Happened to You?: Conversations on Trauma, Resilience, and Healing By: Oprah Winfrey, Bruce D. Perry

• How safety and resilience are grown in the brain
  • Panic Free: The 10-Day Program to End Panic, Anxiety, and Claustrophobia By: Tom Bunn, Stephen Porges (Afterward)
References, continued

- Growing capacity in a community (religious community)
  - RARE Leadership: 4 Uncommon Habits For Increasing Trust, Joy, and Engagement in the People You Lead by: Marcus Warner, Jim Wilder

- Building capacity in the workplace
  - Rare Leadership in the Workplace: Four Uncommon Habits that Improve Focus, Engagement, and Productivity by: Marcus Warner, Jim Wilder