



WELCOME  
WASHINGTON LATIN FAMILIES

# SESSION OBJECTIVES

Parents will be able to:

- ✓ Understand and acknowledge that their children's brains are still forming, and that their actions and decisions as caregivers can impact that brain formation (for good!).
- ✓ Explain some basic facts about the brain, and how chronic stress impacts the way our brains function.
- ✓ Identify subtle signs of increased anxiety and sadness and address these feelings with their children.
- ✓ Identify ways to foster social connection without simply adding more screen time.
- ✓ Learn strategies for encouraging physical movement to balance the screen time.



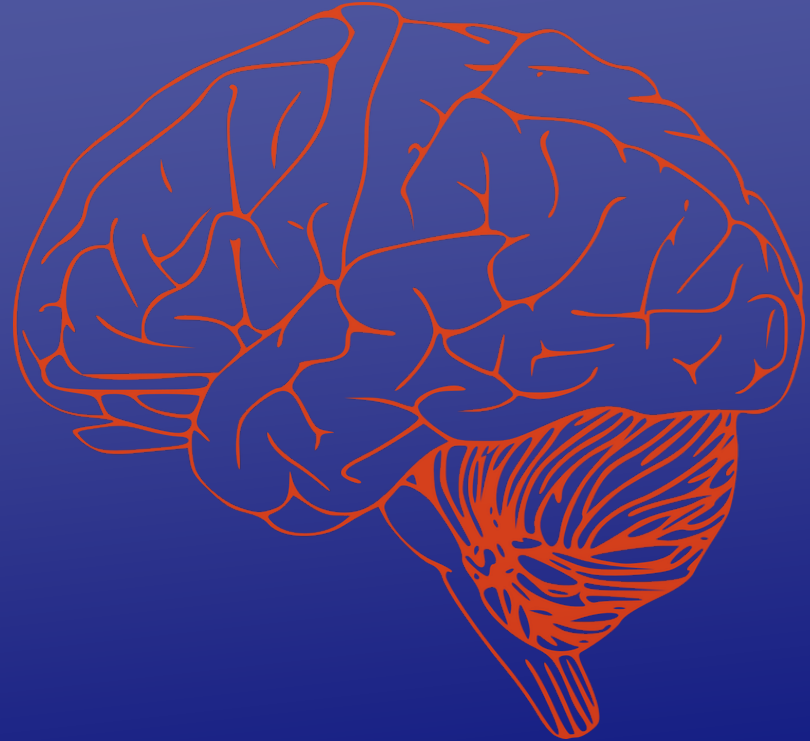


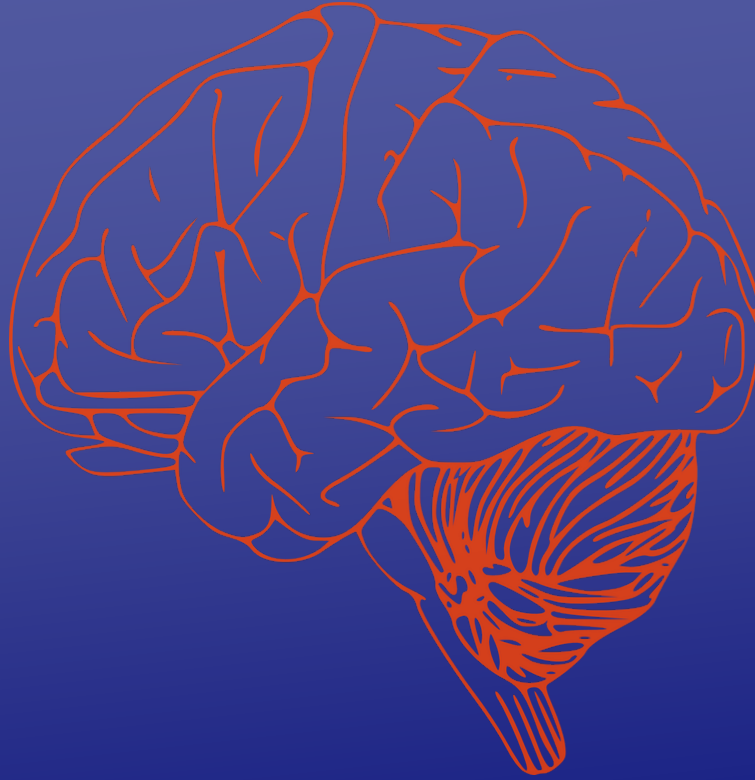
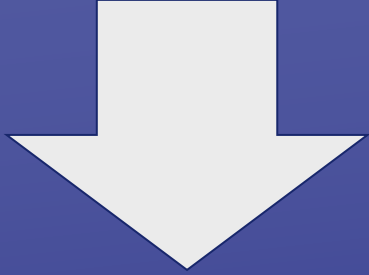
# GROUP NORMING

- Hold compassion for yourself and others, which includes accepting discomfort and accountability for inevitable mistakes.
- Struggle together for the sake of deeper understanding and connection to the heart of the experience as Latin community members.
- Take care of ourselves and be mindful of each other.
- Share the air, and honor other people's narratives.
- Accept non-closure, and let this work carry on beyond this experience.
- Assume good intent AND be real about IMPACT.



# THE CHILD BRAIN





**Bottom Up *before* Top Down**



# THE BRAIN: BOTTOM UP VS. TOP DOWN APPROACH

## Top Brain “Upstairs”

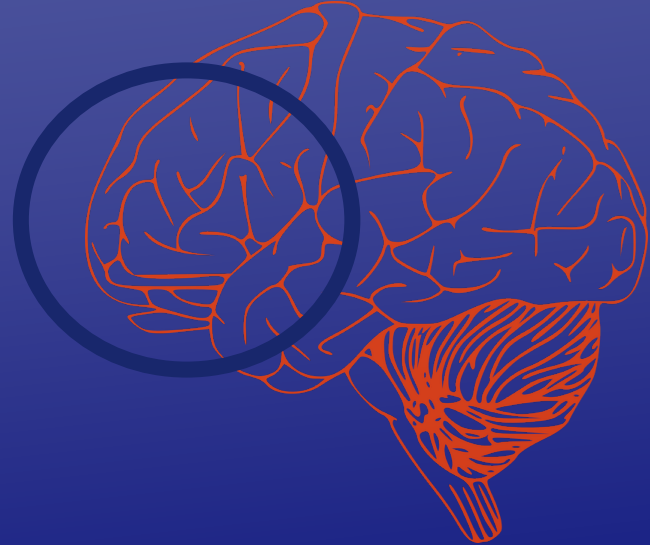
References thinking that stem from the region of the brain known as the prefrontal cortex

Executive functioning center

Essential tasks such as planning, direct motor functioning, cognitive, and social behavior

The ability for this to be the primary region for thinking develops over time

Developmentally begins by ages 3 to 4 but takes many more years to develop fully





# THE BRAIN: TOP DOWN VS. BOTTOM UP APPROACH

## Bottom Brain “Downstairs”

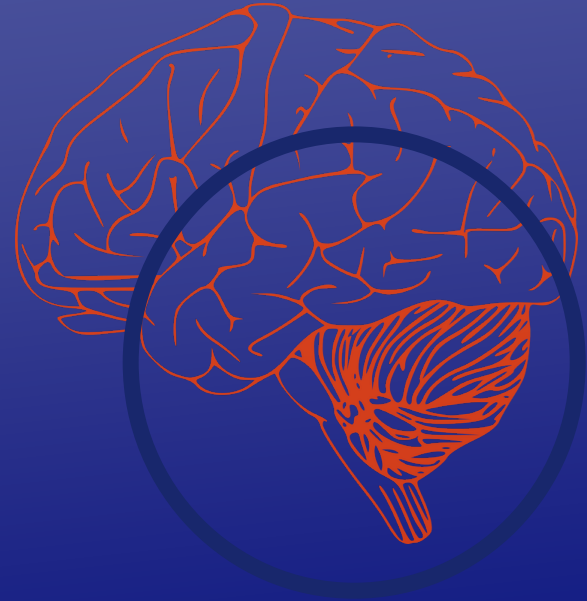
Limbic system including the amygdala

Abilities that help us to stay alive

Subconscious, reflexive, and automatic responses

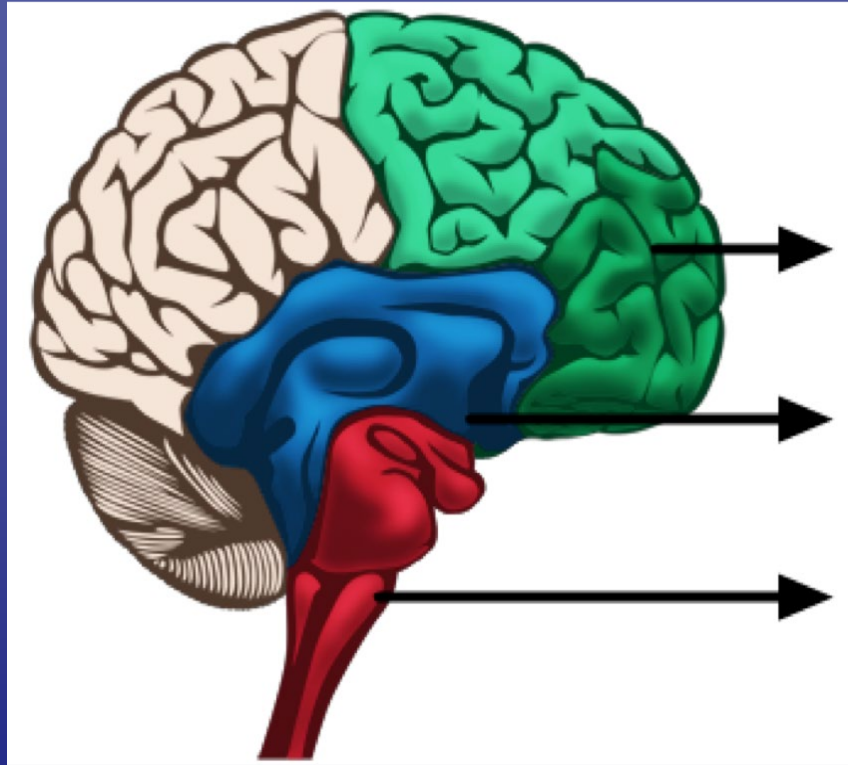
Perceptions of safety and threat dictate these responses

Instinctive drive and self-protection (or ego protection)





# TRY BOTTOM UP VS. TOP DOWN



**Prefrontal  
Cortex**

**Executive  
Functioning**

*What can  
I learn?*

**Limbic  
system**

**Emotions and  
Memory**

*Am I  
loved?*

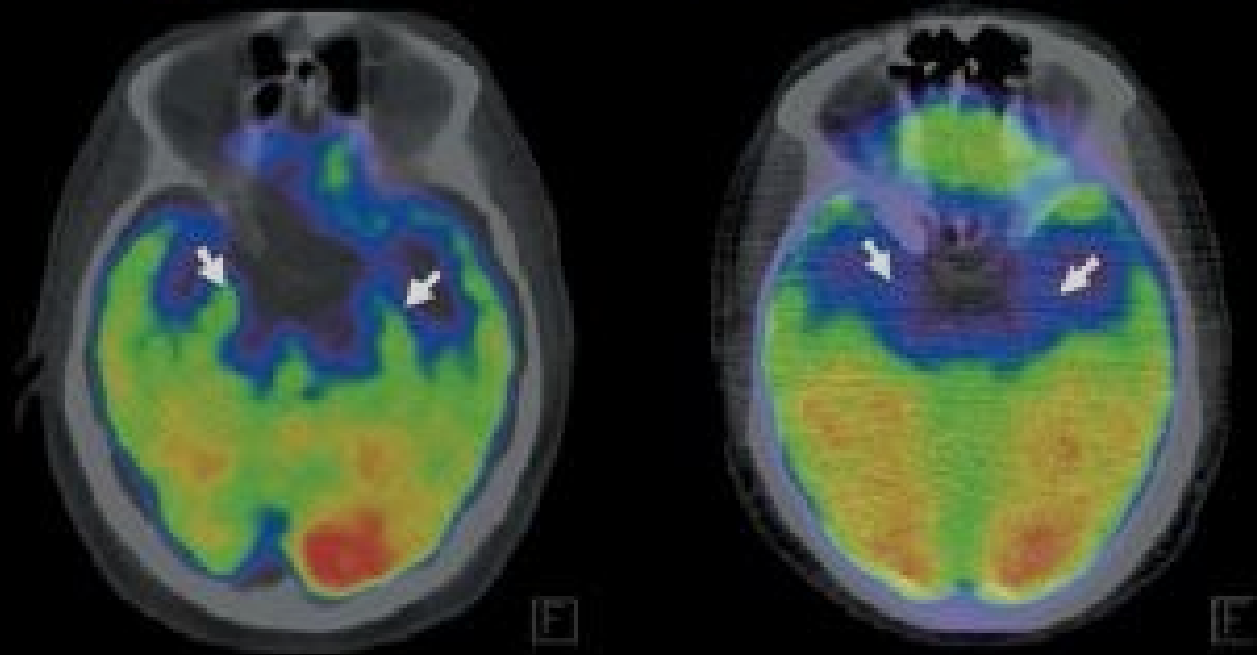
**Brain  
Stem**

**Safety  
Functions**

*Am I  
safe?*



# PET/CT scans reveal activity in brain's fear center



High activity

Low activity

Left: A stressed brain

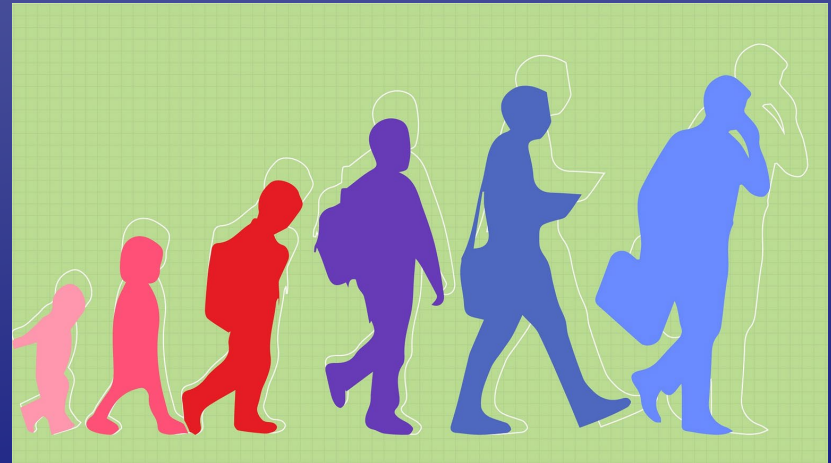
Right: A calm brain



# THE BRAIN: TOP DOWN VS. BOTTOM UP APPROACH

When we're born, our brain threat detection system is more fully developed than our prefrontal cortex.

Planning, thinking, thinking, and calming ourselves are all skills that require neural connections that develop over time.





1

**USE THE “US TIME”  
CHECK-IN METHOD**



# WHY DO IT?

**Research has shown that stress, anxiety, fear, anger, and most other challenging feelings and behaviors, decrease simply through social connection with an adult.**

Helps the caregivers and child to maintain a *consistent*, secure relationship where the child feels safe and calm, even when things are stressful.

Improves cooperation and the child's self-esteem.

Reduces child externalizing and internalizing behaviors.



# HOW TO PREPARE

- ✓ Decide on a *weekly* time when you and the child can hang out for 30-60 minutes. You can decide together, so that the child has a feeling of choice.  
Examples: *Every Thursday at 3:15 after dismissal; Every Wednesday during break*
- ✓ Avoid choosing a time that ends with something the child doesn't like to do. (Don't try to do "Us Time" before a subject the child struggles in or dislikes).
- ✓ Make sure that it is a time you can stick to each week. The important thing is it happens no matter what.
- ✓ Pick a space where you won't get distracted or pulled into other things.
- ✓ Tell the child, "We are going to spend time together every week. This means that it will just be you and me talking together for 30-60 minutes. You can help me choose the day, time, and where we hang out."



# HOW IT WORKS

- Say, “It’s time for *Us Time*.”
- Even if the child has had a ‘bad day’ or recently broken a rule, still have *Us Time* at the scheduled time.
  - *And if needed*, “There may be a consequence for your actions, but we will take care of that after our time together.”
  - Genuinely delight in them even if you’re frustrated at them.
- Start with an open-ended, neutral question or topic to discuss (Google “get-to-know-you questions” for more ideas!)
  - *If you could have any superpower, what would you pick? What would you do? If you could live anywhere in the world, where would it be? What would you see?*
  - *What’s been your favorite part about your week?*
- Try to use one PRIDE Conversation Skills at least every minute
- When the time is over, say, “*Us Time* is finished for today. We will do it again (next Thursday). I love talking with you!”



# USE PRIDE CONVERSATION SKILLS

<b>P</b>	<b>POSITIVE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</b> Tell your child exactly what you like about their idea.
<b>R</b>	<b>REFLECT</b> Repeat what the child says.
<b>I</b>	<b>INQUIRE</b> Ask questions to further promote the conversation
<b>D</b>	<b>DESCRIBE</b> Describe what they are talking about
<b>E</b>	<b>ENJOY</b> Be warm & authentic when you talk!



# DO'S

- ✓ Allow your child to pick the activity
- ✓ Establish parameters as your planning or before the activity begins.
- ✓ Create an environment that makes them feel like they're the pilot. It should be something that they enjoy doing!
- ✓ *Observe, praise, acknowledge!*

# DON'TS

- ❑ Do not agree to do an activity that makes either of you incredibly uncomfortable.
- ❑ Do not criticize or make judgements during this time.
- ❑ Do not use this time to have difficult conversations.





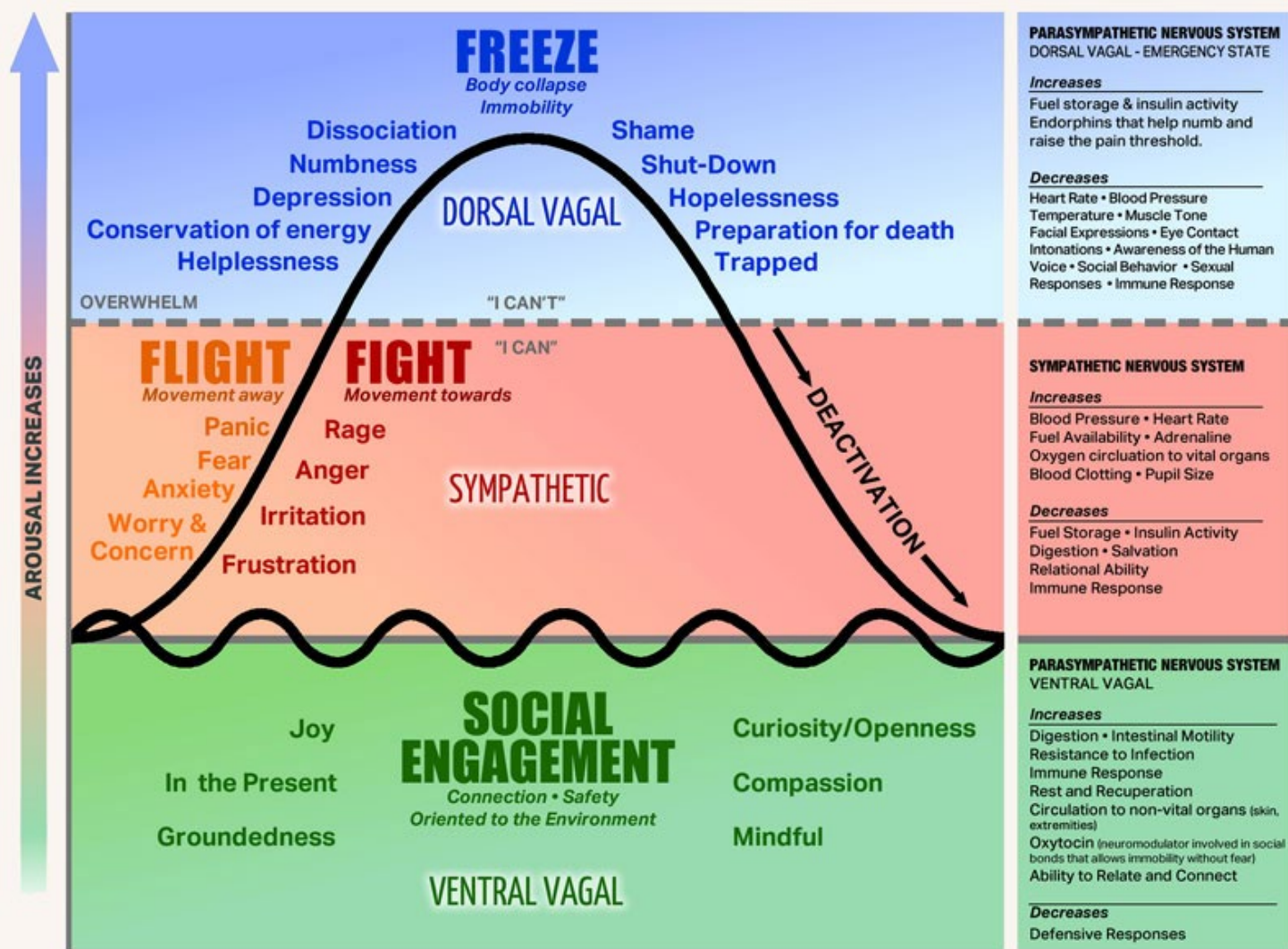
“WHEN WE FAIL TO RECOGNIZE THAT MANY BEHAVIORS REPRESENT THE BODY’S RESPONSE TO STRESS, ***NOT INTENTIONAL BEHAVIORS***, WE EXPEND EFFORT ON TECHNIQUES DESIGNED TO HELP CHILDREN LOGICALLY CONNECT THEIR THOUGHTS, EMOTIONS, AND BEHAVIORS WHEN THEY SIMPLY CAN’T--YET.”

- MONA DELAHOOKE, PHD.

# BEHAVIOR



# THE BODY'S STRESS RESPONSES



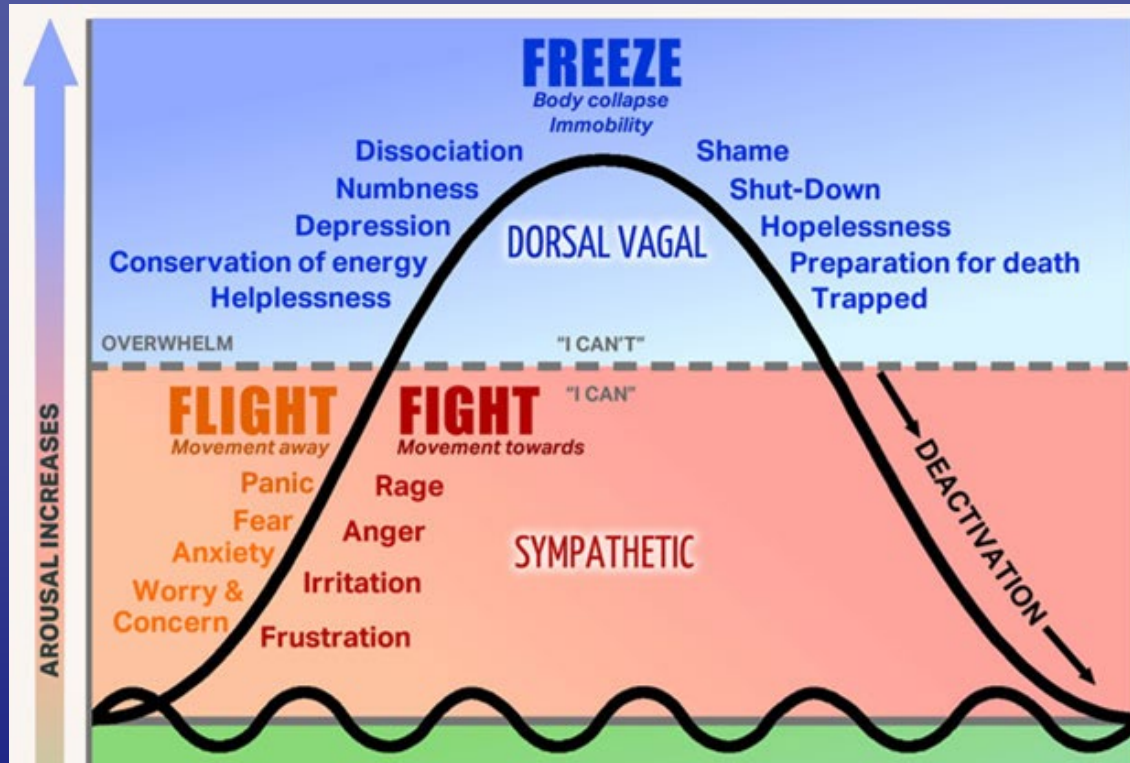


“WHEN WE ARE SAFELY GROUNDED IN OUR  
VENTRAL VAGAL PATHWAY, WE FEEL SAFE AND  
CONNECTED, CALM AND SOCIAL.”

- DEB DANA, LCSW



# Emotional regulation



**Emotional regulation:**  
Multiple executive functioning skills working together

When the body enters into an escalated phase, the skills required for de-escalation are:

- Processing
- Attention
- Planning
- Adapting
- Impulse control



②

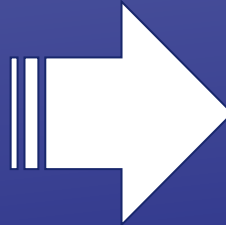
MAKE A REACTIVE PLAN  
&  
PRACTICE IT



# EMOTIONAL REGULATION

## MULTIPLE EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING SKILLS WORKING TOGETHER

1. Create a Reactive Plan
2. Practice it



**Practicing helps to reduce  
the amount of processing  
needed in the moment**  
*(because they've already gone  
through it!)*

With a practiced Reactive Plan,  
*instead of having to use the skills needed for emotional regulation,*  
the “escalated” child can simply deploy the plan  
that has already been discussed and practiced.



# HOW TO PREPARE FOR CO-CREATING THE REACTIVE PLAN







# PREPARING TO A CO-CREATE REACTIVE PLAN 1

- ✓ **Select a neutral time to discuss the child's undesired behavior.**
  - Ensure that you AND the child are in a calm place when initiating this discussion.
- ✓ **Be intentional about hearing the child and demonstrating that you hear them.**
  - Be free from distractions and position yourself so that you can maintain eye-contact.
  - Say, "I want to talk to you about something that I notice you do *[insert undesired behavior]*.  
Do you notice that you do this?  
What causes you to do this?"



# PREPARING TO A CO-CREATE REACTIVE PLAN 2

## ✓ **Express feelings and use “I statements”**

- “When you do [insert undesired behavior], it makes me feel”.
- Be willing to be vulnerable. This may even mean modeling the skill of acknowledging your mistakes and apologizing for your mistakes.

## ✓ **Craft the plan together**

- Say, “Instead of the way things have been going, let’s come up with a plan for what to do when we’re both feeling this way, so that *[insert the negative effects of the current behavior(s)]*.”



# PREPARING TO A CO-CREATE REACTIVE PLAN 3

- ✓ **Identify a silent signal or a code word to use when the child is escalated.**
  - Remember, talking sets the expectation that the child must use all of their emotional regulation skills--skills that they don't have yet!
- ✓ **Identify a safe place for the child to process when they are escalated.**
  - Use the code word or silent gesture to signal that they are expected to head there. Use a calm voice if you and the child have chosen to use a code word.



# COMPONENTS OF A **STRONG** REACTIVE PLAN

The parent and child have done all of the following **TOGETHER**:

- ✓ Planning Discussion has happened *before* constructing the plan.
- ✓ The desired behaviors have been identified.
- ✓ A code word or gesture has been identified and agreed upon.
- ✓ A safe space for processing in the home has been identified.
  - Be sure that you have also identified *a space for yourself*, in the event that a child's undesired behaviors cause frustration.
- ✓ A follow-up conversation takes place when the child and caregiver are both calm.



# THE CAREGIVER





# WHY BEGIN WITH YOU FIRST?

- Children and adolescents are great perceivers.
  - ❖ Kids “catch our calm.”
- They look to us for everything - including their sense of security.



3

PRIORITIZE SELF-CARE



# WHAT IS SELF-CARE?

- The practice of taking an active role in protecting one's well-being and happiness
- The practice of taking action to preserve or improve one's own health
- An activity we do intentionally in order to take care of our mental, emotional, and physical health





# PRACTICE SELF-COMPASSION & FORGIVENESS

- Observing your thoughts and feelings the way they are
- Not judging your experiences or those of others
- Being aware of what you're experiencing in the moment, and not thinking about the past or the future
- **Being aware of your own needs**



# CREATE SPACE TO DRAW INWARD

## **Silence |**

Allows you to hear from within. We can be bombarded with so much going on outside of us that we begin to listen to everything except our own intuition.

## **Stillness |**

Allows for full presence. Multi-tasking can take away the ability to think and therefore, function at optimal capacity. It's a radical form of self-love.

## **Solitude |**

Allows for the space to discern.



4

# MODEL & TEACH

## *THE LOCUS OF CONTROL PRINCIPLE*

# Locus of Control





# UTILIZE POWER STATEMENTS

Use power statements or affirmations daily that focus on control.

- I am resilient and as a human being.  
I am capable of adapting to circumstances that are not in my control.
- I am safe and I am loved.  
I will tackle what I can control.



5

EXPLORE TOGETHER  
AS A FAMILY



# EXPLORE & REFLECT TOGETHER

- ✓ Create new traditions.
- ✓ Reflect as a family on what is going well and what is not since the pandemic began.
- ✓ Revise and restart routines and traditions for 2021.



# MODEL & REQUIRE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

- Model a healthy physical activity plan for your child.
- Children learn about their bodies and the world *by observing adult behaviors.*
- As adults, we have to do it!

## Ideas for Physical Movement

- Outdoor walks
- Neighborhood scavenger hunts
- Hikes (Rock Creek Park or other local trails)
- Organize a family race (relay race!!)
- Family sports tournaments (kickball, basketball, soccer, etc)
- Step tracking attached to incentive or immobile leisure activities

Create new traditions based on exploration. Try something new together!



# RECOMMENDED RESOURCE

