



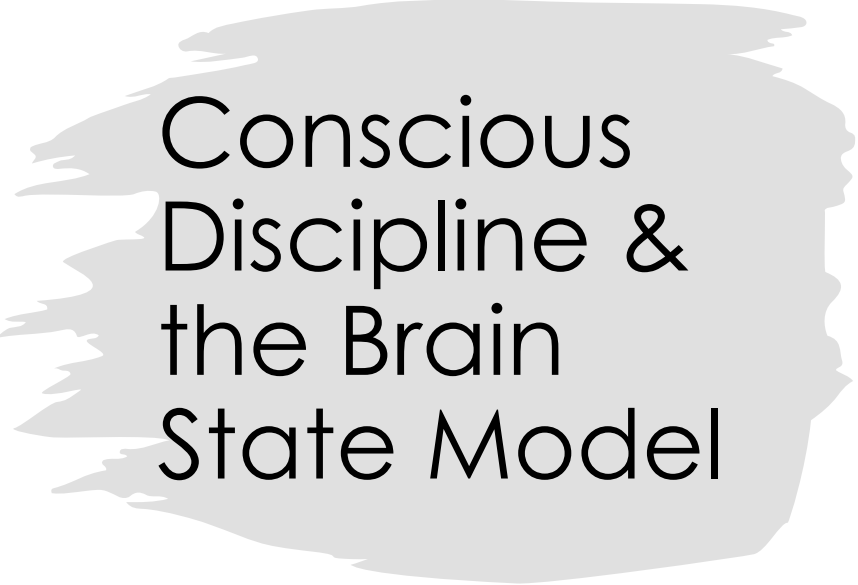
Brain States & Reflective Practice



Introductions

Objectives

- Identify the brain states of others to best guide interactions & responses for support with individuals.
- Identify behavioral expressions associated with the different brain states.
- Learn verbal & nonverbal cues as means of communication, how it relates to regulation, & how to use communication to support re-regulation in children.
- Incorporate reflective practices to respond & support children as they move through the brain states.
- Recognize the influence of your own internal state & the impact past experiences have in your work with children, caregivers, & families.



Conscious Discipline & the Brain State Model

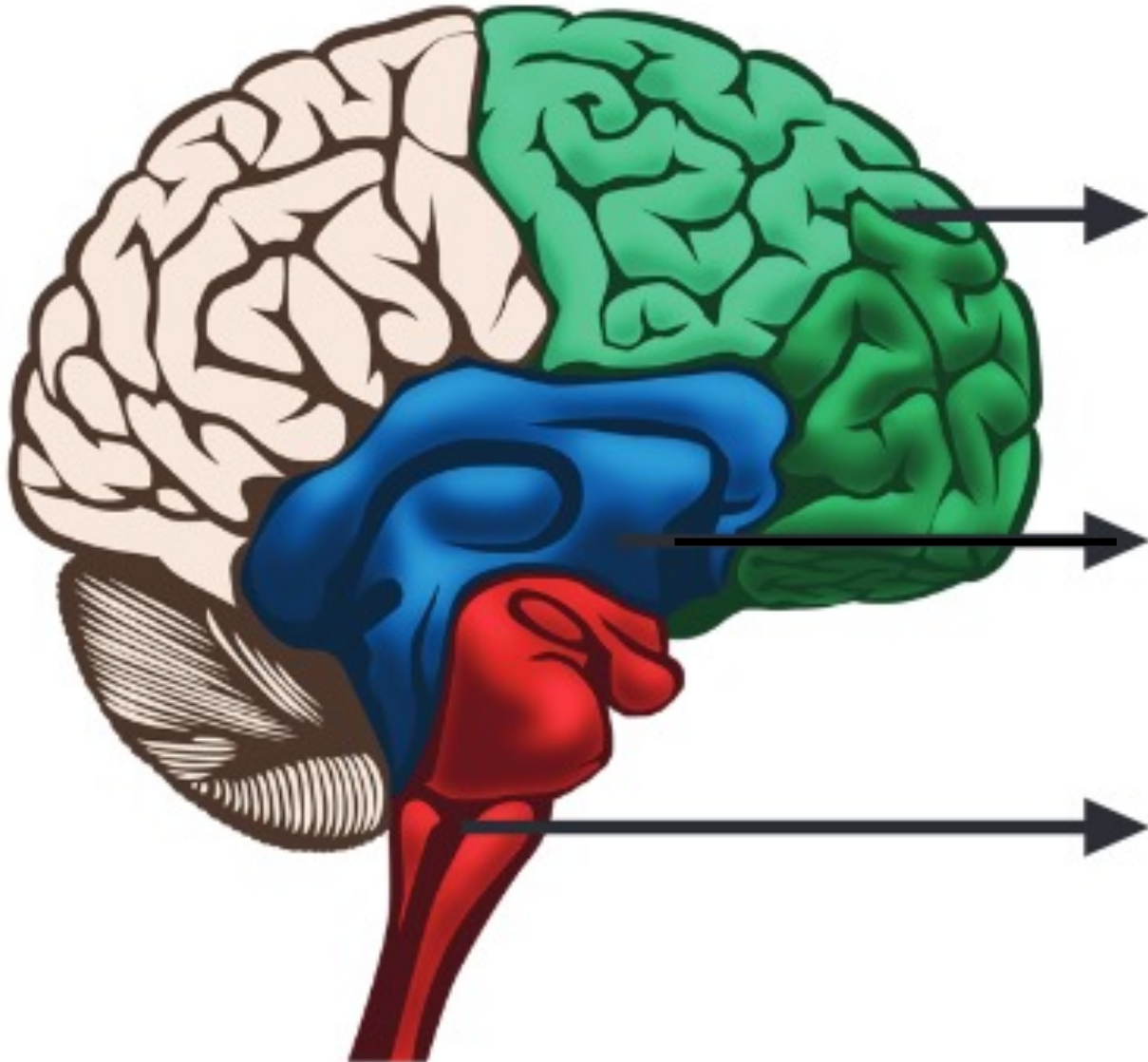
Focuses on internal states

Self-regulation

Increases self-awareness

Helps to manage thoughts,
feelings, & actions

Brain States



Executive State

Need: Problem solving opportunities

Looks like: Wisdom, unlimited skills

Message: What can I learn?

Emotional State

Need: Connection

Looks like: Back talk, sass, yelling, verbal reactions

Message: Am I loved/connected?

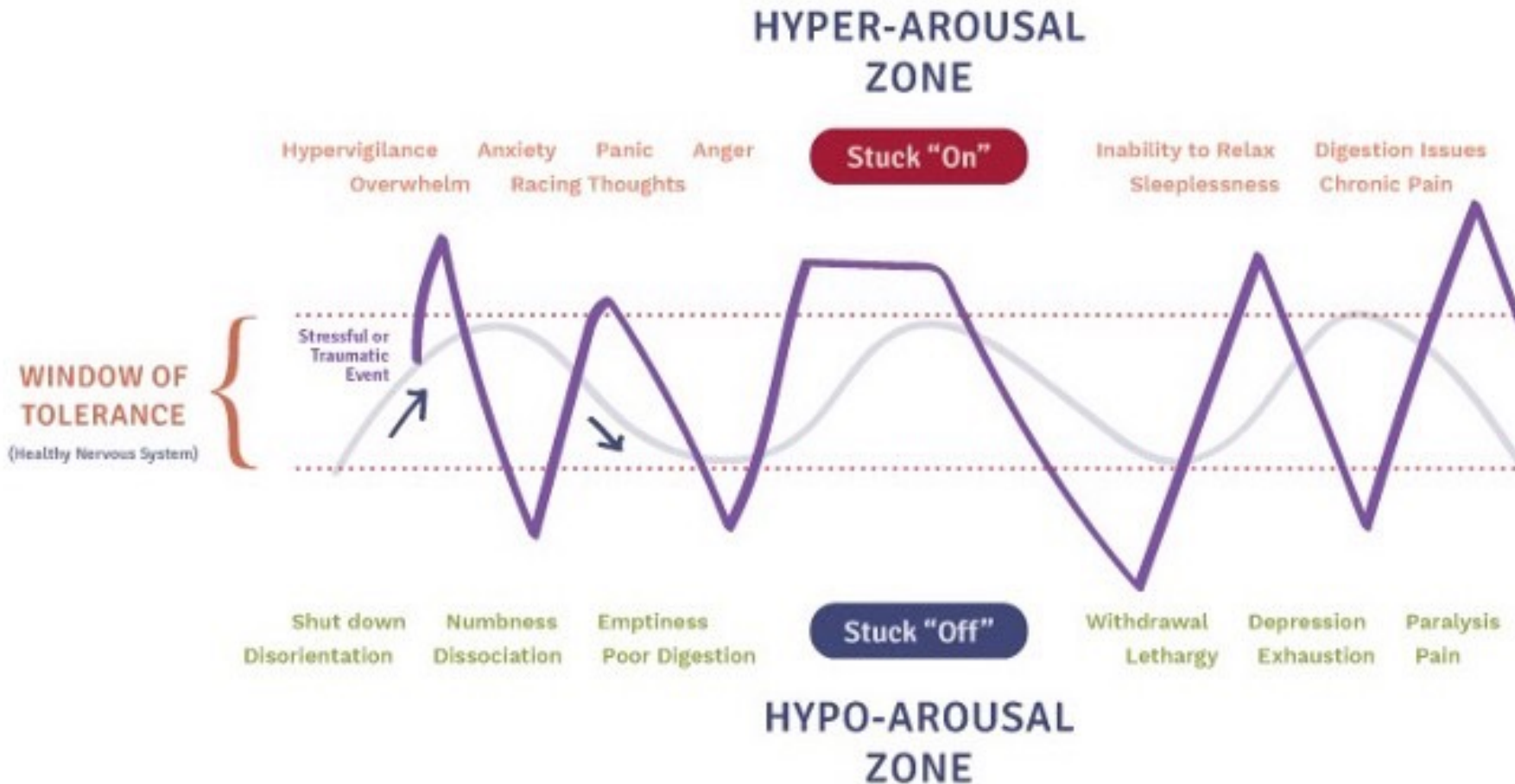
Survival State

Need: Safety

Looks like: Hiding, fighting, surrender, physical reactions

Message: Am I safe?

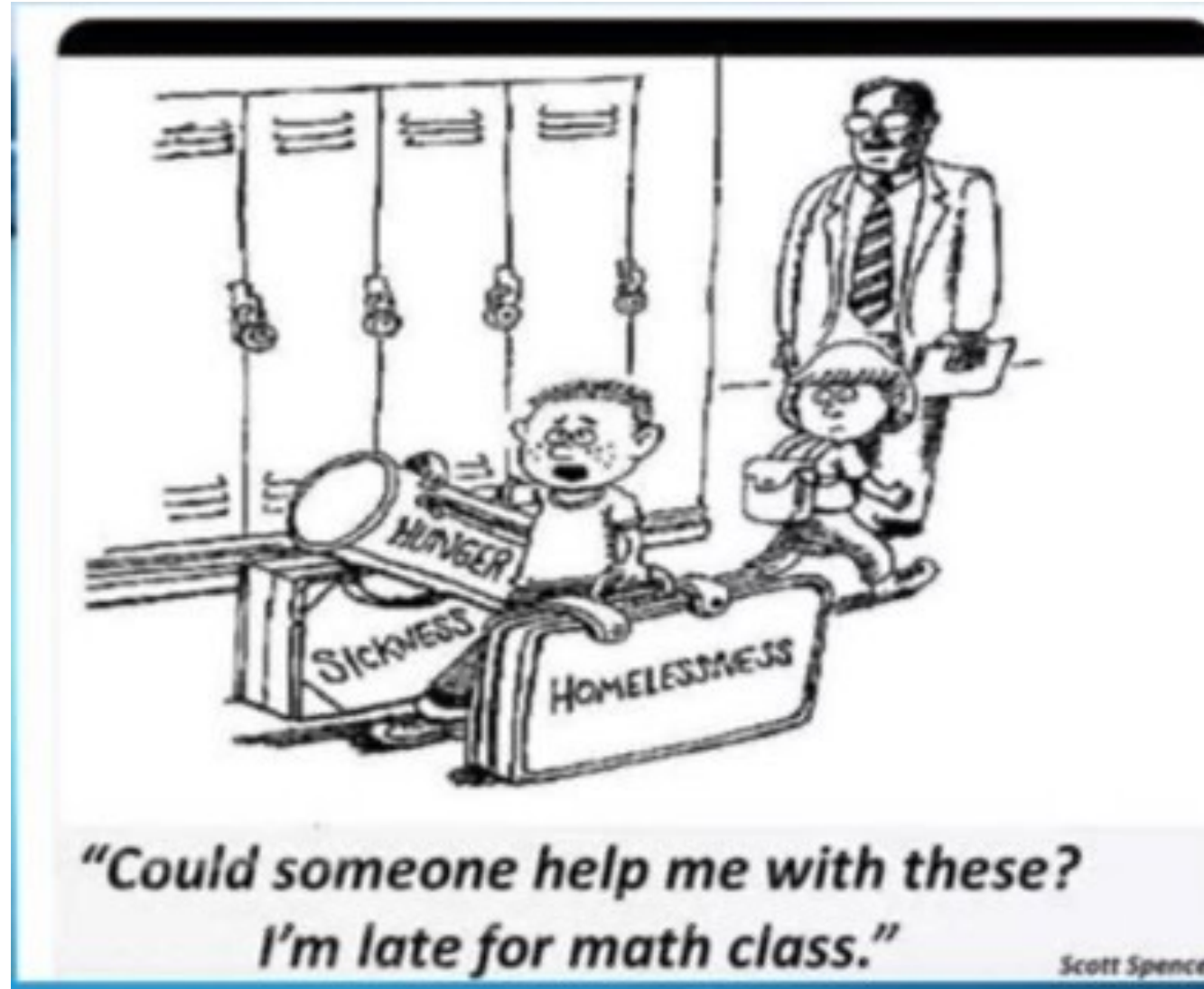
Nervous System Regulation

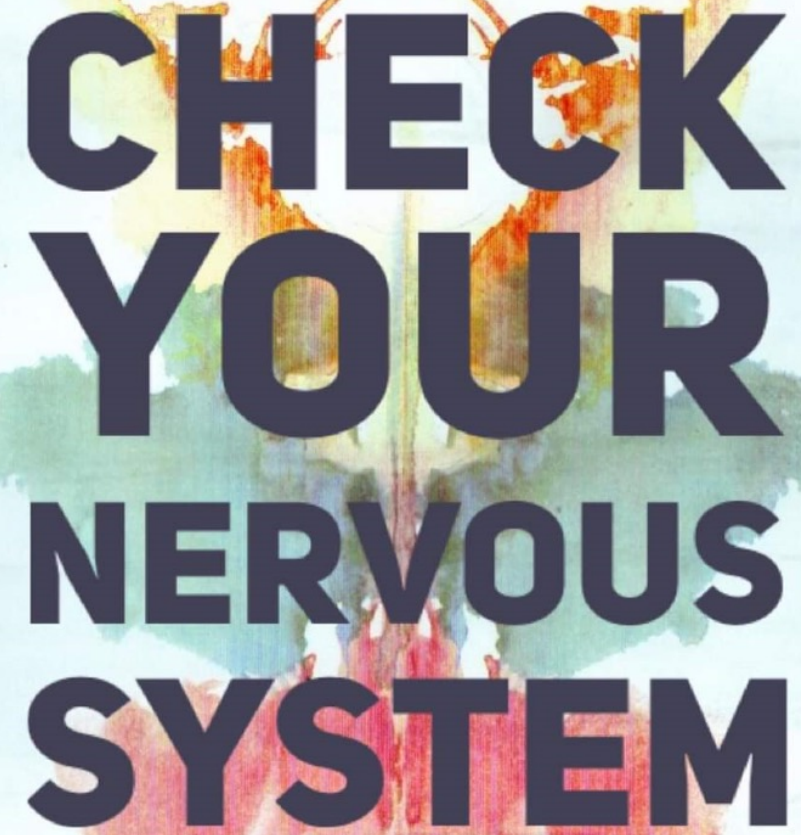


Factors That Affect Brain States

- Prior traumas
- Communication
 - Verbal, Nonverbal, & Meta Communication
- Transitions
- Regulation
 - All regulation occurs through co-regulation

Invisible Suitcases



A watercolor-style background with soft, blended colors of light blue, green, and red. The text is centered and reads "CHECK YOUR NERVOUS SYSTEM" in a bold, dark blue font. The background has a textured, painterly appearance with visible brushstrokes and color gradients.

**CHECK
YOUR
NERVOUS
SYSTEM**

Survival State

Represented by the Brain Stem



Functions:

- Survival systems
- Modulate states of arousal
- Unconscious
- Online at birth

Developmental need:
Safety

Neuroception- Threat Detection

- 5 times a second, at an unconscious level, your brain is scanning the environment around you and asking: Is it safe here? Or is it dangerous?
- When your brain feels safe it can operate at its most sophisticated level (executive functioning).



Survival State Response



Download calm (share your Executive State)

1. **Breathe.** Think “I am safe. I can handle this.”
2. **Mirror child’s body language**, say:
“Your arms are going like this (demonstrate) and your head went like this (demonstrate).”
3. When student makes **eye contact**, instantly take a deep breath.
4. **Label (notice)** how the child is feeling. Label why (if known).
“Your face says... you are...”

It is the **CHILD'S**
definition of *Safe* that
will **remove** them from
Survival State, not *Our*
definition of Safe.



Rupture & Repair

A break occurs



Composure and a return to calm

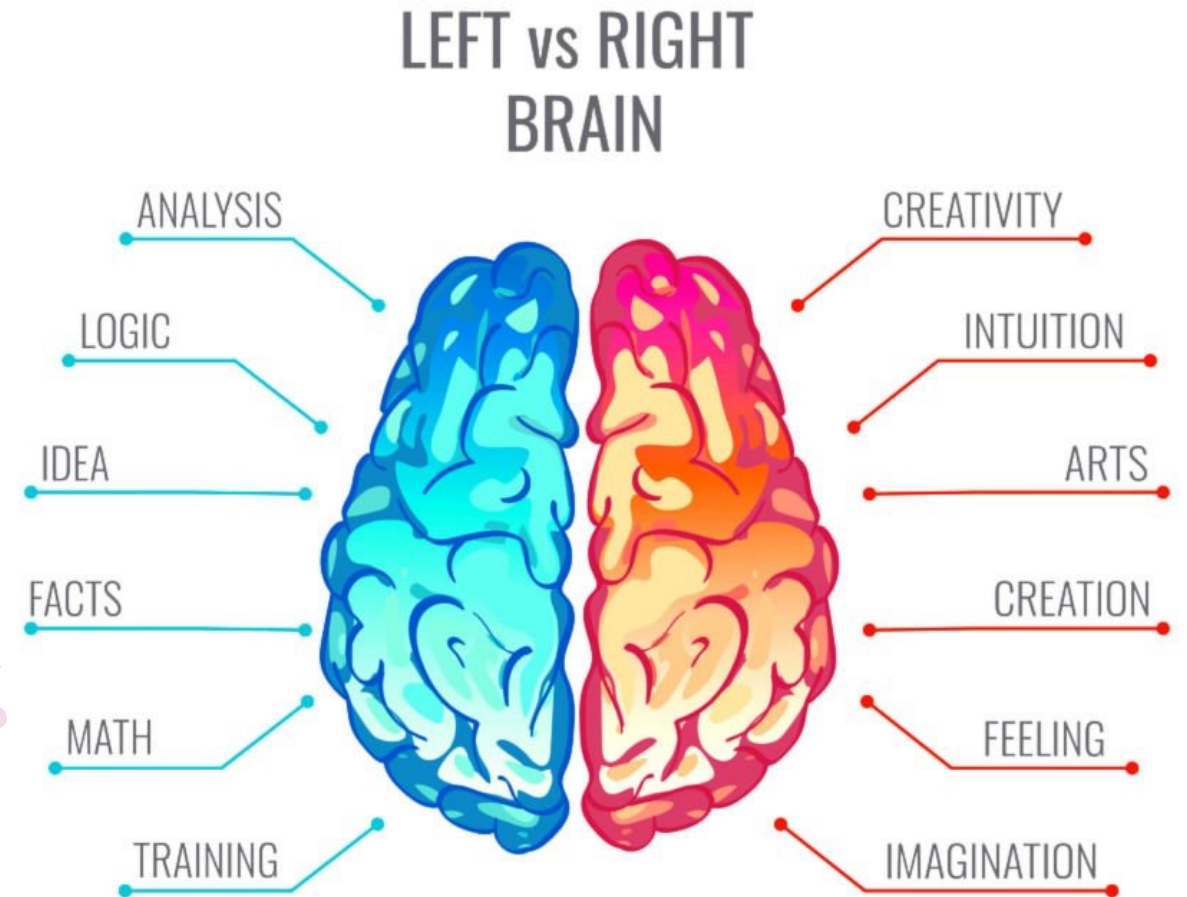


Mutual understanding & growth



Positive Intent

*Shift in
Perspective to
Address
Behaviors*





Felt Sense of Safety- 4 S's

Seen — Not just seeing with the eyes. It is sensing what is behind their behavior

Safe — Avoiding actions and responses that frighten or hurt a child

Soothed — Helping a child deal with difficult emotions and situations

Secure — Through repeated responses we help a child develop an internalized sense of well-being



Responding Vs. Reacting



Listen



Observe



Validate



Empathize

D.

Brain Stem | Survival State

Active Calming, Noticing:
"Your face is going like this."



Pause. Wait for eye contact.
Download calm.

N.

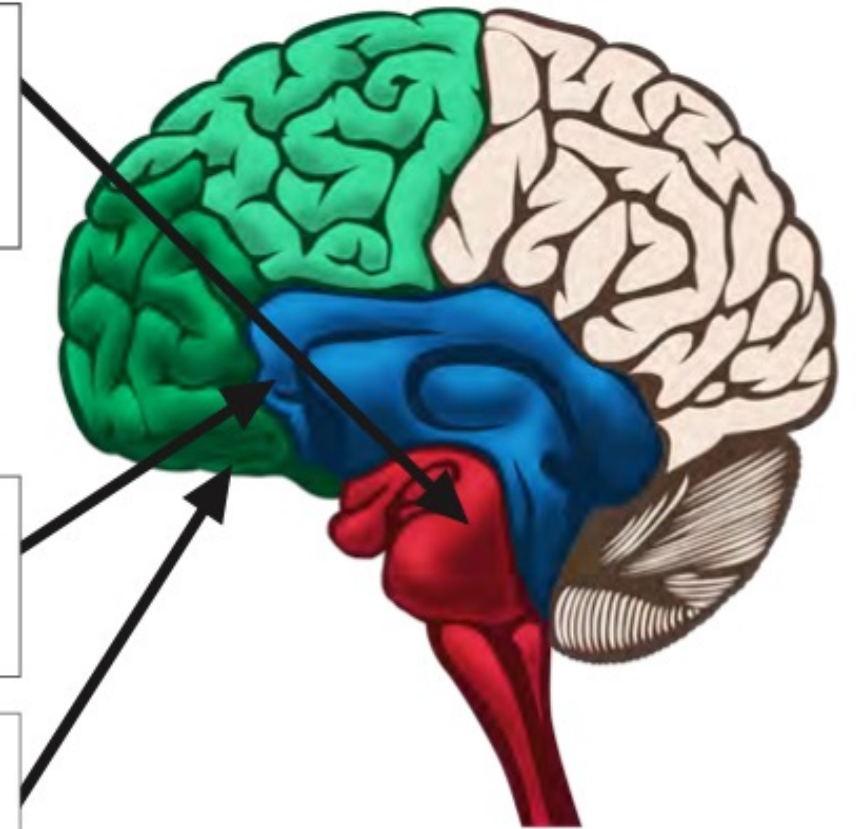
Limbic System | Emotional State

Empathy: "You seem ____."

A.

Prefrontal Lobes | Executive State

Problem-Solving: "You wanted ____."
"You were hoping ____."



Emotional State

Represented by the Limbic System



Developmental need:
Connection

Functions:

- Emotional tone, flexible or rigid, positive or negative
- Tags events as internally important
- Motivation system
- Attention system
- Attachment, relationships, territory
- Stores highly charged emotional memories
- Controls appetite and sleep cycles
- Unconscious
- Comes online with, "No!"



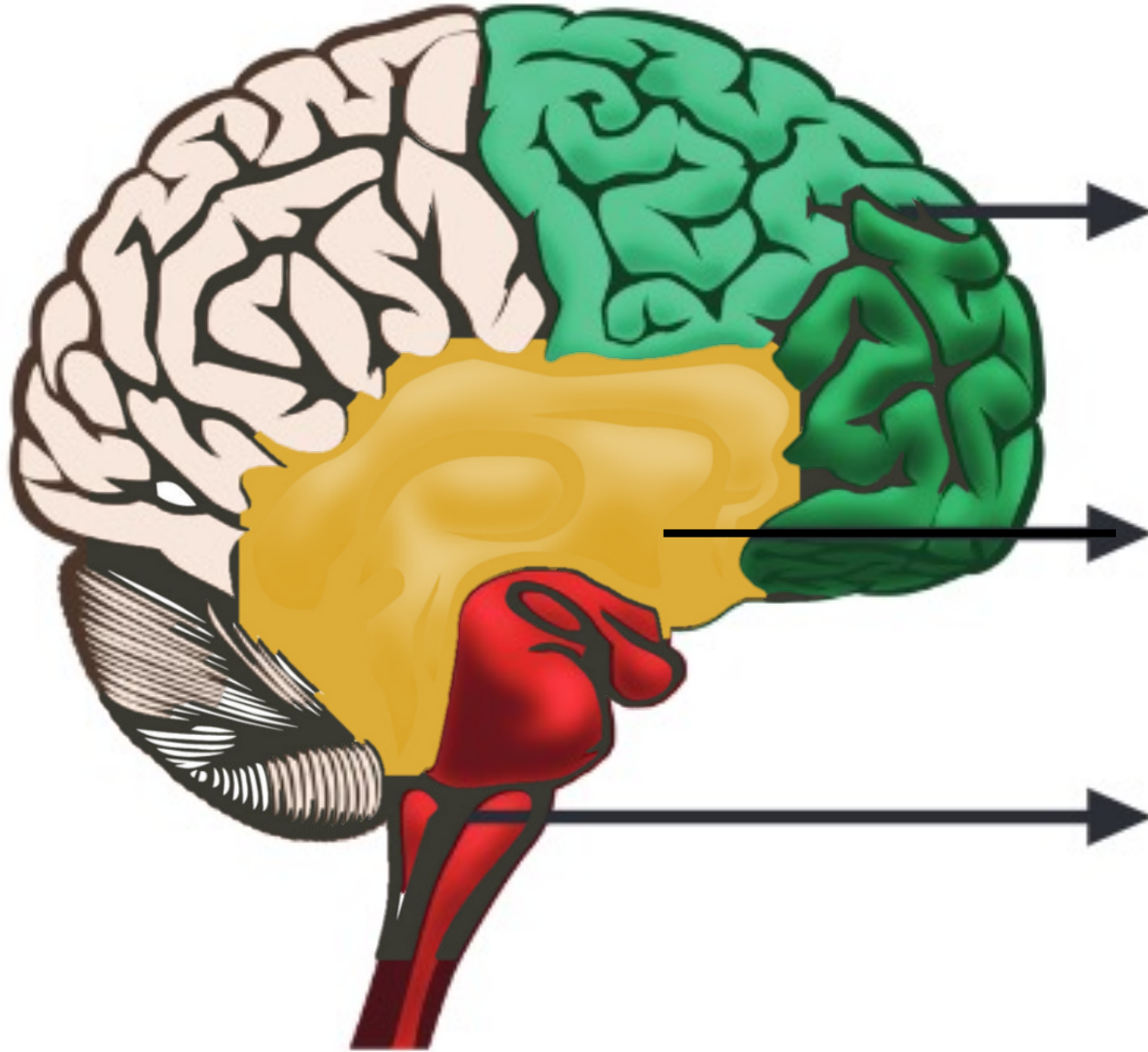
Emotional State Response

Download calm (share your Executive State)

1. Breathe. Think "I am calm. I can handle this."
2. Create a connection with the child.
 1. Eye contact
 2. Presence
 3. Touch
 4. Playfulness



Quick Review



Executive State

Need: Problem solving opportunities

Looks like: Wisdom, unlimited skills

Message: What can I learn?

Emotional State

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Survival State

Need: Safety

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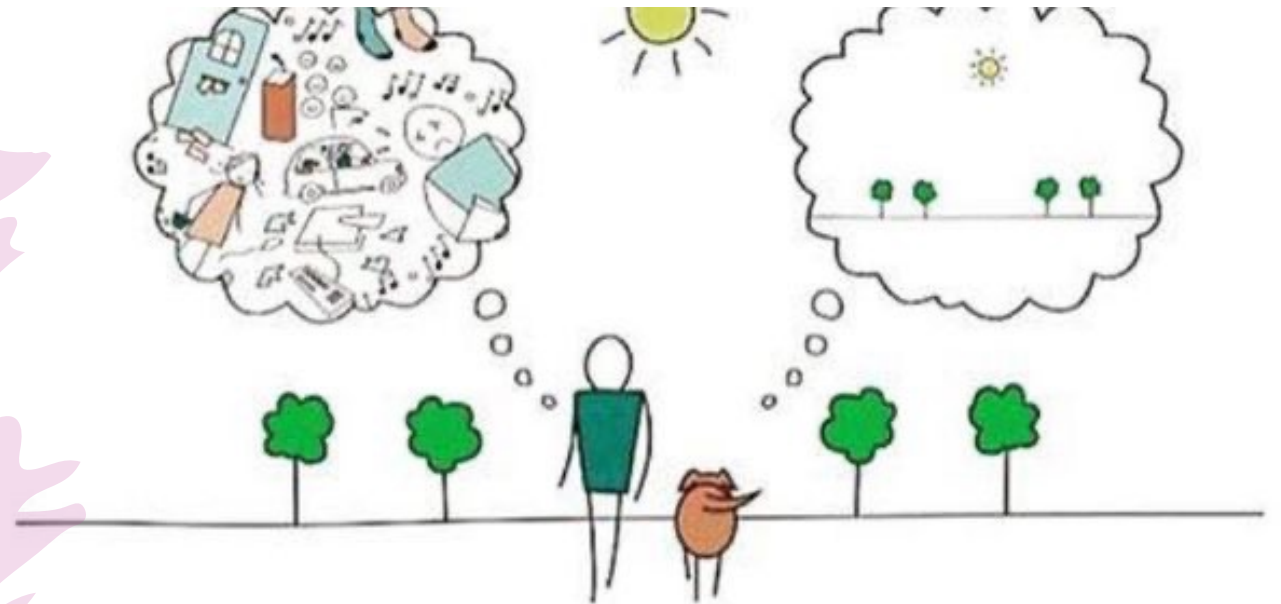
Message: Am I safe?

Reflective Practice



Mindfulness

“Mindfulness is awareness that arises through paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally.” - Jon Kabat-Zinn



Behavior as a Window

“Behaviors are the window into a child's nervous system.”

-Mona Delahooke



Understanding Others



NOTICING



BEING CURIOUS



I WONDER IF...

- “When you hold an infant, hold him not just with your body, but with your mind and heart.” -Gerber

Holding the Baby in Mind

Prioritizing the Baby

How might the baby think and feel?

How might those in the baby's caregiving environment think and feel about the baby?

What might this mean?

Why does it matter?

What have we learned?

Attunement



When someone feels truly understood, “known,” the attunement that occurs creates a space where it is possible to try new ways of interacting.”

-Siegel & Hartzell, 2003

Healing comes through repeated, (attuned) interactions with a compassionate, regulated other.”

-Bruce Perry, 2014

Triggers

- What are your triggers?
- Why do they trigger you?
- Where do you feel the stress?
- What happens to your body?
- What can you do to cope if it happens again?

MSR Awareness Checklist

Behavioral System	In Balance	Out of Balance
Body Functions	<input type="checkbox"/> Steady breathing <input type="checkbox"/> Quiet digestion <input type="checkbox"/> Comfortable temperature <input type="checkbox"/> Steady heart rate	<input type="checkbox"/> Fast breathing, Holding breath <input type="checkbox"/> Indigestion/hungry <input type="checkbox"/> Hot or cold <input type="checkbox"/> Heart racing <input type="checkbox"/> Headache <input type="checkbox"/> Sweaty palms <input type="checkbox"/> Flushing
Body Movement/ Muscle Tone	<input type="checkbox"/> Sitting/standing comfortably <input type="checkbox"/> Shoulders relaxed <input type="checkbox"/> Symmetrical <input type="checkbox"/> Stable	<input type="checkbox"/> Fidgeting <input type="checkbox"/> Slouching <input type="checkbox"/> Hunched shoulders <input type="checkbox"/> Tense muscles <input type="checkbox"/> Gritting teeth
State/Attention	<input type="checkbox"/> Alert <input type="checkbox"/> Calm <input type="checkbox"/> Ready <input type="checkbox"/> Aware	<input type="checkbox"/> Sleepy <input type="checkbox"/> On edge/vigilant <input type="checkbox"/> Overwhelmed <input type="checkbox"/> Urge to fight or flight <input type="checkbox"/> Frozen <input type="checkbox"/> Anxious <input type="checkbox"/> Shut down
Feelings	<input type="checkbox"/> Aware of my own feelings	<input type="checkbox"/> Not aware of feelings <input type="checkbox"/> Uncontained feelings <input type="checkbox"/> Denial of feelings
Social Engagement	<input type="checkbox"/> Focus on participant <input type="checkbox"/> Maintain social connection <input type="checkbox"/> Shift attention smoothly from participant to baby or other	<input type="checkbox"/> Mind wandering <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty focusing on what participant is saying <input type="checkbox"/> Zone out
My MSR Strategies		

Mindful Self-Regulation Exercises

to use in the Moment

Breathing

Intentional breathing is a helpful way to bring us to the present.

Three Conscious Breaths:

1. Breathe in deeply.
2. Hold your breath for 3-4 seconds.
3. Slowly exhale.
4. Repeat for three full breathes.

Deep Breathing:

1. Breathe in deeply.
2. Notice the cold air in your nostrils and on you breath.
3. Breathe slowly out.

Breathing to Calm Self:

1. Breathe in for count of 4.
2. Breathe out for count of 7.

Breathing to Activate Self:

1. Breathe in to count of 7.
2. Breathe out to count to 4.

Grounding

Becoming aware of our senses can be helpful in bringing us back to the present.

Simple Grounding Technique

1. Place both feet flat on the floor
2. Lean back into your chair, and make note of the feeling of the chair under you and against your back.
3. Place your hands in your lap.
4. Notice the way your feet feel in your shoes, and your shoes feel on the floor.
5. Notice the way your hands feel in your lap. Tap your thighs, and notice the way this feels, if you'd like.
6. Recognize yourself as reoriented to the "here and now."

Four Senses Grounding Exercise

1. In your mind, notice 1 thing you see in the room.
2. In your mind, notice 1 thing you can feel ("my feet on the floor" or "the air in my nose").
3. In your mind, notice 1 thing you hear ("traffic outside").
4. In your mind, notice 1 thing you can smell.

Imagery

Snow Globe

1. Visualize a snow-globe in your mind.
2. Imagine the snow-globe is shaken up, and the swirling snowflakes symbolize your stress and state of dysregulation.
3. Imagine the snowflakes gently settling and the snow-globe becoming clear.
4. As the snow-globe becomes clearer in your mind, imagine your stress and dysregulation settling and visualize clarity and peace of mind.

Wheat Field

1. Visualize a field with long blades of wheat blowing on a clear, sunny day.
2. Imagine you are sitting in the field. Feel the breeze and the sun on your skin.
3. Visualize the peace and tranquility that the field represents.
4. Bring yourself back to present, carrying with you feelings of tranquility and peace.

Self Talk

Positive Self Talk is communicating with yourself in a way that helps you to feel more present, regulated, and accepting.

Example self talk phrases:

- I accept the things I cannot control.
- I am here to listen.
- I always give my best effort and that is good enough.
- I can keep asking questions.
- I am smart, confident, and capable.
- I see the best in other people.
- I accept this situation for what it is.
- I can slow down and observe before reacting.
- I am organized and know what I need to do.
- I accept the choices of other people.
- I am learning and growing.

Add your own:

-
-
-

THE BREATHING BOOK



CHRISTOPHER WILLARD • OLIVIA WEISSER • *with* ALISON OLIVER



Final Thoughts

Brain states dictate behavior

All behavior is communication

Regulation occurs through coregulation

Reflective practice is used to examine attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions