

We Can't Wait Conference

The Art and Science of Child Development

Pradeep Gidwani, MD, MPH
September 27, 2024

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Disclosures

- I have no disclosures (CME requirement)
- I am committed to everyone reaching their fullest potential
- I want to create a field called Nurturology

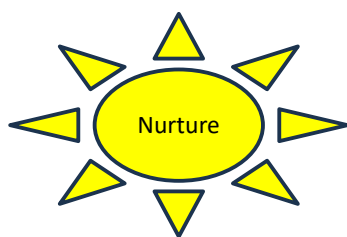
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My Day Job...

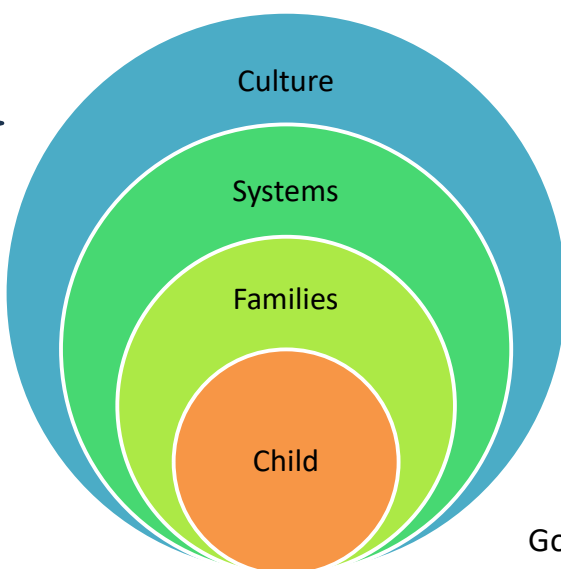
- Since January 2006, Medical Director on Healthy Development Services
 - We have served over 362,000 children and their families
- Since 2013, Medical Director of First Steps, an Healthy Families America - Family Support through Home Visiting program
 - 2811 Families have been served (5313 people)
- Served as President of the local Chapter of the AAP
 - Through Reach Out and Read, the Chapter working its pediatricians reached the 2 million book mark this year!!!

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Children and Families are Always at the Center



1. Nurture Across the Lifespan
2. The Culture of One
3. Human Development through the Lens of Child Development
4. Systems Building
5. Healing Relationships



Goodness, Growth,
Groundedness, and Flow

4

ECMH Learning to Promote Love

Life's

Unites Spiritual and Physics

Operating

Art and Science of Life

Vibrational

Art = Relationships

Energy

Science = Skills

ECMH's focus is improving relationships (connection) and skills of living

5



Can we measure **how our work increases**
the flow of LOVE between parent and child?

6

Nurture is LOVE in action

- To care for and to encourage the growth or development of
(Children, Pets, Plants, Co-Workers)



The Academic Field of
Nurturology

Economy based on units
of nurture

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Nurture as an Organizing Approach

- Promote Nurture to across the Life Span and throughout the community
- Goals to increase nurture for our
 - Children and Families
 - Service Providers
 - Organizations and Institutions
 - Community
 - Systems and Payors

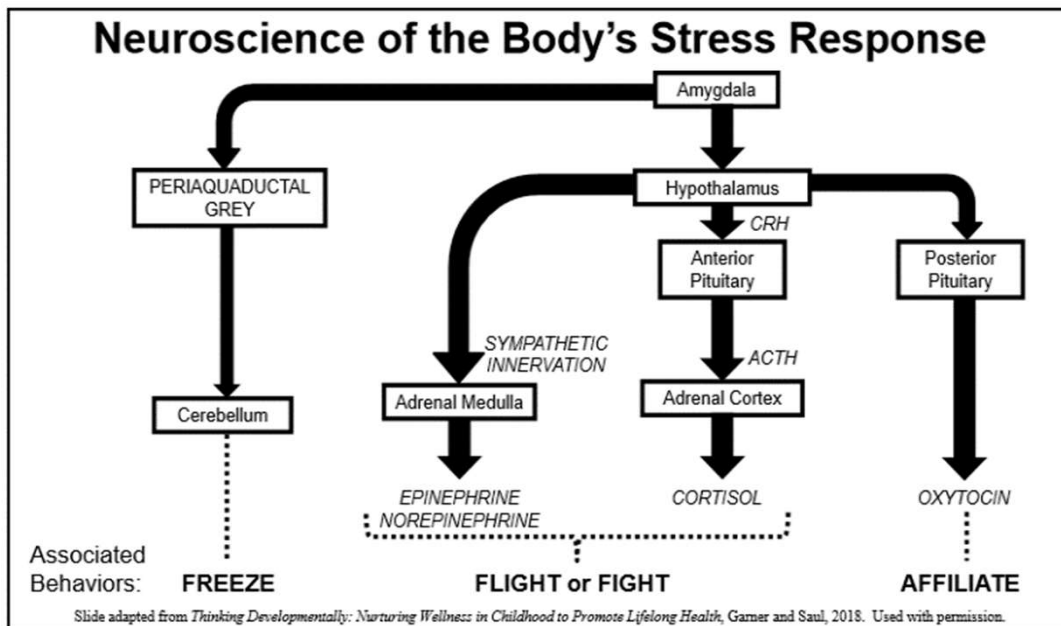
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Nurture across the Life Span

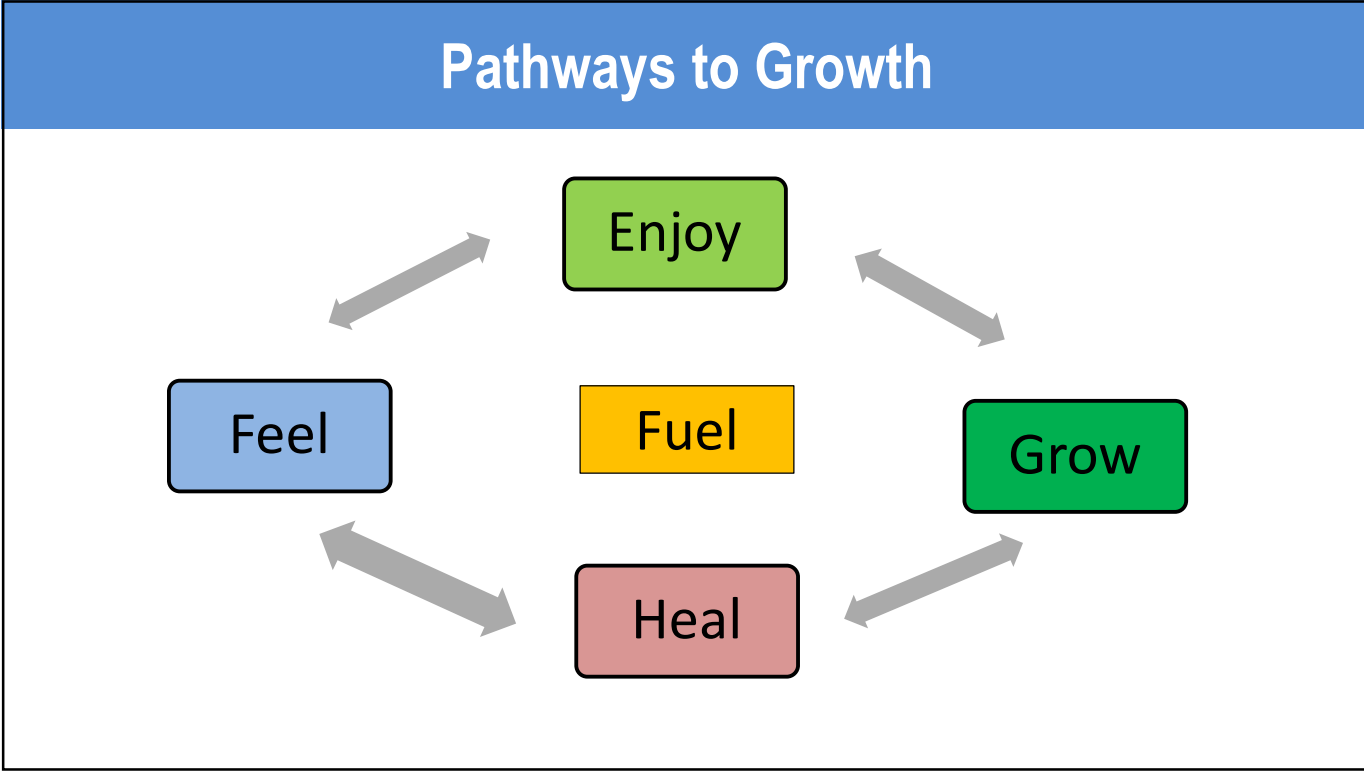


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Stress Response

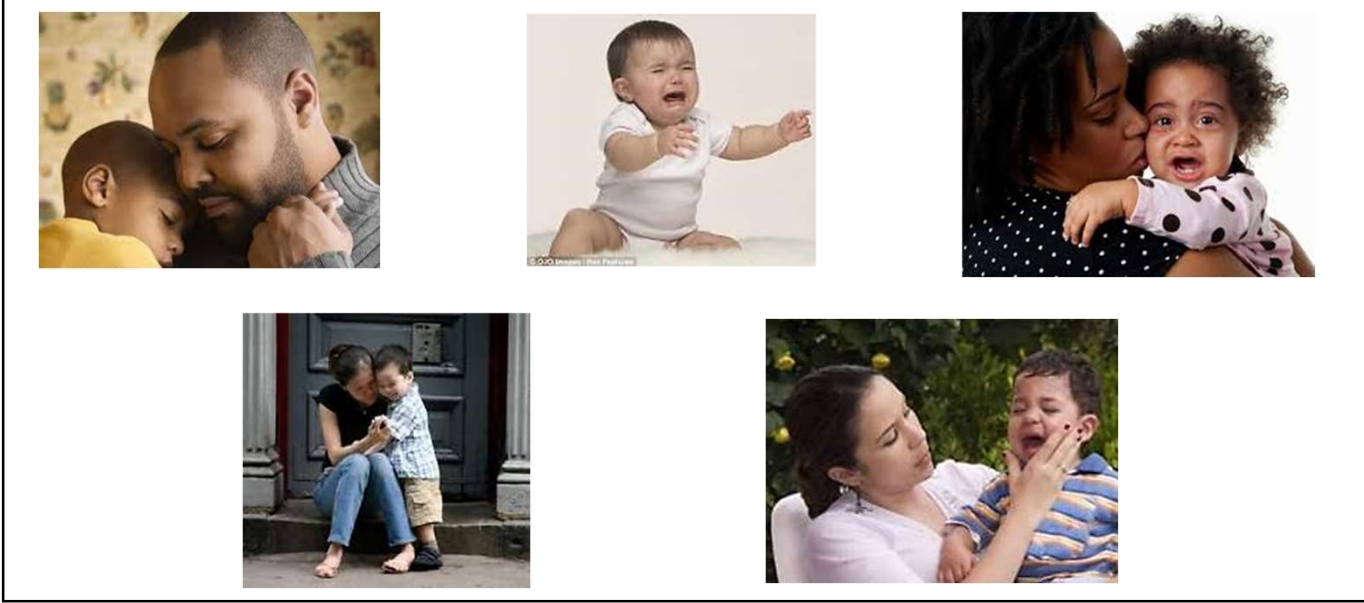


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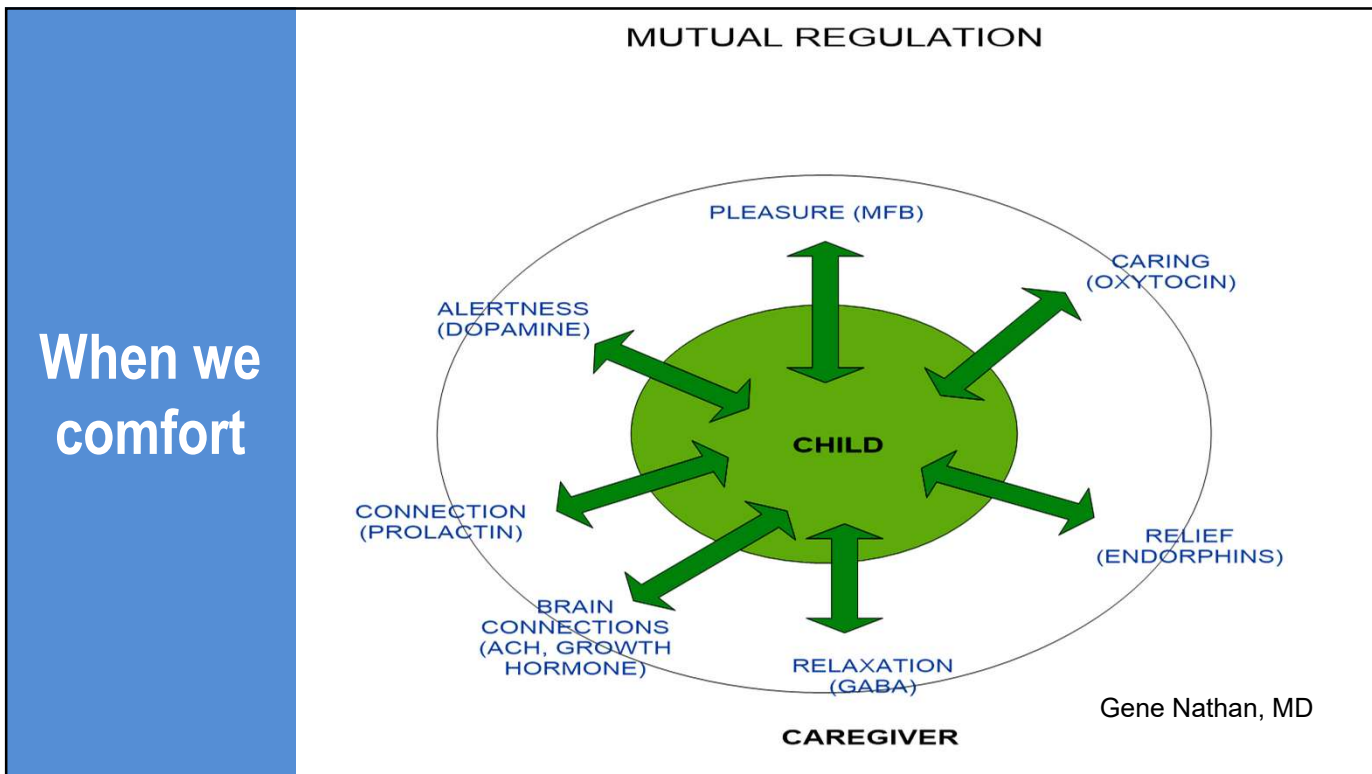


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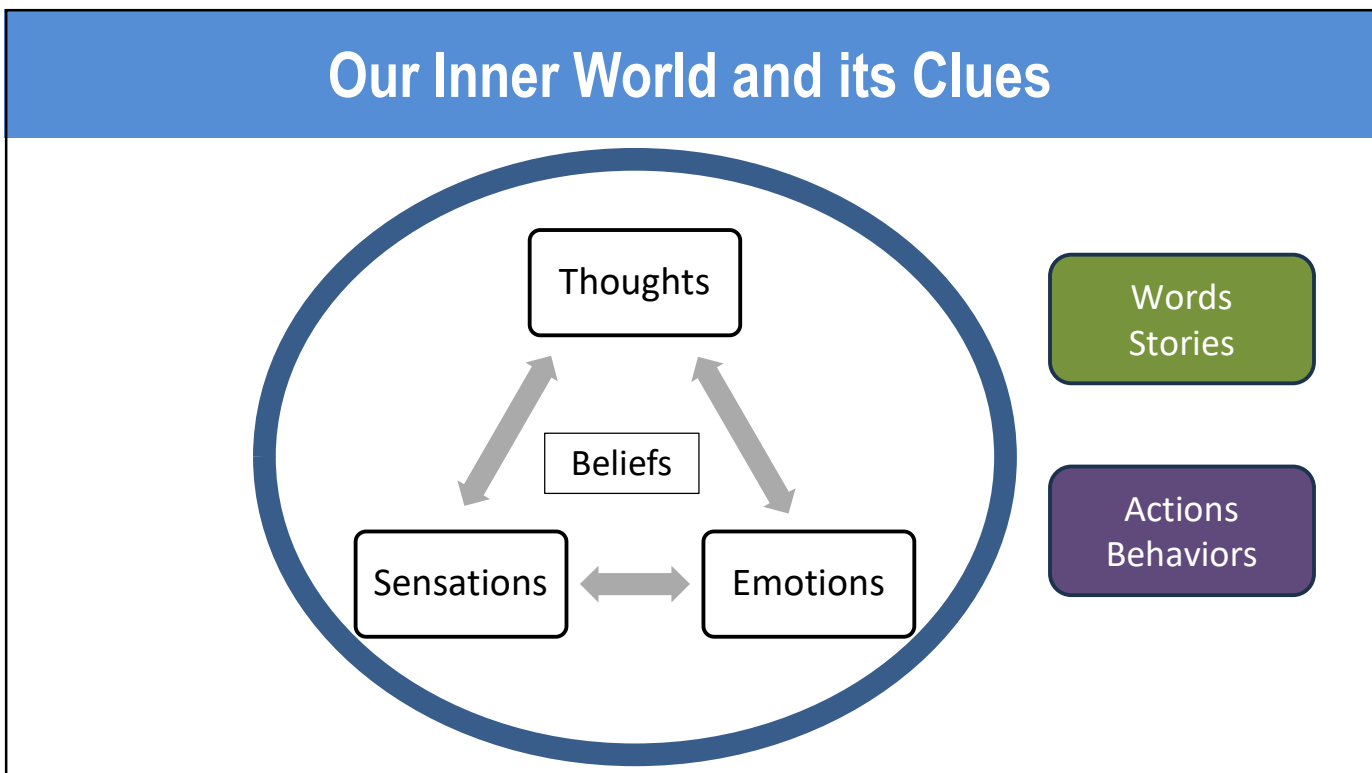
When distressed, we all need someone to respond to us (Safe Haven)



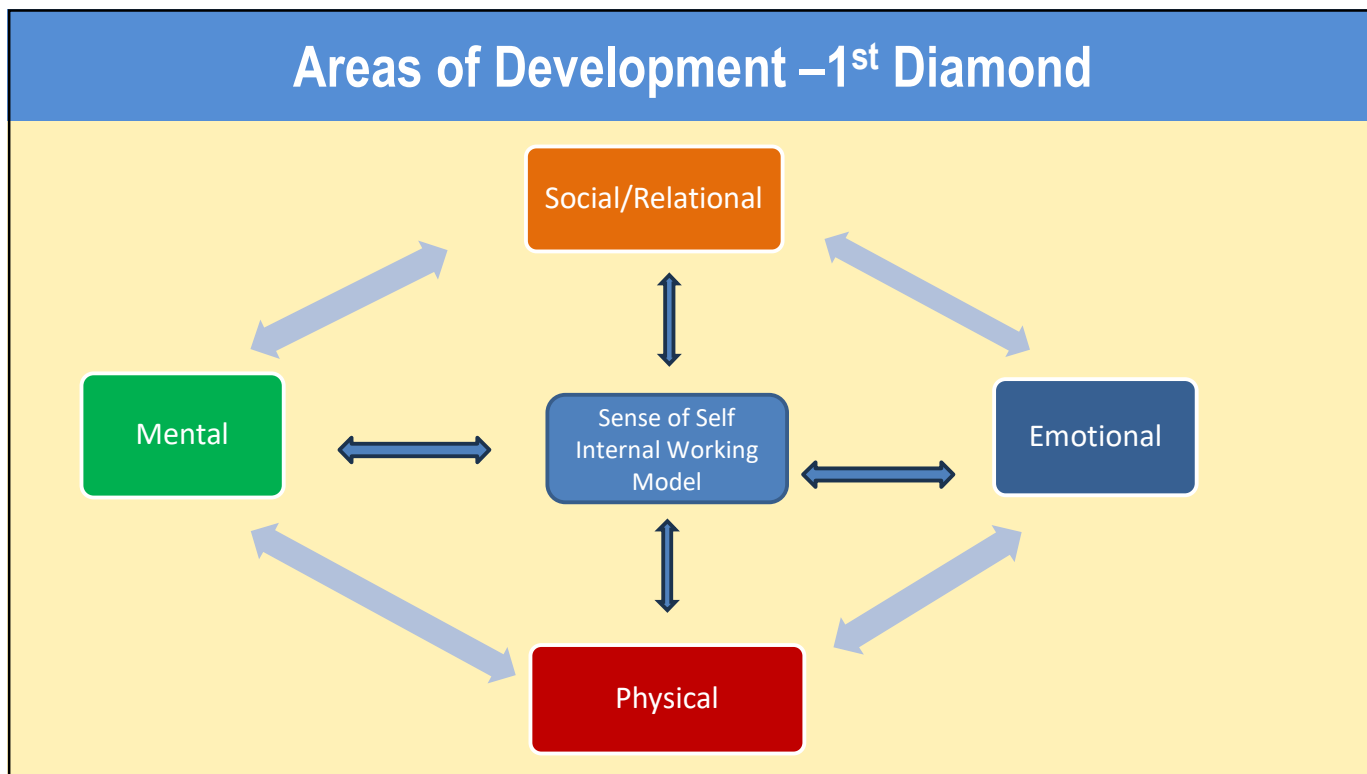
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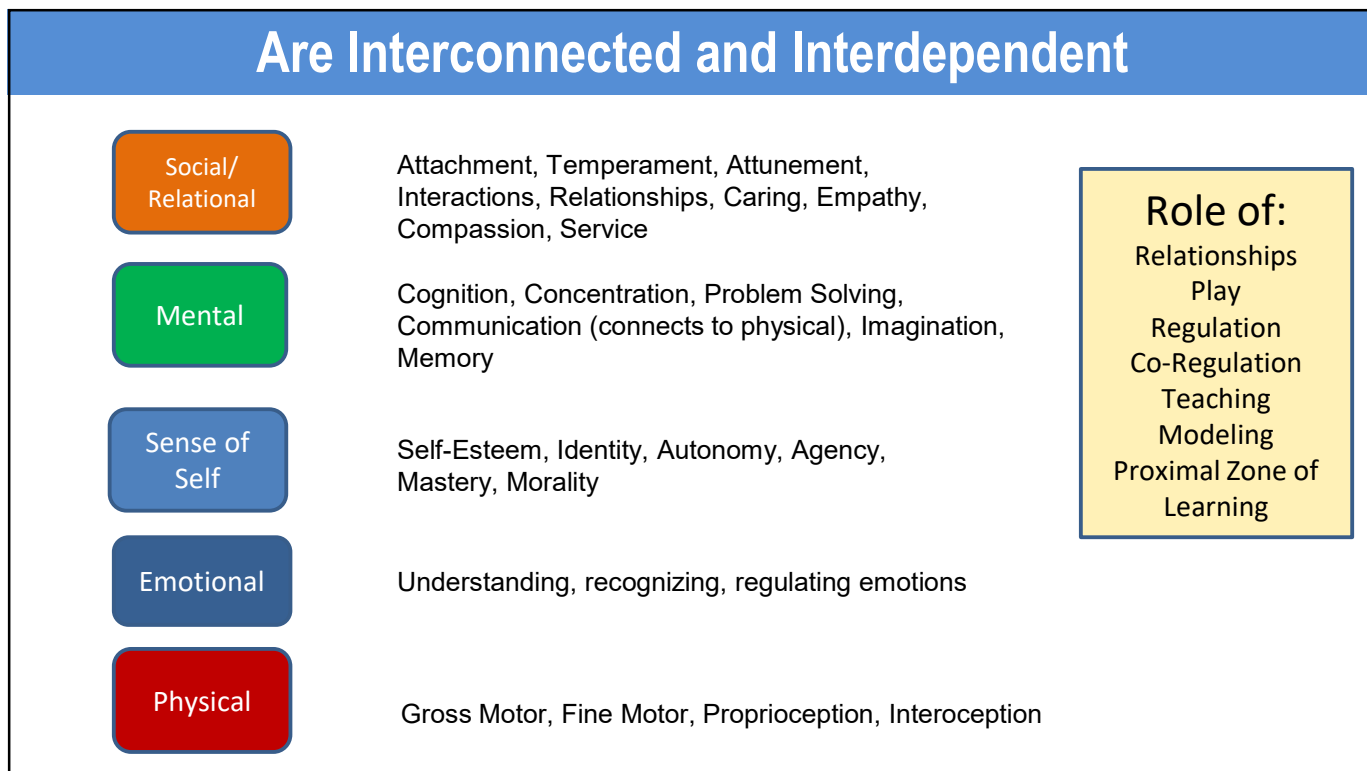
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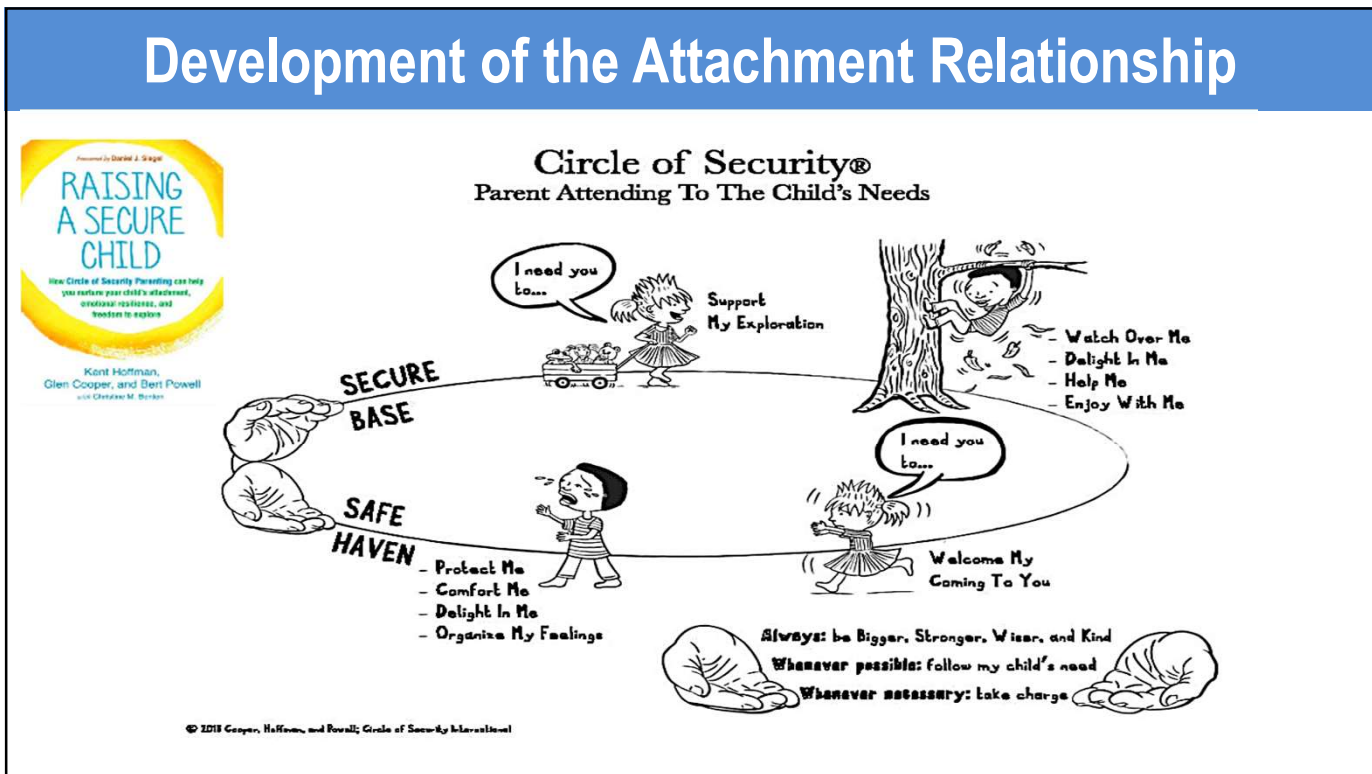
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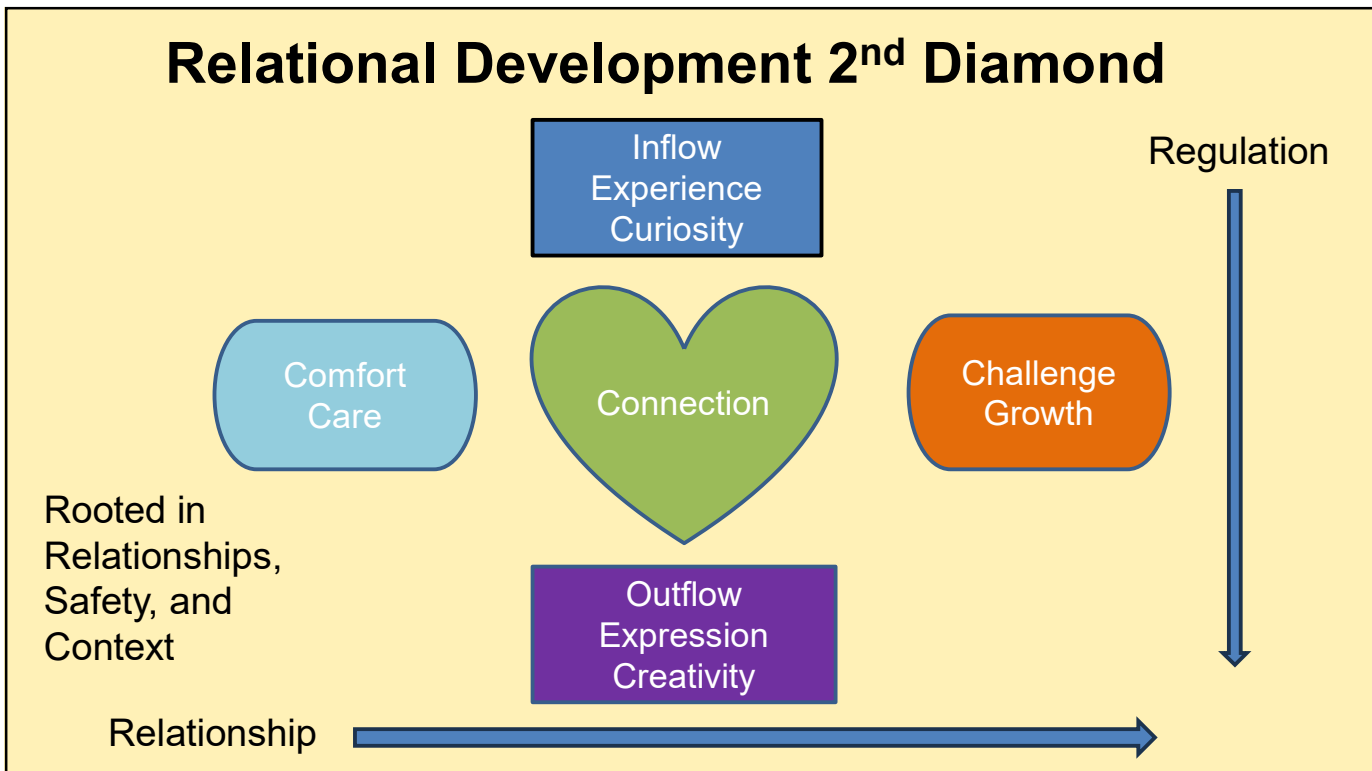
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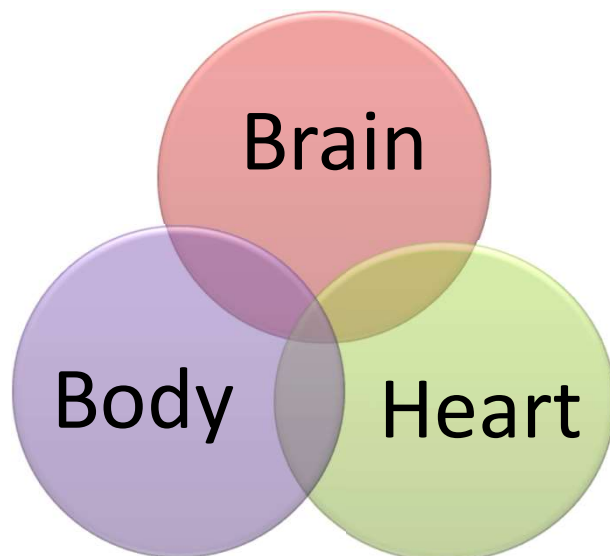


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Energy and Information to Our Mind



Physical
State

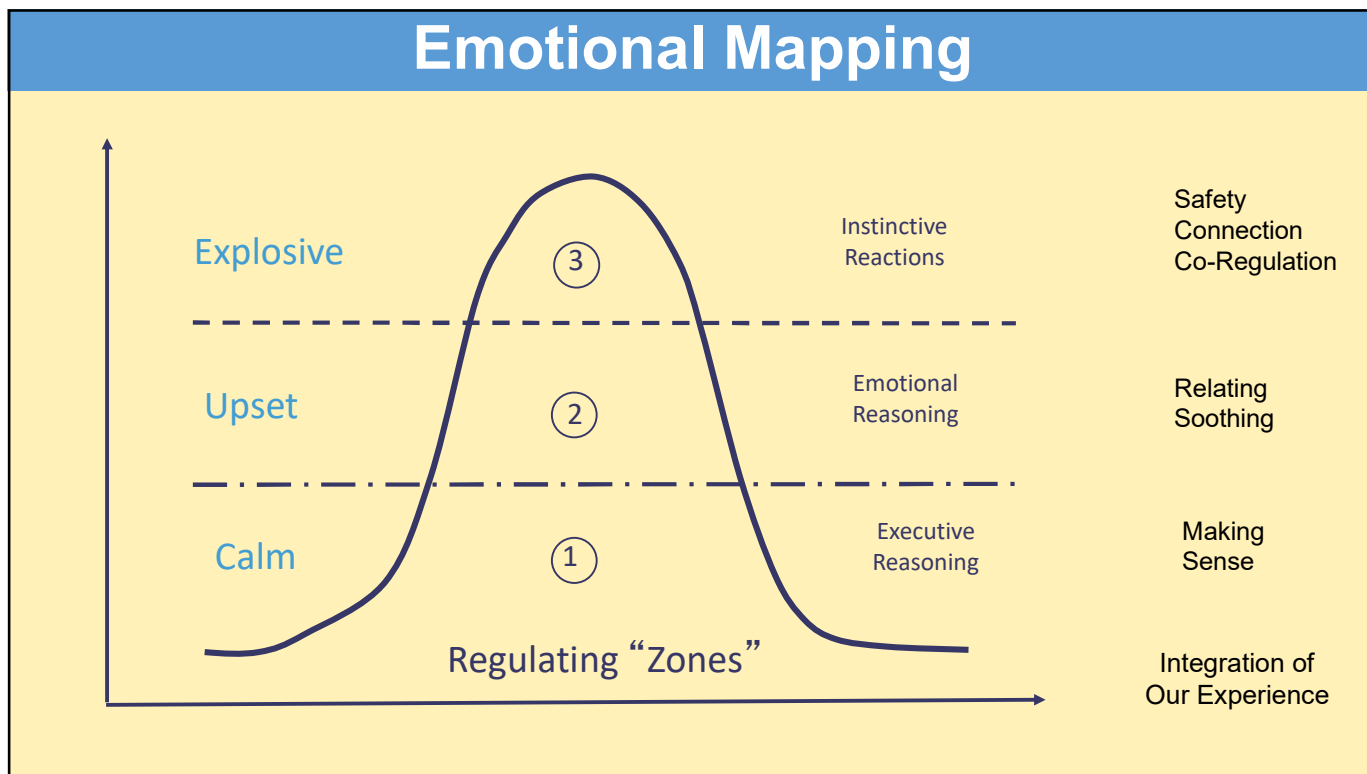
- Tired
- Sleepy
- Hungry
- Thirsty

19

Let's Discuss – When Talking to Parents

- When you see this picture, does it convey why connection is at the center?
- How does supporting children with comfort and challenge help build relationships?
- How do you explain what regulation is, in simple terms?

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Giant Meltdown

- Sammy, 4, began screaming and hanging on to his mom's body while simultaneously pushing her away.
- When Sammy is upset, he wants to be close, but he does not want to be held (his mom has learned).
- His mom moved away a bit and suggested a calming strategy (counting and blowing out a candle), and told she told him "I am here for you."
- He continued to cry a little longer, then began to count.
- Sammy's voice gradually get calmer as he counted. When he 30, he raised his finger to "blow out a candle."
- Her mom asked if he was ready for a hug, and he climbed into her lap and fell into her.

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Winnicott's "Good Enough Parenting"

- Rupture and Repair
 - Ruptures are inevitable and even important for positive growth but only when ruptures are short-lived
 - When we become aware of rupture, we repair by re-connecting being empathic, warm, loving, accepting, curious, and playful
- "Good Enough Parenting"
 - Being good enough ultimately fosters independence and autonomy in the growing child
 - There is flexibility and room for real-life mistakes and limitations to our parenting abilities

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The "ABCDE"s of Co-Regulation



Attune



**Be
Reflective**



**Calm,
Coregulate**



**Describe
and
Repair**



**Explore
Options**

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Increasing Emotional Regulation

- Identifying and discriminating emotions
- Identifying and countering thoughts that underlie negative emotional states
- Asking what is happening for you now?
- The goal of these questions is not to “be right”, but to explore the basis for (and meaning of) your internal experience

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Teaching Parents - Insight and Empathy

- What does their behavior mean?
 - What is it trying to express?
 - What is underneath it? - a fear, a belief, an experience
- What emotion is at play?
- What is the underlying need?
- What is their story telling or showing us?

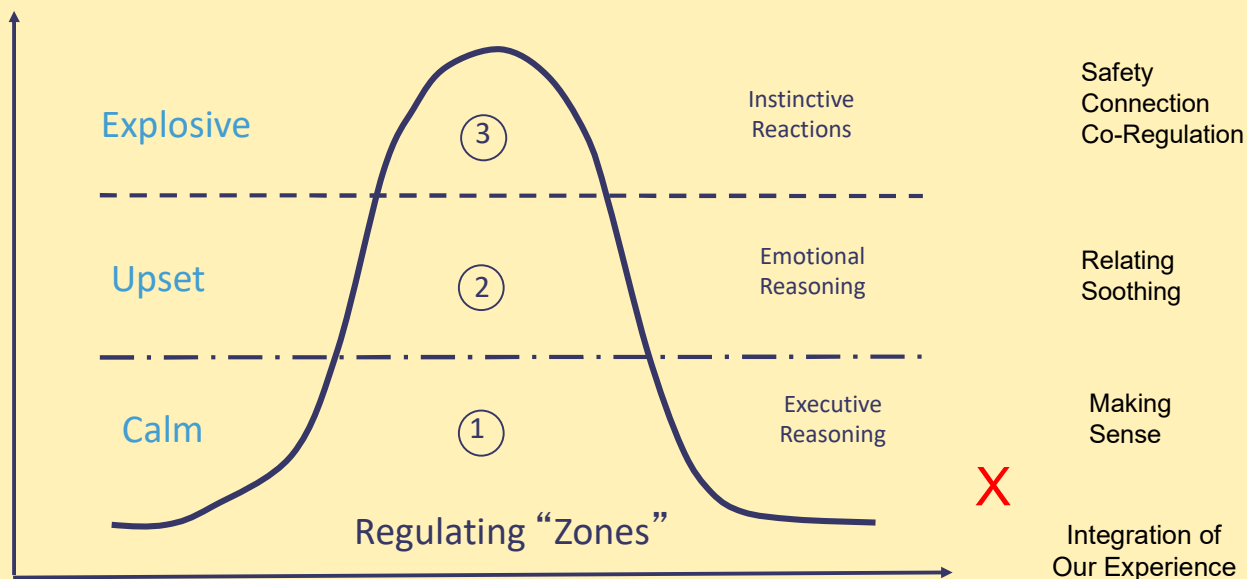
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Making Sense/Meaning - Coherent Narratives

- We use language to organize and make sense of internal and external worlds by weaving together thoughts, feelings, sensations and actions
- A way for explaining behavior—emotionally meaningful, causally-linked, and is a means of education, understanding and change
- Provides the (developing) brain with fundamental means of integrating data from disparate sources
- Connection of the past and present in the creation of an autobiographical sense of self-awareness

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Emotional Mapping



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Making Sense of Giant Meltdown

- Sammy's Mom can ask once he is calm
 - “Sammy, do you remember when you got so upset?”
 - “I wonder if ... made you upset?”
 - “You did such a good job calming down. Do you remember what helped you feel better?”
 - “It felt good to me that you hugged me when you felt better.”
 - “I will always try to help you when things get hard for you.”

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Resilience Building Process

*Relationships
create resiliency by developing the capacity to
regulate, reflect, and reframe*



Calm, Consider, and, Create a New Way to See the Situation

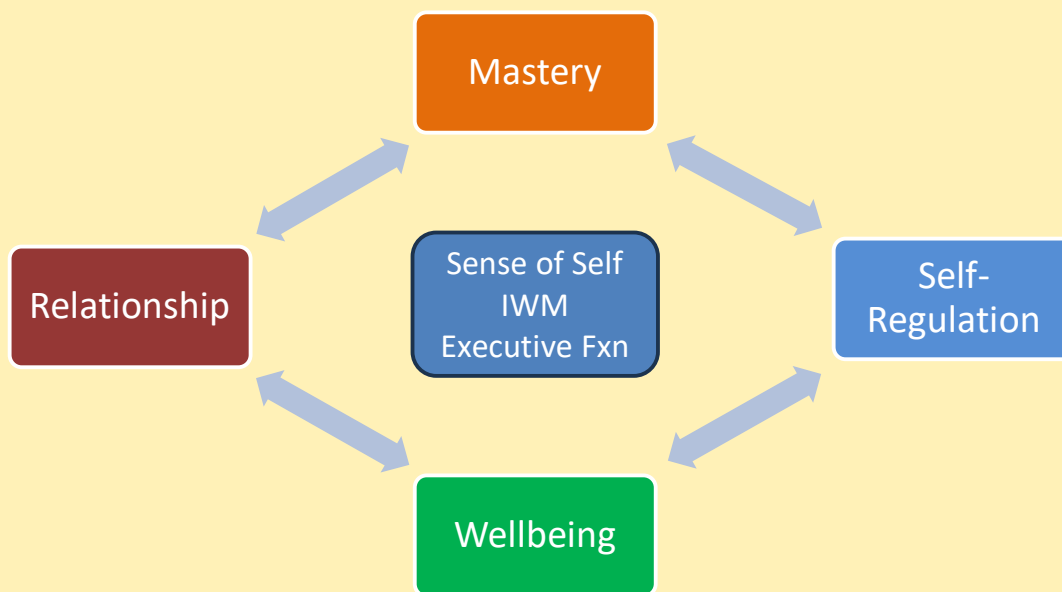
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Let's Discuss

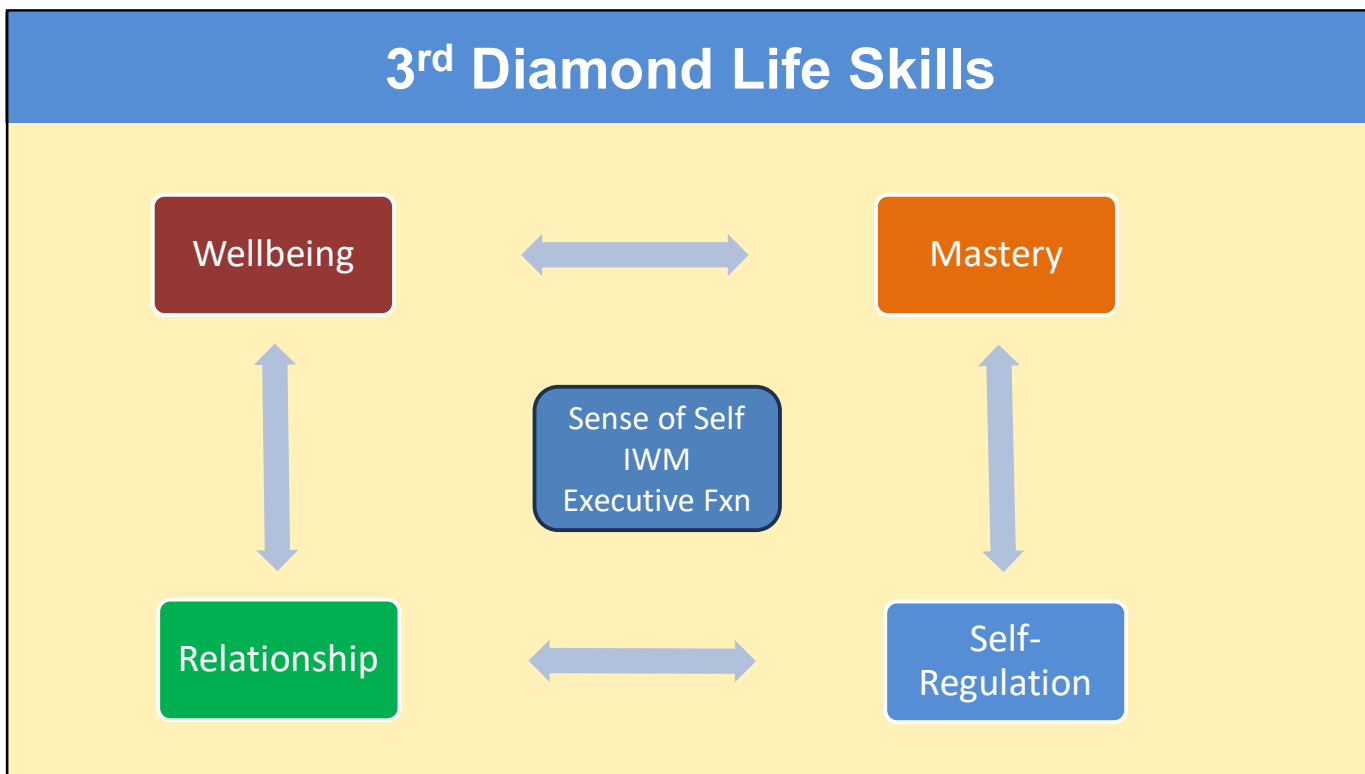
- What if parents understood what was happening in their child's inner world?
- How have you taught parents co-regulation?
- How does dysregulation look like in adults?
- How does a meltdown look like in adults?

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3rd Diamond Life Skills





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Executive Function

- Executive function are **skills** to manage daily life
- Needed to **focus, follow directions, and handle emotions.**

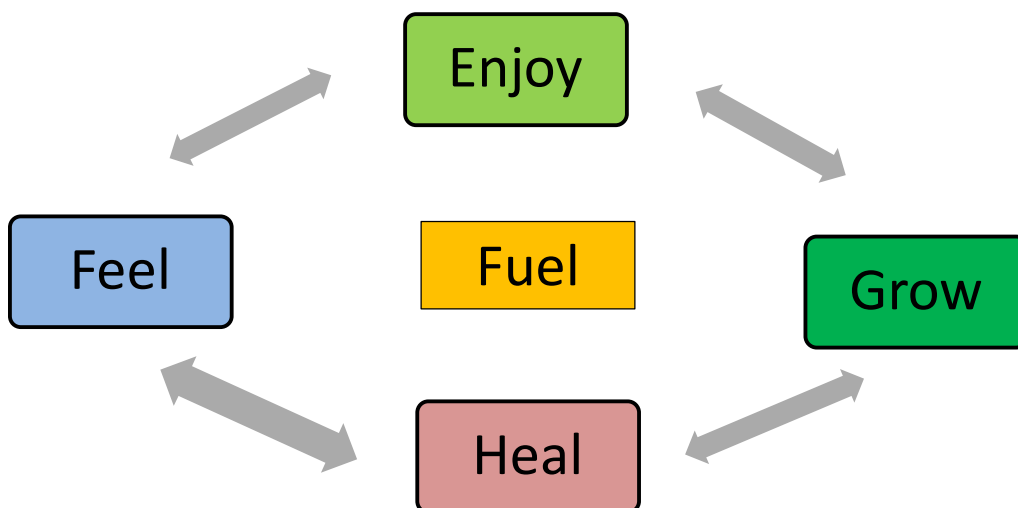
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Let's Discuss

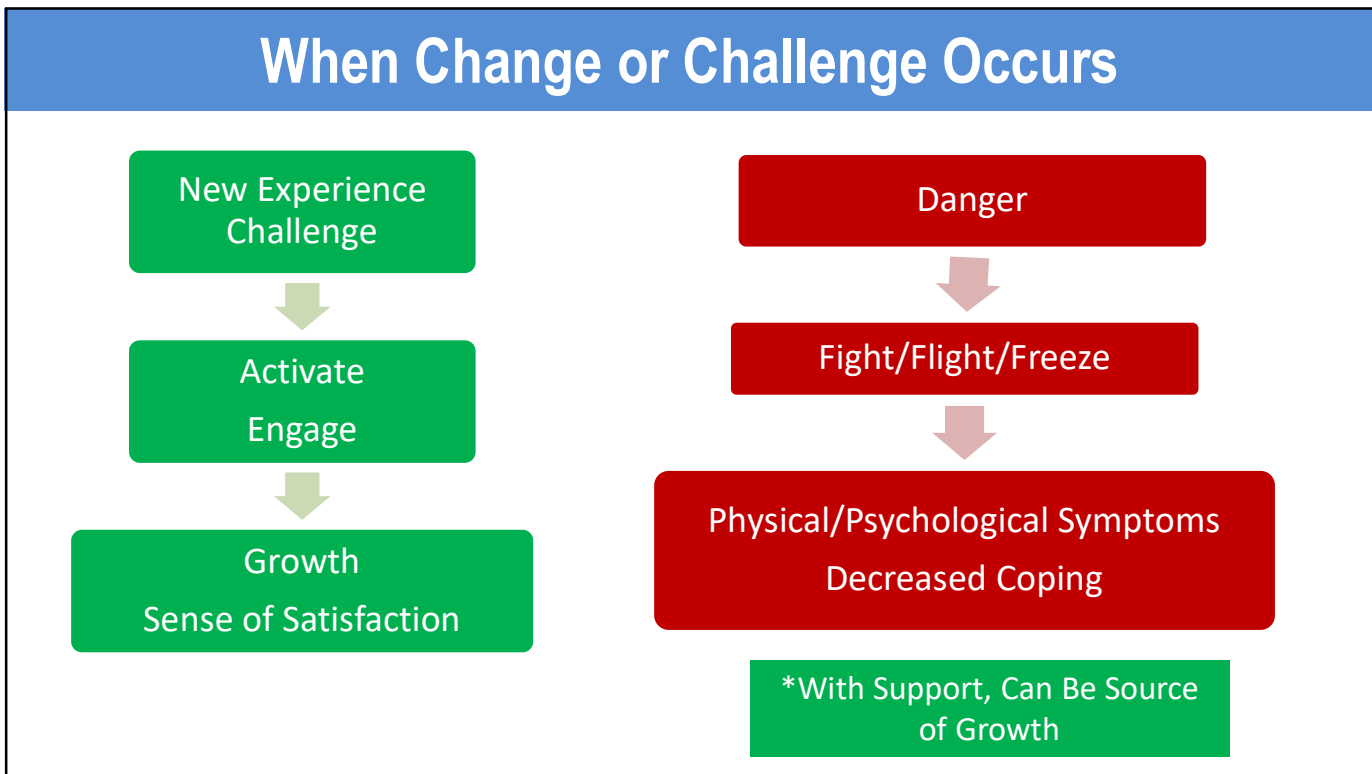
- Which picture did you like better?
- What comes to mind when you hear wellbeing?
- What comes to mind when you hear mastery?

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Pathways to Growth



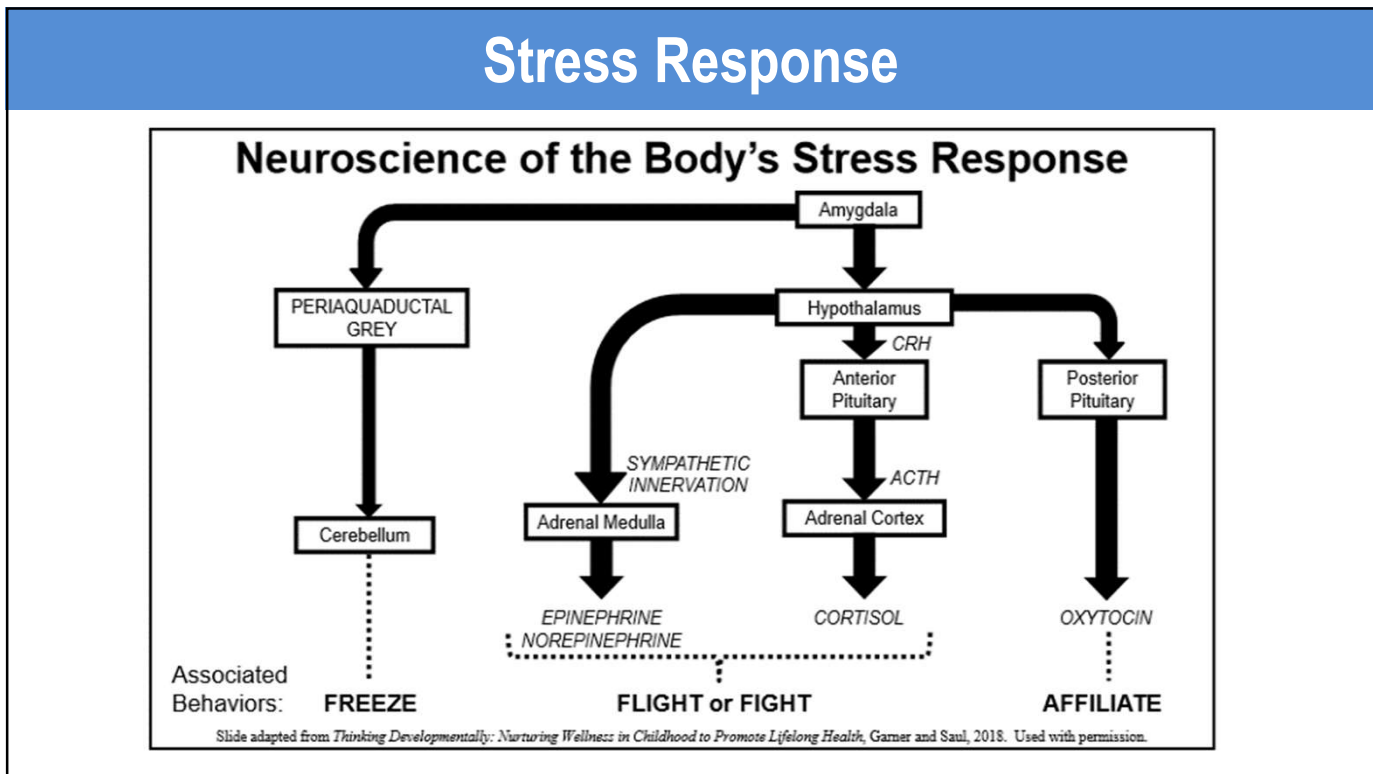
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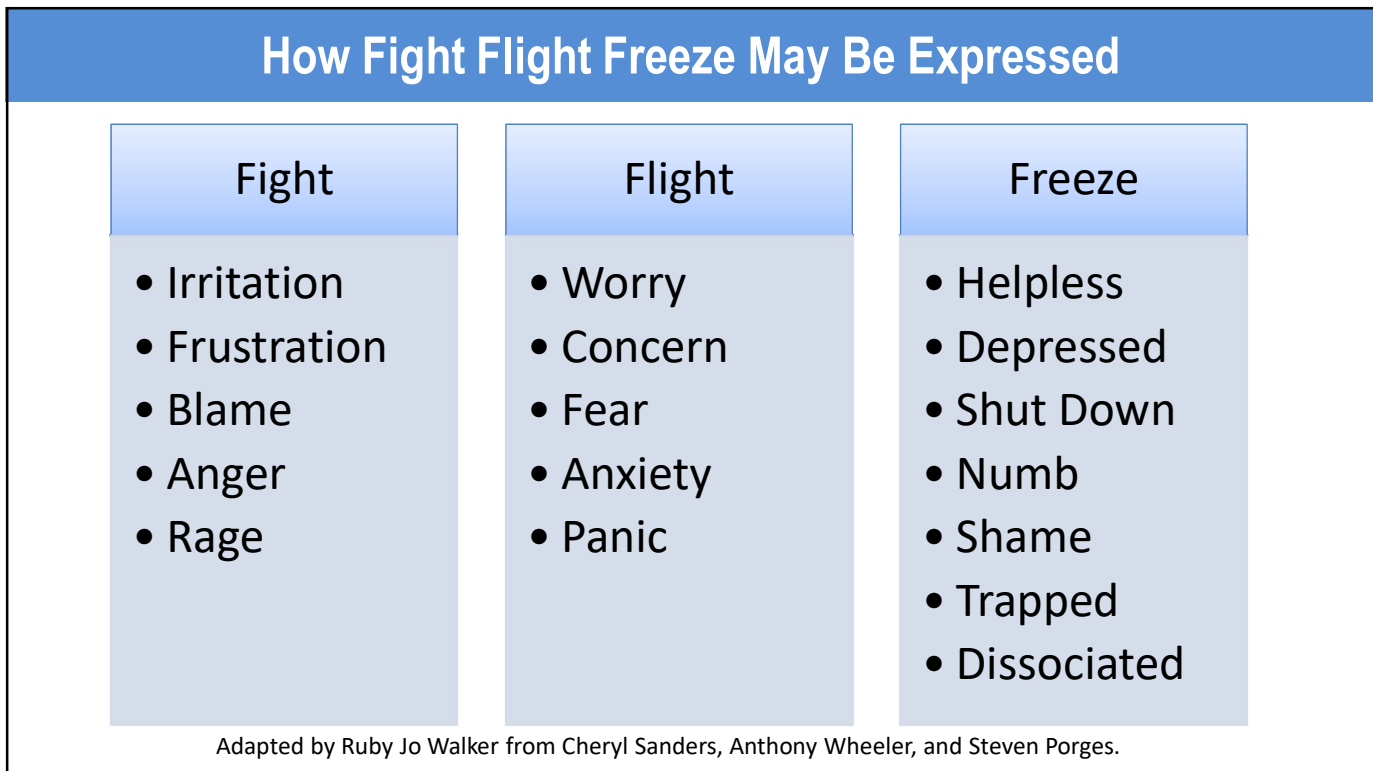
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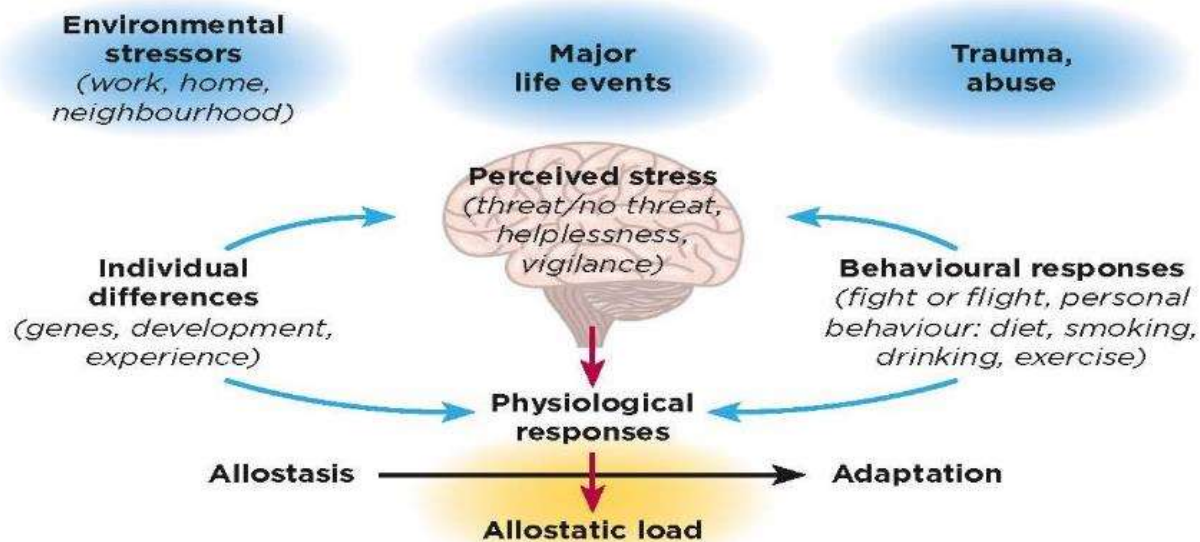


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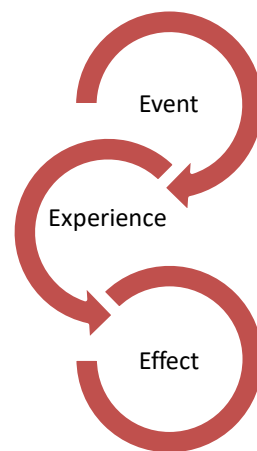
Response to Stress is Individual



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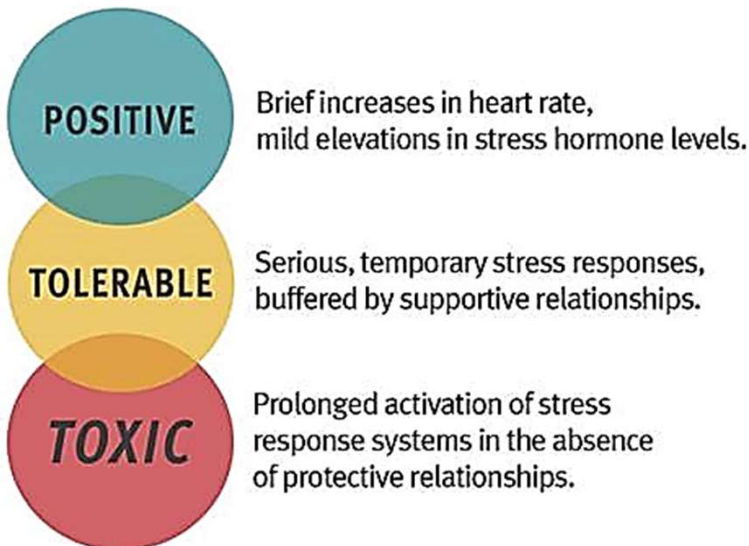
Difficult Experience and Trauma

- Trauma is often the result of an overwhelming amount of **stress** that exceeds one's ability to cope, or integrate the **emotions** involved with that experience
- Trauma differs between individuals, according to their subjective experiences
- **Unprocessed events, experiences, or emotions can be triggering**



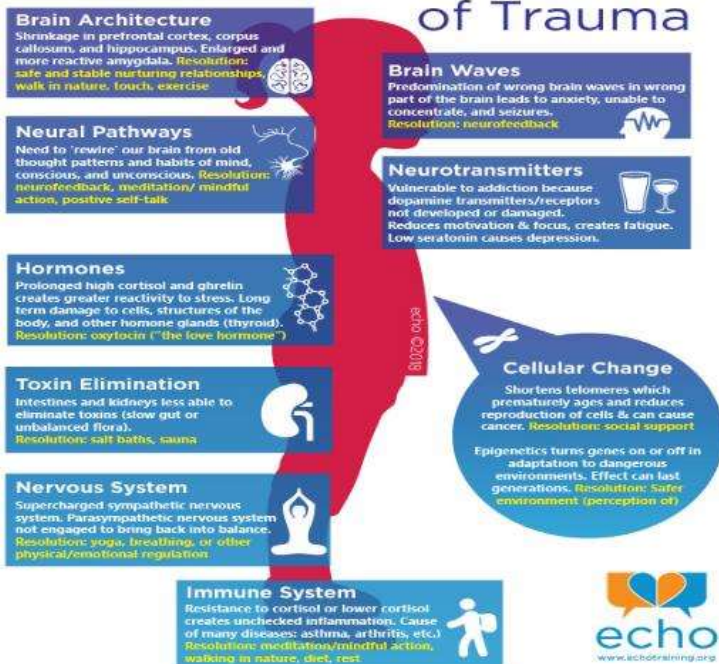
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Positive, Tolerable, and Toxic Stress



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Physical Impact of Trauma



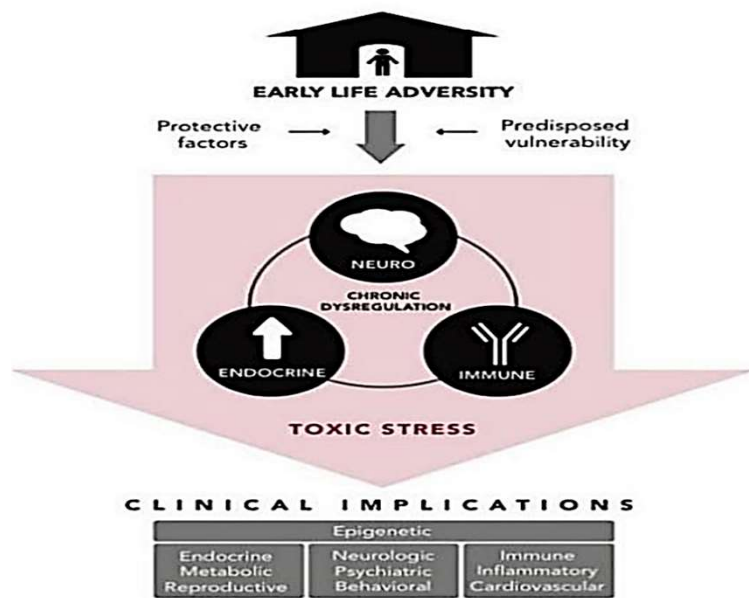
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Childhood Trauma

- The physical and emotional responses to events that threaten the **life or integrity of the child** or of someone critically important to the child
- Overwhelm a child's capacity to cope resulting in feelings of terror, powerlessness, and out-of-control physiological arousal
- Failure to provide sensitively responsive interaction during developmentally important periods of life
- Immature alert/alarm systems
- Dependent on caregiver for support and context

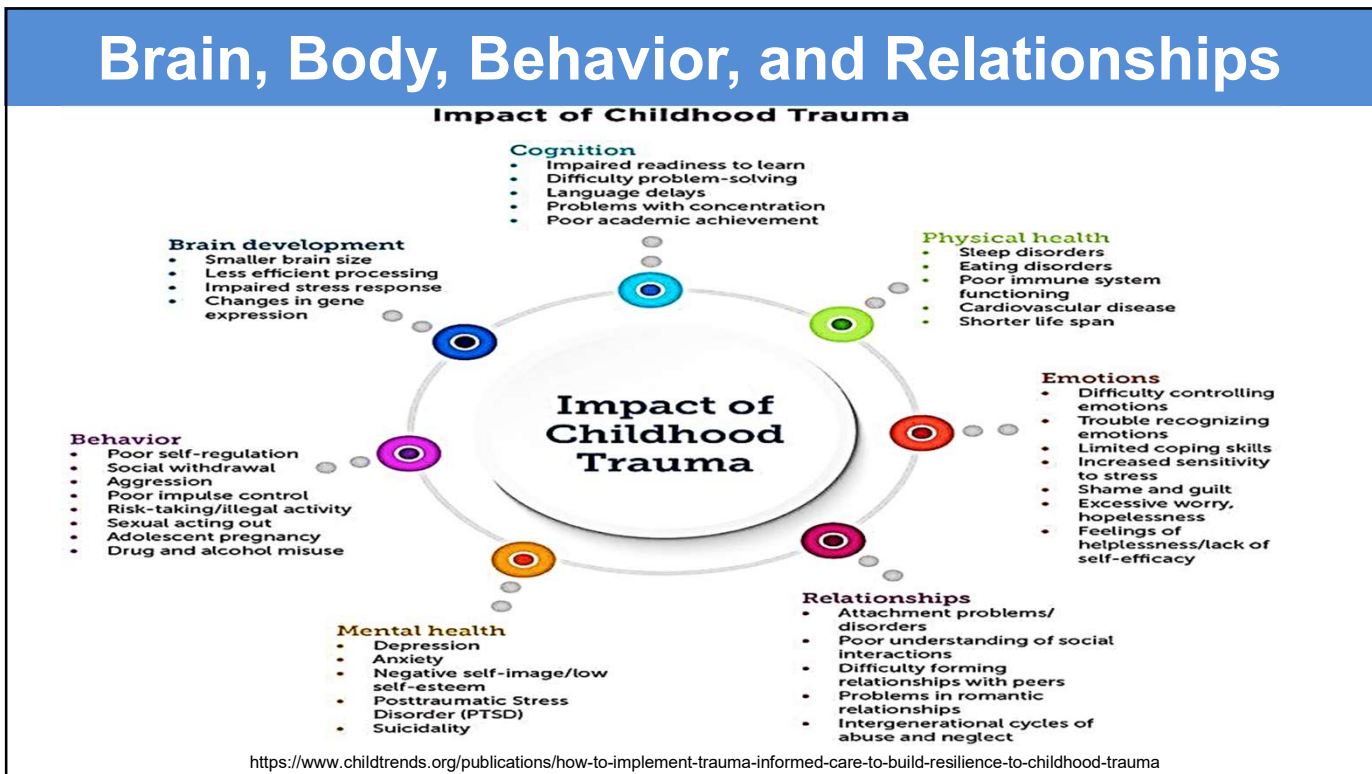
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Toxic Stress Physiology



Bucci et al., 2016

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Positive Relationships Down Regulates Stress

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Safety

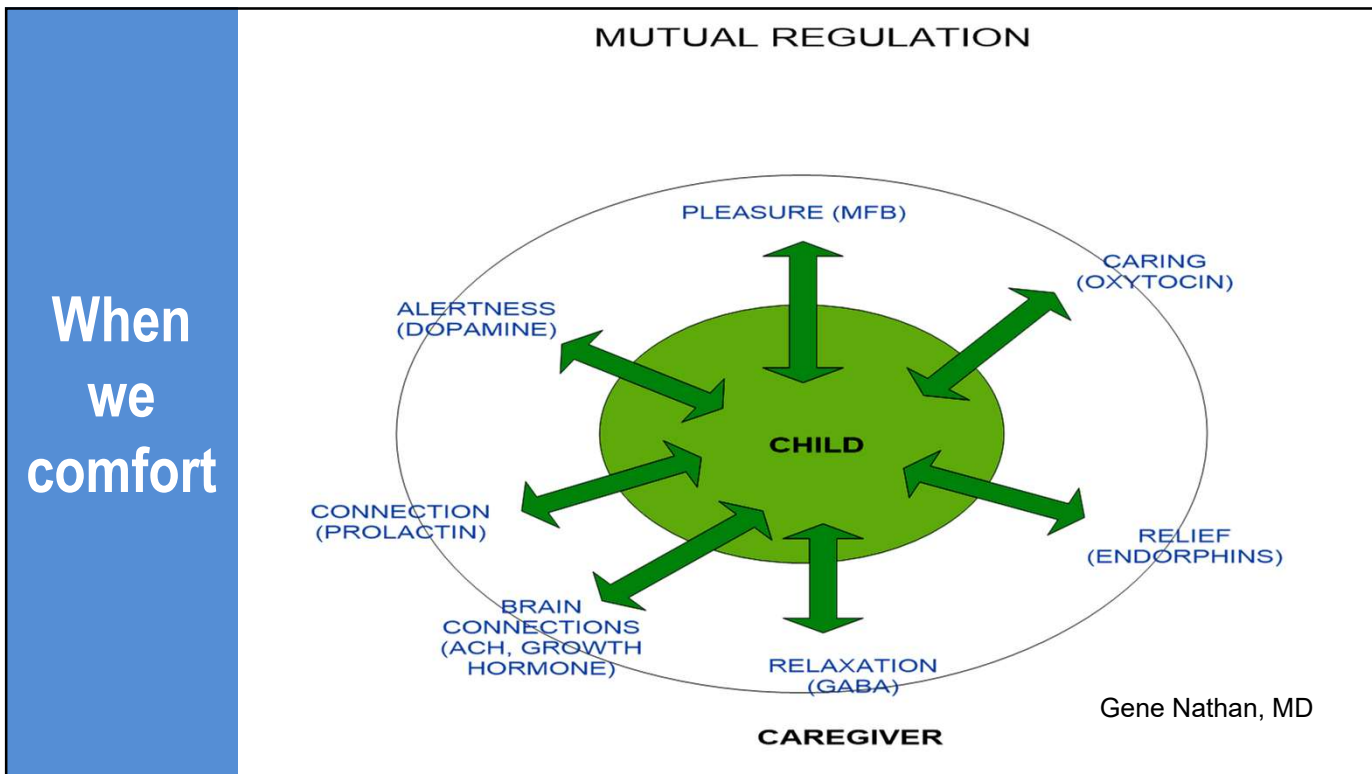
Pleasure

Hormonal

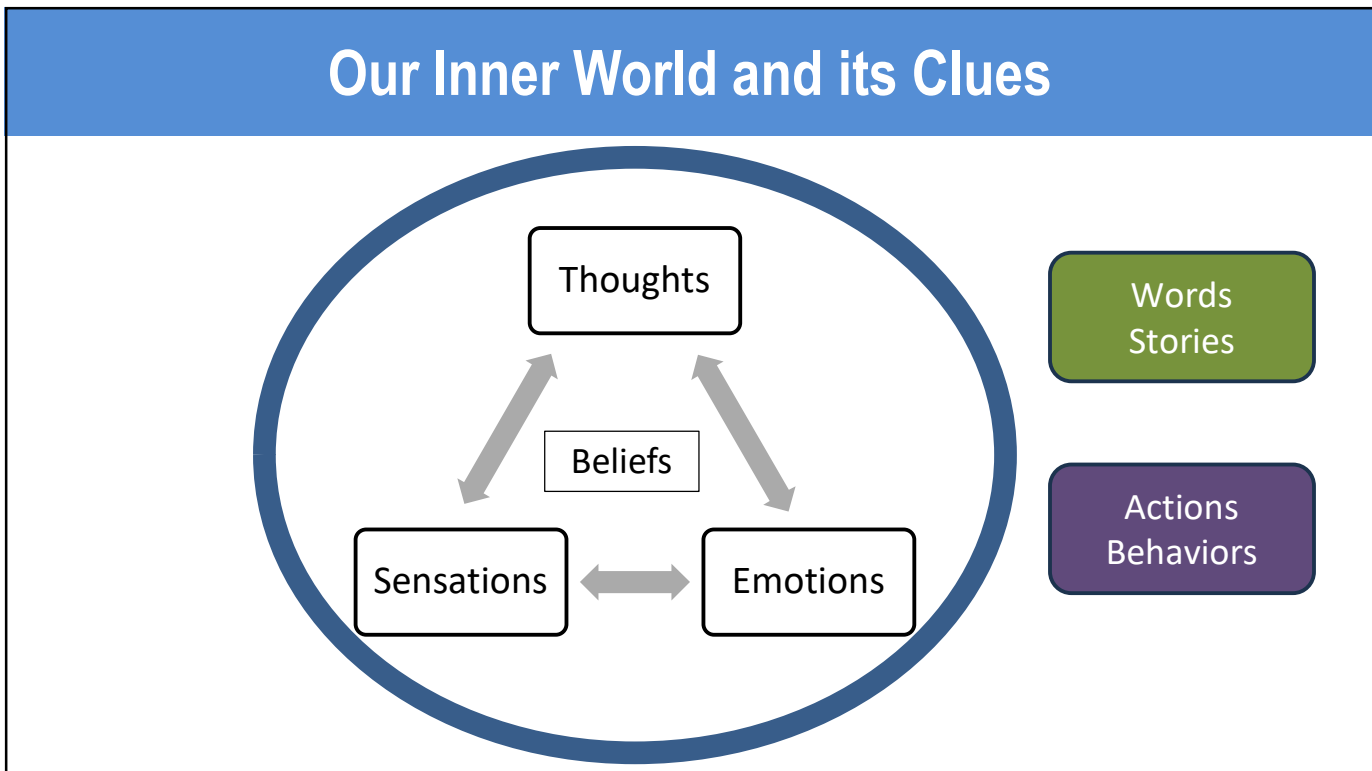
Cascade

Creates Calm

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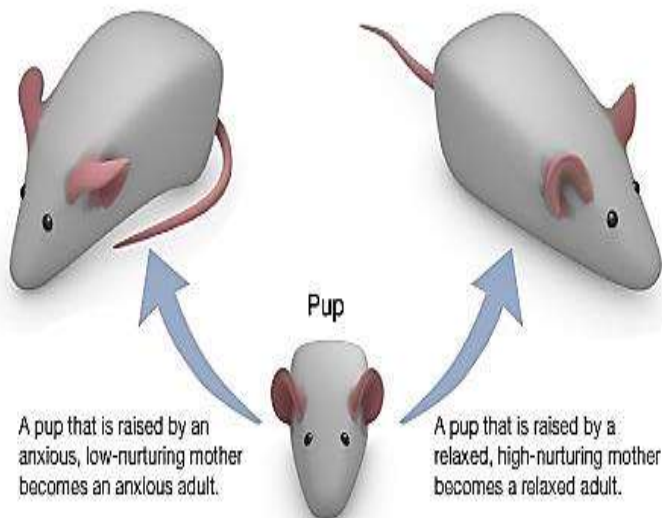


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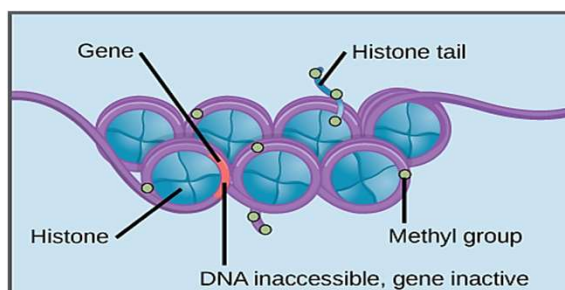
Nurture Impacts Biology - Mouse model



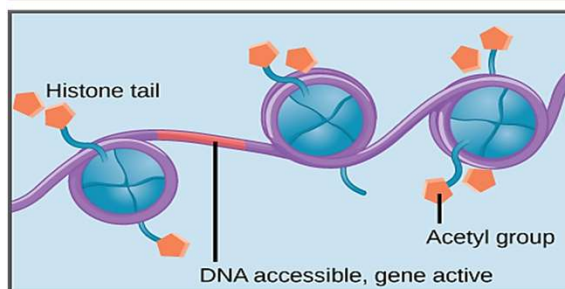
- High Licking Moms deactivates Methyl in Pups
- Activate GR Gene
- GR Protein in the Cytoplasm increased
- Binds Cortisol
- Pups are Less Stressed and Recover faster

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De-Methylation Turning On Gene Expression



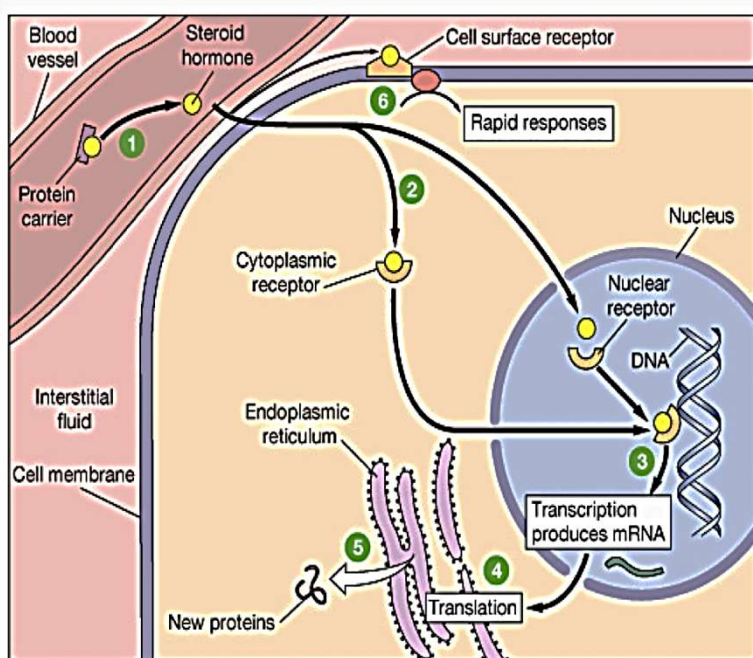
Methylation of DNA and histones causes nucleosomes to pack tightly together. Transcription factors cannot bind the DNA, and genes are not expressed.



Histone acetylation results in loose packing of nucleosomes. Transcription factors can bind the DNA and genes are expressed.

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Decreases Steroid Hormone Effects



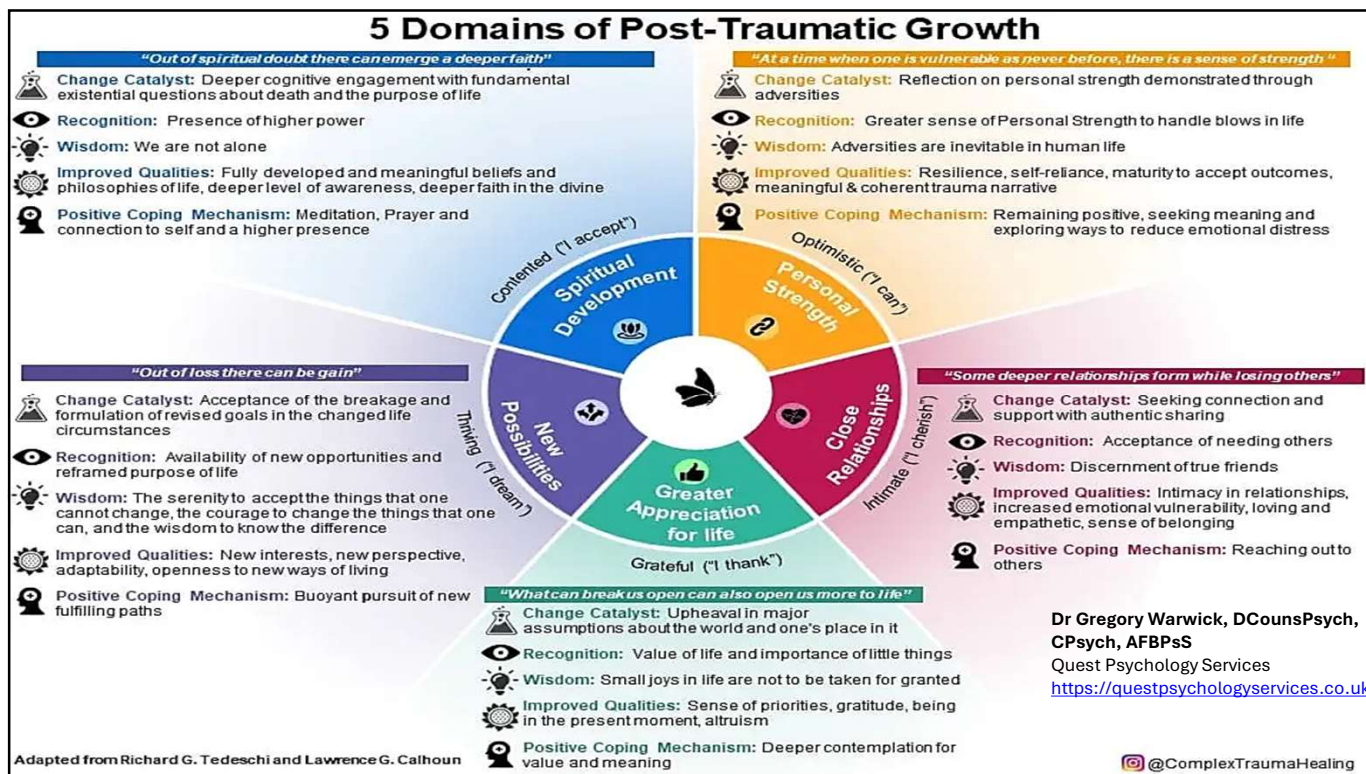
- 1 Most hydrophobic steroids are bound to plasma protein carriers. Only unbound hormones can diffuse into the target cell.
- 2 Steroid hormone receptors are in the cytoplasm or nucleus.
- 3 The receptor-hormone complex binds to DNA and activates or represses one or more genes.
- 4 Activated genes create new mRNA that moves back to the cytoplasm.
- 5 Translation produces new proteins for cell processes.
- 6 Some steroid hormones also bind to membrane receptors that use second messenger systems to create rapid cellular responses.

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Resistance to Addressing Trauma

- Humans are wired to survive, adapt and move forward
- When someone has moved past their trauma, they have created an adaptive (or maladaptive) mechanism to get on with their lives
- Why would they disrupt it?
- Back to - What is their story telling or showing us?
 - Look for fractured narrative, missing pieces, responses like “I guess normal”
 - Narrative therapy can help create a coherent story

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Facilitating Post Trauma Growth

- **Education:** Understand Trauma and PTG Potential, Cultivate Acceptance
- **Emotional regulation:** Mitigate Intrusive Thoughts, Adopt ER Practices, and Shift to Reflective Thinking
- **Constructive Disclosure:** Create Emotionally Safe Environment, Share Personal Struggles Constructively, Provide and Receive Support
- **Narrative development:** Develop a Coherent Narrative, Life Sustainable Life Principles, Embark on a Hero's Journey
- **Service:** Find Ways to Serve, Organize around the 5 Domains, Develop Appreciation for the Paradoxes

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Families' Unspoken Questions

- Are you safe? (physically, emotionally, mentally, and relationally)
- Can you see me? Or am I a number, a case, a stereotype?
- Can you actually help me?
- Will you be there in the long run? When things get tough?
- “Yeah, I have heard that before.” (at a certain point of vulnerability, families will push you away from fear of being hurt)
Can you stay open, non-judgmental and patient?

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How Do You Know When a Family Feels...

- Safe (physically, emotionally, mentally, and relationally)
- Seen, heard, felt, known
- That you can help them
- That they know the next steps
- That you will be there for them
 - in the long run
 - when things get tough

One of my Dearest
Colleagues suggested
“You need to slow it
down, a lot.”

**Let's Talk
about it**

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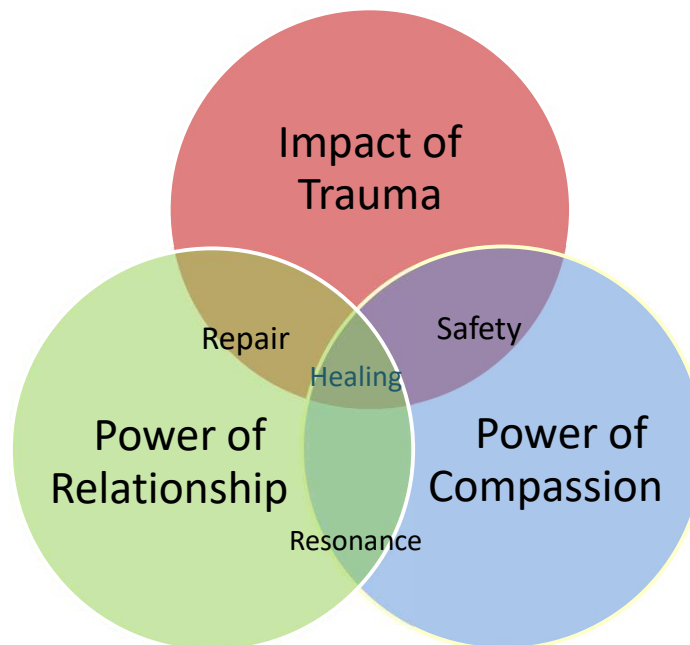
How Do You Respond to Help a Family Feel...

- Safe (physically, emotionally, mentally, and relationally)
- Seen, heard, felt, known
- That you can help them
- That they know the next steps
- That you will be there for them
 - in the long run
 - when things get tough

Let's Talk
about it

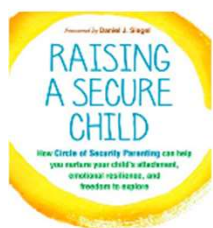
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Creating Healing Relationships



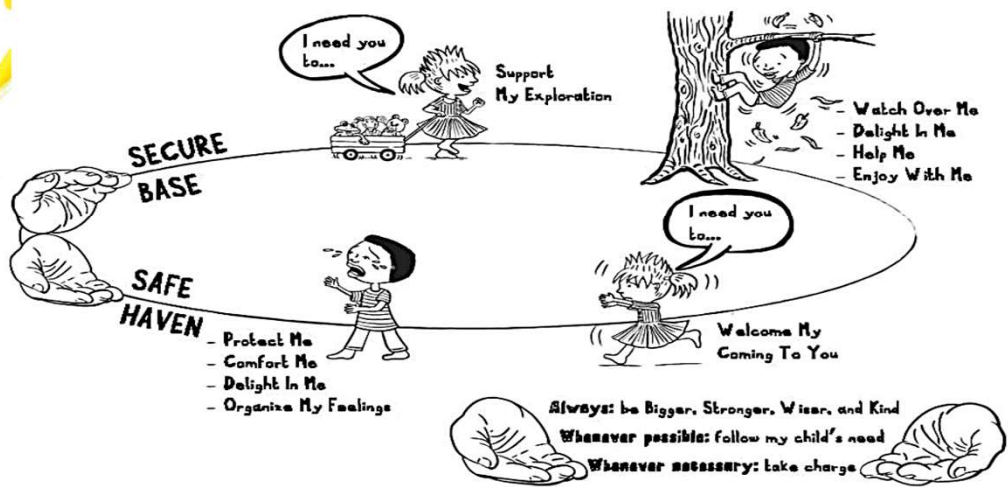
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Development of the Attachment Relationship



Kent Hoffman,
Glen Cooper, and Bert Powell
with Christine M. Bronfen

Circle of Security® Parent Attending To The Child's Needs



© 2018 Cooper, Hoffman, and Powell; Circle of Security International

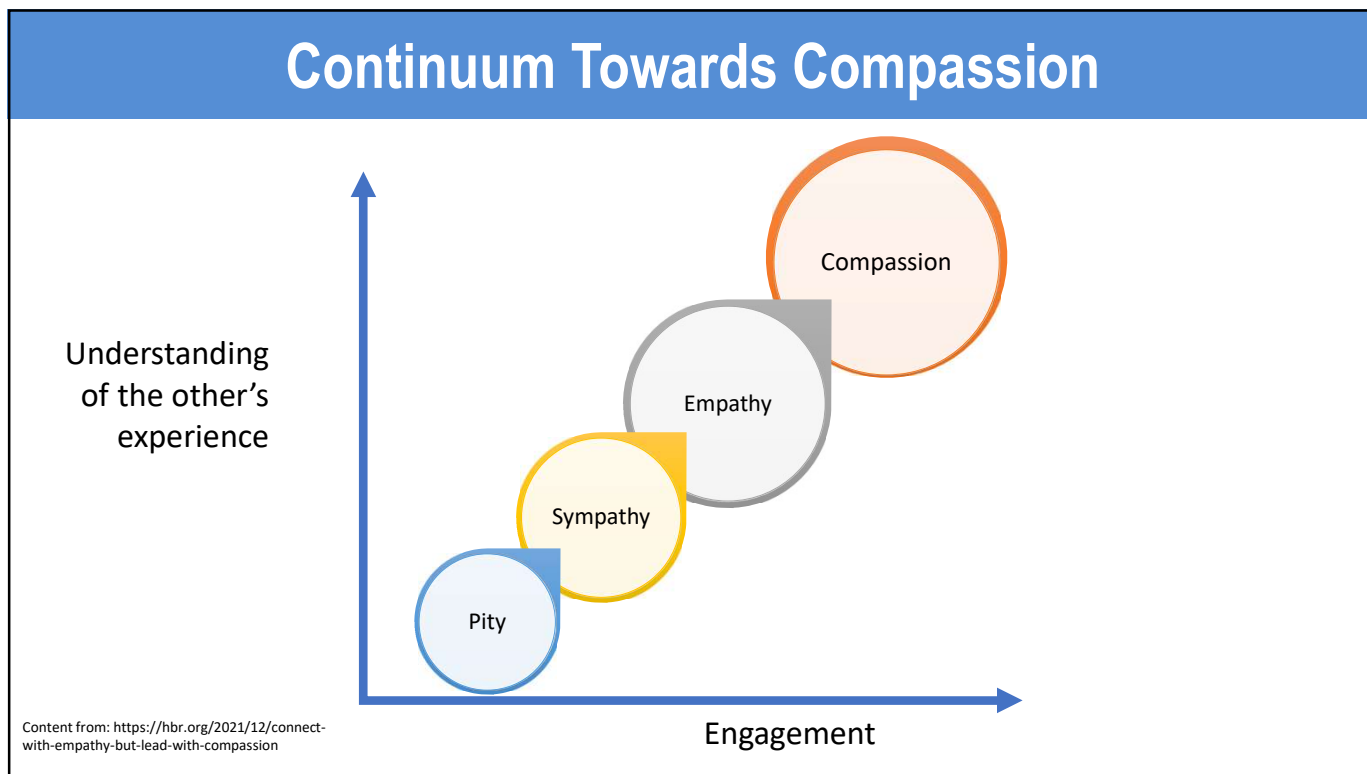
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Compassion and Nurture

Image from:
<https://www.chrischristophotography.com/index/C0000JAz7wCxrTwc/G0000SXmY8PYpp8/10000TwVJOHv3ma8>

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What can do in the face of suffering?

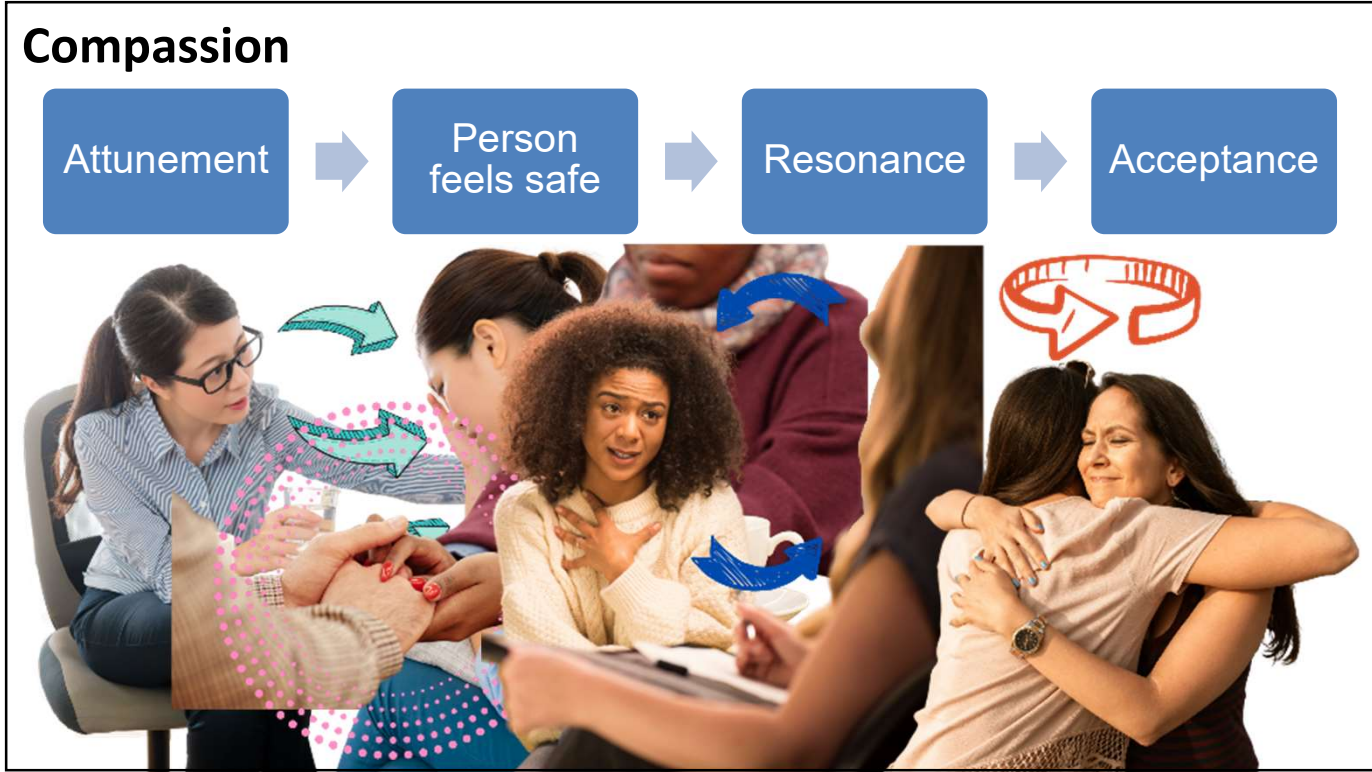
- Our job is not to right or to know everything, but to be the one who is present, open, and attuned for resonance with what is

Dan Siegel, MD – The Mindful Therapist

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SELF-COMPASSION BREAK

Think of a situation in your life that is difficult, that is causing you stress. Call the situation to mind, and see if you can actually feel the stress and emotional discomfort in your body.

Now, say to yourself:

1. THIS IS A MOMENT OF SUFFERING

That's mindfulness. Other options include:

- This hurts.
- Ouch.
- This is stress.

2. SUFFERING IS A PART OF LIFE

That's common humanity. Other options include:

- Other people feel this way.
- I'm not alone.
- We all struggle in our lives.


Now, put your hands over your heart, feel the warmth of your hands and the gentle touch of your hands on your chest. Or adopt the soothing touch you discovered felt right for you.

3. MAY I BE KIND TO MYSELF

You can also ask yourself, "What do I need to hear right now to express kindness to myself?" Is there a phrase that speaks to you in your particular situation, such as:

- May I give myself the compassion that I need
- May I learn to accept myself as I am
- May I forgive myself
- May I be strong.
- May I be patient

This practice can be used any time of day or night, and will help you remember to evoke the three aspects of self-compassion when you need it most.




From: <https://self-compassion.org/exercise-2-self-compassion-break/>

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Compassion's Other Side


FIERCE SELF-COMPASSION

TENDER SELF-COMPASSION
ACCEPTING OURSELVES
TO ALLEVIATE SUFFERING



INNER HEALING
TENDER

FIERCE SELF-COMPASSION
TAKING ACTION
TO ALLEVIATE SUFFERING



OUTER CHANGE
FIERCE

BALANCE OF BOTH ENERGIES FOR WHOLENESS

together CREATES A **CARING FORCE**

DR. KRISTIN NEFF
self-compassion.org

- **PROTECTING** DRAWING BOUNDARIES AND SAYING **NO**
- **PROVIDING** AND SAYING **YES** TO OUR NEEDS
- **MOTIVATING** TO LEARN, GROW AND CHANGE THE WORLD

OUR AUTHENTIC SELF
CLAIMS BOTH OUR TENDER & FIERCE SIDES
COUNTERING THE GENDER ROLE SOCIALIZATION WE HAVE ALL BEEN STEEPED IN

ALLOWING US TO **THRIVE**

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Self Kindness – An Individualize Approach

- For some, mental practices can be re-traumatizing and cause anxiety
- Try **behavioral self-compassion**, or figuring out what you need in the moment to feel soothed—for example, petting your dog or taking a short break from work
- Ask - What do I need to feel safe? To be comforted, soothed, validated? To protect, provide for, motivate myself?
- Review what you already do to care for yourselves and try applying those practices. Maybe exercise, a warm bath, watch a funny movie, journal or cook.

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Self Compassion Myths

- Self-compassion is a form of self-pity – better processing of emotions and mental health
 - “I try to be understanding and patient toward aspects of my personality I don't like”
 - “When things are going badly for me, I see the difficulties as part of life that everyone goes through”
 - “When something painful happens, I try to take a balanced view of the situation.”
- Self-compassion means weakness – better coping
- Self-compassion will make me complacent – greater motivation and accountability

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The Inner Critic/Judge

- We all have a voice in our head. For most of us, it is an inner critic or judge.
 - What is the critic's job?
 - Why do they talk to us that way?
 - What happens when we push them out?
- What if they get re-training?
 - Inner coach
 - Wise Guide
- Listen, turn towards, and ask for another approach

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Knowing Our Limits

- It is hard to realize that my help is not enough for the person in front of me
- We can fall into the well of hopelessness
- Ask for help
- Ask for compassion that is greater than our own (Big Compassion)
- Knowing our role and having colleagues who know our hearts can keep hope burning in us

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Practice – Feeling Your Strength

- Remember a challenge or difficult situation that you overcame or remember a time you felt successful
- Bring back the feelings in your body and feel your strength
- Allow that feeling to sink deeper into your body

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Cultivate Mental Flexibility

One technique

- Is it true?
- How do I know it is true?
- If I let go of the belief “this is true,” how will I feel?
- What would I lose if it is not true?
- Can I live it is not true?

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Wrapping it up

Reflections Q & A

Keep in touch
Pradeep Gidwani
pgidwani@aapca3.org

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