

The Importance of Relationships: Connecting with Hard-to-Reach Students

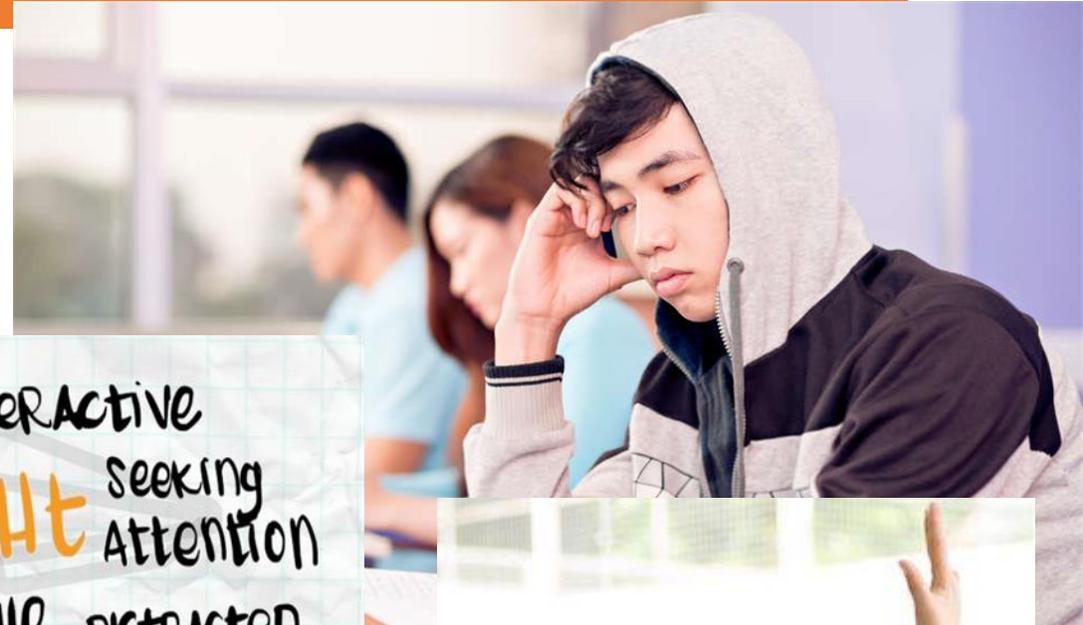
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DISRESPECTFUL ARGUMENTATIVE
OPPOSITIONAL FIGHT
 INSUBORDINATION DANGEROUS OR VIOLENT
 STUBBORN

HYPERACTIVE
FLIGHT seeking ATTENTION
 LEAVE THE ROOM DISTRACTED

DAY DREAMING
 DOESN'T CARE
 DOESN'T TRY
FREEZE
 APATHY

OVERLY PLEASING
 SEEKING APPROVAL
FAWN
 CHECK IN WITH ADULTS
 ALWAYS HELPING

 attachtrauma.org

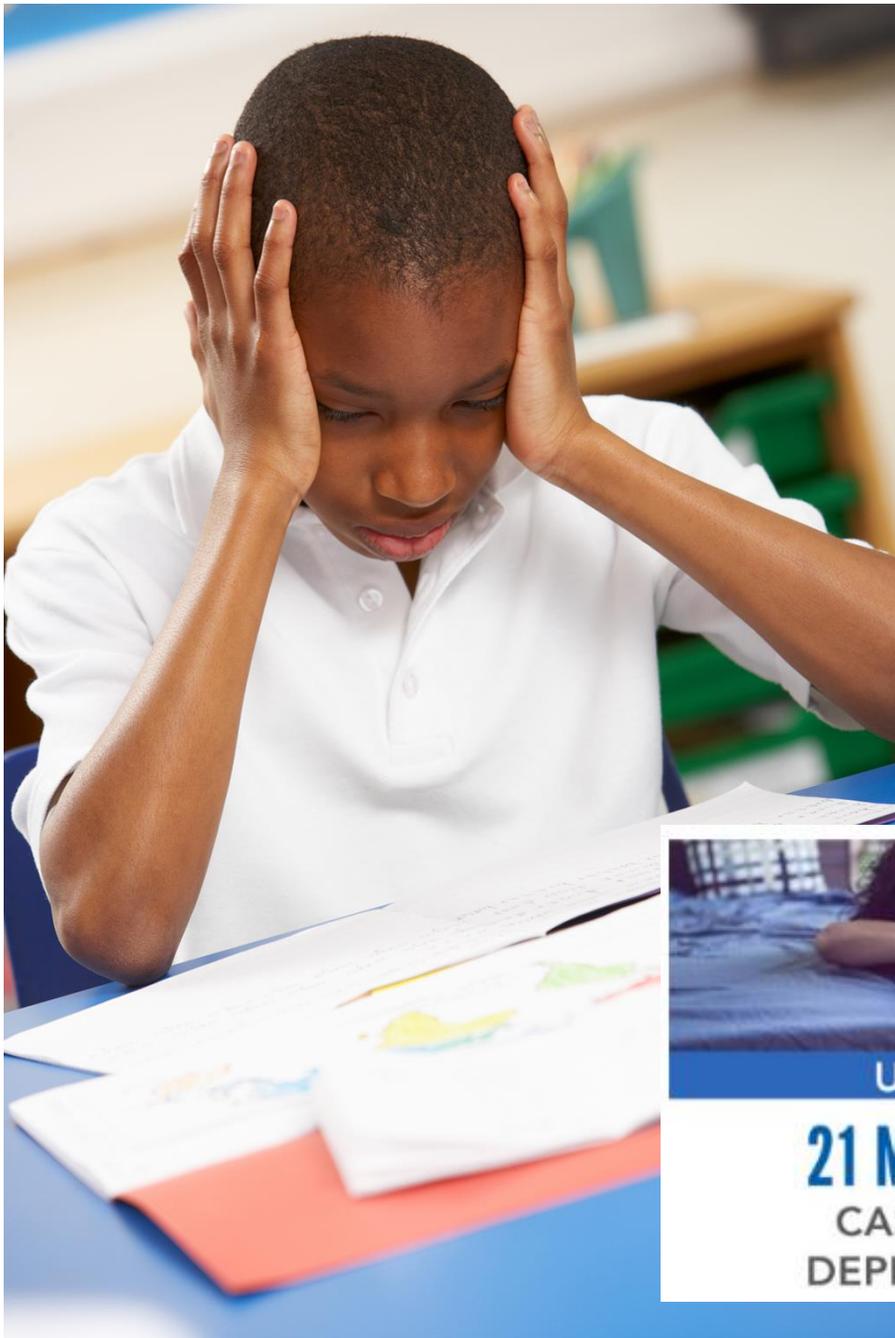


~~*“What’s wrong
with you?”*~~

vs.

*“What happened
to you?”*





RECOGNIZING the Impact of ACEs

5 of 10

At least 5 of the top 10 leading causes of death are associated with ACEs.

Relationship problems

- problems at work
- Divorce
- Risk of Suicide
- Criminal involvement

Addictions

- Heart
- Diabetes
- Cancer
- Anxiety
- Early death
- Chronic Pain

25% of students(educators) in the classroom with dysregulation and delays

UP TO
21 MILLION
CASES OF
DEPRESSION



WE'RE WIRED FOR CONNECTION

Normal Infant Trust Building

Cycle

Baby has a need



Baby
cries



Needs met by
caregiver



Trust
develops



50-60%
secure
attachment



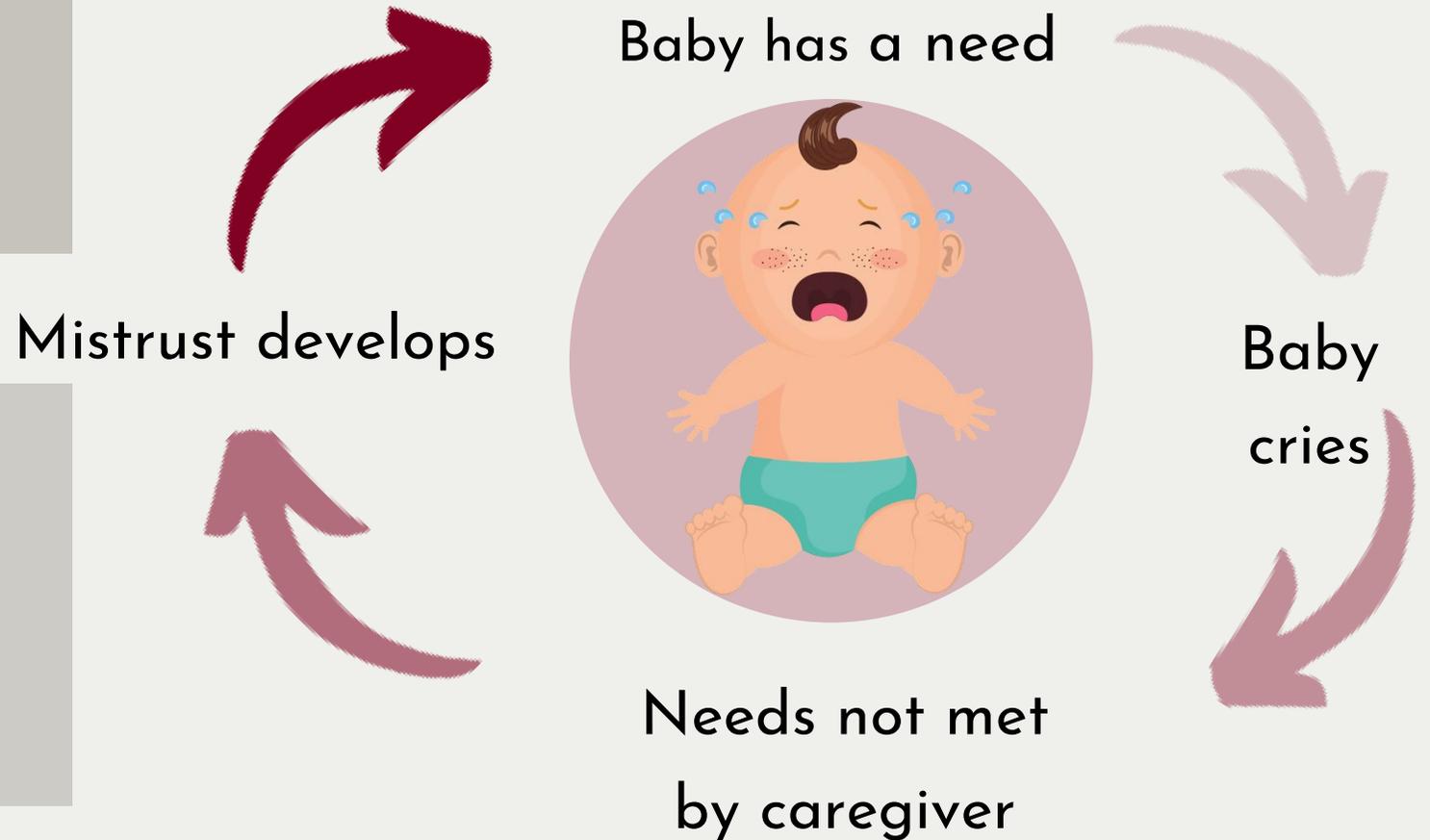
World View

The world is unsafe, scary,
and unpredictable
Adults can't be trusted

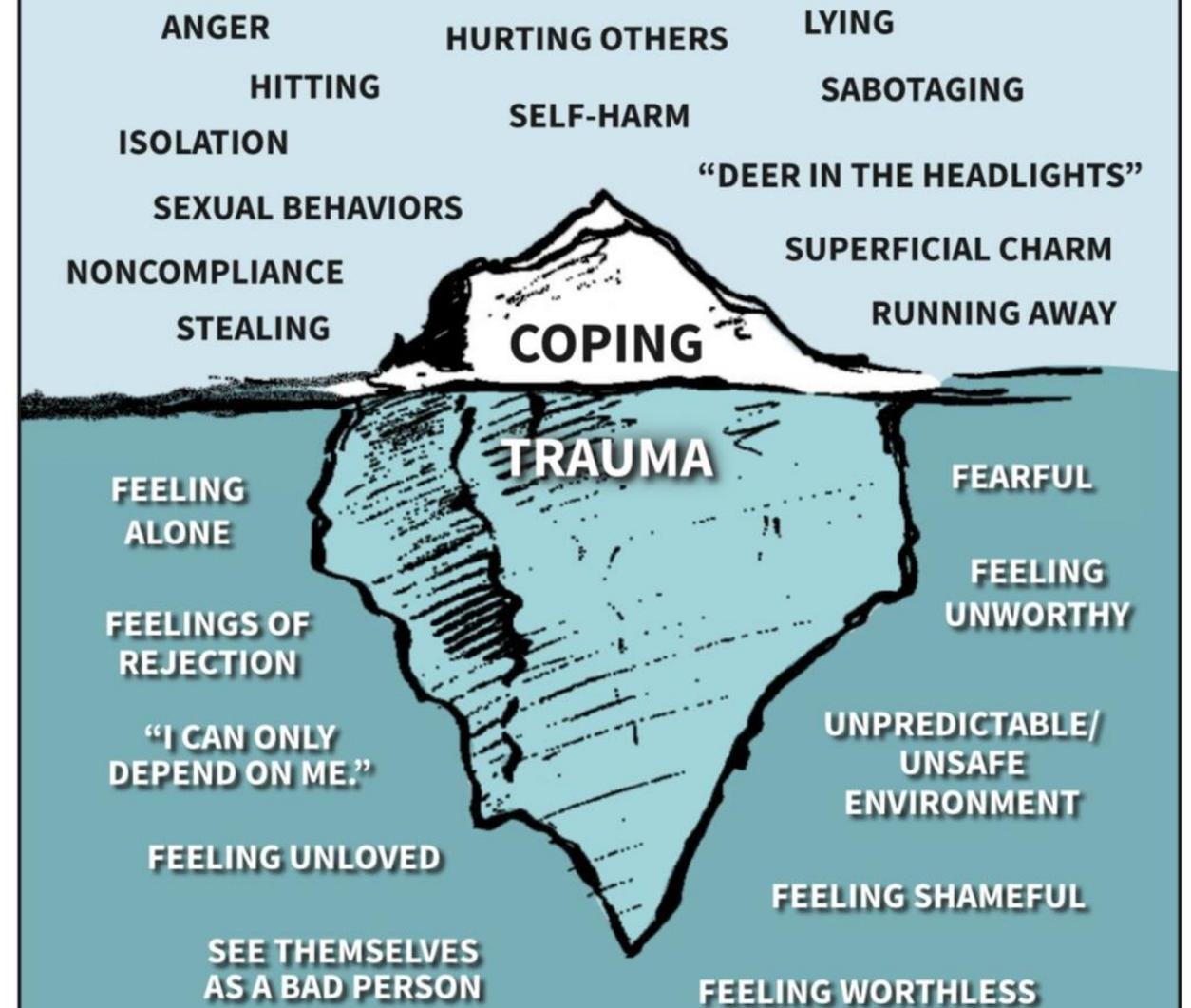
Self View

I don't matter
I'm worthless
I can only depend on me

WHEN ATTACHMENT NEEDS AREN'T MET



What We See



What's Actually Happening

Adapted from www.AttachmentTraumaNetwork.org

- This is Dysregulation!
- Dysregulation happens when an individual does not feel unsafe.
- Behavior is often an attempt to survive, and a student's nervous system needs help at that moment.



- One person's trigger is a resource for another.
- **Collin and Alec**
- I was punishing adaptations that were helping them get through moments.

A black and white photograph of a young boy with dark hair, looking upwards and to the right with a thoughtful expression. He is wearing a striped shirt. The image is used as a background for text.

Kids are not going to walk up to you and say, "I'm really struggling with some tough emotions right now and I'm not sure how to cope."

www.thepathway2success.com

They are going to act out and behave in challenging ways.

It means the same thing.

Pathway 2 Success

~~Attention~~
connection
seeking
behaviors

xo Lauren Pace

- Let's shift our lens.
- Thinking of your student as *behaving badly* disposes you to think of punishment.
- Thinking of your student as *struggling to handle something difficult* encourages you to help them through their distress.
- We can heal attachment wounds and lower the risk of ACEs. We can re-write these kids stories and help them end in a positive way through connection with positive relationships.
- Your history of connectedness is a better predictor of your health than your history of adversity.-Bruce Perry

NEUROPLASTICITY

Our brains are
“plastic” our
whole lives.

Safety
Regulation
Connection
Learning

We can
change them!



State Dependence

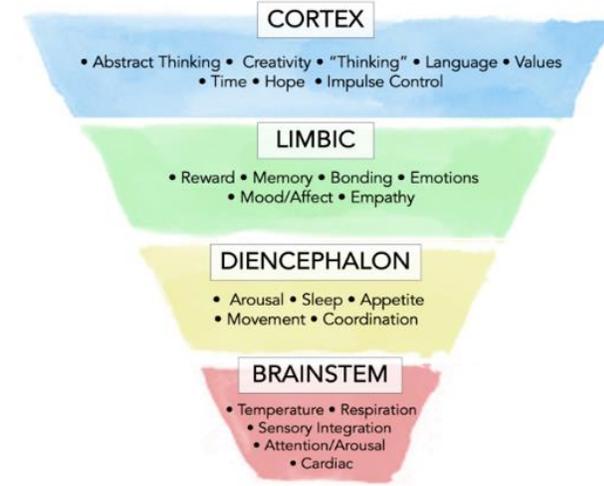
Sense of Time, Cognition & Functional IQ



"STATE"	CALM	ALERT	ALARM	FEAR	TERROR
Dominant Brain Areas	Cortex (DMN)	Cortex (Limbic)	Limbic (Diencephalon)	Diencephalon (Brainstem)	Brainstem

Cognition	Abstract (Creative)	Concrete (Routine)	Emotional	Reactive	Reflexive
Functional IQ	120-100	110-90	100-80	90-70	80-60
Sense of Time	Extended Future	Days/ Hours	Hours/ Minutes	Minutes/ Seconds	Loss of Sense of Time

NM Brain Heuristic



Safety, regulation, connection before a student can learn.

CONNECTION BEFORE CONTENT!

Am I making it worse? Asking for a friend...

There is an incredible power difference between a teacher and a student. Teachers are usually bigger, smarter, more connected to other adults, more comfortable in the school environment, more respected, and able to deliver serious consequences to misbehaving students. Staff members can reduce the differential in practical ways. Physically we can make ourselves smaller by kneeling, sitting down, or crouching to eliminate the dominating posture that escalates children toward alarm or fear. We can temper our voices and make the exchange private when possible. We can give students a limited but reasonable choice of how best to move on from conflict, so they don't lose all sense of self-control.

–Bruce Perry

WHAT CO-REGULATION ISN'T:
Demands for Compliance
Behavior Focused
Self- Implementation
Grit
Our Agenda
Imbalance of Structure and Nurture
Assumption of Incompetence
Sarcasm, Condescension, Judgment
Sending the Child Away/Time-Out
Unpredictability, Inconsistency
Permissive
Free Reign
Punitive

CO-ESCALATION
Narrowed Eyes
Clenched Jaw
Tight Fists
Standing Over
Lecturing
Blaming
Shaming
Elevated Volume
Shallow Breathing
Quick Movements

The Stress Is Not The Problem

THERE WILL ALWAYS BE STRESS. IT'S HOW WE BUFFER IT AND RELEASE THOSE STRESS HORMONES. BEING STUCK IN STRESS IS THE PROBLEM.

THE GOALS IS TO MOVE FLUIDLY BACK AND FORTH BETWEEN EXCITEMENT, STRESS AND RECOVERY.

STRESS RESPONSE SYSTEM

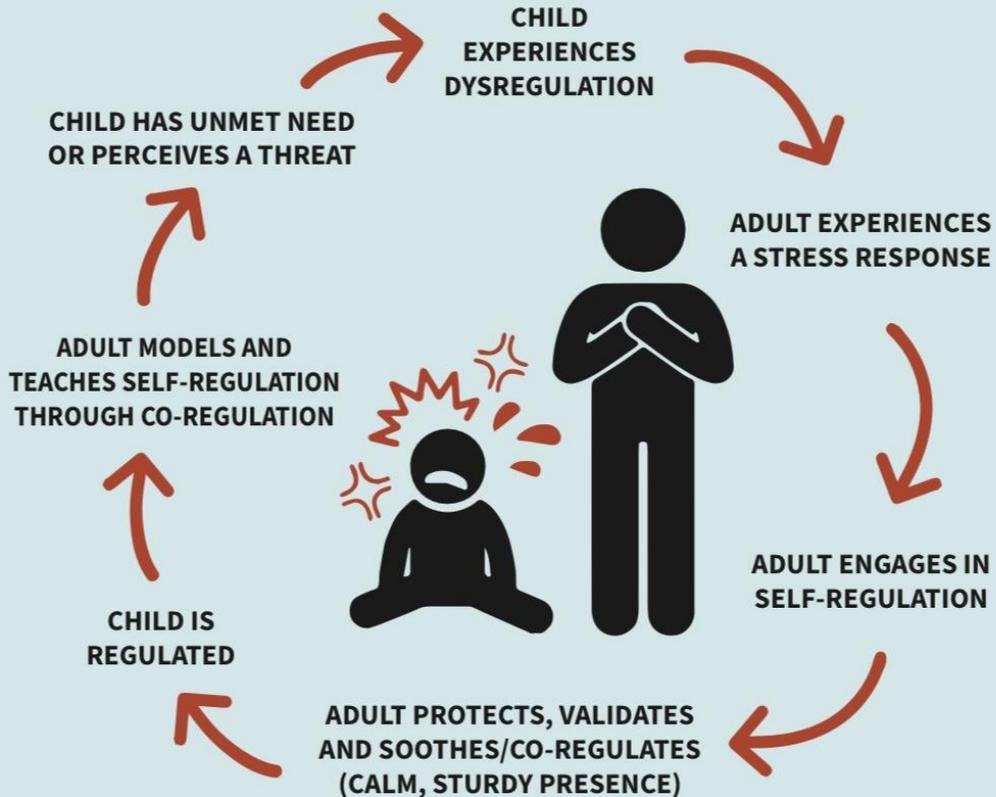
Positive Stress	Tolerable Stress	Toxic Stress
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Normal and essential part of healthy development• Brief increases in heart rate and blood pressure• Mild elevations in hormonal levels• Example: tough test at school. Playoff game.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Body's alert systems activated to a greater degree• Activation is time-limited and buffered by caring adult relationships• Brain and organs recover• Example: death of a loved one, divorce, natural disaster	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Occurs with strong, frequent or prolonged adversity.• Disrupts brain architecture and other organ systems.• Increased risk of stress-related disease and cognitive impairment.• Example: abuse, neglect, caregiver substance abuse

Intense, prolong, repeated, unaddressed

Social-Emotional buffering, Parental Resilience, Early Detection, Effective Intervention



The Regulation Cycle



Adapted from <https://instituteofchildpsychology.com>

Managing all emotions with the ability to move fluidly between them is the goal.

Felt Safety through co-regulation is the goal.

We need other people. We are hurt in relationship and we heal in relationship. Our brain and nervous system are not isolated, but interconnected and social. At our core, we are social beings who regulate through connection with others.

Buffering the stress...

- The 'super-power' of humankind is our capacity to connect; it is regulating and rewarding and the major "route" by which we can teach, coach parent, heal and learn.
–Bruce Perry

WHAT CO-REGULATION IS:
Compassion During Struggle
Relational Regulation
Modeling Emotional Management
Borrowing of Another's Calm
Compromise
A Balance of Structure and Nurture
Connecting with Curiosity
Soft Tone of Voice
Eye Level and Side-By-Side Intervention
Emotionally/Physically Safe Environment
Accountability
Boundaries
Discipline

CO-REGULATION
Warm, Soft Gaze
Relaxed Face
Pause and Breathe
Kneeling Down
Fewer Words
Avoiding Judgment
Validating
Listening
Deep Breathing
Slowing Down

Children need at least one person in their life who thinks the sun rises and sets on them, who delights in their existence and loves them unconditionally.

-Pamela Leo

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#OneCaringAdult

#OneCaringAdult

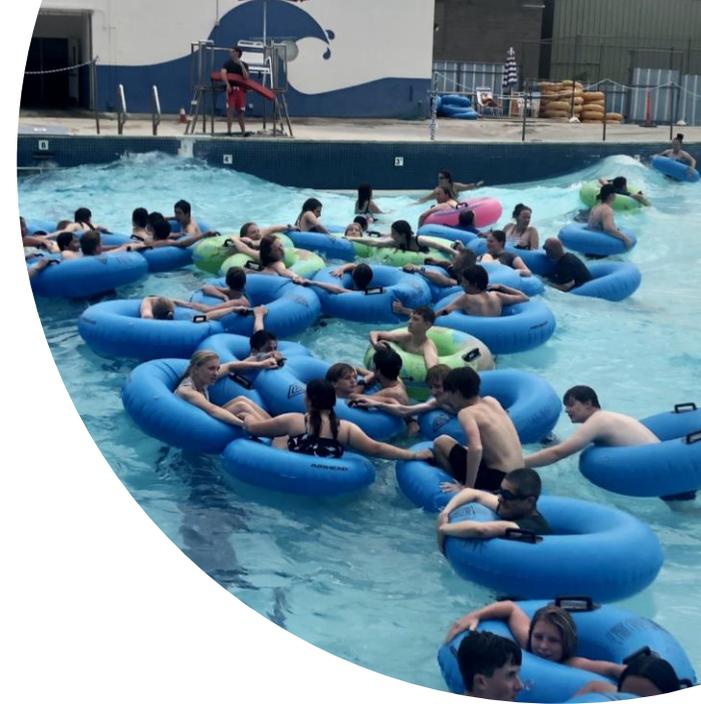
Relationships are the agents of change and the most powerful therapy is human love.

-Bruce Perry

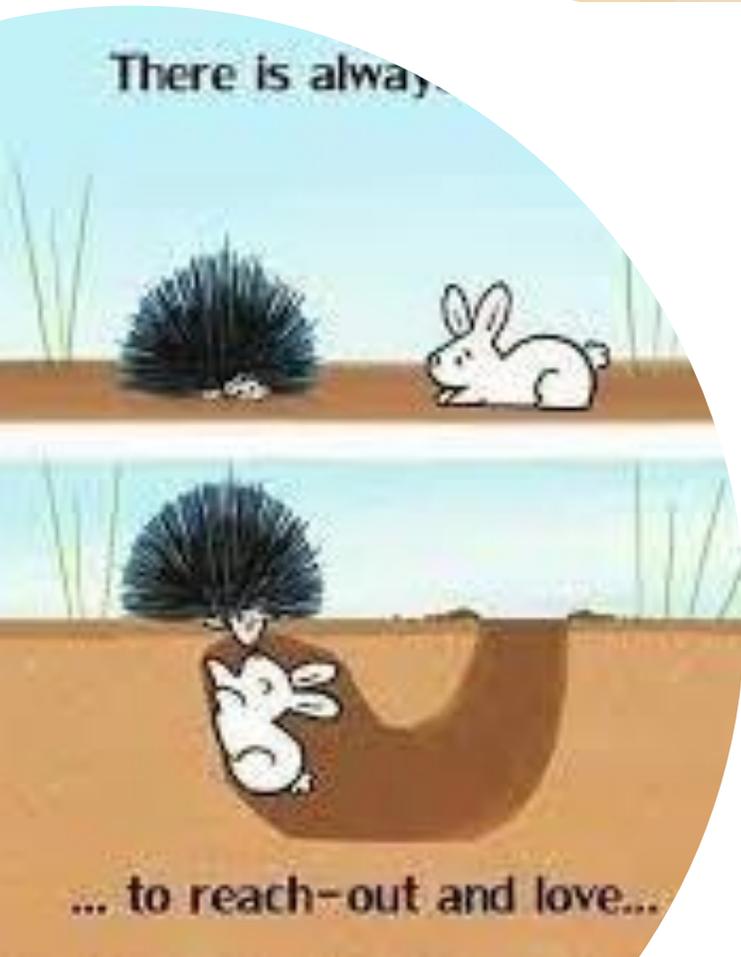
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*Social Mapping
for students and staff*



Staying Connected



Loneliness is
starvation.
Connection is
nourishment.





Those who are nurtured best survive best. It turns out that our emotional resilience and our ability to learn are inextricably woven.

We are not survival of the fittest.
We are the survival of the nurtured!

-Louis Cozolino





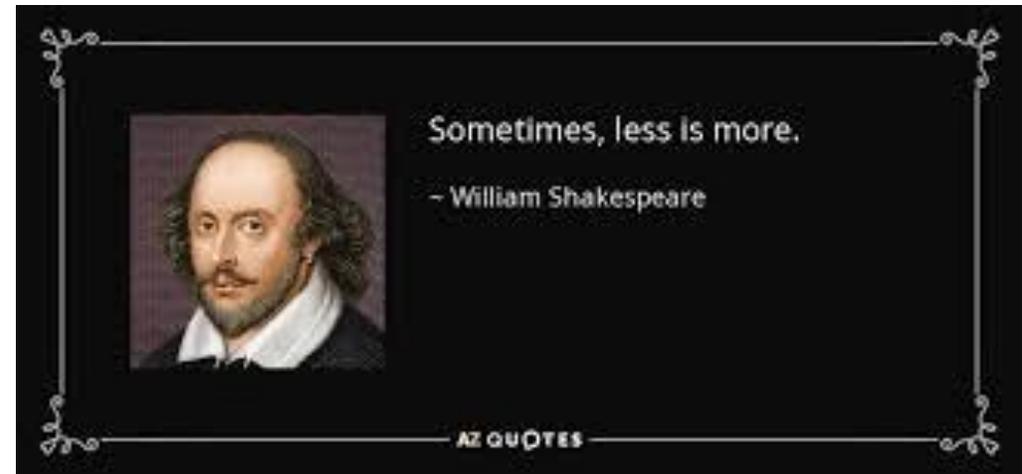
- Focus on the relationship NOT the behavior
- Discipline with co-regulation
- Keep going in after the kid, don't let them drift away
- Everyone needs an otter buddy

What is a “Therapeutic Dose” ?

This means that a brief, 3-minute interaction can provide sufficient ‘dosing’ of a therapeutic experience. Embedded in these 3-minutes will be many 5-second moments of true ‘connection’. Fully present, listening without judgement and with an ‘open heart’.

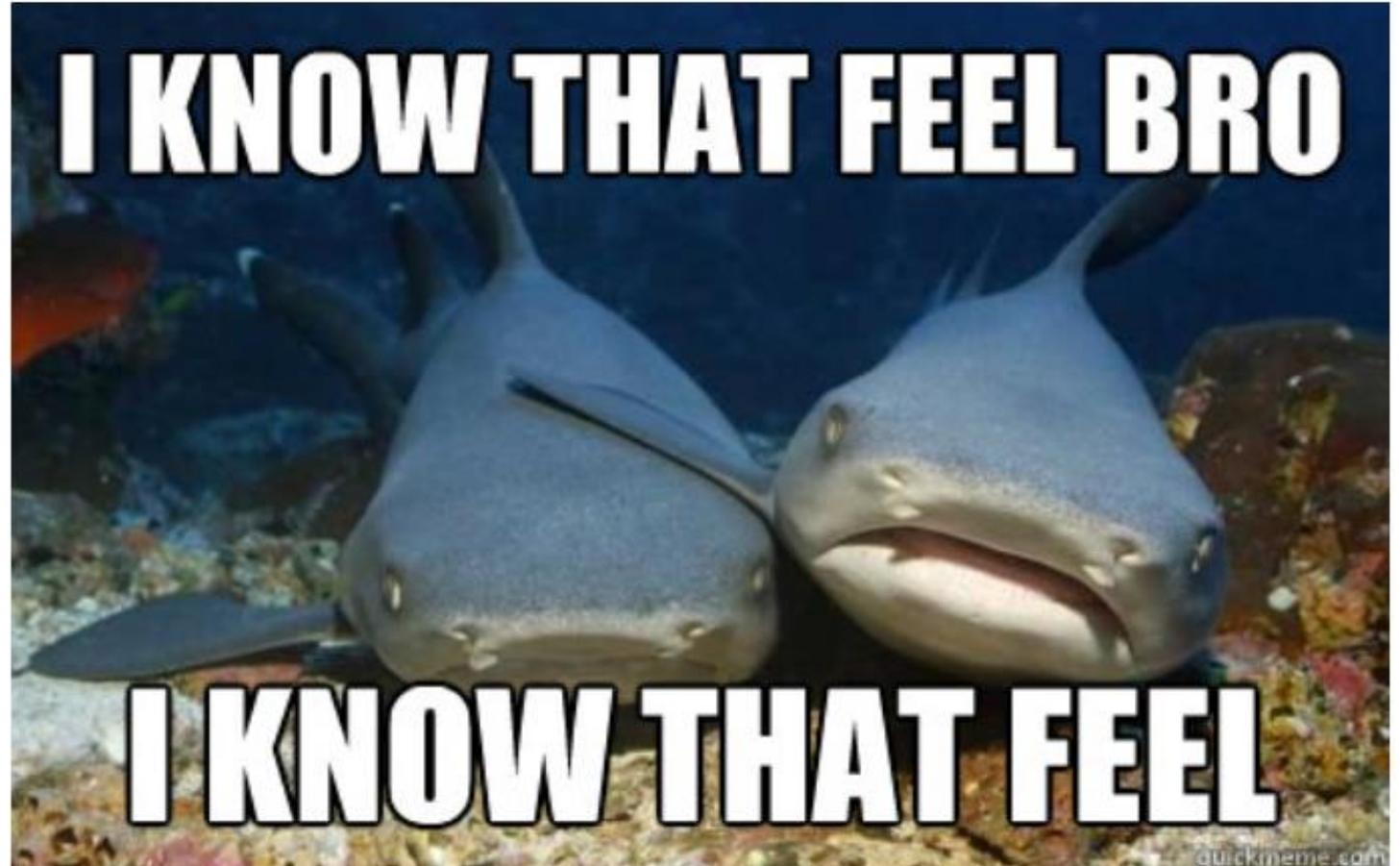
Ideally multiple ‘3-minute’ doses with many 5-second moments will be provided throughout the day by the child’s Therapeutic Web.

Connectedness is the key. Relational health buffers present stressors and helps heal from previous trauma.



Empathy for the struggle

- **Switch to your non-dominant hand**
 - feel the struggle
 - it will get easier
 - developmental vs chronological age
 - empathy for neurodiversity and exceptional needs
 - skill building can get more robust and more accessible with support
 - dosing to pave new neural paths



- **Blocked Care:**

- A protective response in educators where a student's blocked trust leads to an educator's suppression of connection and caregiving.

Students with a history of trauma may have a very limited intimacy barrier, one that initially compels them to push teachers and classmates away. This is the survival mechanism of a trauma-affected student letting you know that intimacy can only improve in small increments over time.

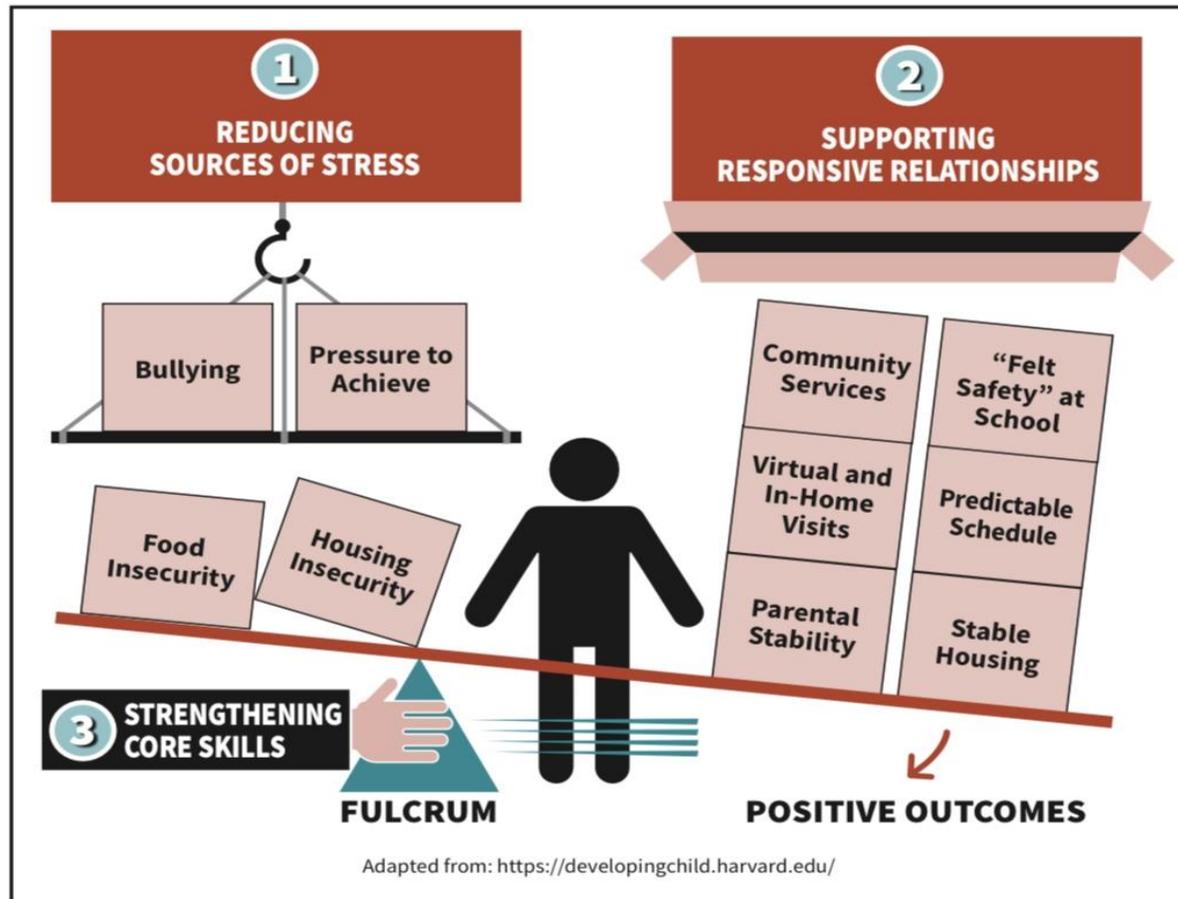
WHAT HELPS??

- P.A.C.E model
- Dosing
- Complete the stress cycle
- Community care
- Understanding how resilience is built
- Remembering your WHY



- **Resilience is...**
- The ability to overcome hardships
- This ability is grown, it is not something you are born with







The single most common factor for children who develop **resilience** is **AT LEAST ONE STABLE AND COMMITTED RELATIONSHIP** with a supportive parent, caregiver, or another adult.

- Dr. Jack Shonkoff, Harvard's Center for the Developing Child



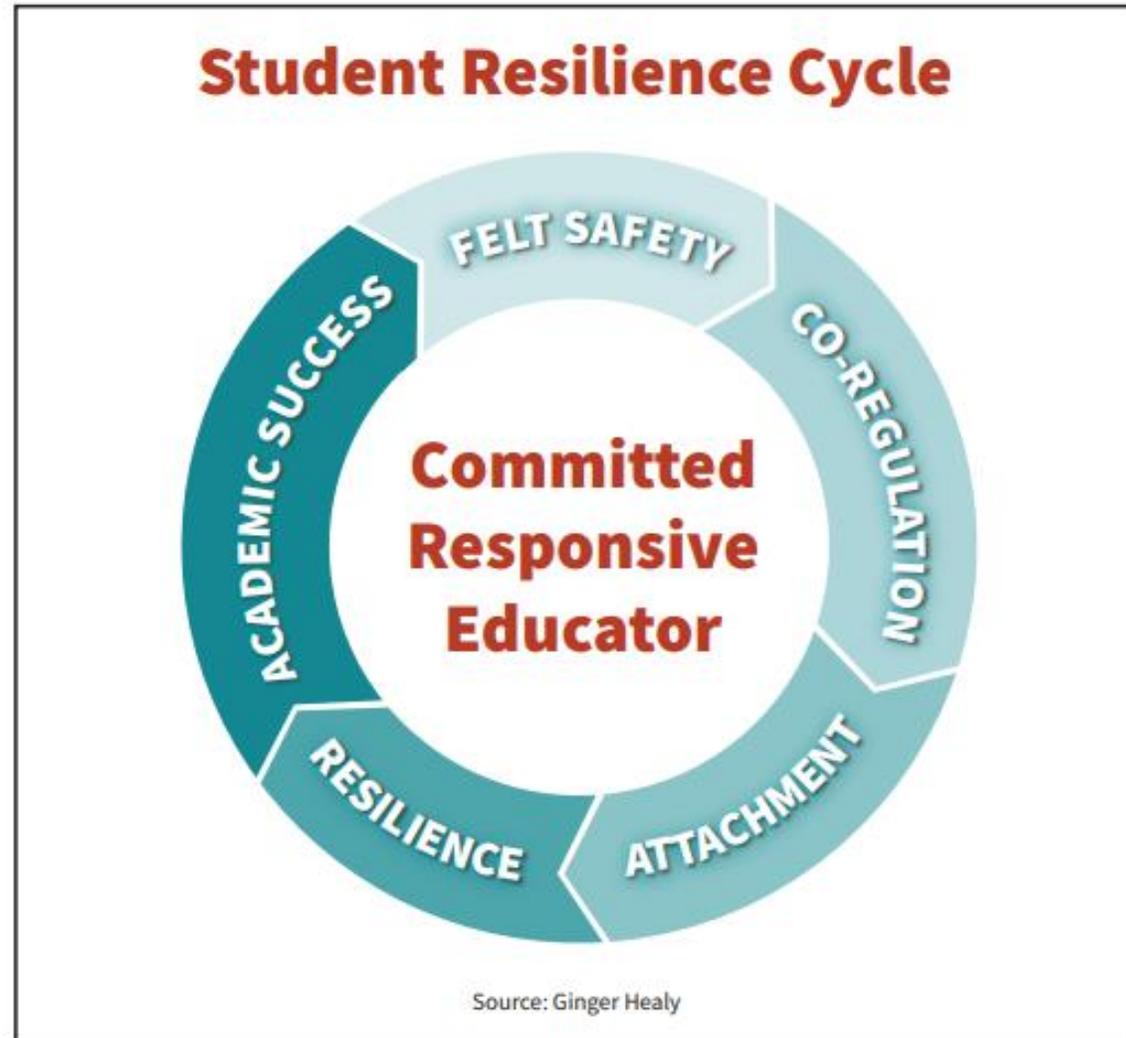
MICHAEL  **JR.**

You Are the Strategy

Fire can warm or consume, water can quench or drown, and wind can caress or cut.

And so it is with human relationships: we can both create and destroy, nurture and terrorize, traumatize and heal each other.

-Bruce Perry



General Attachment & Trauma Suggested Resources

- ATN's *Essentials of Therapeutic Parenting* - Webinars and Parenting Cards.
<https://creatingtraumasensitiveschools.org/store/>
- *Center for the Developing Child* - Harvard University <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/>
- *The Whole-Brain Child & The Power of Showing Up* - Daniel J. Siegel, MD and Tina Payne Bryson, Ph.D.
- *Beyond Behaviors, Body Brain Parenting* - Mona Delahooke Ph.D
- *The Deepest Well*- Nadine Burke Harris, M.D.
- *Building the Bonds of Attachment* - Daniel Hughes, PhD
- *The Connected Child* - Karyn Purvis, PhD & David Cross, PhD
- *No Drama Discipline* - Daniel J. Siegel, MD
- *What Happened to you?, The Boy Who Was Raised as A Dog* - Bruce Perry, MD
- *The Body Keeps Score* - Bessel van der Kolk, MD



Trauma-Informed School Resources

- ***Building Trauma-Sensitive Schools: Your Guide to Creating Safe, Supportive Learning Environments for All Students.*** Jen Alexander, 2019.
- ***Reaching and Teaching Children who Hurt: Strategies for your Classroom.*** Dr. Susan Craig, 2008.
- ***Teachers' Guide to Trauma: 20 Things Kids with Trauma Wish Their Teachers Knew.*** Dr. Melissa Sadin & Nathan Levy, 2017.
- ***Trauma-Informed Teaching and IEPs: Strategies for Building Student Resilience.*** Melissa Sadin, EdD, 2022.
- ***The Re-Set Process: Trauma-Informed Behavior Strategies.*** Dyane Lewis Carrere and Wynne Kinder, 2020.
- ***Connections Over Compliance.*** Lori Desautels, PhD, 2022.
- ***The Regulated Classroom.*** Emily Read Daniels, 2020.
- ***Building a Trauma-Informed Restorative School.*** Joe Brummer and Margaret Thorsborne, 2021





RESOURCES

When Self-Care Doesn't Work

Helen W. Mallon

Burnout: The Secret to Unlocking the Stress Cycle

Amelia and Emily Nagoski

The Center on Trauma and Children

University of Kentucky

The Deepest Well

Nadine Burke Harris

ACEs

<https://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/aces/index.html>

ATTACHMENT & TRAUMA NETWORK

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AttachTrauma.org

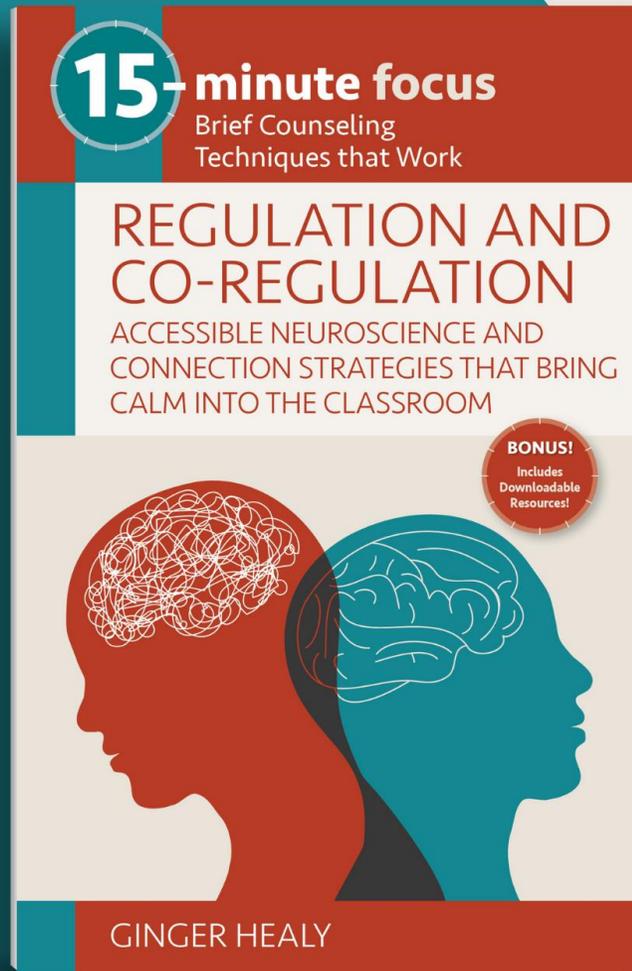


Trauma Sensitive Children's Books

- ***Some Days I Flip my Lid***-Kellie Doyle Bailey
- ***Riley the Brave, Hello Anger, What's Inside your Backpack***-Jessica Sinarski
- ***What to Do When You Worry Too Much*** - Dawn Huebner
- ***Views from our Shoes***- Donald Meyer
- Mind Up Curriculum

My New Book!

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&
Relational**

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Join Ginger & Julie as we share our trauma-informed and attachment-focused knowledge AND stories from our lives and those we've served through the Attachment & Trauma Network, Inc.

2024 Creating Trauma-Sensitive Schools Conference

And Communities

CREATING
TSS  2024
Conference

Largest Gathering of Trauma-Informed Educators!

In-Person February 18-20, 2024

At Hilton Anatole, Dallas, TX

Virtual February 22-23, 2024



Keynotes and Special Guests:

Dr. Nadine Burke-Harris

Dr. Lori Desautels

Dr. Stuart Shanker

Susan Hopkins, M. Ed.



How is this Important to Educators?



When childhood adversity is experienced, and attachment needs aren't met:

- Inner Working Model is skewed
- Brain development is impacted
- Nervous system is sensitized
- You are going to see dysregulation in the classroom
- Our expectations need to shift
- We need to respond in a trauma-sensitive way
- Academic success is directly linked to emotionally safe relationships
- Understand the brain and nervous system



PUT YOUR OXYGEN MASK ON FIRST

PFFT. Just an oxygen mask? You need scuba gear!
A full tank! Diving buddy!

WHAT YOU NEED

A plan, tools, resources, equipment, training and support!

DON'T PUT YOURSELF AT RISK

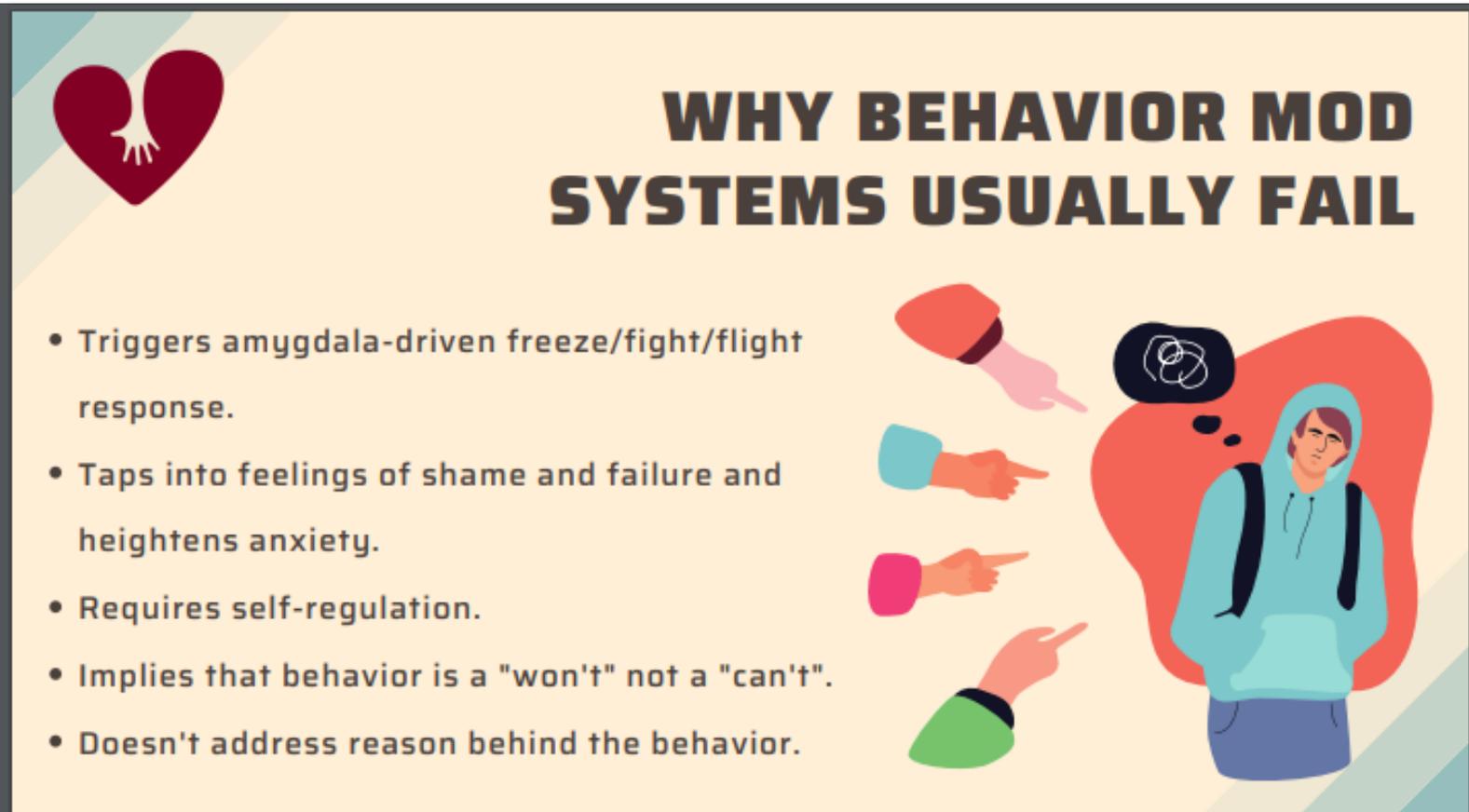
Emotionally or physically.

ENTER THE WATER SAFELY

You can go underwater, just do it safely because you will be under for long amounts of time.

Dr. Nadine Burke Harris

Managing behaviors with point sheets, sticker charts, level systems, seclusion, or restraint makes things worse. They are shame and fear-based and assume behaviors are deliberate. Bottom-up behaviors don't respond because they are brain-based stress responses that require understanding, compassion, and felt safety.



WHY BEHAVIOR MOD SYSTEMS USUALLY FAIL

- Triggers amygdala-driven freeze/fight/flight response.
- Taps into feelings of shame and failure and heightens anxiety.
- Requires self-regulation.
- Implies that behavior is a "won't" not a "can't".
- Doesn't address reason behind the behavior.

The infographic includes a red heart icon with a white hand inside, and an illustration of a person in a blue hoodie with a backpack being pointed at by four hands of different colors (red, blue, pink, green). A thought bubble above the person contains a tangled knot.

Avoid Shame-Based Management



What we don't need in the midst of struggle is **shame** for being HUMAN.

~Brene Brown



Our students are children. They didn't wake up with **shame**—people and systems created a world that puts **shame** on them. We must actively work not to “fix” students, but to uproot and undo the systems that try and **shame** us, and move toward a world rooted in love and care.

~

Christina Torres