

The Self-Regulation Blueprint

How to Engage Executive Function Skills for Better Emotional and Behavioural Outcomes

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PRE-WORKSHOP SURVEY




<https://drcarolinebuzanko.com/self-regulation-pre-survey/>

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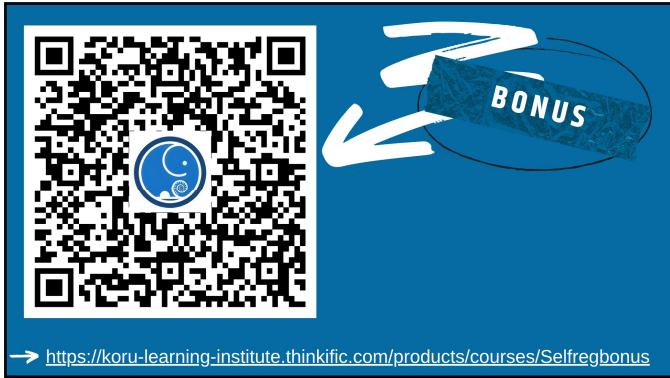
Learn more with me!



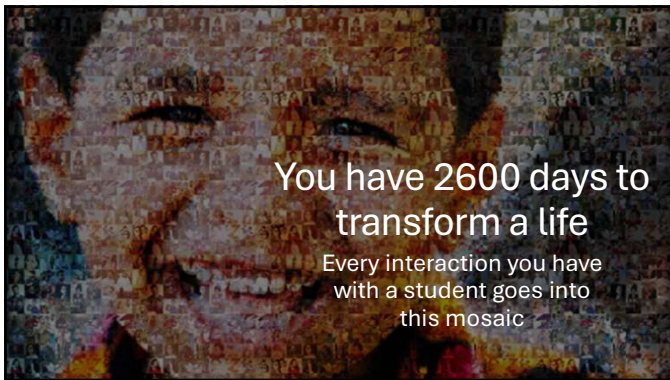
<https://parentsoftheyear.buzzsprout.com/> [rebrand.ly/OverpoweringEmotionsPodcast](https://drcarolinebuzanko.com/rebrand.ly/OverpoweringEmotionsPodcast)

OVERPOWERING EMOTIONS
with Dr. Caroline Buzanko

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A blue rectangular graphic featuring a QR code on the left and a stylized 'BONUS' tag on the right. The tag is white with a blue border and the word 'BONUS' in blue capital letters. Below the QR code is a small circular logo with a crescent moon and a star. At the bottom left, there is a white arrow pointing to the right, followed by the URL: <https://koru-learning-institute.thinkific.com/products/courses/Selfregbonus>

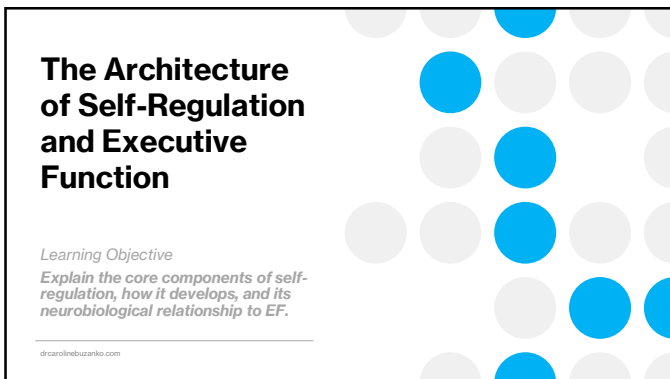
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A mosaic portrait of a smiling man's face, composed of many small, colorful tiles. The text is overlaid on the right side of the mosaic.

You have 2600 days to transform a life

Every interaction you have with a student goes into this mosaic

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A white rectangular slide with a pattern of blue and grey circles on the right side. The text is on the left.

The Architecture of Self-Regulation and Executive Function

Learning Objective
Explain the core components of self-regulation, how it develops, and its neurobiological relationship to EF.

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Self-Regulation Foundational for Overall Success



- Adaptive functioning
- Learning
- Emotion regulation
- Communication
- Social functioning
- Long-term health and well-being
- Vocational success
- Managing self without others

Independence

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Self-regulation is NOT

- Self-control (this is a subset of self-regulation)
- Used to resolve conflicts between two competing goals
 - Extremely effortful and depletable
 - Relying on it (willpower) alone is a fragile strategy

Compliance or obedience

- A compliant child may have zero capacity for independent regulation.
- A defiant child may be attempting to regulate and failing.

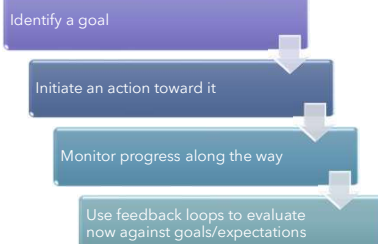
Sitting still and being quiet

- The quiet child is not always the regulated child.

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Self-Regulation a Dynamic Process

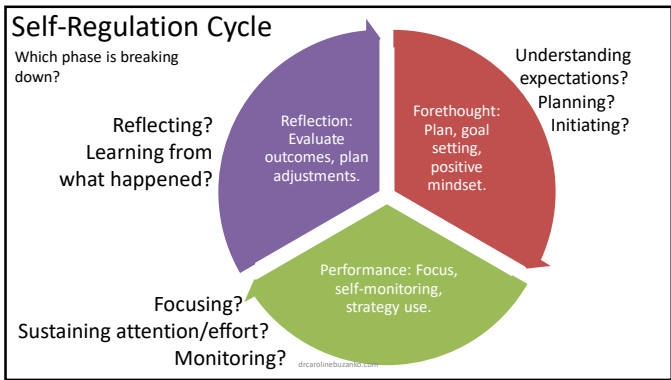


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To adjust, we need to be aware of:

- Changes in our environment
- How we are feeling
- What we are thinking
- How we are behaving
- How to respond adaptively when upset
- How to be flexible and adapt to a situation
- How to resist an emotional outburst

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Self-regulation

Range of skills that help students to adapt to a situation or meet a certain goal (flexibility key!)

Regulation


ABILITY • DISCIPLINE • ATHLETIC PERFORMANCE • EMOTIONAL CONTROL • AGGRESSION/VIOLENCE • DEFIANCE • MENTAL HEALTH • PA

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Executive Functions (EF)

POWERS

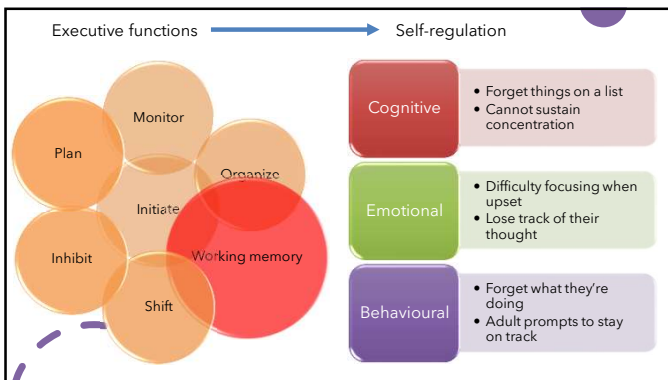
- Brain-based skills important for everyday functioning
- Top-down cognitive control
- Help us to decide what tasks we will pay attention to and which ones we will choose to do



Self-Regulation

Manifestation of EF challenges

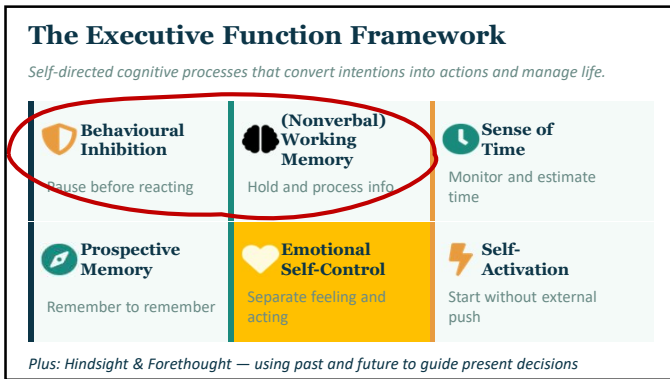
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Behavioural Inhibition

The brain's brake pedal.

- The capacity to pause, hold back, or override an impulse before acting
- Master EF
 - Every other EF requires inhibition first

Without the brake, the prefrontal cortex never gets the half-second it needs to do its job.

Stop the prepotent response
Resist the strongest, most automatic urge.

Interrupt an action in progress
Notice mid-behaviour and pull back.

- The half-second window where change is possible.

Protect the pause from interference
Hold the brake long enough for working memory and flexibility to come online.

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Skill: Nonverbal Working Memory

Internal self-talk to guide behaviour

- Think before acting
- Remember rules
- Consider consequences
- Hindsight/foresight
- Problem-solve

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Kids must be future thinkers

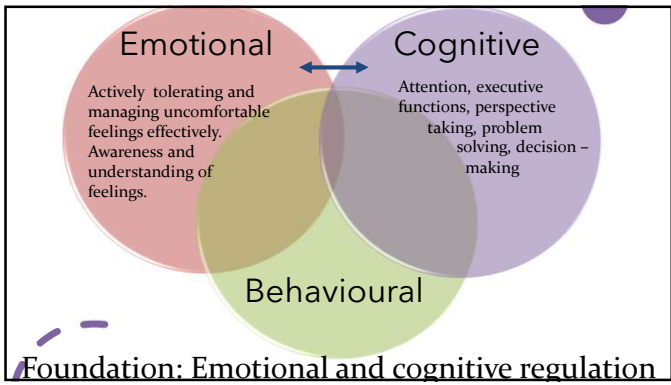
- Self-monitor
- Stop
- See the future
- Say the future
- Feel the future
- Play the future

Challenging for kids with self-regulation difficulties!!!
AND, under emotional arousal, working memory capacity SHRINKS.

To do that future successfully.

- Practice regularly

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Voluntary Process that is extremely EFFORTFUL

Remember rules + anticipate consequences...

...to manage thoughts and emotions...

...to guide behaviour and make positive choices about what to do next

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Limited
More demands (e.g., focus, working memory)

Self-Regulation

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Sensory Stimuli

Emotion Regulation

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Energy Depletion

Get dressed

Eat breakfast

Be nice to your sister

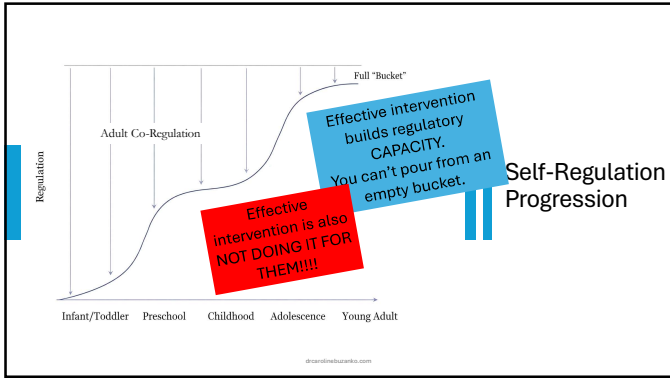
Pack your backpack

Brush your teeth

If you don't get done, no iPad after school

Drains already limited resource pool:
Toxic Effects

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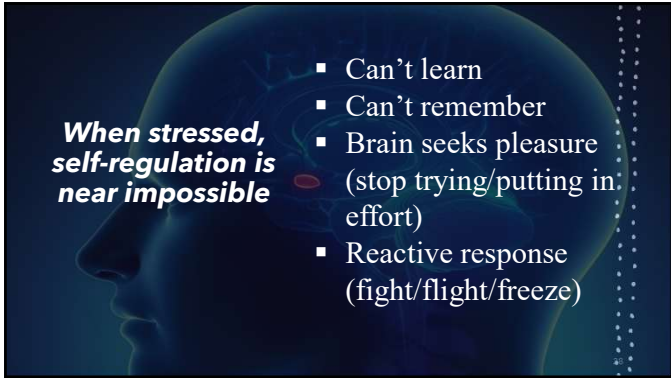
Inhibition Fails Under Stress

Inhibition is the FIRST EF to go offline when emotional arousal climbs.

REGULATED	ACTIVATED	DYSREGULATED
<p>Brake works</p> <p>Child can pause, consider options, choose. Inhibition is intact.</p>	<p>Brake slipping</p> <p>Working memory shrinks. Pause shortens. Impulses leak through despite knowing the rule.</p>	<p>Brake offline</p> <p>Amygdala in charge. Behaviour is reactive, not chosen. Skill cannot be performed — even if known.</p>

We don't teach inhibition during the meltdown. We rebuild capacity before it's needed!


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When stressed, self-regulation is near impossible

- Can't learn
- Can't remember
- Brain seeks pleasure (stop trying/putting in effort)
- Reactive response (fight/flight/freeze)

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Self-regulation Difficulties

- Low CONFIDENCE to regulate emotions
- Limited knowledge and clarity about emotions
- Poor goal-directed behaviour when upset

Stress becomes too overwhelming

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98% of students with self-regulation delays experience significant stress levels...

... that is much more severe and frequent and more difficult to manage than neuromajority peers.

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Using the Emotional Brain



Emotional brain

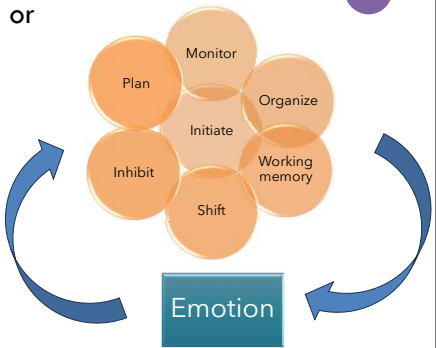
- Emotion is a stronger motivator than reason
- When it wins:
 - Connections stronger
 - Dopamine increased
 - Increases likelihood will win again

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Emotions Enhance or Impair EF

- Energizes action
- Overwhelm EF

EF must modulate emotions



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Is this child CHOOSING not to meet this expectation?
Or are they UNABLE to meet it right now?

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Reframing Challenging Behaviours

Learning Objective
 Reframe challenging behaviours as gaps in executive function and skills to be built, not willpower.

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Developmentally Appropriate Behaviours

			
Preschoolers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Argue Demanding Independence Say "No!" Test limits Act babyish Some tantrum Minor aggression Jealousy, worries Know-it-all 	Grade school <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Want more freedom but need help Struggle with failure Support to manage big emotions Poor verbal impulse control Test limits Tantrums Dramatic Complaining 	Early Adolescence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attitude Mild opposition Social skills trouble Don't think of consequences of actions Argumentative Push against/argue about rules Disrespectful Blame others 	Teens <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experimenting Minor rebellion Control for autonomy Resistance to authority Moody Noncompliant, Defiant Emotionally distant Impulsive and risk taking Dismissive Misread social cues

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Warning! 100% obedience comes at a great cost

Importance of acting out

- Essential for development & learning
- Learn about themselves & the world
- Boosts independent thinking
- Helps form identity
- Boosts emotional regulation
- Empowering
- Stand up for themselves



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Warning!
100%
obedience
comes at a
great cost

Problem with compliance

- Stifles development
- Creates followers
- Don't think for themselves
- Leads to anxiety, vulnerability, ; lack of self-identity
- Limits individuality
- Easily manipulated
- Erodes sense of self



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“People with great passions, people who accomplish great deeds, people who possess strong feelings, people with great minds and a strong personality rarely come out of good little boys and girls.”
Vygotsky

**Non-Compliant People
Change the World!**



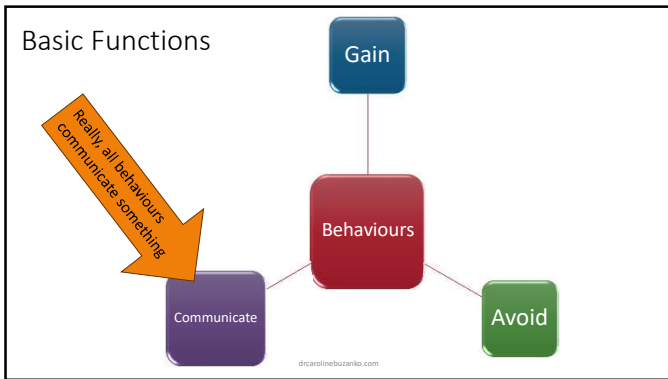
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Result of both



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EMOTIONS IN ACTION

Learning Objectives

- Articulate the role of emotions
- Differentiate misbehaviour from stressed behaviour

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Mood Predicts Behaviour

- Physical**
 - Environmental enrichment
 - Noise
- Social**
 - Interaction history
- Physiological**
 - Ill/pain
 - Hungry
 - Tired

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Emotions are not the problem

- The goal of emotion regulation is NEVER to eliminate emotions.
- Emotions are adaptive signals carrying information about a child's relationship to their environment.
- Every emotion has a function.
 - When we understand the function, the behavioural outcome becomes predictable. Then we can move from behaviour management to addressing the underlying need.

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Emotions Are Adaptive!

Tell us something about reality

- Anger**
 - Signals: threat, injustice, boundary violation, blocked goal
 - Function: Mobilize energy to protect our well-being or overcome an obstacle
- Fear**
 - Signals: perceived or real threat
 - Function: Activate protective behaviours to prevent harm
- Joy**
 - Signals: Safety and connection
 - Function: Motivate approach, exploration, bonding
- Shame**
 - Signals: perceived violation of social standards
 - Function: Prompt self-reflection & social repair
- Sadness**
 - Signals: Loss, separation, or unmet needs
 - Function: Recover, elicit care from others

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ODD or Trauma?

- Changes in brain development
 - Disrupt emotional regulation and executive functioning, heightened stress responses
 - Hypervigilance or overreacting to perceived threats
 - Emotional outbursts or withdrawal
 - Increased likelihood of behaviours as coping mechanisms
- Difficulty with trust and forming secure relationships.
 - Difficulty following rules or responding to authority.

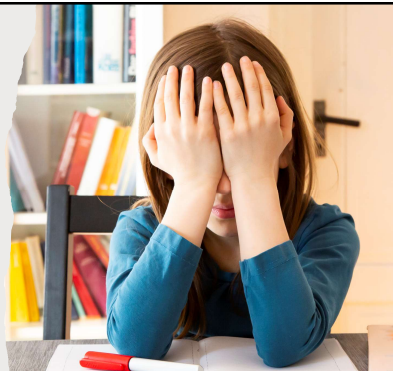


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Trauma Related Behaviours

Predictable outcome = Safety for the nervous system

- Relationships are unpredictable!
- Getting close is vulnerable & uncomfortable
 - Easier to disrupt the relationship
- Distracts from uncomfortable feelings
- Less vulnerable



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Anxiety

Fear of abandonment

- Cling, control, complain
- Aggression
- Sensitive to criticism, failure, or perceived injustice.

Avoidance

Fear of rejection

- Suppress needs
- Withdraw
- Aggression


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Misbehaviour (Won't do it)

- Aware of behaviour and rules
- Within their capacity to act differently
 - Have the skill
 - The environment is within their window of tolerance
- They are making a deliberate choice

This is far rarer than most adults assume!




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Stress behaviour (can't)

None of these capacities:
Behaviours serve to protect

- The nervous system is overwhelmed, EF is offline
- They lack the developmental skill
- OR they have the skill but can't access it under duress (performance deficit)



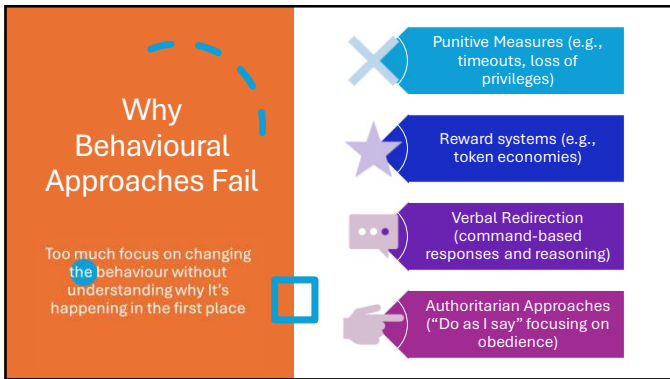
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Why Behavioural Approaches Fail

Too much focus on changing the behaviour without understanding why it's happening in the first place

- Focus on compliance vs. understanding the behaviour's purpose.
- Do not address the underlying emotional needs or skill deficits.
- May increase power struggles and escalate behaviours.
- Can damage the relationship and lead to mistrust.
- Reinforce negative behaviours
- Lack long-term effectiveness
- Impacts self-esteem

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Unfortunately,

When we take behaviours at face value, we miss the source.

We often escalate the behaviour if we're only giving the child attention when there is a problem behaviour

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Greatest predictor of ODD: Adult stress + negative perceptions of the child

Other strong predictors: high levels of parental criticism and low warmth

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Consider Skills to Develop vs. *Problem*



Instead of:

- Oppositional
- Only if wants to
- Narcissistic
- No empathy
- Lazy
- Sloppy
- Loner
- Doesn't prioritize

Might be difficulties:

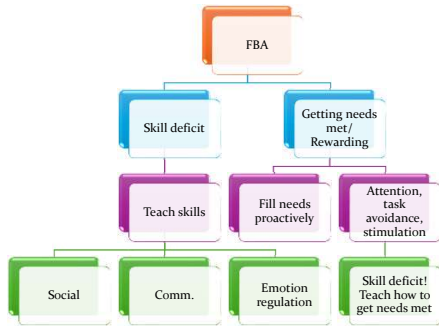
- Flexibility
- Know what is important
- Theory of mind
- Subtle social cues
- Initiation
- Fine motor skills
- Social understanding
- Seeing big picture

Reframe:

- Working on...
- Learning to...
- Still developing...

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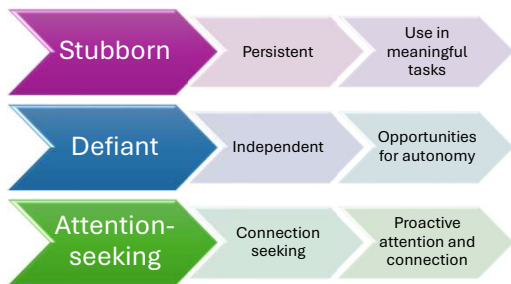
No bad kids!!! *What are they defending?*



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Strengths-Based Reframing

Signals of strengths to develop proactively



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Find the Antidotes!

Defies authority	• Follows directions; obeys rules
Destroys property	• Uses objects appropriately
Fights with siblings	• Plays and shares with siblings; assists them
Hits others	• Solves problems verbally
Disrespectful	• Collaborates, accepts decisions
Irritable	• Express how they feel • Good natured & easy going
Lies	• Is honest

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*Catch 'em being good
Maintain more positive to corrective interactions*

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But only if you can see behaviours as a lagging skill (ESR*) AND unintentional

These approaches are less effective if you view the student as intentionally difficult.

*Emotional Self-Regulation

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JUDGE VS. SCIENTIST

Be the SCIENTIST (otherwise, every other strategy is going to fail)

THE JUDGE

What is wrong with this kid?

- Behaviour is a problem to eliminate
- Certainty arrives fast, case closed
- Consequences first, curiosity later
- Student becomes the diagnosis

Closes the door on learning.

THE SCIENTIST

What is this behaviour telling me?

- Behaviour is data, not identity
- Curiosity is the default response
- Hypothesis, observe, test, revise
- Student is a collaborator in the puzzle

Opens the door to connection & skill building.

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Praise Publicly,
Correct Privately

Public correction can trigger an emotional shutdown or defensiveness.

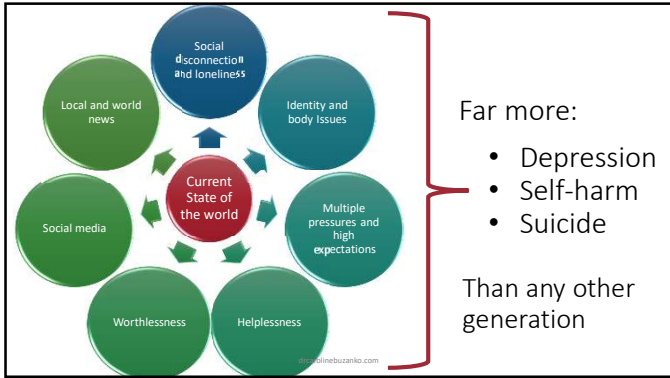
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Adult Traps that Unintentionally Stifle Growth

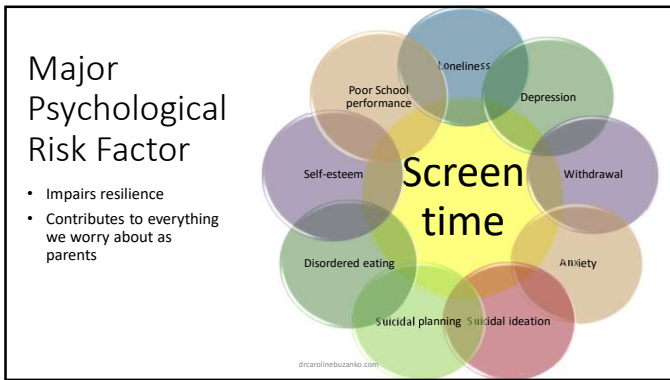
Learning Objective
Recognise the common traps adults fall into that can unintentionally stifle regulation and growth.

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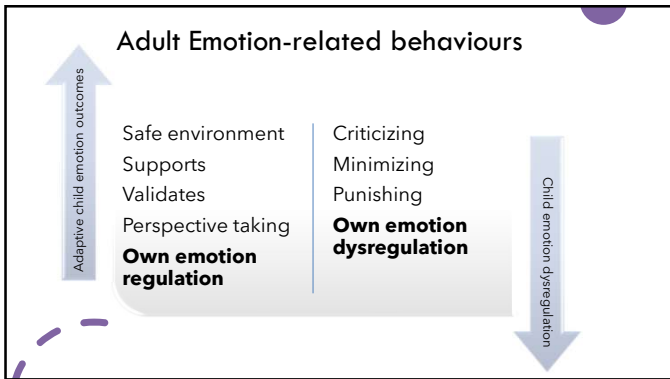
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“There’s a reason why western kids are so bad”

Fixing Persuading and pushing
Punishing Directing

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Unsolicited Support

- Swooping in can:
 - Undermine the equity in the relationship
 - Create a sense of obligation
 - Independence and self-esteem threatened
 - Feel invalidating
 - Seem unsympathetic
 - Shut down communication

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Encouraging kids to do their best can create unrealistic expectations

Undefined and Unmeasurable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What does best mean?</i> May translate to flawless performance or never making mistakes. • May interpret this as needing to excel every time, which is an unattainable goal.
Perpetuates Perfectionism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reinforces the belief that anything less than perfect is unacceptable. • This mindset can lead to fear of failure, procrastination, or avoidance of challenging tasks.
Creates Constant Pressure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May feel that they need to perform at full capacity all the time. • Leads to burnout, anxiety, and lower self-esteem when they inevitably can't maintain that standard.
Takes Focus Away from Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leads kids to avoid mistakes rather than embrace learning. • Students may focus more on outcomes than the process of improvement.

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“Do your best”

-  **Negative Internal Dialogue**
“If I’m not doing my best, I’m letting others down.”
“If I’m not the best, I’m not good enough.”
-  **Shift to External Validation**
“I need to prove myself constantly.”
-  **Self-Worth Tied to Achievement**
 Equate their value with performance, not effort or character.

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Conditional Regard

- I’m only lovable when...
- Guilt-driven compliance
- Avoidance

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Saying Don’t worry doesn’t work

- Minimizing
- Undermines independent coping
- No skills developed
- Creates dependency
- Get stuck in constant need for reassurance
- Act as enablers

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Our best intentions to make them feel better often works against us


- We minimize or negate their feelings
- We excuse away their feelings
- Kids may believe we don't want to hear how they feel
- We might send the message we know best
- The benefit from our hindsight is lost
- We disrupt our connection with kids when we share advice or opinions

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Misapplying Strategies




BREATHING



RELAXATION



CHANGING THOUGHTS



GETTING STUCK ON CONTENT

Need to teach the amygdala: I don't need to do ANYTHING.
 • Otherwise, teach it something MUST be wrong, so you SHOULD be hypervigilant.

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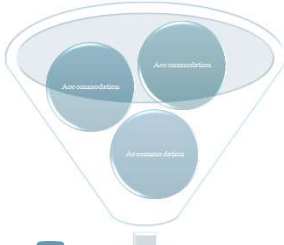
FRAGILE
HANDLE WITH CARE

- Decreases self-confidence
- Start to doubt their interpretation of the world

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Accommodations worsens anxiety & emotional dysregulation long-term



More impairing and severe with poorer treatment outcomes

- Fail to learn anxiety tolerance
- Fail to develop coping skills (and autonomy and self-efficacy)
- Prevents corrective learning and habituation
- Reinforce maladaptive beliefs
- Reliance on reassurance reinforces an overestimation of threats and **undermines confidence**
- Increased risk for other problems
- Decreased academic confidence** and success
- Increased dependency
- Reinforced negative reinforcement cycle

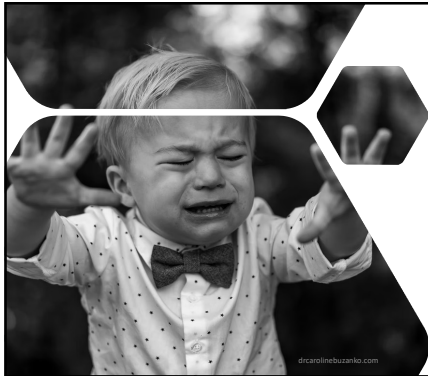
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Accommodation Behaviors



- Participation**
 - Assist in checking behaviors
 - Assist in avoidance
 - Reassure
- Modification**
 - Prevent distressing situations

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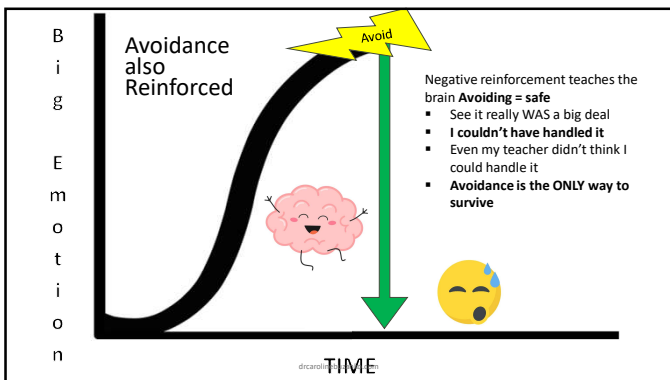
Anxiety & Other Big Emotions...

- Wants certainty
- Wants predictability
- Wants comfort

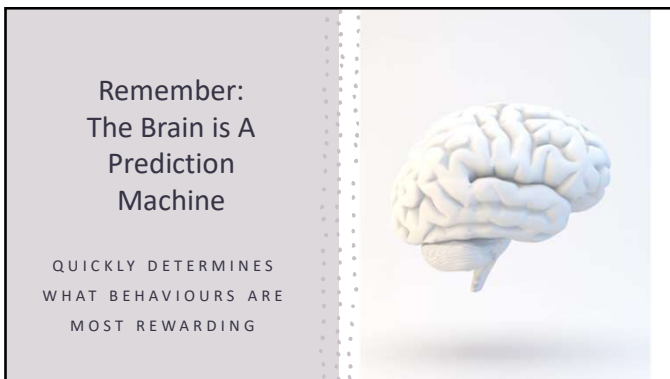
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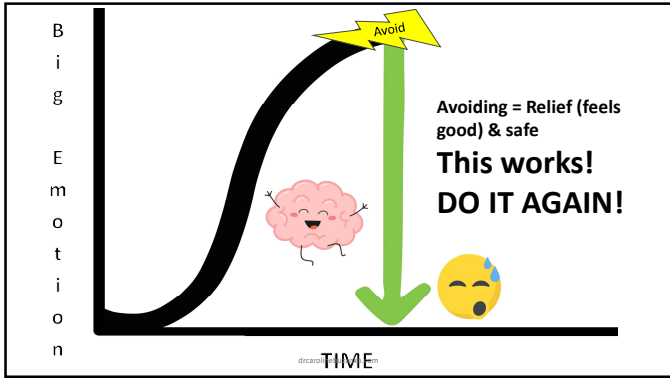
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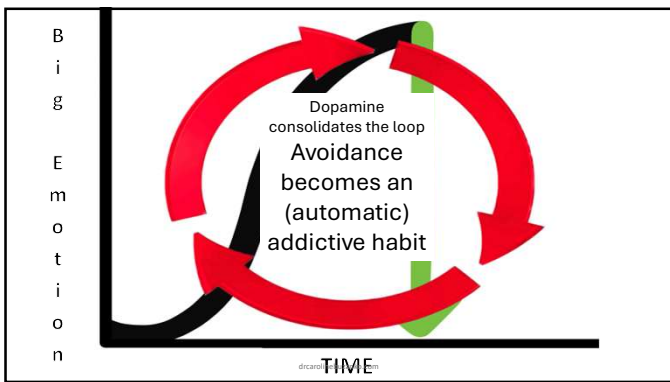
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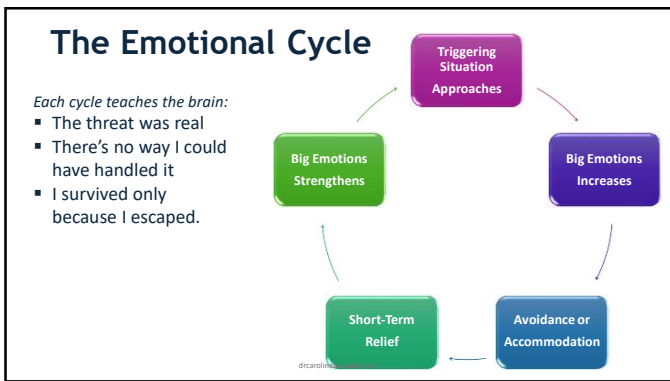
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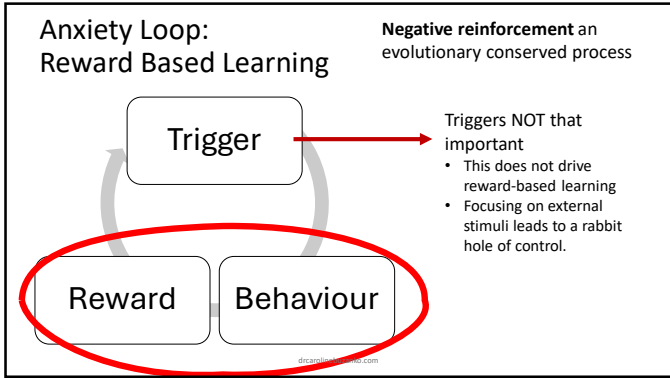
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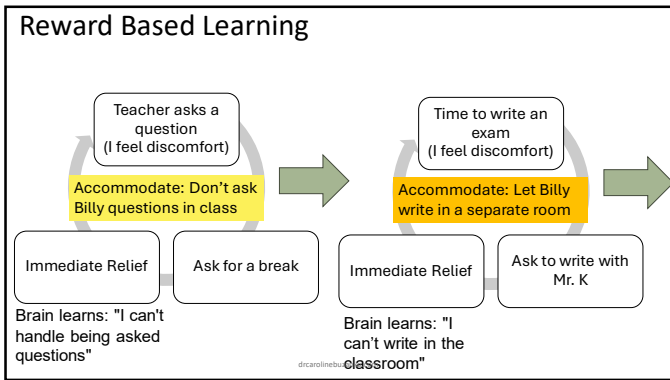
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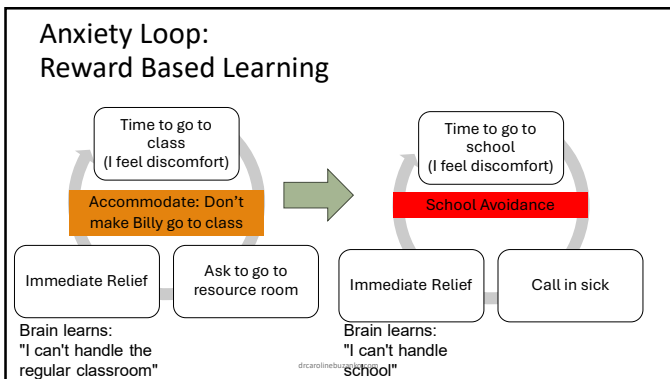
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Your Big But...



Hard to tolerate seeing them in distress, leading to our own avoidance



What if's




Other buts

...they'll have a meltdown
 ...I don't have time
 ...they're not ready
 ...the other students need me
 ...they'll get hurt
 ...parents will complain

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What are you doing for kids they can do themselves?

Harming kids when we do

- Changes brain development & ingrains emotional challenges
- Makes kids vulnerable: **Confidence and resilience stunted**
 - No opportunities to experience manageable amounts of stress
 - No opportunities to learn that they can handle it

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Stunted Resilience = Dysregulation

Kids develop patterns of behaviour/ways to respond to stress and other emotions depending on whether they believe they can manage.

And when they don't think they can manage....

DONT see themselves as capable and do avoid, give up, or lash out




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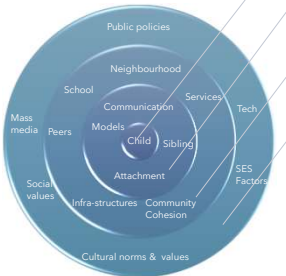
Self-Regulated Kids are Resilient kids

Effectively respond to and cope with everyday challenges



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Numerous factors influence our ability to cope



- Child**
 - Coping & Self-regulation
 - Self-confidence
 - Social Skills
- Family**
 - Parenting
 - Relationships
 - Connections
- Community**
 - Connections with peers
 - Educational settings
 - Healthy risk-taking opportunities
- Society**
 - Policies
 - Values
 - Legislation

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Get Out of the Traps!

This alone can make all the difference in the world

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What is our job?

<p>NOT To</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fix • Solve • Reassure • Make them feel better 	<p>To</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help them be the bravest versions of themselves in this unpredictable life
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Consider IPP's/IEP's

- Does it accommodate anxiety? Or prevent it from
- Are skills being taught (in the natural context)?
 - How do breaks/office visits help?
- Is there a transition plan to reduce supports?
- Does the plan address tolerance (physical symptoms)?
- Does it document how to maintain contact between home and school?

Help students move toward **COURAGE**, not comfort

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Co-Regulation & Emotional Coaching





Learning Objective
 Support children effectively when big emotions show up with co-regulation and emotional coaching.

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Keys to success: Co-regulation

Effective adult role to help kids understand and adjust their thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. Help maintain balance.

-  Scaffolding support
-  Nurturing & maintaining emotional balance
-  Coaching and modelling
-  Create space for THEM to regulate their thoughts, feelings, and behaviours.

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Connection Essential for Regulation


To tolerate and regulate emotional responses & cope with stress

Self-Regulation is a top-down process

Connection is bottom up

- The brain's response to threat is more efficient to recover from when connected
- Uses less energy and fewer brain structures

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Adult Relationships

Critical difference in outcomes

- Greatly supports self-regulation & emotional well-being
- Greatest predictor of long-term happiness
- Reduces problem behaviours
- Improves school liking, self-efficacy, learning, and engagement

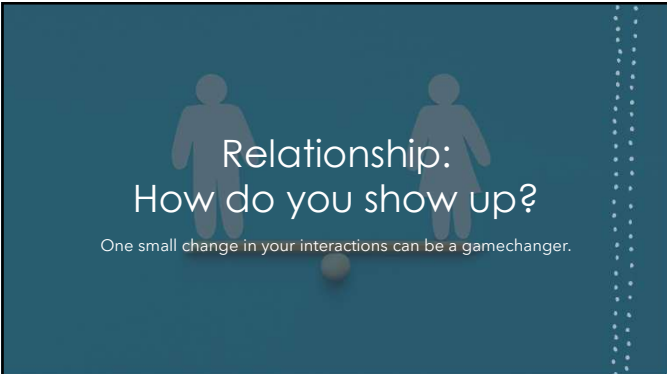
103

Board Members

Name	School issues	Friend issues	Parent issues	Sibling issues	Getting in trouble	Emotional	Health
Mr. Frank	X						
Dr. Simms						X	X
Susan	X	X	X				
Mom				X	X	X	
Jeff			X	X	X	X	X
Brendan		X					X
Marie			X	X	X	X	X

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Relationship: How do you show up?

One small change in your interactions can be a gamechanger.

105

You have less than 6 minutes

- Students need to feel liked and respected
- What can you DO to strengthen your relationship with your students every day?



School should be a place...

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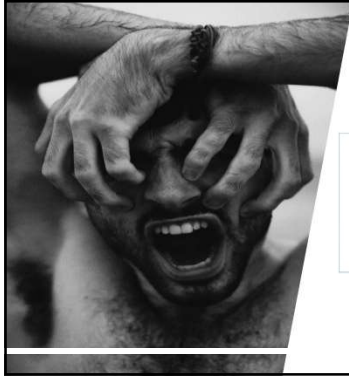
HOW YOU RESPOND
MAKES THE DIFFERENCE

We are the most powerful variable in the equation!!!!

- We either de-escalate or accelerate the crisis.
- Everything we say, everything we do, and everything we DON'T say or do is an intervention.
- Make sure our interventions are working for the child, not against them.

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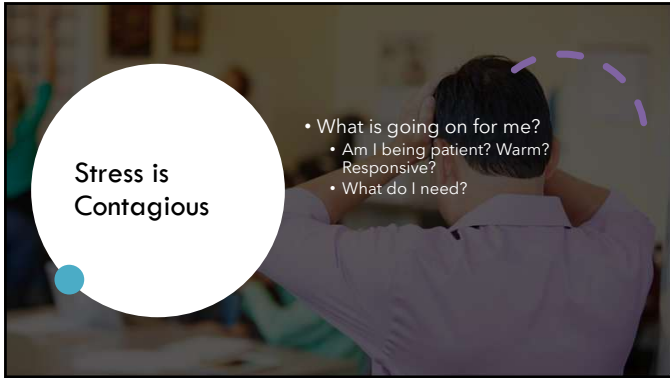
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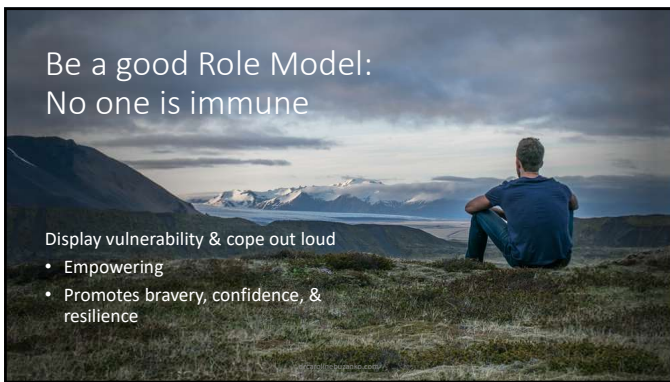
Adult self-regulation

- Avoid passing own stress on to kids!!!

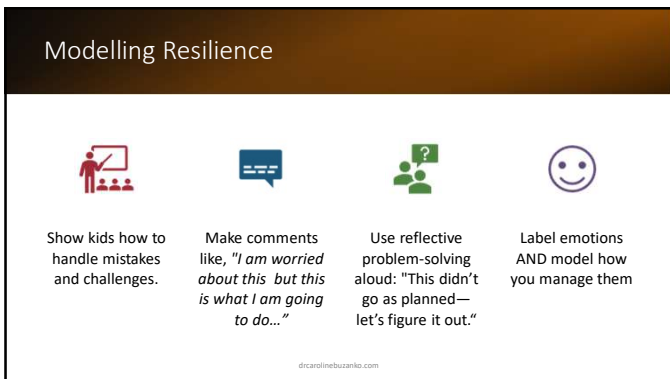
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111

Modelling Resilience

Name the state.
Granular. One sentence.
"I'm feeling frustrated because... I said something unkind to someone and I didn't mean to."

Say what you value.
The reason.
"That frustration shows how much I care about showing kindness to people."

Say what you'll do. An action.
"I'm going to take a walk around the block and think about what to do next."

Close the loop. Take the action. Return.

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Tending to ourselves

Self-care brings wholeness – we can trust and feel connection and fulfillment to our kids.

Can only connect and support kids as much as we can connect and support ourselves.

Better able to demonstrate patience, understanding, and empathy unconditionally.

Appreciation for our own humanity = appreciation of theirs.

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What did you value as a student?

- What are things adults did that you valued and appreciated?
- What do you wish they did differently?
- What did they do/not do that influence how you interact with students today?
- What things did they do/not do that influence what kind of person you want to be with students today?

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Reflect on own Incentives



- What brought you into this role?
- What kind of ____ do you want to be?
- What motivates you?
- How do you want to feel at the end of the day?
- How do you want kids to remember you?

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Align with Values: From Ideas to Reality



- List concrete, observable behaviours you can do that align with your top three values?
 - Reducing corrective feedback
 - Identifying child's strengths and positive behaviours more frequently
 - Listening actively more often
 - Engaging in collaborative problem solving whenever a conflict arises
 - Showing more love
 - Engaging in more acts of kindness

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Co-Regulation Regulating for them/Making them feel better

Don't promote prompt-dependency!

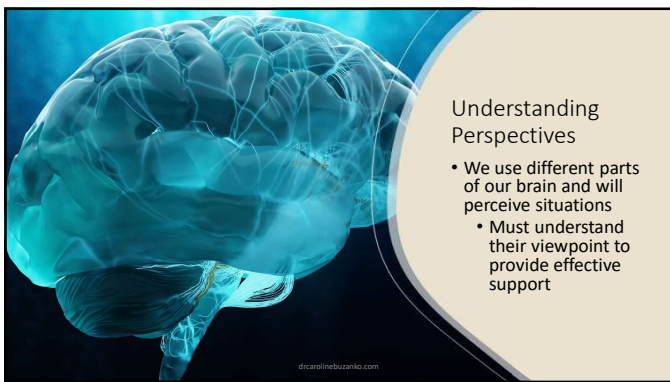
Be a Catalyst

- Support without taking over
- Get them going, build momentum, and then step away

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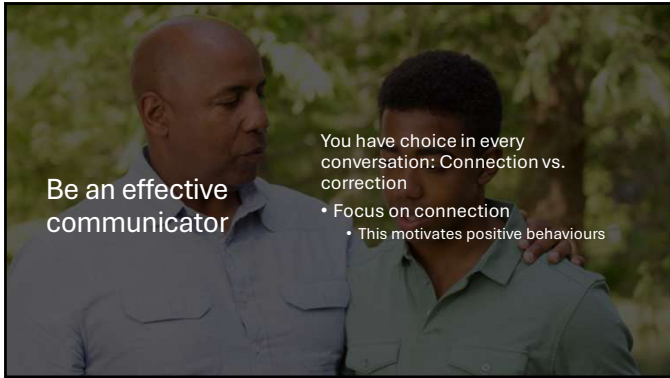
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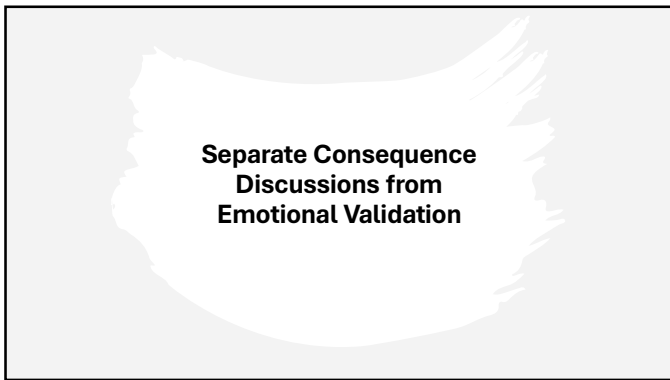
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123

Validation Formula = Adjective!

That...

- ✓ Sounds...
 - ✓ Hard
 - ✓ Frustrating
 - ✓ Overwhelming
 - ✓ Confusing
 - ✓ Disappointing
- ✓ Sucks

Just name what you see

NOT:

- ✗ I understand (you don't fully)
- ✗ It's okay (dismissive)
- ✗ At least... (minimizing)

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Nurturing Language That Regulates vs. Escalates

✗ Escalating Language	✓ Regulating Language
"Stop crying — you're fine."	"Something feels really hard right now."
"Why did you do that?"	"What were you trying to figure out?"
"You're being dramatic."	"Your body is telling me this is important."
"If you don't stop, you'll lose your screens."	"Let's figure this out together."
"How many times do I have to tell you?"	"This part keeps tripping you up. Let's look at why."
"Calm down."	"That sounds frustrating. What's up?"

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Example scripts for common moments

<p>➔ Transitions</p> <p>Forewarn. "Five minutes left, then we move to math."</p> <p>Bridge. "What's one thing you want to finish first?"</p> <p>Co-launch. "I'll get the books out, meet me at the table."</p>	<p> Refusal / Shutdown</p> <p>Validate. "Oof, this is tricky."</p> <p>Stay near. "I'll be here when you're ready."</p> <p>Open door. "What could help right now?"</p>
<p>❤️ Meltdown</p> <p>Slow yourself. Long exhale, slow movements.</p> <p>Name + stay. "This is big. I'll be right here."</p> <p>Wait, don't fix. Silence is regulating. Resist the urge to talk.</p>	<p>🔗 Repair After Rupture</p> <p>Own your part. "I raised my voice earlier. That wasn't what I wanted."</p> <p>No 'but'. "I'm sorry." [Don't follow with a justification.]</p> <p>Reconnect. "Want to start this part over together?"</p>

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Replace negativity with curiosity



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Emotion coach

Coaches validate & then ask open-ended questions.

- What do you need?
- What do you need to do next?
- What are you going to do?
- How are you going to figure that out?



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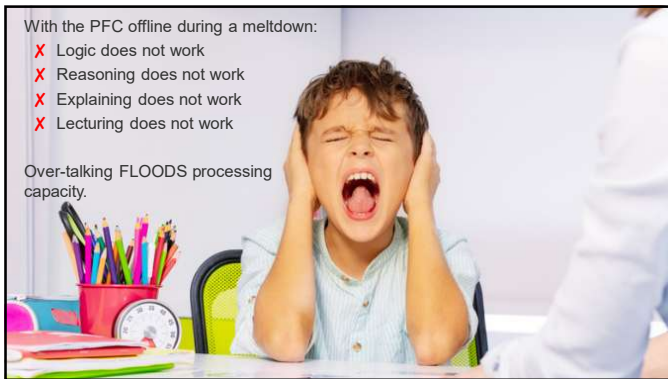
128

Power of Open-Ended Questions (vs. Directives)

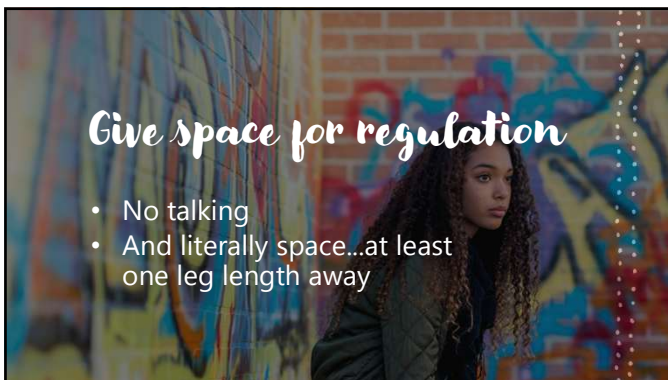
Helps kids feel understood and engaged.	Fill their need for autonomy • Boosts confidence, motivation, and resilience.	Strengthens trust and connection	Helps kids develop key skills • Problem-solving, self-awareness, self-advocacy, and self-trust
Promotes independence	Creates cooperation vs. power struggles	Nurtures resilience & distress tolerance	

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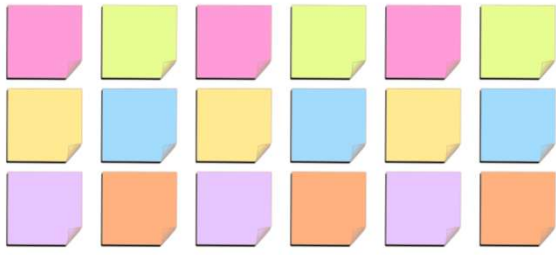
What do you need from others when dysregulated?

We all need different things when we're distressed




133

What I need from you



134

Sometimes we need to focus on upregulating certain emotions
(instead of trying down-regulate all the time)



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Remember

- Manage your own emotions!
- Reframe the behaviour
 - Behaviours a signal they lack the skills to meet an expectation
- Highly dysregulated = set aside the unmet expectation for now
 - Come back later as needed
- Do not regulate for them
 - Scaffold to gradually transfer the cognitive load to them
- Maintain empathy + high expectations and limits

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Recognize the Signs!

Being Proactive is always way easier than waiting for a reaction

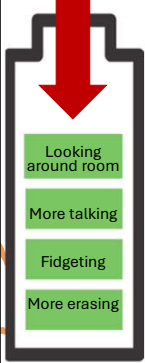
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The don't go from 0 to 100 instantly!
Internal signs missed

- Baseline** ◦ Feel fine
- Disturbance** ◦ Feel off but can ignore it.
- Activation** ◦ Hard to manage emotions.
- High Alert** ◦ Emotional flooding can't control


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Identify Early Warning Signs

- Coaching!
- Describe what you see:
 - *I notice there is more talking.*
 - *It seems like Restless Rick is showing up*
- Ask open-ended questions
 - What do you need to _____?
 - What can help?
 - What do you need to do?

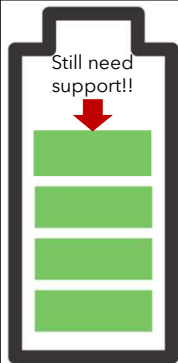
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Self-Regulation Battery Example

Signs for Billy's energy level	Co-regulation Plan/supports
Optimal participation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Attending ▪ Communicates needs ▪ Easily transitions ▪ Engaging ▪ Smiles ▪ Follows requests easily ▪ Follows rules ▪ Using strategies ▪ Thinks flexibly ▪ Solves problems ▪ Relaxed posture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear expectations • Mental rehearsals & pictures of tasks • Acknowledge positive behaviours • First-then for less preferred activities • Regular breaks • Provide leadership • Provide done samples • Use job talk • Proactive skill-building & problem-solving

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Signs for Billy's energy level


Signs for Billy's energy level	Co-regulation Plan/supports
OK Participation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Seeks connection ▪ Attention drift ▪ Forgets sequence of tasks, rushing ▪ Fidgeting, blurting ▪ Can engage in tasks with frequent check-ins ▪ Responds to strategies offered ▪ OK with following rules with reminders ▪ Transitions with support ▪ Negotiates-can come to agreement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inject positive emotion ▪ Micro mindfulness ▪ Stand near by ▪ Point out plan & visual schedule ▪ Hands-on activities out and available to use ▪ Social acknowledgment when requested ▪ Frequent breaks ▪ Regular monitoring signs of stress ▪ Mark halfway point of task (vs end) & timer. ▪ Identify time robbers and brainstorm time savers

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Support Inhibition
Scaffold the Pause: In-the-Moment Cues
Externalize the brake until the child can apply it internally. Cue vs. command.

<p>VERBAL Name the urge</p> <p><i>"I see your body wants to grab."</i></p> <p>Label what the brake is fighting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Narrating builds awareness without shaming. 	<p>VISUAL Stop sign cue</p> <p><i>Tap a stop-sign card on the desk before the moment of choice.</i></p> <p>External visual carries the load.</p>	<p>MOTOR Clasp hands</p> <p><i>"Holding help your hands wait."</i></p> <p>Gives the body a competing action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Easier with a substitute behaviour.
<p>TIMED Three second pause</p> <p><i>"Three Mississippi's before you answer."</i></p> <p>Time-bound and concrete</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knows when the pause ends, which makes it tolerable. 	<p>CHOICE Two-option offer</p> <p><i>"Walk away, or use words. Which one?"</i></p> <p>Replaces the prepotent response with a structured fork</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leverages choice instead of suppression. 	<p>REPAIR Try-again do-over</p> <p><i>"That happened fast. Let's try a redo?"</i></p> <p>Removes shame</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reframes inhibition failure as a skill rep vs. a character flaw.

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Signs for Billy's energy level	Co-regulation Plan/supports
<p>Very Challenging Behaviours</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical aggression Verbal aggression Running away Screaming Hitting Face turning red Crying Impulsive 	<p>Emphasize cues of safety & ride it out</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Position body lower than his, open hands (> legs length) Minimal talking Let him know you are there and can help if needed Give time and space Follow his lead for connection Keep him/others safe Stop all EF demands

143

Fundamental Skills for Effective Self-Regulation

Learning Objective
 Teach and apply EF skills for emotional and behavioural self-management in everyday settings.

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Shifting the Goal

~~Instead of eliminating student distress (calm),~~
we want to

**INCREASE DISTRESS TOLERANCE
AND FUNCTIONING (BRAVERY)**

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The # 1 thing they need to learn?
How to manage the experience of
big emotions when they show up

Not the actual trigger

AND How To Handle Hard

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Fundamental Skills	
Body <i>Bottom-Up</i>	Interoceptive Awareness – <i>detecting internal body signals</i> Emotional Literacy – <i>naming what you feel with precision</i>
COGNITIVE <i>Top-Down</i>	Working Memory – <i>the brain's whiteboard</i> Distress Tolerance – <i>enduring discomfort without escape</i> Behavioural Inhibition – <i>the brake pedal</i> <small>Cognitive Flexibility – shifting, adapting, seeing alternatives (comes with experience)</small>
METACOGNITIVE <i>Self-Directed</i>	<small>Meta-Thinking – thinking about your own thinking Decision-Making & Problem-Solving – generating and choosing options</small>

147



First, Externalize
Challenges

& Work as a Team

148

Saying it out loud gives us more power

- ✓ To expose it
- ✓ To take control and use helpful coping strategies

Visualization makes it concrete

- ✓ Minimizes emotional noise
- ✓ Tames the emotion

Draw it out!

149

Henchman Examples

Catastrophizing Carl	Mindreading Mandy	Humiliating Hannah	Perfectionist Paula	Overestimating Oscar
Rigid Richard	Avoiding Alison	Permanent Pete	Fortune Telling Fran	Scarcity Sam
All-or-nothing Al	Grumpy McGrumperson	Self-critical Carla	Mindreading Mandy	Negative Ned

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Externalize
They are not their behaviour

Things to watch for:
 Mind robbers
 Brain drainers
 Freaking out Fran
 Mean Jean
 Explosive Bob
 Worry Wanda
 Distracting Dan
 Yelling McGee

Get on offense and make a plan together - you're on the same team!

- When does it show up?
- How does it show up?
- What can you do?
- What support do you need?

151

How do emotions show up?

Sounds like:
 List the worried thoughts and images that come up:

Feels like:
 List physical symptoms associated with worries:

Looks like:
 List behaviours that result from the worries, including avoidance:

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Skill: Interoceptive Awareness

- The ability to perceive and interpret internal body signals.
- FOUNDATIONAL!
 - Cannot manage an emotion they cannot detect.


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Physical Symptoms are a Problem

Defense response is FELT

They start to worry about the physical feelings, which are distressing, which they will do anything to stop

Become reactive
Misinterpret and leads to more sensations...



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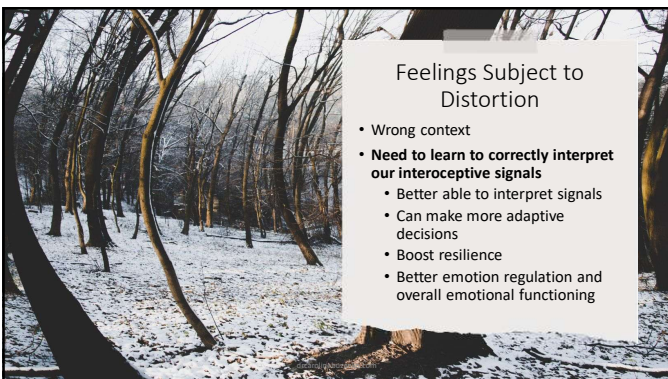


Feel More but can't interpret what the feelings mean

Do whatever they can to get rid of them...

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Feelings Subject to Distortion

- Wrong context
- **Need to learn to correctly interpret our interoceptive signals**
 - Better able to interpret signals
 - Can make more adaptive decisions
- Boost resilience
- Better emotion regulation and overall emotional functioning

156

The "Vitamin Shot" Study

Schachter & Singer, 1962

1

Inject Epinephrine

Participants received an injection that caused racing heart, trembling, and flushing — but were told it was a "vitamin."

→

2

Manipulate Context

Placed with either a euphoric confederate (laughing, playful) or an angry one (hostile, complaining).

→

3

Result

Same arousal, different emotion.

The physical sensations were identical. Their label was different. Clients **MUST** understand that a racing heart before a presentation is the same chemistry as excitement before a concert. This alone already calms the amygdala.

157

The "Vitamin Shot" Study
Schachter & Singer, 1962

Mood **NOT** affected by their environment
WHEN THEY UNDERSTOOD WHAT WAS HAPPENING IN THEIR BODY

158

Misattribution of Affect

Body deficit → emotional misfires

Dehydration → Anxiety

Low sleep → Irritability

Hunger → Crankiness

Depression = Body bankruptcy

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Check Body Budget First!

- Instead of reset or safe place have a battery charging space
 - Kids get this, there's always a charging station
- See video in bonus materials – feel free to download and share!

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Emotions show up in the body

They need to know that we **MUST** have physical reactions to alert us to what is happening

- Cannot change reactions without this understanding

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Understand how emotions shows up = Adaptive thinking

The mystery is gone

BONUS: Expecting physical sensations helps reduce signals to amygdala

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Now we can respond in helpful ways!

Validate the suckiness!

That makes sense!
No wonder - your adrenal glands have sent out all that yucky stuff.

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Teach the process to keep the cortex working

Even when their amygdala gets frustrated and wants to take over with the stress response.

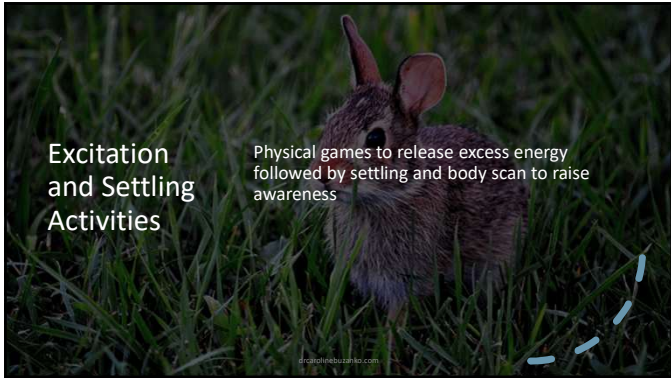
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> _____ Dizzy _____ Racing _____ Tension _____ Achy _____ Sore _____ Hot _____ Cold _____ Tingly _____ Numb _____ Sharp _____ Breathless _____ Shivering _____ Sweating _____ Trouble swallowing _____ Tired 	<p>Identify & describe where anxiety shows up. Stronger on left or right?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> _____ Shivers _____ Increased heart rate _____ Weak legs _____ Ringing ears _____ Blurred vision _____ Muscle tension _____ Shaking _____ Trembling _____ Chest pain _____ Headaches _____ Burning skin/sweating _____ Blushing _____ Changes in breathing _____ Stomach-ache/ Nausea _____ Relaxed
--	--	---

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Labelling Parts of Emotions & Experiences

- Change our interpretation of them
- Change how our body responds
- Dampen amygdala's false alarm
- Turn on prefrontal cortex
- Learn that we have control over our responses
 - *I know what this is & I know how to handle it*
- Avoid getting sucked in – it's just a piece of information
- Make adaptive decisions

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Skill: Emotional Literacy

Students with strong expressive abilities can self-regulate the best.

- Express feelings adaptively
- Comfortable talking about feelings
- Know/figure out what to do next


Emotion coaching to support these skills



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Recognize

- With no words comes behaviours
- Name it to Tame it
 - PFC comes online!
 - Calms nervous system
 - Builds confidence
 - Strengthens foresight

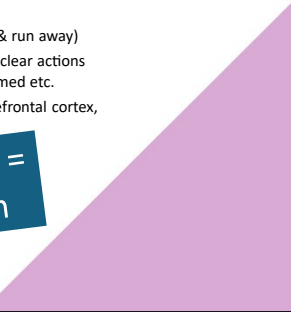


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Granularity Important!


- Broad label ('I feel bad') → vague action (Cry & run away)
- Precise labels ('overwhelmed', 'uncertain') → clear actions
 - Nervous vs. scared; embarrassed vs. ashamed etc.
- Accurately labelling emotions engages the prefrontal cortex, enhancing top-down control.

Higher granularity = better regulation



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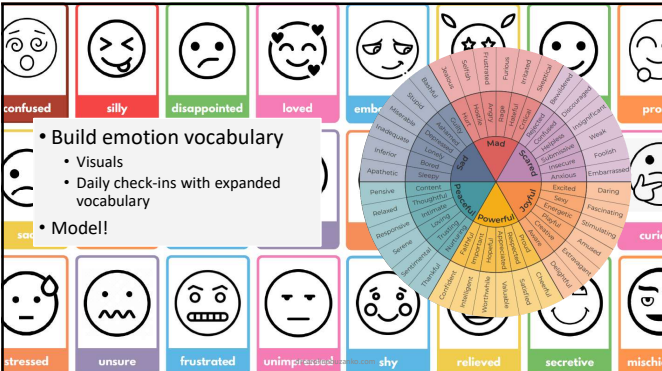
Emotional Granularity: What can ANXIOUS mean?



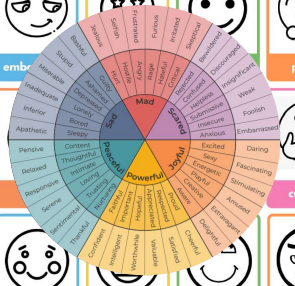
Worried	• Thinking about future problems
Nervous	• Anticipating performance
Panicky	• Feel like losing control
On-edge	• Hypervigilant
Stressed	• Overwhelmed by demands
Insecure	• Doubting self in social situations

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- Build emotion vocabulary
- Visuals
- Daily check-ins with expanded vocabulary
- Model!



173

Emotion Regulation...


It's not about avoiding, ignoring, or suppressing emotions

It's about being aware of emotions, acknowledging them, co-existing with them, and responding in helpful ways

174

Skill: Distress Tolerance

- Capacity to endure discomfort (being aware of, acknowledging, and co-existing with it) and responding in helpful ways
- To **end the fear of discomfort**
 - I am uncomfortable but I am going to do this anyway



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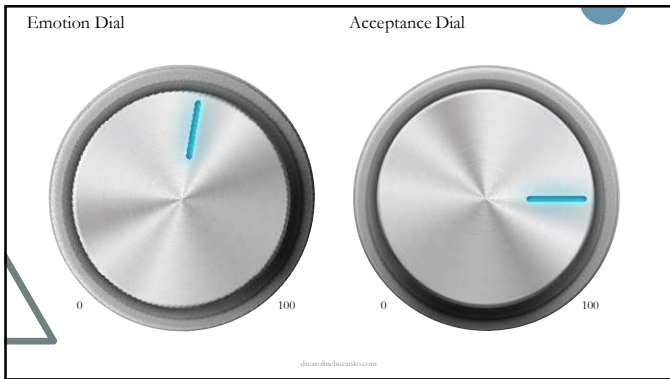
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Emotion regulation – Smart Hulk!

176

Emotion Dial Acceptance Dial



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Change Relationship with Emotions

From judgmental and critical stance in which they try to avoid, minimize, or eliminate

Sit with it until it subsides



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Curiosity is the best response to emotional experiences

"Interesting...."




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Curious kids feel safe & have nervous systems that self-regulates

Anxiety leaves no room for curiosity.



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RAIN Practice: Regularly Throughout the Day!

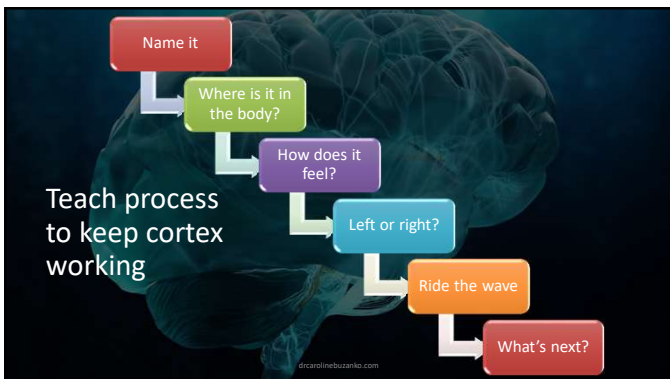
- R** Recognize what's happening
- A** Allow/Accept it to be there (don't resist)
- I** Investigate with curiosity (body sensations)
- N** Note what's happening ("tightness," "heat," "restlessness")

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183

Big Emotions Keeps us Stuck

**At the expense of
valuable information
NOW**

Our
work is
in the
NOW

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Mindfulness

Must be present to attend to the current context

- To keep prefrontal cortex online
 - To attend to corrective information
 - To learn!

Versus getting sucked into worries, which intensifies the emotional experience and keeps us stuck



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Mindfulness...


- Paying attention to the present moment in a non-judgmental way
 - Being detectives
 - To keep prefrontal cortex online
 - To attend to corrective information
 - To learn!
 - Creates distance
 - Creates pause to make helpful choices

Versus getting sucked into and stuck with emotions

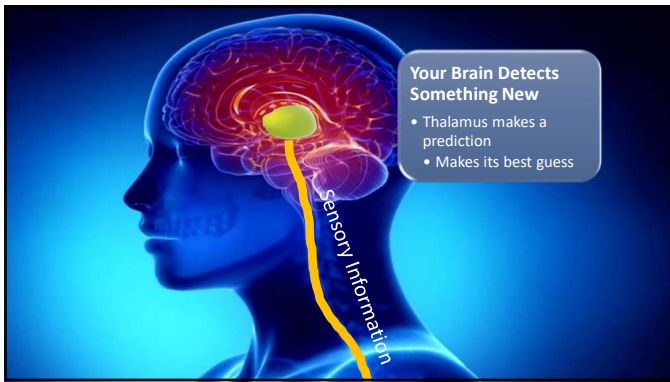
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Our body is going to respond based on its best guess




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188

Dimensionality Reduction

- Brain processes 11 million bits of info/second
- Our conscious mind can only handle 40-50 bits of info/sec



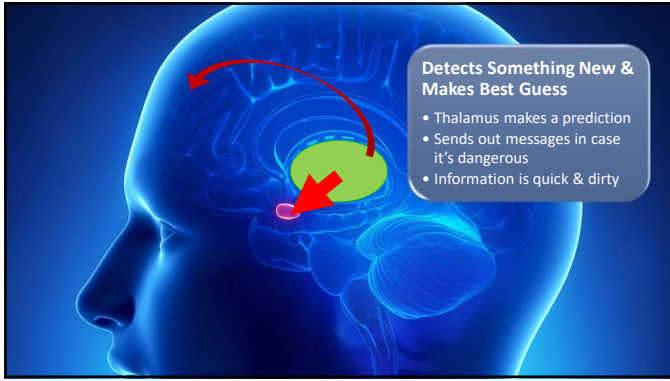
Quick & dirty & sometimes WRONG

Makes quick guesses based on limited information

```

    graph TD
      A[Integrates sensory input + body needs] --> B[Too much data -> brain compresses info]
      B --> C[Creates summaries of summaries]
  
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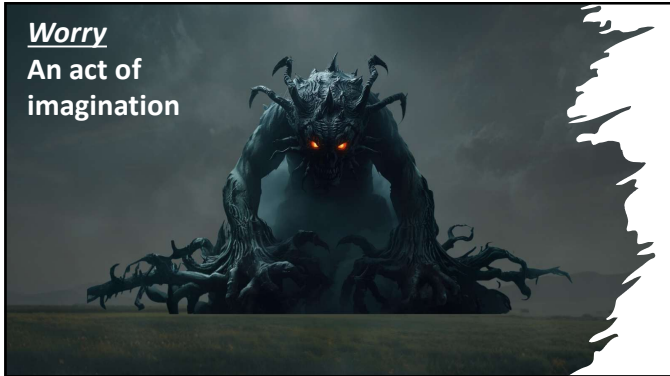
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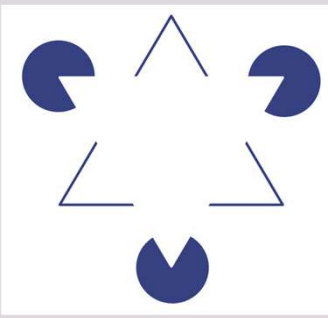
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191



192



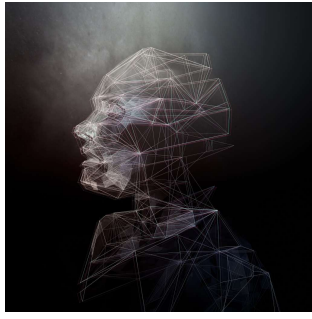
Difficulties with emotion regulation = hypervigilant amygdala

- Sends danger signals around anything that's even slightly uncomfortable.

193

Knowledge Influences Sensory Information (e.g., all faces are always convex)

Our knowledge/ experience misleads us into seeing the mask as convex

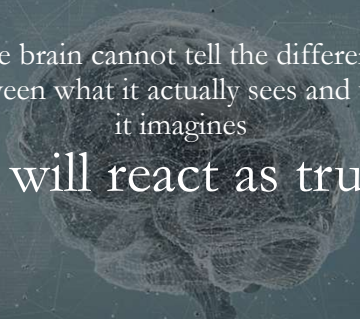


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194

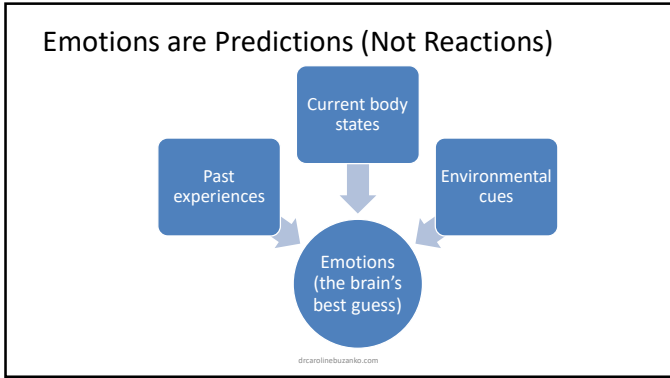
The brain cannot tell the difference between what it actually sees and what it imagines

& will react as truth

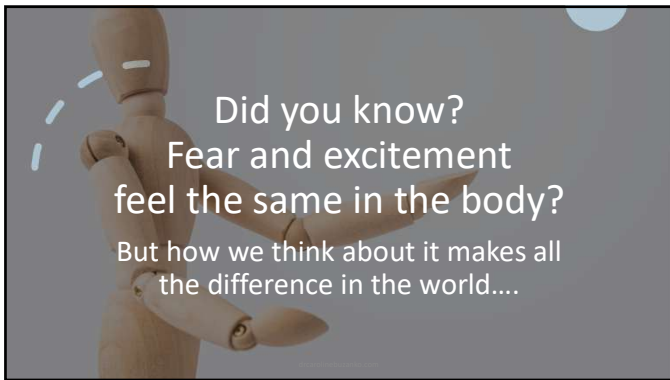


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When does the threat response trigger?

When does the challenge response trigger?

Threat vs. Challenge Response

Not good or bad, different purposes

Threat response

- Survival mode
- Situation we're not equipped for
- More cortisol (defend/protect)

Challenge response

- Growth opportunity
- Manageable but hard
- More adrenaline (achieve goal)

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Amygdala Relies on Past Experiences

The amygdala is often mistaken

- Doesn't have all the relevant information.
- Will always rather be safe than sorry.
- Does not know what will happen

Needs to be corrected!

199

Avoidance Narrows the World

Leads to a diluted life

Need to Make Life Rich Again!

200

Big Emotions


Big Emotions

TIME

201

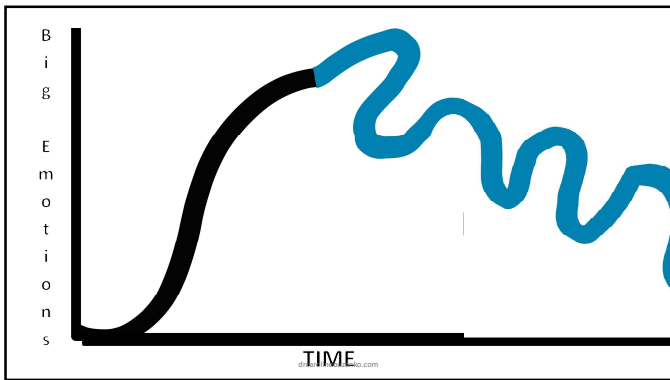
**Re-Training the Brain:
The Only Way Out Is
THROUGH**

When children avoid things, they don't feel comfortable with, they lose the chance to practice and grow




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202



203



Talking & thinking does NOT retrain the amygdala

The ONLY way the thalamus and amygdala learn is by EXPERIENCING

The ONLY way to teach your alarm system that you're safe:

- Face the scary thing
- Feel the feelings without trying to escape or fix them.
- Do nothing to make the anxiety go away — just let it be there.

The more you practice, the more your brain learns

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90% of what kids learn is from what they *experience*

205



Resilience

Ability to adapt well to **adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or even significant sources of stress.**

206



Resilient kids

Effectively respond to and cope with emotions and everyday challenges

They can handle hard!

207



Master Adaptive Responses
Emotion Exposure
(with response prevention)

Integrate skills to master adaptive responses

- Talking not enough to change the brain!
- **Doing makes stronger memories**
- **Doing gives us experience**
- **Quicker progress**
- Provoke **STRONG EMOTIONS** - MUST feel uncomfortable for learning to happen

208



Become so good at managing ANY emotion that comes up

Learn to *respond differently*

LOTS OF EXPERIENCE

- Anxiety
- Shame
- Guilt
- Rejection
- Disappointment
- Frustration
- Self-doubt

The more micro-sucks throughout the day, we build resilience, motivation and tenacity

REINFORCE BRAVERY!

Practice practice practice – make it so they don't have to think

209



Set up Behavioural Experiments to ensure learning!

We are going to be detectives, or scientists, and going to check out these conspiracy predictions

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210

Collaborate!

- Brainstorm ideas, rate them, and let them choose
 - The harder it is, the faster the gains!

Easy Hard

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211

Goal for ALL Experiments

- To get used to and better **tolerate uncomfortable body sensations** in anxiety-provoking situations
- To **activate the amygdala** for new learning
- To test out and **challenge** their negative predictions about what might happen

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Antecedents (Triggers to anxiety)	Predicted Awfulness	Actual Awfulness	Later
Being called on unexpectedly by the teacher	8		
Feeling nausea in class	10		
Making a mistake in front of others	9		
Initiating an interaction – saying hi to a classmate	9		
Giving a presentation	8		
Answering a question in class	6		
Wearing green to school	6		
Friend not being at school	8		
Being late and walking into a full class	9		
Asking to go to the bathroom	8		
Eating in front of others	7		

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213

Kids must be future thinkers

- Self-monitor
- Stop
- See the future
- Say the future
- Feel the future
- Play the future

To do that future successfully.

- Practice regularly

Challenging for kids with self-regulation difficulties!!!
AND, under emotional arousal, working memory capacity SHRINKS.

214

Setting up Exposure:
Collaborate a specific plan

- Collaborate a specific plan
 - Step-by-step
 - What, when, where, for how long
 - Who else is around? What is their job? What are they going to/not going to do?

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Identify potential obstacles and how to address them.

Step-by-step plan

On Monday morning at 10:00, I will:

- Walk to M's desk
- I will keep my eyes on the edge of the teacher's desk at the back
- When I reach J's desk, I will look at M and smile
- As I reach the corner of M's desk, I will say "Hi" clearly and audibly
- I will continue walking past M's desk to get a drink of water and see C. to debrief and data dump
- At the end of the day, I will take additional data and debrief with mom

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Predictions are important for learning!
Set up as experiments to ensure learning

217

Map the Prediction
Hypothesis Testing

LOTS of experiments needed!

- What do I think will happen? **BE SPECIFIC!**
 - Henchmen will say, make me feel, try to make me...
 - Other's responses/outcomes
- How awful will it be? (1-10)
 - How long will the awful last?
- How likely is it to happen? (%)
- *What will I learn?*
- *What do I have to look forward to?*

218

When the gremlin shows up, it is going to:	I am going to:
Tell me → I can't do it	Say → I say Hi all the time
Make me feel → Vomity	Notice → My feet
Want me to → Run to the bathroom	Do → Follow the plan.

For Adults: Reassure Support Confidence

219

LEARNING MUST HAPPEN

- Direct challenge to negative outcome expectancies
- Corrective learning about tolerating distress
 - Pendulating
- Spend at LEAST 10 minutes debriefing
 - Check predictions
 - Learning
 - What needs to be tweaked/addressed
 - Next steps to keep going
- Celebrate

220

Predict to Maximize Learning!

Antecedents (Triggers to anxiety)	Predicted Awfulness	Actual Awfulness	Later
Walking by M's desk and saying Hi	90	80	10

Predictometer says this will happen	What really happened?
I will turn bright red	Face felt warm
I will stare like a deer in headlights	Focused on the back desk then M
I will say something nonsensical or stupid	Said Hi
M will look at me in disgust	She smiled and said hi back
Everyone Classmates will hate me won't talk to me	Everyone is acting the same
I will die from embarrassment	Still alive and breathing

221

Our job is not to convince!
Learning happens through experience

Learning #1:

- Test the accuracy of their predictions
- Make their own conclusions
- Create new expectations




222

Exposure to LEARN:

Learning #2:
**Anxiety/
 Uncomfortable
 emotions are safe,
 tolerable, & temporary**

The amygdala will learn: This is not dangerous!
 (And will stop sending the false alarm.)



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Exposure to LEARN

Learning # 3
 Despite feeling anxious, I **still did it**

ON MY OWN
 Without safety behaviours

And... I can still live life and do anything, even while feeling anxious!



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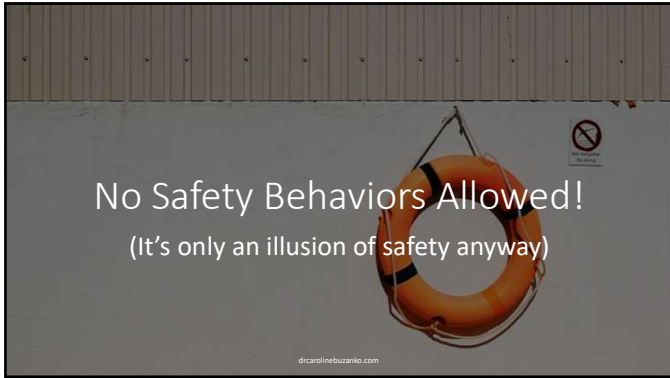


When something bad **DOES** happen

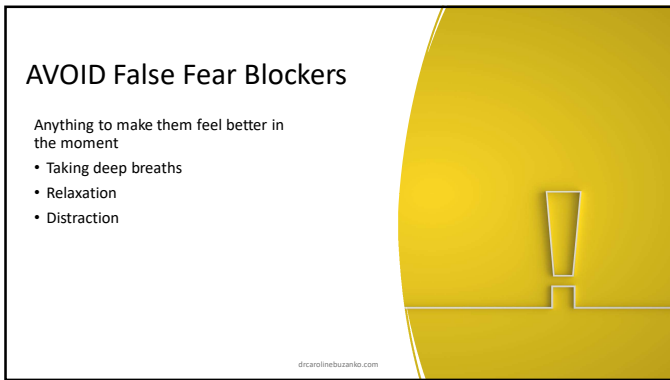
- Yay!
- What did you learn?
- Importance of keeping going

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228

Honesty!
AND,
We have no idea what is going to happen.
Let's see if your predictions are right.



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229




If I am uncomfortable
Then I know I am on the **right** track

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YAY! You're changing your brain!
That's what we want – now we know
the brain is learning!



MUST
Activate to
generate

Develop new,
competing
brain circuits

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Use Mirror Neurons
Show confidence
= FEEL confidence

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232


Our confidence in them is one of the most important factors to success



Effective Response

233


Foster autonomy!



VALIDATE & NORMALIZE
You're sick to your stomach worried about failing. That's tough. It makes sense this feels gross.

234

Foster autonomy!



VALIDATE & NORMALIZE



EXTERNALIZE

Sounds like worry is trying to get you to avoid.

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235

Foster autonomy!



VALIDATE & NORMALIZE



EXTERNALIZE




SHOW CONFIDENCE

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236

Foster autonomy!




VALIDATE & NORMALIZE

You're sick to your stomach worried about failing. That's tough. It makes sense this feels gross.




EXTERNALIZE

Sounds like worry is trying to get you to avoid.



SHOW CONFIDENCE

- Body language
- Tone
- Sit beside them



PUT IT BACK ON THEM

Open-ended questions

- What's the plan?
- What's the first step?
- How do you want to do this?

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You don't grow with easy

Experience to cope with challenges
- realize they CAN manage and have the capacity to succeed

CHALLENGE BOARD

- Choose tasks
- Track progress – the harder the task, the further they go!

238

Opportunities to Be Comfortable in the World

Promote independence!

- Give kids the chance to do, think, be, and make their own decisions and mistakes
- Encourage kids to try new things, even when scared
 - They need to know you support and trust them!

239

Opportunities for Independence

- Give more responsibility and independence
 - Get ready
 - Check their homework
 - Solve conflicts
 - Make their own friends
 - Fix mistakes
 - Solve problems
 - Assert their needs (set up opportunities)
 - IPP goals

240

Missions for Self-Exposure

You're only limited by your own creativity!

Create themes for the week

- Imperfection
 - Make a guess when don't know
 - Focus on quantity vs. quality in a timed task
 - Fast decision making
 - Leave a mistake
- Talking to people
 - Ask stranger for time or directions
 - Ask someone to play
 - Compliment someone



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Courage Stations

Station Examples

Public Voice

Social Spark

Share & Tell

Uncertain Question

Silent Spotlight

Raise It Up

Simulation Scenario

Read a short poem or fact aloud to your group.

Start a conversation with a peer using a provided prompt (e.g., "What's your favourite snack?").

Show your drawing or story to the group and describe it.

Try answering a tough riddle without knowing the right answer.

Stand silently in front of the group for 10 seconds while they give silent applause.

Practice raising your hand and sharing an idea during a mock class discussion.



242

Create challenges!

• Challenge of the day, week, or month

Work through things on their own

Might get frustrated in the moment but the intrinsic reward once solved is far greater than if helped



243

Bring Back Risky Play
It's critical for their development

Doing something brave and difficult is more important than the outcome

Risk-takers advantage
Exposing kids to opportunities for some risk is helpful

- Limits on screen time
- Learn the skills they need to survive early
- Help with important events and occasions
- Let them bake and decorate the cake (without you fixing it)
- Eskimo club
- Using tools

244

Use Natural challenges!

- Challenges are part of life.
 - Dealing with them is part of learning.
 - Let them fail (but don't set them up for failure)
- Optimize teachable moments
 - Kids to take accountability
 - Understand other's perspectives
 - See the consequences of their behaviours
 - Work through next steps and how to fix things

245

When to Step Back vs. Step In

Is this moment building capability or eroding it?

246

When to Step Back vs. Step In

Step Back When *Must learn "I did that" (not "I need rescuing")*

- The struggle is productive
 - There's effort, some frustration
 - Hard but not overwhelming
- The risk is tolerable
 - Might feel disappointed, uncomfortable, or fail
- You're responding to *your* discomfort, not their actual need.

Step In When

- They are drowning
 - Distress overwhelming
- They've tried but lack a critical skill.
 - Sometimes scaffolding is needed vs. encouragement.
- The context is already overwhelming.
 - If they're dealing with multiple stressors, sometimes we protect in one domain so they can build skills in another.
- Underlying needs like sensory processing
- There is real physical danger

247

Capitalize in Learning

BUT, Don't Take Over! Still Teaching Opportunity

- Offering a tool or prompt rather than a solution
- Co-regulating alongside them without removing the challenge
- Reducing one variable while keeping the growth edge present
- Being a steady, confident presence that communicates "this is hard AND you can handle it"

Step In When

- They are drowning
 - Distress overwhelming
- They've tried but lack a critical skill.
 - Sometimes scaffolding is needed vs. encouragement.
- The context is already overwhelming.
 - If they're dealing with multiple stressors, sometimes we protect in one domain so they can build skills in another.
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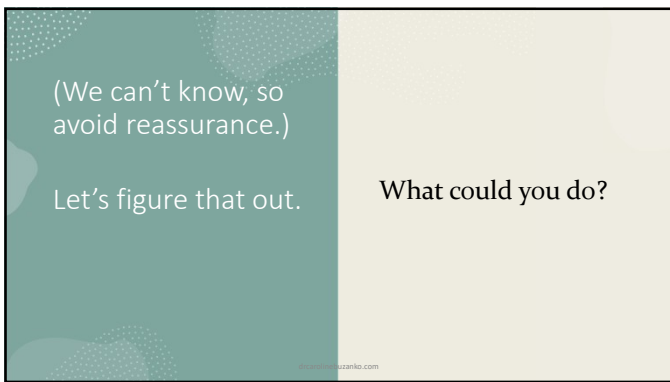
Unexpected event/mistake of the day & how you handled it

SKILLS: TOLERATE UNCERTAINTY & COGNITIVE FLEXIBILITY (THINK ABOUT DIFFERENT OPTIONS THEMSELVES)

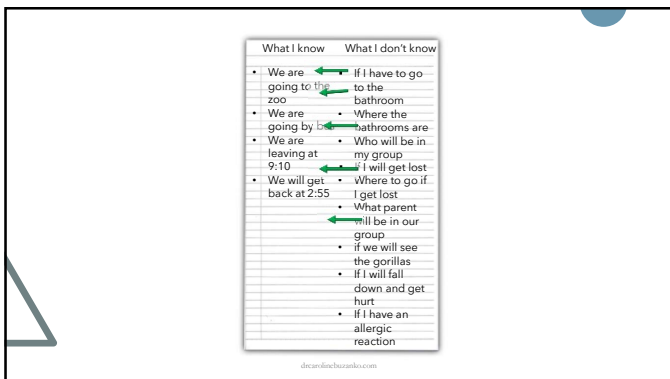
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252



**Always call out brave/
self-regulating behaviours**

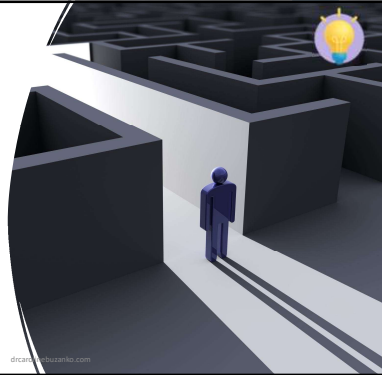
Focus on what we want to see more of
(and being the kid they want to be vs.
avoiding because of fear)

- Visual reinforcement of successfully completing hard things
- Cues positive engagement
- Reinforces learning

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Outcomes directly
relates to their
acceptance &
**willingness to feel big
emotions**



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Emotion Dial Willingness Dial



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Buy-in!

- Why are you doing this?
- How will it be helpful for you?
- How does worry get in the way?

256

MUST have buy-in

Otherwise, you get resistance

- We can never make anyone do anything
- Emotional distress directly related with hesitancy to be uncomfortable
- MUST identify what is more important than feeling uncomfortable

257

How Do Emotions Get in the Way?

Anxiety

wants me to

- Avoid
- Run away
- Cry
- Yell
- Feel gross
- Isolate
- Stay home
- Feel bored

Miss out on

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • seeing friends • sleepovers • birthday parties • mall with friends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • field trips • sports • being in the class • going to school/learning
---	---

258

What is the most favourable outcome?

Benefits

Costs

*Johnny:
Going
Skateboarding
with Friends*

Practice to get better

Jim's afterwards for slushies

Everyone will laugh at me

Away from brother

Part of the group

Might fall down

Get out of chores

Fun

Might be slow

See my friends

FYI Skill: Cognitive Flexibility/
Problem-Solving/Decision-Making

259




Write it out!

- I want to go on the outing and have fun
I am willing to not know what's going to happen
- I want to be in the play
I am willing go to the audition nervous
- I want to show my science project
I am willing to go to the science fair even if I feel like I am going to puke

What story DO you want to buy into?!

260



More important than goals!

What is Important to Them?

And how is anxiety getting in the way?

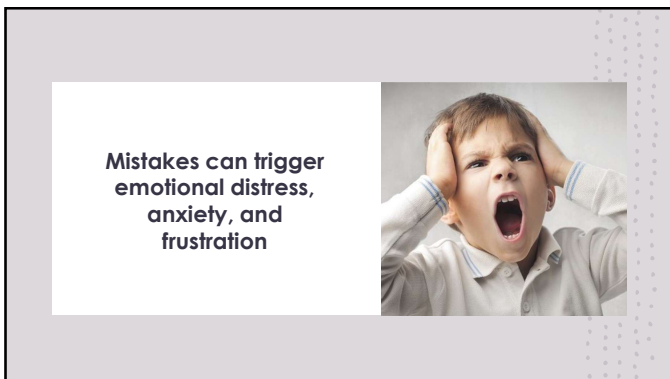
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264

We Need To:



Frame mistakes as a critical component of growth and resilience



Shift the narrative around mistakes



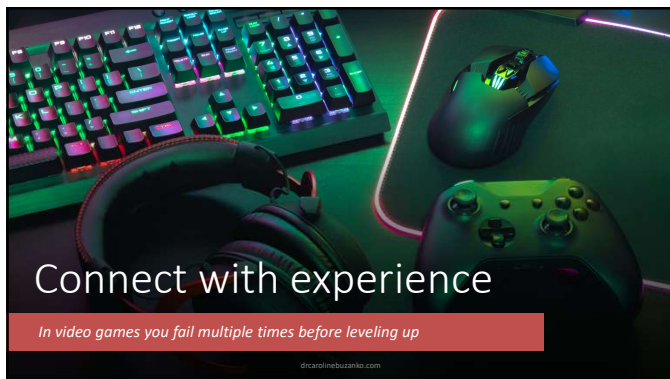
Show how mistakes are the beginning of success

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267



Reframe Mistakes as Opportunities

First though, MUST feel safe to make mistakes and learn from them.


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Celebrate Mistakes

Mistake of the day wall

- Share a mistake or challenge faced, how they fixed/handled it, and what they learned



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Open-Ended Questions

- What was this experience like?
- What did you learn today?
- What mistake did you make that taught you something?
- What did you try hard at today?
- What can you learn from this?
- What will you do the next time you are in this situation?
- What advice can you tell others based on this?

Best response to a mistake = Yay! You get to try again!

270

Skill: Get Meta!

Reflective Practices

Path to success journal

- "What mistake did I make today?"
- "Why did it happen?"
- "What did I learn?"
- "What can I do differently next time?"

Post mistake debriefs

- "What was the goal?"
- "Where did things go off track?"
- "What's one thing I can adjust next time?"



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272

Build Procedural Thinking!

- Strive for excellence, but address unrealistic standards
 - Emotions related to expectations
- Focus on what's next (vs. circumstances, rumination, should's)



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Reframing Mistakes & Feedback

Shift from nouns (e.g., grades, no control over) to verbs (e.g., learning, and expressing, which they do control).

Failure resumes

Process-Oriented Feedback: Constructive feedback re: strategy, effort, and advancement

274

Yes!

Learning requires a state of discomfort (agitation or frustration), which signals the brain that something needs to change.

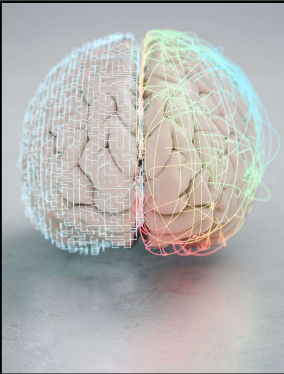
Frustration = learning!

When frustration does hit...

275

Repetitive, easy tasks **maintain** neural pathways.
New, **difficult experiences** build neural pathways.

276



Errors Trigger Plasticity

Mistakes signal the brain that something isn't working and needs to adapt

- Increases alertness & problem-solving
- Stimulates dopamine release, reinforcing learning and motivation.
 - The bigger the challenge and frustration, the bigger the dopamine spike.**
- Experiences involving **moderate stress and correction** are more likely to be remembered and retained, **strengthening long-term learning**

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Frustration is Essential!

Frustration drives plasticity

- Frustration signals attention to the gap between current ability and desired outcome.
- Walking away stops the process and solidifies the negative experience and reinforces avoidance**

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Persistence Formula

Motor learning Automaticity developed through physical repetition.	Break! • 5-10 minute to reset attention, allowing students to re-engage with the task.
Cognitive Learning Relies on working memory, focus, and conceptual understanding. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elementary: 5-10 minutes beyond frustration Middle School: 10-15 minutes beyond frustration High School: 15-20 minutes beyond frustration 	Break! • 5-10 minute to reset attention, allowing students to re-engage with the task.

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Role Titles:
Elite Mistake
Practitioners

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Unavoidable!

Choose Your Risk:

1. Making a mistake, learning, trying again, and get better
2. Walking away, no learning, stay stuck, fall behind

You Can't Avoid Risk – But You Can Choose Growth

281

Planned Struggle Time

Create difficult tasks in which they must make mistakes to learn and get to the right answer

Good skill building for adults too, to learn how to step back and let kids experience frustration and do things on their own throughout the day!

Task

Inherently frustrating	Boosts self-regulation	Does not allow for perfectionism
------------------------	------------------------	----------------------------------

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Can inadvertently hinder growth by preventing students from experiencing productive struggle.
Reinforces the belief that mistakes are negative rather than valuable learning tools.

Accommodations

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Over-scaffold tasks	Step-by-step instructions for every task. Breaking work into overly simplistic pieces with no room for independent thinking.
Avoid difficult tasks to prevent frustration	Sends the message that struggle should be avoided. Promotes avoidance and undermines confidence.
Unlimited time on every task	Students may avoid problem-solving strategies, waiting for adult guidance. Can diminish time management skills.
Constant error correction	Highlighting errors before students can review and self-correct. Reinforces the idea that perfection is the goal. Discourages risk-taking and experimentation.

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Automatic re-do without reflection	Don't learn from previous mistakes. May disengage from initial effort, relying on multiple attempts.
Correct / give answers too soon	Encourages copying rather than learning from errors. Eliminates the process of self-correction.
Eliminate challenging assignments	Reinforces the belief that struggle equals failure. Limits growth opportunities and skill development.
Over-praise success vs. effort	Students equate success with natural talent, not perseverance. Fear of mistakes grows as success becomes the sole focus.
Rescue students during struggle	Prevents problem-solving skills from developing. Sends the message that frustration = failure.

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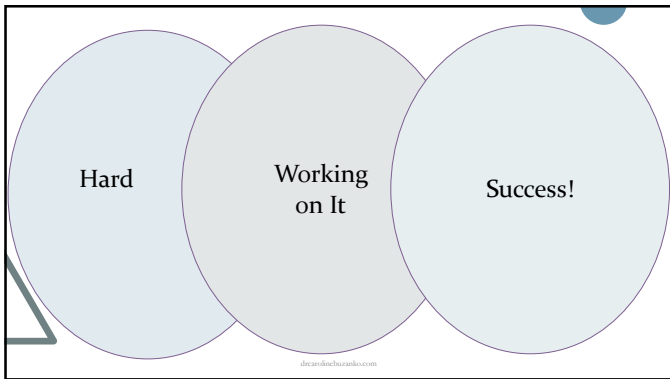
Excessive redirection or prompting	Prevents students from developing self-regulation and accountability.
	Creates external motivation instead of internal responsibility.
Over-explain	Bypasses the learning process
	Robs students the chance to work through problems, reducing resilience and critical thinking.
Limit risk-taking in projects or assessments	Assignments with little room for creativity or experimentation to ensure students succeed robs them the opportunities to take risks, innovate, and learn from failure.
Rescue students from failure or low grades	Excessive retakes or bonus points
	Diminishes accountability and opportunities for learning

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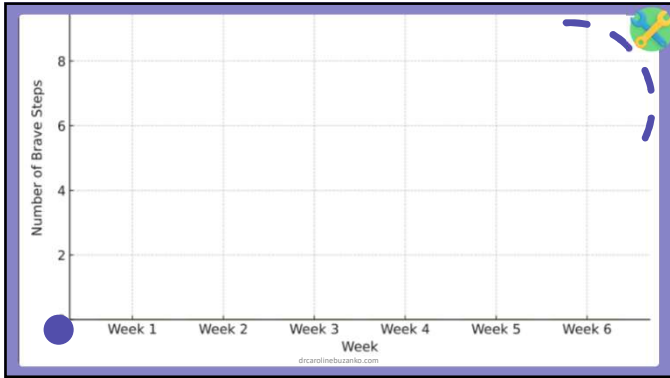
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289

Coping Cards

What worry says:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What I am going to say back:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.


290

Create a mental movie!

And tap into the good feelings after.


291

Other Bridges & Strategies




Surprise Journal

Monday: I predicted ____,
but actually ____
Tuesday: I predicted ____,
but actually ____



Detectives Journal

Gather clues about what
really happens



Installing Updates







Like a phone updating apps:
The brain has old
information and needs
to install updates.
Each experiment is a
new update

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The Executive Function Framework

Self-directed cognitive processes that convert intentions into actions and manage life.

 <p>Response Inhibition</p> <p>Pause before reacting</p>	 <p>(Nonverbal) Working Memory</p> <p>Hold and process info</p>	 <p>Sense of Time</p> <p>Monitor and estimate time</p>
 <p>Prospective Memory</p> <p>Remember to remember</p>	 <p>Emotional Self-Control</p> <p>Separate feeling and acting</p>	 <p>Self-Activation</p> <p>Start without external push</p>

Plus: Hindsight & Forethought — using past and future to guide present decisions


293

Critical for All Other EF

Without response inhibition, no other EF can do its job.

Without the pause, no higher-order thinking occurs.


- Avoiding distractions
- Persisting without giving up
- Realizing what you're doing is not working and stopping
- Planning any tasks
- Delay gratification
- See into the future
- Now vs. not now
- Affects day-to-day activities



294

Reframe & Externalize
Failed Brakes

- How do I work on my brakes?



295



- When is it important to think before you act?
- When do you NOT need to think before you act?
- When is it better to get the small reward right away vs. the big reward later?
- When is it better to wait?
- When have you chosen the bigger reward later over the smaller one right away?
- What are your marshmallows? Your phones? iPad? Videogames?

Good to reflect AND make a plan NOW

296

Strengthening Inhibition
Deliberate Engagement

- Resistance to temptation actively strengthens executive functions
- Build activities regularly into the day
- Reps in calm states make the skill available under stress.

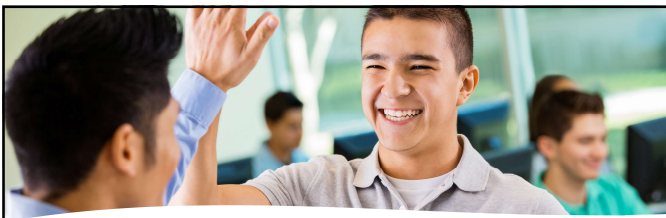
	Simon Says/ Red Light, Green Light incorporated into classroom activities		Delay Gratification <i>Wait for a large reward later vs. for small immediate one</i>		Mindfulness moments: Improve attention regulation and impulsivity
	Micro-challenges <i>Resist distractions for certain period</i>		Positive Reinforcement		Gamify "Focus stamina tracker" - points for resisting distractions and boosting focus time

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Other Inhibition Practice Ideas with Low-Stakes Reps

Activity Examples	What it builds	
Freeze dance/statue games	Sustaining the pause across a delay.	<p>Calm before crisis. Reps only happen when the child is regulated.</p> <p>Make it playful. Games beat drills. The brain encodes inhibition more efficiently when the practice is enjoyable.</p> <p>Short, frequent. Two minutes daily outperforms thirty minutes weekly.</p> <p>Generalize across contexts. Practice in as many different contexts as possible.</p> <p>Celebrate the pause.</p>
Marshmallow-style waiting	Tolerating delay for a larger reward.	
Slow-motion challenges	Down-regulating speed of an automatic action.	
Card/ball games with a 'pass' rule	Holding a turn while attending to others.	
Mindful eating (one bite, wait)	Body-based pause practice.	
The waiting game	Wait # seconds before answering easy questions.	

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Check-In Check-Out (CICO)

- Enhanced student-adult relationships
- Immediate feedback
- Increased self-monitoring
- Data-driven decision making

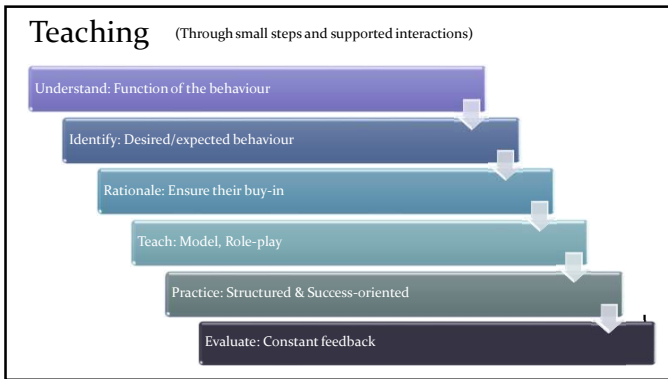
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Teaching Response Inhibition

- Resistance training through structured teaching trials to learn to resist the temptation
 - Do vs. not do
 - Proactive
 - Break negative-feedback cycle; 15:1 rule
 - Short redirection vs. lectures



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Working with Parents & Caregivers

Learning Objective
 Develop strategies for supporting parents and caregivers in reinforcing emotional regulation skills.

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Reducing Accommodation

WHAT CAREGIVERS CHANGE	THE SUPPORTIVE STATEMENT
<p>Map the accommodation. Identify what you currently do to help the child avoid distress (answering for them, removing triggers, doing tasks they could do).</p> <p>Pick ONE to reduce. Start with the most concrete accommodation you feel confident dropping. Don't overhaul everything at once.</p> <p>Tell the child first. "I've been doing X. I love you, and I think you can handle this. Starting Monday, I'll do Y instead."</p> <p>Hold the change with warmth. Distress is expected. Stay close, stay kind, stay the course.</p>	<p>1. ACCEPTANCE <i>"I see this is really hard for you."</i></p> <p>2. CONFIDENCE <i>"AND I know you can handle it."</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>Reassurance gives temporary relief. Supportive statements build long-term capacity.</i></p> <p><i>The goal: To help children become the bravest & most self-confident version of themselves in this unpredictable life.</i></p>

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Reinforcing Skills at Home

Home is where most regulation reps actually happen.



Body Budget Check-Ins

Sleep, food, hydration, movement BEFORE behaviour conversations. Body deficits drive emotional misfires.



Emotion Coaching at Home

Daily emotion vocabulary, validation, and open-ended questions. Build granularity through ordinary moments.



Externalize the Emotions/Behaviours

Give the gremlin a name. Make it the family's shared opponent (vs. the child's identity).



Microsucks Daily

Small daily exposures to discomfort. Risky play. Imperfect attempts. Tolerating boredom and disappointment.



Celebrate the Brave & Doing Hard Things

Notice the attempt, the pause, the willingness (vs. just the win).

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Caregiver Self-Care

Stress is contagious. A dysregulated adult cannot co-regulate a dysregulated child.



Body First

Sleep, food, hydration, movement. Caregivers' own body deficits leak into parenting.



Notice Your Own State

"What is going on for me right now?" Stop, do what is needed before the next interaction.



Lean On Your Village

Caregiving is not solo work.



Permission to Repair

No one is perfect. Repair is key for relationships & modelling.

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Challenges?

Remember, they are likely having a hard time

- Parents are often:
 - Exhausted and running on empty
 - Operating from their own activated stress response
 - Conflicted between partners about the "right" approach
 - Caught in escalation cycles they cannot break
 - Carrying guilt ("What did I do wrong?") and grief
 - Reverting to old patterns under stress

Effective parent work always begins with VALIDATION

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