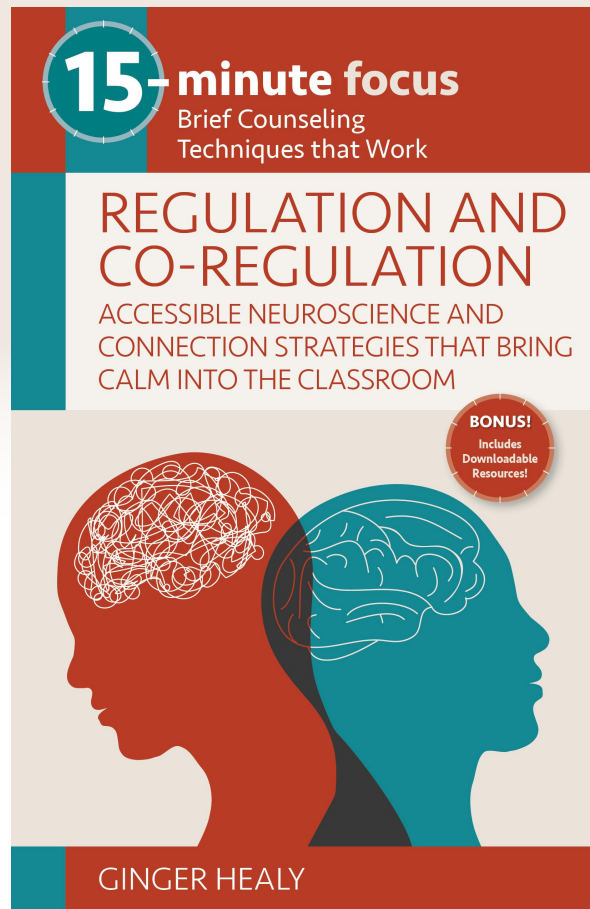


Reproducible Resources from



15-Minute Focus
Regulation and Co-Regulation:
Accessible Neuroscience and Connection Strategies
that Bring Calm into the Classroom
Written by: Ginger Healy
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Glossary of Key Terms

Adrenaline: A hormone produced in the adrenal glands released into the body as a stress response. It prepares the body to take action for fight or flight.

Amygdala: Regulates fear and alerts us to danger, keeps us safe, aware of our surroundings, and away from potential harm. The amygdala can send false alarms and can become faulty when it is overactivated.

Attachment: Lasting psychological and emotional connectedness between human beings.

Attunement: Being able to tune in to a child's emotional safety. Allowing them to feel seen, known, and understood emotionally. Providing nurture proactively rather than making the child earn it.

Blocked Care: When an adult becomes emotionally unavailable because their repeated attempts to care for and support a child are rejected. When a teacher tries to comfort or connect with a student in the classroom, they might get a range of push-away behaviors. Being continuously rejected, no matter your approach, is exhausting and deflating, and your adult brain may react with Blocked Care. It is often referred to as compassion fatigue.

Blocked Trust: When a child does not feel good enough about themselves to allow a safe connection.

Co-Regulation: Warm, responsive, soothing interactions between two people (both adults and children). Attuned, communicative, and reciprocal exchanges.

Cortisol: A stress hormone released during stress to alert the brain and body of a potential threat. High levels of Cortisol can cause brain fog, diminished memory, sleep deprivation, and dehydration, resulting in larger doses flooding the nervous system and creating more damage.

Discipline: A response to behavior focused on strategies where students learn and grow from the experience. Not the same as punishment.

Dopamine: The “reward chemical.” Provides a sense of motivation to continue pursuing a given reward or need. Requires reactivation once the need or reward has been achieved. A dopamine deficiency is linked to depression, fatigue, apathy, and boredom.

Dysregulation: When an individual's ability to manage and tolerate overwhelming emotions is compromised because the brain's cognitive state and body's emotional state are out of sync due to a real or perceived threat. Also called Emotional Dysregulation.

Endorphins: A pain-relieving hormone that lessens the prediction of pain, reduces stress, triggers euphoria, and stimulates the immune system.

Executive Functioning: Cognitive skills that allow us to focus our attention, plan and prioritize, be self-aware, have flexible thinking, and use memory recall.

Fawn: A response to trauma presenting as appeasement, approval seeking, offering help, attention (connection) seeking, validation seeking, and letting others dictate behavior.

Felt Safety: A subjective experience in which the brain and nervous systems feel genuinely safe and allow the child to relax and feel comfortable in a given environment. Just because the child is physically safe does not mean they truly feel safe.

Fight: A response to a trauma that presents as arguing, swearing, aggression, violence, challenging of authority, etc.

Flight: A response to trauma presenting as being distracted, hyperactivity, running, hiding, avoiding, and more.

Freeze: A response to trauma that presents as an inability to finish tasks, lack of motivation, withdrawal, “deer in the headlights,” inability to move or talk, daydreaming, etc.

Hippocampus: Part of the brain responsible for processing emotional information, as well as creating, consolidating, and maintaining memory. When the amygdala is activated, signals are sent to the hippocampus disrupting its ability to form memories. This part of the brain is critical for academic skills like memorization of facts and spatial memory.

Mirror Neurons: Neurons in the brain that reflect the behavior of others (i.e., the brain perceives emotions another person displays and mimics them).

Neurodivergent: A term used to describe someone with brain differences, such as Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), Tourette’s Syndrome, Epilepsy, and Dyslexia.

Neuroplasticity: How the physical architecture of the brain adapts to new experiences and information, reorganizes itself, and creates new neural pathways based on what a person sees, hears, touches, thinks, practices, etc. Anything we give attention to or emphasize in our interactions creates new links in the brain. Where attention goes, neurons fire, and where neurons fire, they wire or join.

Neurotypical: A term used to describe someone with typical neurological functioning or development.

Object Constancy/Object Permanence: The understanding that items and people still exist even when you can’t see or hear them. A blanket with a familiar smell, a picture, a plush, etc., can be used as tools for a child to keep/take with them to reinforce permanency and safety in a relationship when the adult is not near.

Oxytocin: The “love hormone” released through physical touch, proximity, or thinking about someone with whom we have an attachment, including pets.

Prefrontal Cortex: The part of the brain central to emotional regulation, reflective functioning, and executive functioning, including judgment and mood. The lower regions of the prefrontal cortex are instrumental in the regulation of emotions emerging from the limbic system.

Punishment: A negative response to behavior focused on a consequence that may deter repeated behavior and inflict suffering. Not the same as discipline.

Regulation: Skills used to calm physiological stress response systems, promoting emotional and behavioral flexibility through self-soothing. We are in this state when we can effectively manage, identify, and respond to our feelings and return to a balanced, calm state. Also called Emotional Regulation.

Resilience: The developed ability to adapt to hardship and move forward.

Restorative Practices: An innovative, trauma-informed approach to discipline and student accountability that moves away from punitive measures and focuses on healing, accountability, and change. Strategies in this field include community conferences, restorative circles, and victim/offender dialogues in both community and school settings.

Rupture and Repair: The concept that healthy development depends on making mistakes and then offering the appropriate apology and repairing the situation.

Scaffolding: Giving just enough support to allow children to learn skills independently, which helps them gain confidence in themselves yet recognize the benefits of support.

Serotonin: A mood stabilizing, “feel good” hormone contributing to mood regulation and happiness. Influences sleep cycles and digestion.

Stress: The neurological and physiological shift when someone encounters a stressor (threat). Not all stress is negative, but all stress causes a change within the body.

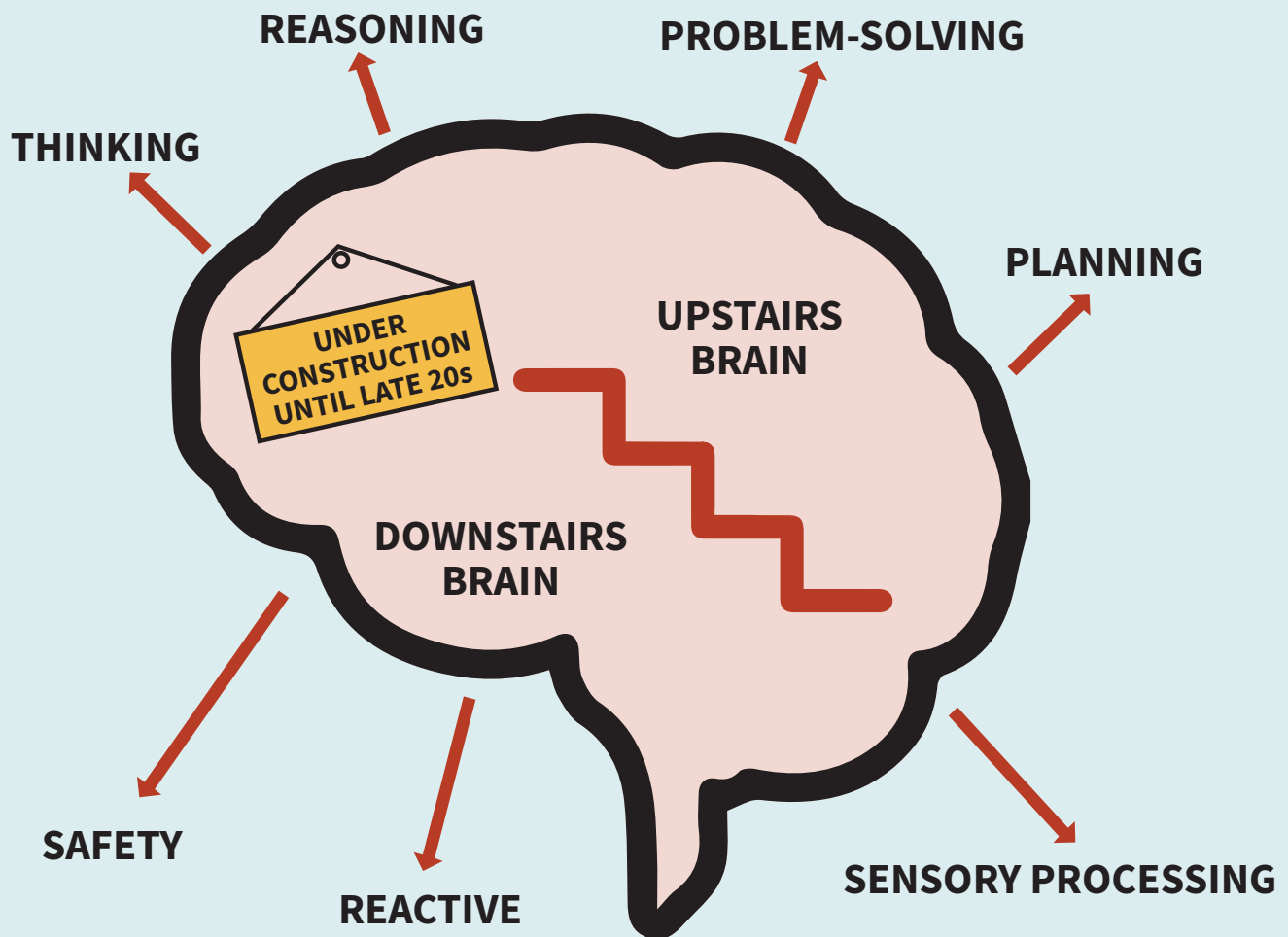
Stressors: Events that activate a person’s stress response; can be external or internal circumstances.

Toxic Stress: Chronic, excessive stress which exceeds a person’s ability to cope, especially in the absence of supportive caregiving from adults.

Trauma: A psychologically distressing event or pattern of events outside the range of everyday human experience. Impairs the proper functioning of the person’s stress-response system, making it more reactive or sensitive and often involving intense fear, terror, and helplessness. Trauma isn’t what happened to you but what happens inside of you as a response to what happened to you. The same event can happen to two people, but they may not experience it the same.

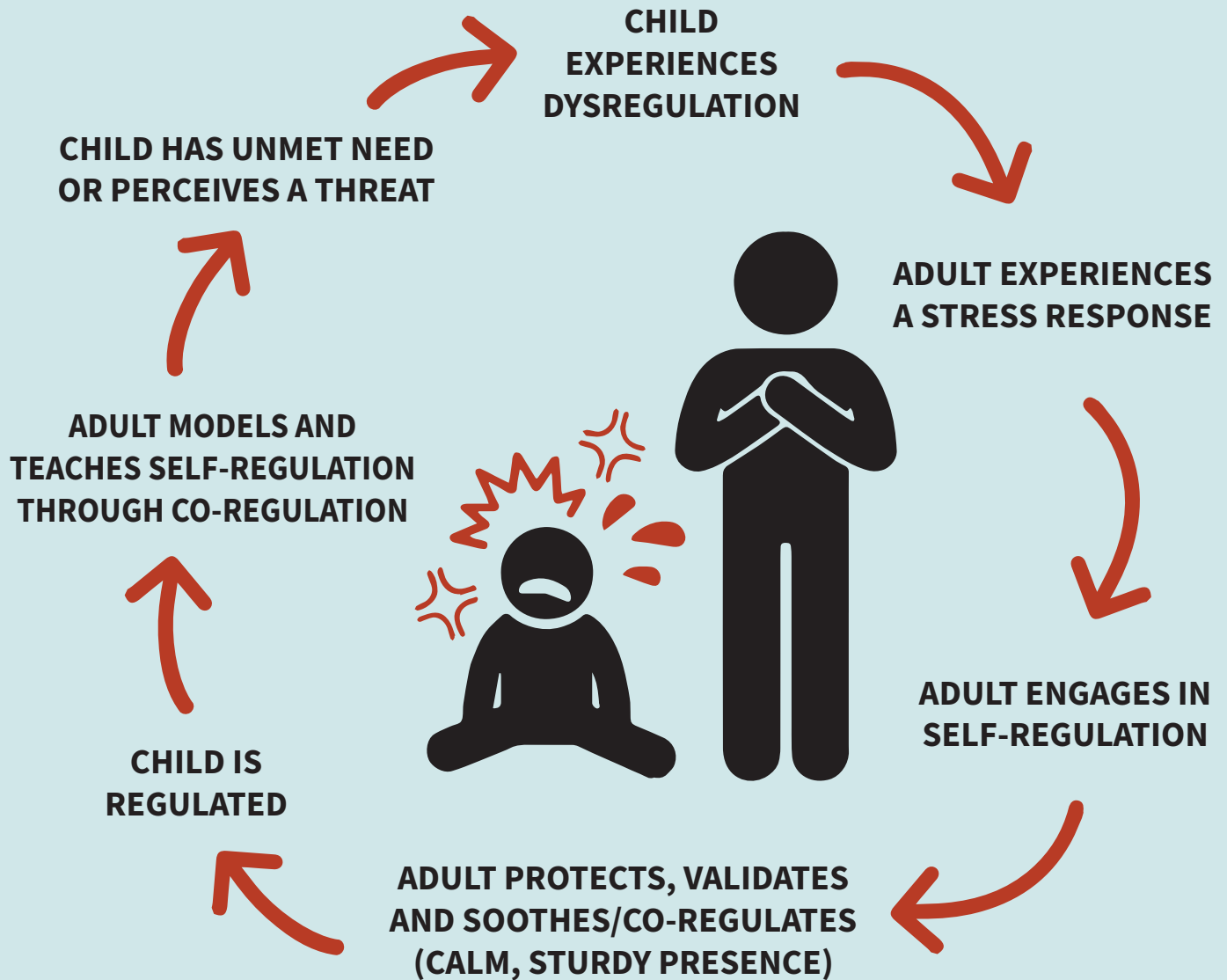
Trigger: A sensory/visceral stimulus or set of stimuli that evoke the memory of a stressful/traumatic condition, emotionally and physiologically returning the individual to the place or time of the initial trauma (whereas stressors cause an immediate state of stress, strain, or tension). Also defined as anything that creates an unwanted feeling, which can be external or internal but is different for everyone.

Understanding the Brain Will Help Us Understand Behavior



Source: www.gregsantucci.com Adapted from Siegal and Bryson (2011)

The Regulation Cycle



Adapted from <https://instituteofchildpsychology.com>

What We See

ANGER

HURTING OTHERS

LYING

HITTING

SELF-HARM

SABOTAGING

ISOLATION

“DEER IN THE HEADLIGHTS”

SEXUAL BEHAVIORS

SUPERFICIAL CHARM

NONCOMPLIANCE

RUNNING AWAY

STEALING

COPING

TRAUMA

FEELING
ALONE

FEARFUL

FEELINGS OF
REJECTION

FEELING
UNWORTHY

“I CAN ONLY
DEPEND ON ME.”

UNPREDICTABLE/
UNSAFE
ENVIRONMENT

FEELING UNLOVED

FEELING SHAMEFUL

SEE THEMSELVES
AS A BAD PERSON

FEELING WORTHLESS

What's Actually Happening

Adapted from www.AttachmentTraumaNetwork.org

Help Is a Phone Call Away



If a student or staff member needs assistance, call

I Need a Walk and Talk in Room _____

Use this code if you have a student that has tried calming strategies in the classroom, but needs to do a lap around the school with an adult. The goal is for an adult to take the student on a brief walk to co-regulate, and then return them to class.

I Need a Hangout in Room _____

Use this code if student is in the room and needs someone to come sit with them for a few minutes. The student may be shutting down or in the “freeze” response. The goal is that someone will come and co-regulate with the child and the child stays in the classroom.

I Need a Flip-Flop in Room _____

Use this code if you want someone to take over your lesson, so that you can co-regulate with the student.

I Need a Delivery in Room _____

Use this code if you have a student that needs to be escorted to the office for a referral. Referring staff will need to complete an office referral form and send work that can be done independently.

I Need to Clear Room _____

Use this code if a student is being aggressive or destructive. This code triggers an emergency response by the TCIS Team and other staff to support potentially transitioning the class to another location.

I Need an S&R for _____ (Student Initials/Room Number)

Use this code if a student has left your area without permission. Follow with an office referral form and work to be completed independently.

Source: Mayflower Mill Elementary

WHAT CO-REGULATION IS:	WHAT CO-REGULATION ISN'T:
Compassion During Struggle	Demands for Compliance
Relational Regulation	Behavior Focused
Modeling Emotional Management	Self- Implementation
Borrowing of Another's Calm	Grit
Compromise	Our Agenda
A Balance of Structure and Nurture	Imbalance of Structure and Nurture
Connecting with Curiosity	Assumption of Incompetence
Soft Tone of Voice	Sarcasm, Condescension, Judgment
Eye Level and Side-By-Side Intervention	Sending the Child Away/Time-Out
Emotionally/Physically Safe Environment	Unpredictability, Inconsistency
Accountability	Permissive
Boundaries	Free Reign
Discipline	Punitive

Rupture & Repair

Rupture is inevitable. Repair takes work.

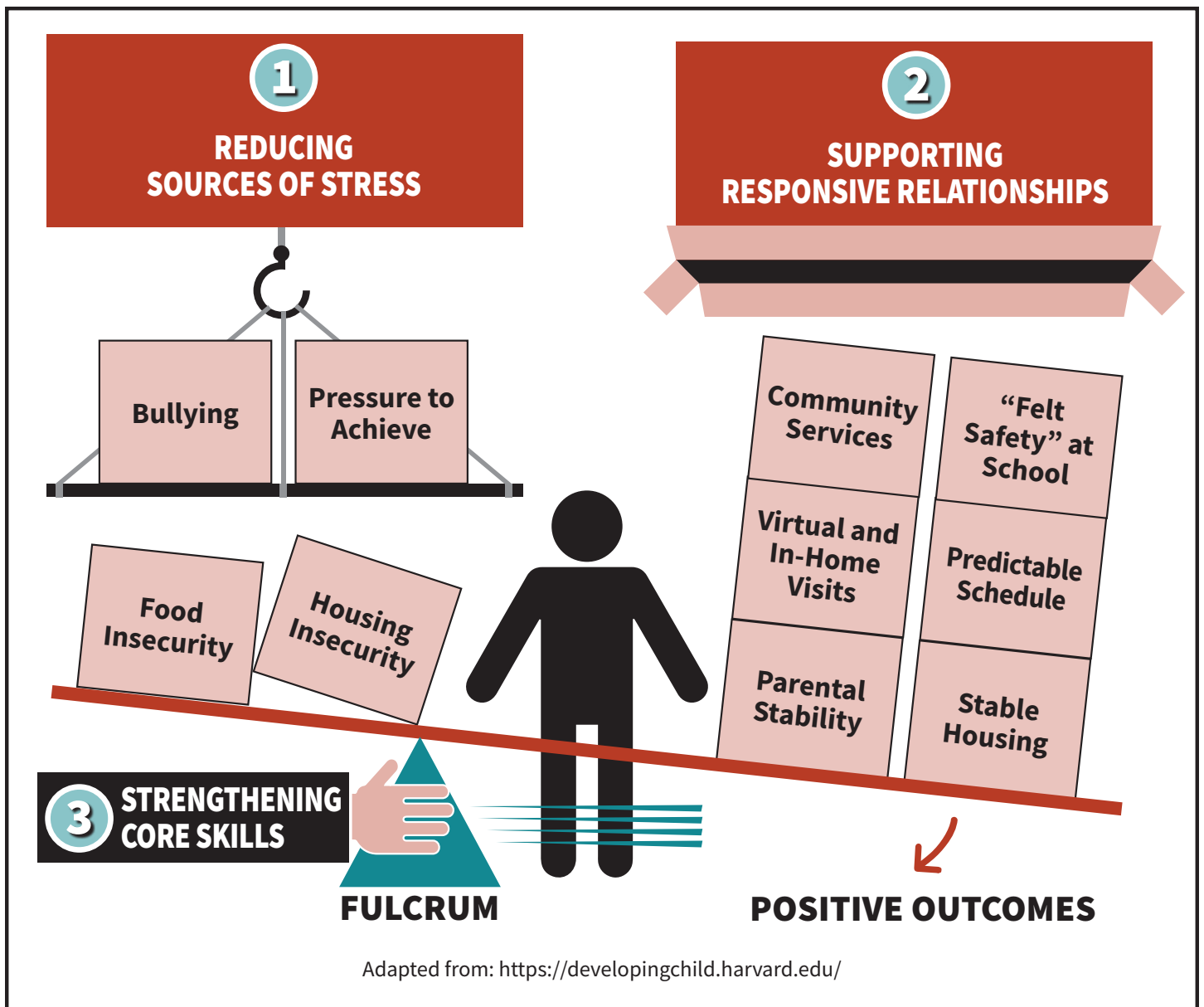
**Repair is more than
“I’m Sorry.”**

It’s also:

- Acknowledging that it happened
- Owning our role
- Naming the impact (and listening to their version)
- Talking through how it was co-created
- Planning a path forward



Source: Lindsay Braman



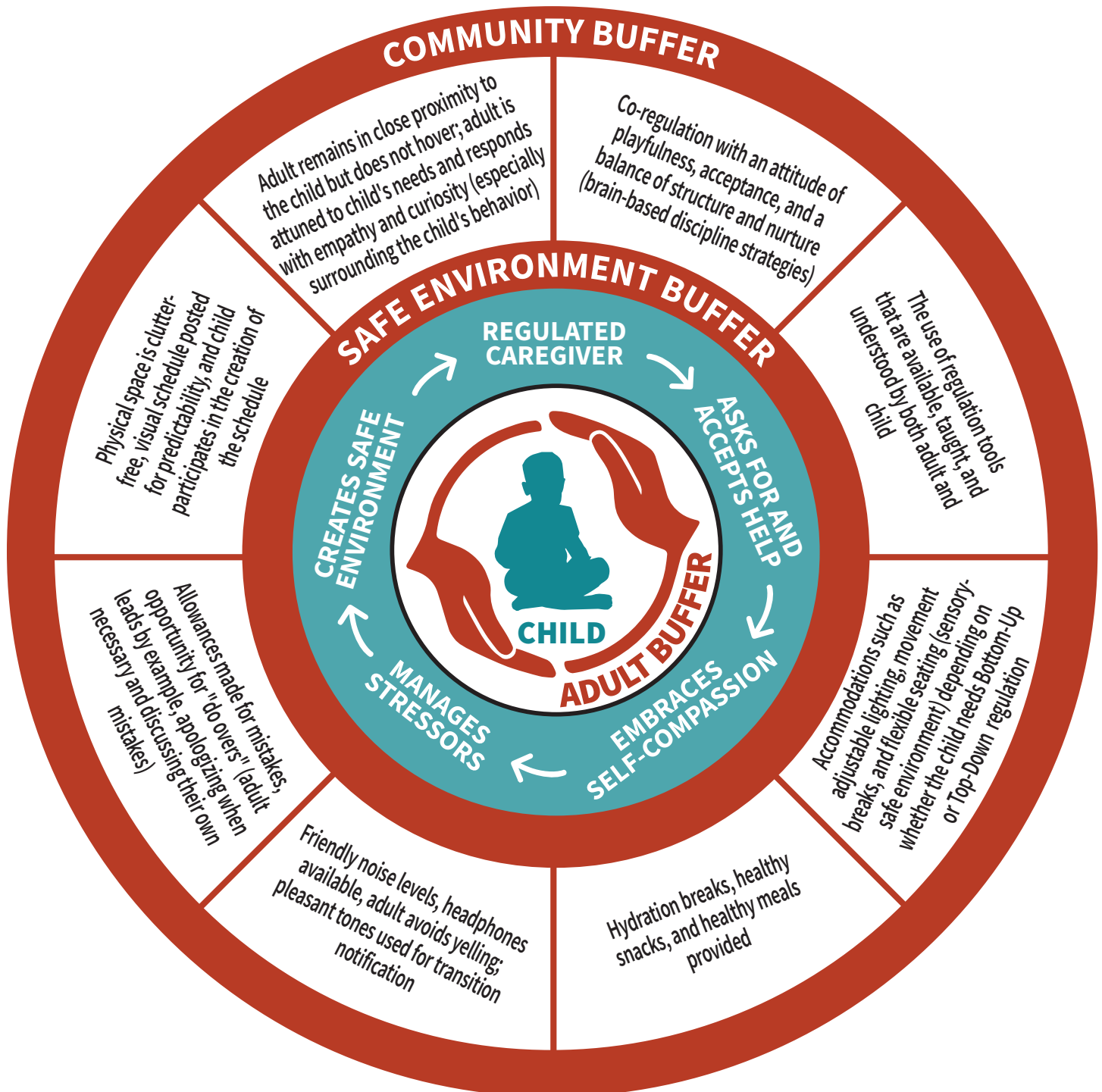
CO-ESCALATION	CO-REGULATION
Narrowed Eyes	Warm, Soft Gaze
Clenched Jaw	Relaxed Face
Tight Fists	Pause and Breathe
Standing Over	Kneeling Down
Lecturing	Fewer Words
Blaming	Avoiding Judgment
Shaming	Validating
Elevated Volume	Listening
Shallow Breathing	Deep Breathing
Quick Movements	Slowing Down

Student Resilience Cycle



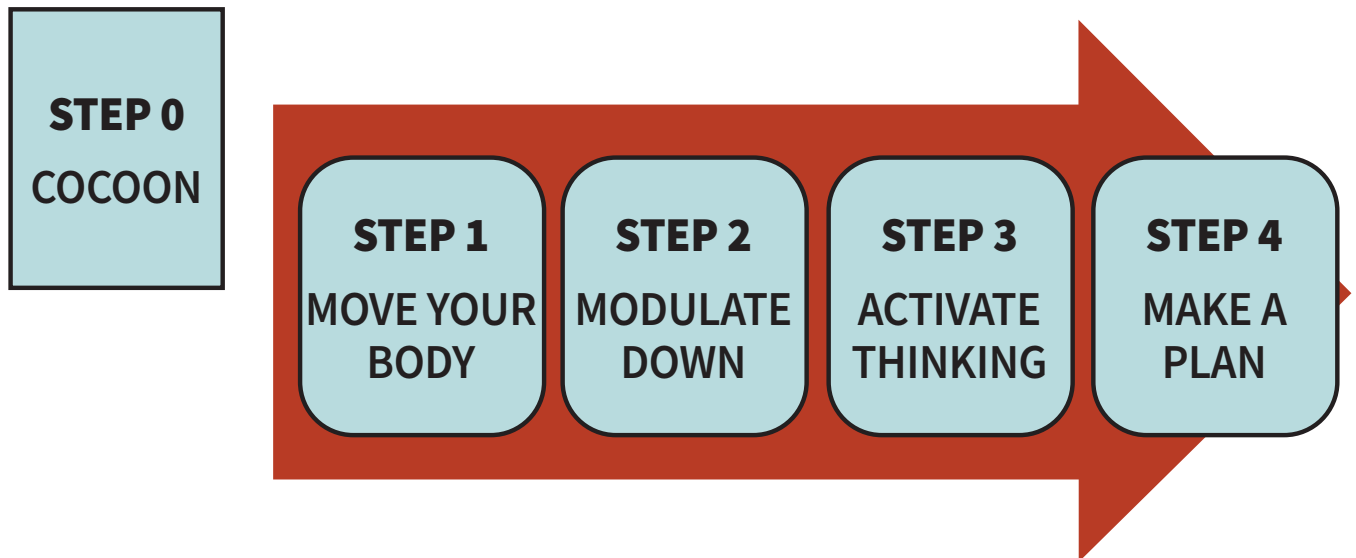
Source: Ginger Healy

Creating Physically and Emotionally Safe Environments as Buffers for Children



Source: Ginger Healy

The Re-Set Process™



The Re-Set Process adapted from Carrere et al 2020

- Establish Safety: Helping a child feel safe always comes first.
 - Keep language to a minimum
 - Provide comfort items (drink of water, weighted blanket)
 - Stay near, but don't hover
 - When the child is ready, get them moving with you. It will burn off stress chemicals, introduce feel-good hormones, and allow the child to tune in to you.
- Move for two minutes:
 - Lunges
 - Wide arm circles
 - Walking
- Transition from large to small movements (to continue burning off stress) for one minute:
 - Stretching
 - Shoulder shrugs
 - Tense and release
 - Deep breaths

- Activate their brain and get the hemispheres talking to each other for one minute:
 - Doodle
 - Make a list of their favorite things
- Discuss what happened for one minute:
 - Plan for the next time it happens in a non-shameful way
 - Laugh about mistakes everyone made

This whole process only takes a few minutes!

As parents/caregivers and educators, if our goal is compliance or obedience, we are communicating a need for control, power over, and relief from the felt chaos in our own nervous systems. If we desire connection when encountering a rough behavior, we can offer time, space, and a felt presence that invites the nervous system inside to rest while we figure it out.

Notes

(Updated from first printing)

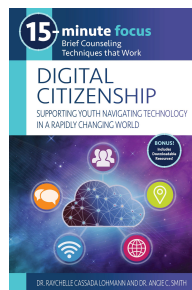
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15-minute focus

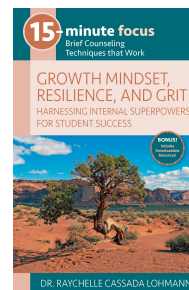
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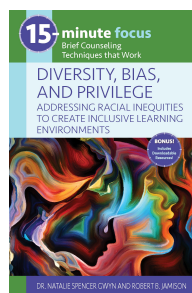
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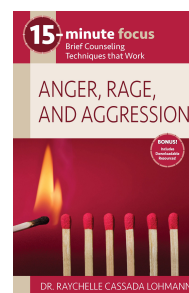
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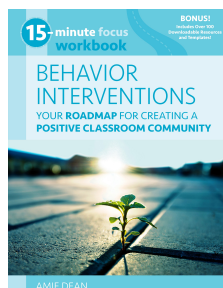
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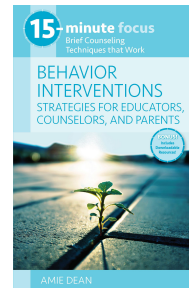
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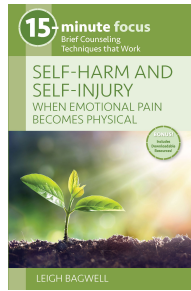
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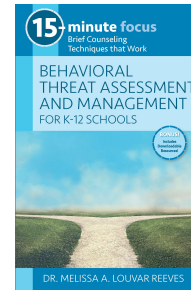


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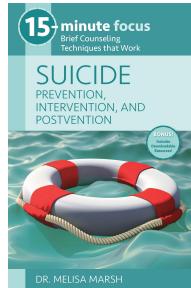
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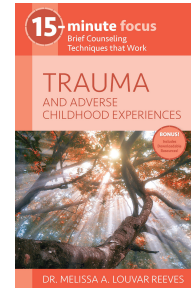
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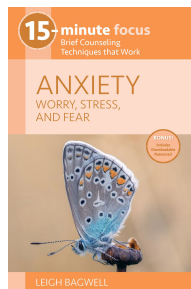
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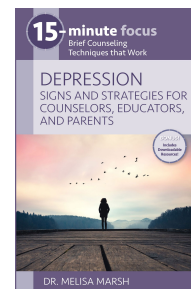
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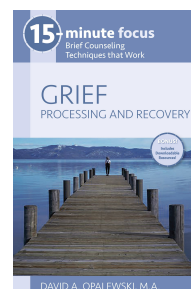
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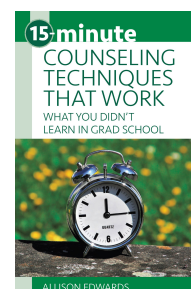
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