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**Self-regulation:**  
Tools for children and  
families

“ IT'S NOT THE LOAD THAT  
BREAKS YOU DOWN.

IT'S THE WAY YOU CARRY IT. ”

- C.S. Lewis

# Resilience

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- Wellness strategies
- Self-regulation

# Wellness strategies

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- Sleep
  - Touch
  - Play
  - Learning
  - Connection
  - Down time
- Increase by 30 minutes
  - Increase hugs
  - Increase play by a game twice a week
  - Celebrate all learning
  - 1-2 meals together
  - Explain why down time is need for everyone & no screens for 1 hr a night

# Self-regulation

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- Defined as the adaptation of one's own thoughts, feelings, and actions in a way that facilitates the engagement in and completion of goal-directed activities (Blair & Razza, 2007; Zimmerman, 2000).

# Self-regulation

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- Behaviorally: Self-regulation is the ability to act in your long-term best interest, consistent with your deepest values.
- Emotionally: Self-regulation is the ability to calm yourself down when you're upset and comfort yourself up when you're experiencing a big emotion.

# Talk at your tables

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- Who do you know that demonstrates good self-regulation skills? Why do you think that?

# Self-regulation

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- Foundational role in promoting wellbeing across the lifespan, including physical, emotional, social and economic health and educational achievement.
- Supporting self-regulation development in youth is an investment in society, as stronger self-regulation predicts higher income, better financial planning, fewer risk behaviors like substance use and violence, and decreased health costs.

# When do we start self-regulating?

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- Self-regulation processes are already evident by the end of the first year of life with infants showing individual differences in their attention regulation.  
(Rothbart & Bates, 2006)

# Benefits of self-regulation

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- Strong and consistent improvement in cognitive regulation
- Small but significant improvements in health, mental health, and delinquency
- Substantial benefits from mindfulness programs in particular, across both cognitive and emotional regulation, as well as for stress and mental health

# Why do we need Self-regulation?

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<b>Regulated</b>	<b>Dysregulated</b>
Maximal Cognitive & Motor Functioning	Compromised Cognitive & motor functioning
Intentional	Reactive
Creative Problem Solving	Repeating Same Mistakes
Transformative	Coercive or Avoidant

# Attachment

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Parent-child bonds provide the keys  
to self-regulation

- Security- A safe predictable environment
- Attunement – Deep listening and acceptance
- Soothing – Using all five sense to comfort & calm

# What get's in the way of developing self-regulation skills?

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- Lack of safety and attunement
- Insecure resources
- Trauma

# Internal Signs of dysregulation

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- exhibiting emotions too intense for a situation
- difficulty calming down when upset
- difficulty decreasing negative emotions
- being less able to calm themselves
- difficulty understanding emotional experiences
- becoming avoidant or aggressive when dealing with negative emotions
- experiencing more negative emotions

# External signs of dysregulation

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- exhibiting more extreme emotions
- difficulty identifying emotional cues
- difficulty recognizing their own emotions
- focusing on the negative
- difficulty controlling their attention
- being impulsive
- difficulty decreasing their negative emotions
- difficulty calming down when upset

# Trauma

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A traumatic injury is when a person experiences a real or perceived threat to life, bodily, integrity, or sanity and our ability to cope is overwhelmed and (engagement of the sympathetic nervous system).

- Big T – Big events that people recognize as intense and overwhelming.  
War, Death, Disasters, Abuse, Neglect, Illness, Accidents
- Little t – Smaller events that cause people to feel overwhelmed and powerless, rejection, loss, embarrassments.

# Trauma

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- Trauma occurs when an intolerable event or an experience occurs that engages the sympathetic nervous system
- Trauma is stored in the body
- Past memories can trigger or stress response
- Dissociation is a protective mechanism in response to trauma
- In the moment a trauma event is occurring you cannot choose your response

# Trauma Therapy

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- Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing
- Havening
- Sensorimotor
- Internal Family Systems

# Growing self-regulation

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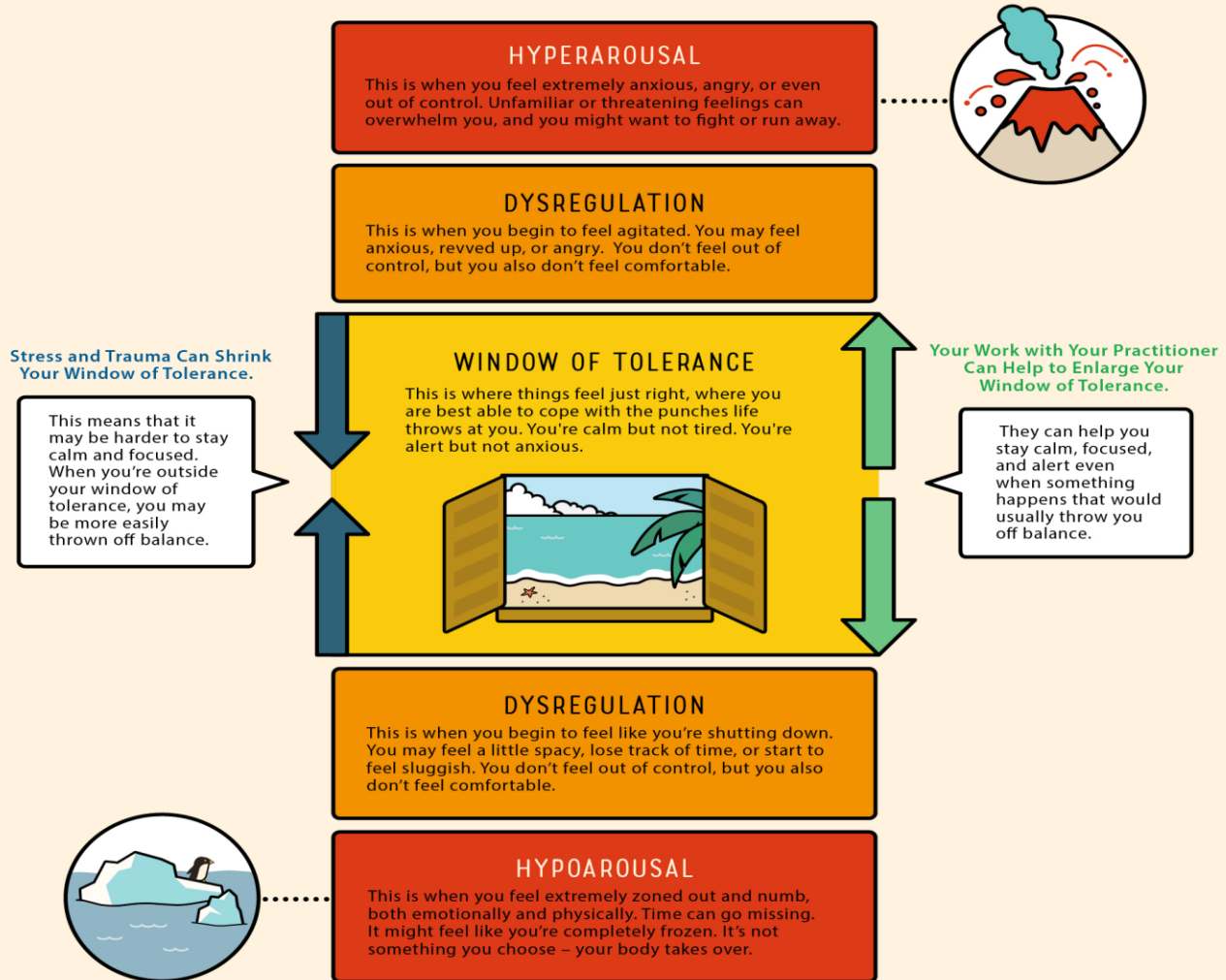
- Taking good care of our bodies
- Keeping your body calm
- Curiosity around your thoughts and feelings
- Comforting strategies
- Mindful Pleasure
- Minimize numbing

# Compassion calms

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- Connect first
- Hand on the heart and belly
- Deep breaths
- Affirming statement

# How Trauma Can Affect Your Window of Tolerance



# Feelings

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- Feelings are not good or bad
- They are information from our bodies
- They give us cues about our environment
- They give us cues about our body –sensations or images

Teach “Window of Tolerance”

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# Still able to developing tools....

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- Self-regulation supports during this developmental period are critical.
- Especially important for youth with a history of adverse childhood experiences; for this group, interventions during adolescence and young adulthood may reduce their risk and facilitate resilience.

# Early and Mid-adolescence (i.e., 11-15 yrs)

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- Brain systems that seek rewards and process emotions are more developed than cognitive control systems responsible for good decision-making and future planning.
- Self-regulation is developmentally “out of balance” at this age.
- Tremendous growth in self-regulation skills continues throughout young adulthood, which can be strengthened with instruction and support.

# Self-Regulation Skills Developing During Adolescence

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- Persisting on complex, long-term projects (e.g., applying to college)
- Problem-solving to achieve goals (e.g., managing work and staying in school)
- Delaying gratification to achieve goals (e.g., saving money to buy a car)
- Self-monitoring and self-rewarding progress on goals
- Guiding behavior based on future goals and concern for others
- Making decisions with broad perspective and compassion for self and others
- Seeking help when stress is unmanageable or the situation is dangerous

# Curiosity builds insight

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- Was there a moment when you knew that you might explode?
- What was happening in your body?
- When you feel that big feeling bubbling up what else can you do?
- What works for you to make the feeling a little smaller?

# Volcano

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Where is my red zone?



Where is my green zone?

When you feel your volcano about to explode...

1.  Take a deep breath
2.  Keep your ideas in your mind
3.  Wait your turn
4.  Let your important ideas out of your mouth



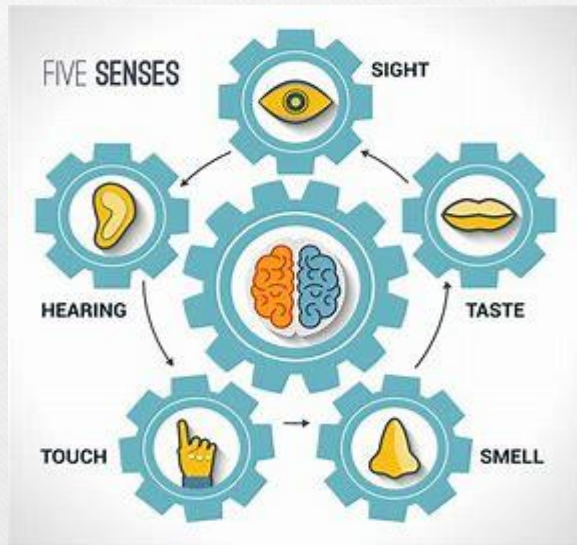
# Stay curious

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- How is their behavior protecting them?
- What are they avoiding by acting out?
- Does their behavior happen with certain adults?
- Which particular feelings are the most uncomfortable for the youth?
- What is the next step in getting calm? Not two or three steps ahead

# Soothing strategies for self-regulation

## FIVE SENSES



- Nature pictures
- Essential oils
- Soft fabrics
- Mindful eating
- New song



# Talk at your tables

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- Write down all the strategies you have that use the five senses. Talk about which one works really well.

## The Whole-Brain Child

Daniel Siegel, MD and Tina Bryson PhD

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- Don't try to move kids (or adults) from their downstairs brains into their upstairs brains.
- Don't try to move kids (or adults) from their right brain to their left brain.
- Meet them where they are and help the brain make the connections!

# Teach about their stress response

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- Our stress response is complex and designed to help us survive
- Your stress response
  - Helps you pay attention
  - Fight Flee or Freeze
  - Tend and Befriend

## Behavior is communication

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- Instead of extinguishing the behavior
- Build skills that lead to resilience and well-being
- Extinguish: “You’ve got to stop punching your sister when you are mad.”
- Build skills: “It’s okay to be mad, but what are some of the ways you can respond without hitting?”
- “I know you are scared to try that on your own, let’s practice smaller steps.”

# Naming it to tame it

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- Witnessing an emotional experience helps the child gain awareness
- Describe what you see with compassion. “I saw that your face got tight and you squeezed your fist.”
- Ask them questions about the feelings. “I am wondering where you are feeling that anger? Where did you feel it first?”

# Build empathy- “Yes Brain”

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- Fine tune “empathy” radar
- Provide a language of empathy and care
- Expand the circle of empathy
- “I wonder why he reacted like that?” or “When you hit her what did you notice on her face?”
- “I feel mad when you don’t talk to me at school.”
- Talk to your kids about how others are being hurt and strategies to help your community

# Delay gratification

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- Play games that help children notice when they delay gratification they feel more empowered
- Build personal rewards into setting boundaries

# Finding Meaning

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"Turbulence  
teaches grounding.  
The edge teaches breath.  
Falling teaches rising.  
Breaking teaches building.  
Pain teaches healing.  
Resentment  
teaches boundaries.  
Failing teaches rebirth.  
Harmony continuously  
seeks itself.  
Remember, it is simply a  
circle continuing on,  
and you are supported."

Victoria Erickson  
Author, Rhythms & Roads

# Practice

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- Take a few moments to list your most meaningful roles, relationships, activities or goals. In what parts of your life are you most likely to experience joy love, laughter, learning, or a sense of purpose.
- Would you describe any of these roles as stressful?
- What is both meaningful and causing you stress?

# Practice curiosity

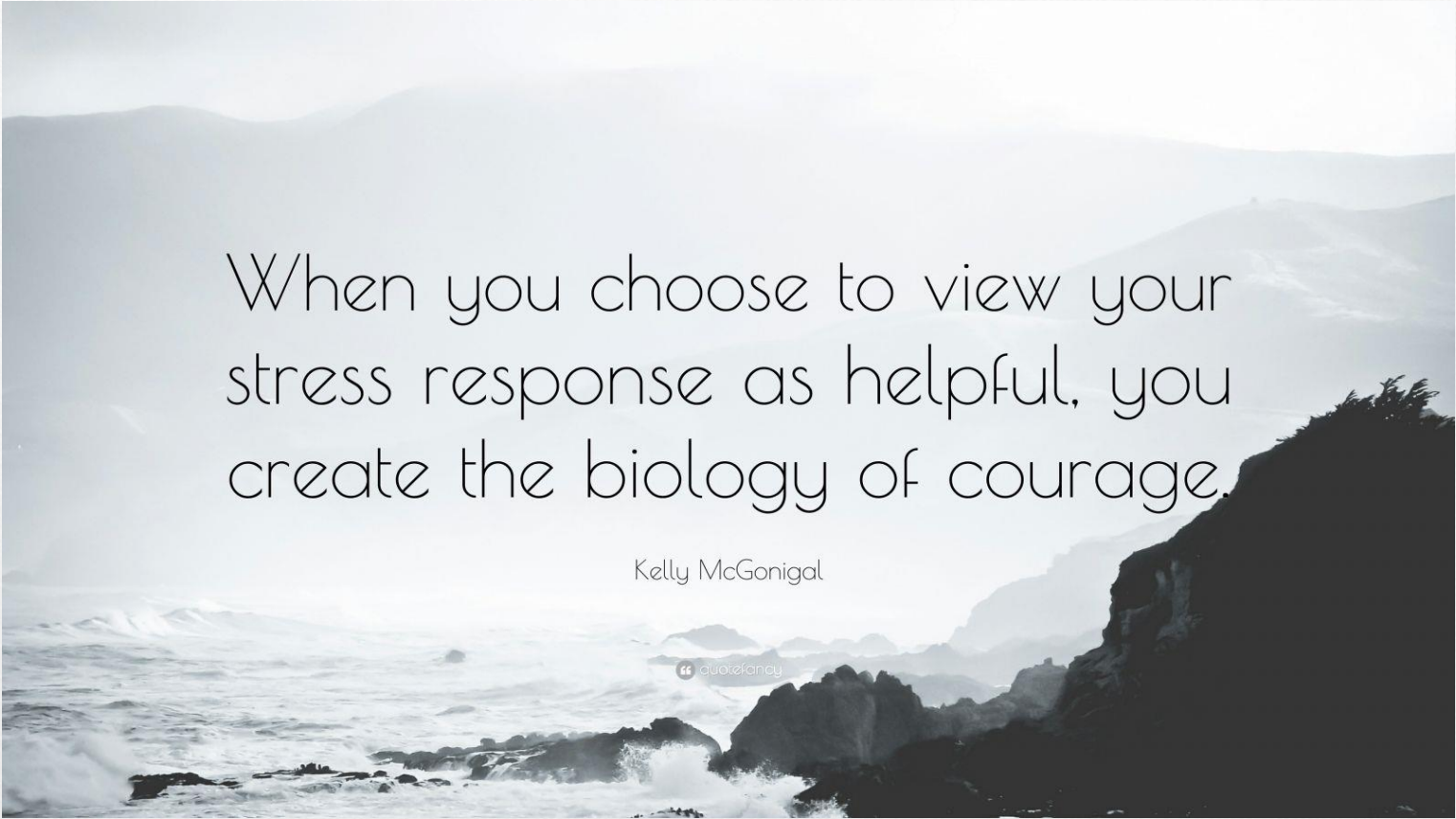
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- If you are not curious... you are probably triggered.
- Notice what you are feeling (Emotions)
- Notice what you are feeling (Body Sensations)
- Self-regulate – Breathe
- Get support from other people - Listening

# Questions to ask

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- “What would you like to see different about your current situation?”
- “What are we doing that is helping or hurting this situation?”
- “What will happen if you don’t change?”
- “What is the BEST thing you could imagine that could result from changing



When you choose to view your  
stress response as helpful, you  
create the biology of courage.

Kelly McGonigal

“ quotejancu

# Reframing pain

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- Future facing story – “That was really hard and I know that we can learn from this together.”
- Positive affirmation - “You are working really hard to survive. You are really strong.”
- Teach body posture: “Brave body” vs “Scared body”
- Remind them about choosing: “Which struggle do you prefer?”

# Meaning and Empathy

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- Writing about our values helps the children see meaning in their lives, makes them feel more loving, connected and empathetic toward others
- Writing about the values makes people feel more powerful, increases pain tolerance enhances self-control, and reduces unhelpful rumination after a stressful experience.

“Our job is to walk with our children through their difficult moments with connection and empathy, allowing them to feel, to be active participant in problem-solving, and to discover the depth of the their own capacity.”

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Dan Siegel

Tina Payne Bryson

# Relationships

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- Although self-regulation is an internal capacity, its development and use depend on predictable, responsive and supportive environments and relationships. The early development of these important self-regulation skills takes place in social and interpersonal contexts, beginning with attachment with caregivers and parenting behaviors (cf. McClelland et al., 2010; Siegel, 2012).

# Parent self-regulation

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- What kind of balance does the parent have?
- Can parents recover and soothe themselves?
- Can a parent tolerate the child's discomfort or are they too disconnected?
- Are they trying to control the child rather than self-soothing?

# Wellness is a practice

- Does my child seem frequently grumpy or tired?
- Is my child too busy?
- Are they getting enough sleep?
- Am I saying “Hurry up” a lot?
- Is my child spending quality time connecting with others?
- Is my child getting enough exercise?
- Am I stress or grumpy?
- Am I too busy?
- Am I getting enough sleep?
- Am I rushing?
- Do I have time to connect with others?
- Am I getting enough exercise?

# Attunement

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- Allow the child to tell you the story
- Reflect back what you see and hear
  - “I see your breathing hard and your face looks angry, is that right?”
  - “I notice that when you were talking your words are coming out fast.”
- Validate feelings
  - “I hear that you feel angry and I care about that.”
  - “What is happening for you?”
  - “Do you think there is more that I need to understand?”
  - “Is there something that I am doing that is helping or hurting this situation?”

# Mindfulness

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- Mind-body interventions referenced here include yoga, meditation, and martial arts. Mindfulness is an increasingly mainstream technique of intentionally focusing attention on one's emotions and thoughts in the present moment, and accepting these thoughts and feelings without judgment.

Murray, D. W. & Rosanbalm, K. (2017)..

# Taking a pause

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- Pause with empathy
- Pause prevents reactivity
- Build a ritual around pausing before, during, and after escalation

# Responding

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- Breathing for ten breaths
- Checking to see if there are any alternative views
- Teach compassion and breathing
- In the session ask for a breath and reward it
- Do you have another part that sees this differently?
- Hand on your heart & your belly

# Asking permission before problem solving

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“I think you are really strong and I bet if you can take some deep breathes you will come up with a plan to handle this situation.”

“You are showing that you really care about other people’s feelings and I like that about you. After you get calm you will be able figure out how to care about that person and yourself at the same time.”

“Are you ready to work on a solution? What have you already thought about doing that might help this situation?”

“What do you think might work to help and what do you think might make things worse?”

# Parents can help by focusing

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- SELF-REGULATE
- ATTUNMENT: Help the kids notice feelings through validation
- COACH, PRACTICE and VISUALIZE
- BOUNDARIES versus using control

# Practice

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# Mentoring

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- It was found that the group with high-quality mentoring relationships outperformed the comparison group in both future planning style and goal-setting style. Lau, W. S. Y., Zhou, X., & Lai, S. M. K. (2017).
- The development of mentoring-relationship quality, future-planning style, and career goal setting among adolescents from a disadvantaged background. *PsyCh Journal*, 6, 76–82. doi:10.1002/pchj.152

**Self-compassion-being supportive and kind to yourself, especially in the face of stress and failure-is associated with more motivation and better self-control.**

Kelly McGonigal

quote fancy

# Looking within

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- We are trained to look calm when we are not...
- Are we self-regulating?
- Do we get stuck in reacting?
- How do we relate to team members?
- Are we being vulnerable?

# What is secondary traumatic stress?

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- Traumatic learning through witnessing or interacting with trauma survivors.
- May occur after daily exposure to traumas in conjunction with empathetic response.
- May occur after one overwhelming stressful event.

# What blocks resiliency?

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- Fear blocks curiosity
- Thinking is stuck on negative beliefs
- Not feeling our feelings/developing armor
- Being silent
- Lacking awareness of how others receive us
- Survival communication

# Stress paradox

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- High levels of stress are associated with both distress and well-being
- Higher levels of stress seem to go along with things we want: love, health, and satisfaction with our lives.
- Feeling stress can be a barometer for how engaged you are in your life
- Stressful experiences challenge us to find meaning in our lives

# Giving and Receiving

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“We’d like to believe that there are two kinds of people in the world – those who need help and those who offer help.

The truth is that we are both. We need to give and we need to need.”

-The Compassion Collective

# Receiving

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- Giving and receiving are intimately tied to connection
- Receiving help is a sign of weakness
- Without being able to receive
  - You cannot receive joy
  - It drains your energy
  - You have a false sense of power

# Accepting Joy

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- Joy makes you younger, smarter, more intuitive, and healthier . . . with better hormonal balance and immune-system functioning. Joy even positively affects your metabolism.
- Joy has to be noticed and expanded to be
- Joy has an energy charge in the body

# Connection

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- Connection is one of the foundation of health
- We have a deep need to build connections
- How am I asking for feedback? Who is brave enough to give me feedback?
- Do we plan for triangulation and escalation in team work?

# Self-care during work

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- Relaxing your body
- Gratitude
- Awe
- Joy
- Connection
- Knowing our value
- Breath, music, walk
- Gratitude board
- Story telling
- Watch an inspiring video
- Asking questions
- Compassionate self-talk

# Talk in pairs

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- What are ways that can you increase your self-regulation during work?
- What are ways you can help your team members to value and practice self-regulation?

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“In my experience, healthily vulnerable people use every occasion to expand, change, and grow.”

-Fr. Richard Rohr

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