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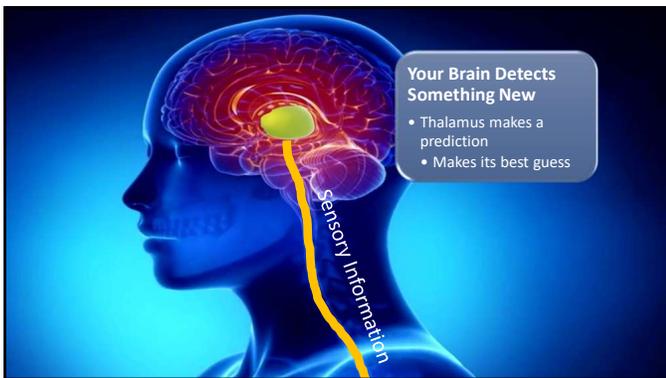
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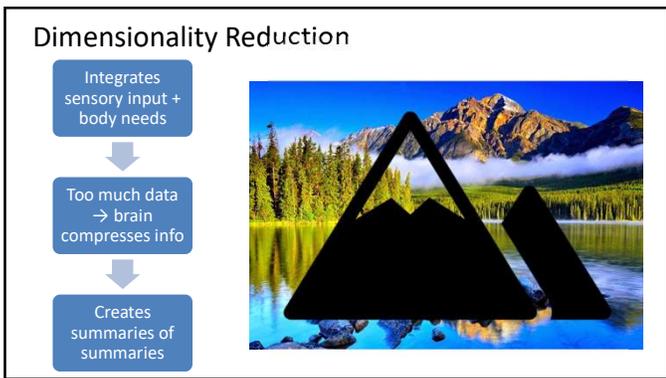
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**Better Safe Than Sorry Processing**

Our brain doesn't care if its hazardous or not

- Our brain will respond based on what we need to survive
- Can react in error



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**Worry**  
An act of imagination



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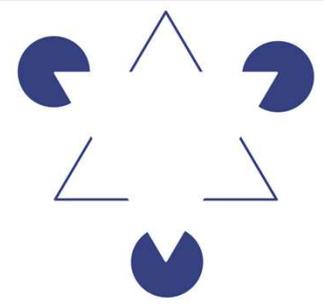
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Anxious students have more hypervigilant amygdala

- Sends danger signals around anything that's even slightly uncomfortable.

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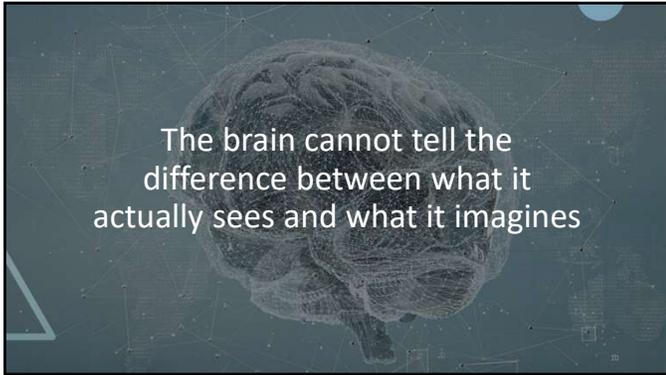
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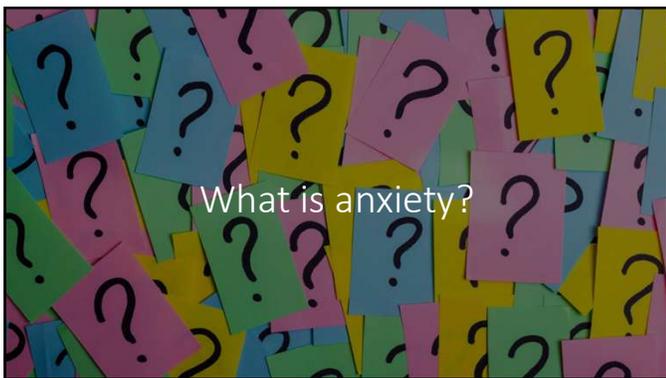
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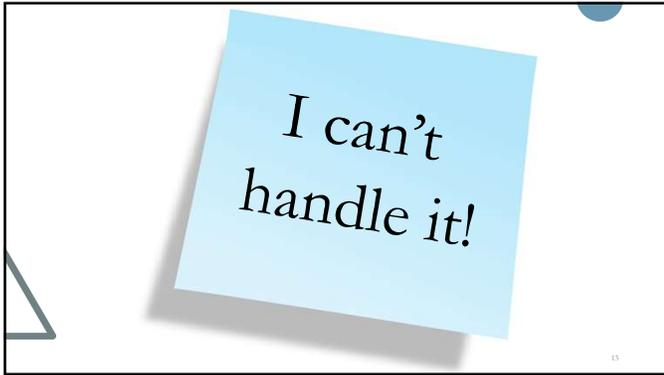
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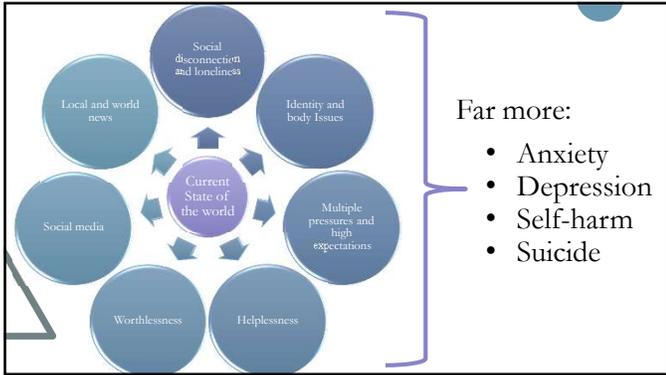
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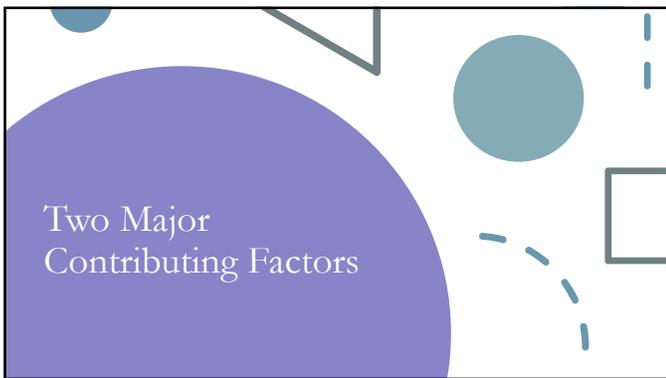
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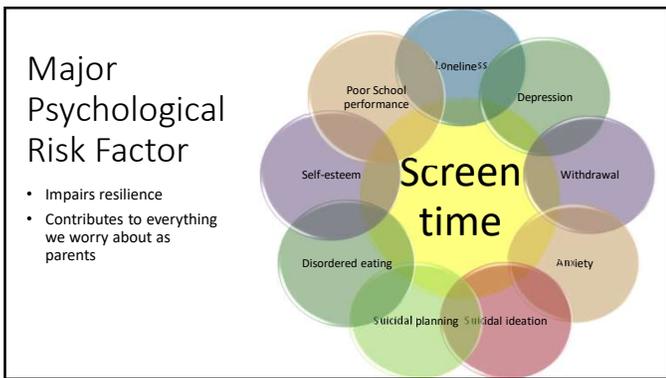
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### Recommended Guidelines

<2	2-5	Elementary	High school
NO screen time	30-60 min.	1 hour (<2 at most)	<2 hours
Turn screens off completely!	Co-watch	Co-watch	Still co-watch!

Australian Department of Health; Canadian Paediatric Society, Public Health Agency of Canada, American Academy of Pediatrics

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### Resources

- Canadian Home Video Rating System (CHVRS) <https://www.mpa-canada.org/canada-home-video-rating-system/>
- Center for Humane Technology: <https://www.humanetech.com/>
- Common sense media: <https://www.commonsensemedia.org/>
  - Teach digital citizenship: <https://www.commonsense.org/education/digital-citizenship>
- Family Online Safety Institute: <https://www.fosi.org/>
- Media Smarts: <https://mediasmarts.ca/>
- Screenagers: <https://www.screenagersmovie.com/>
- Wait until 8<sup>th</sup>: <https://www.waituntil8th.org/>

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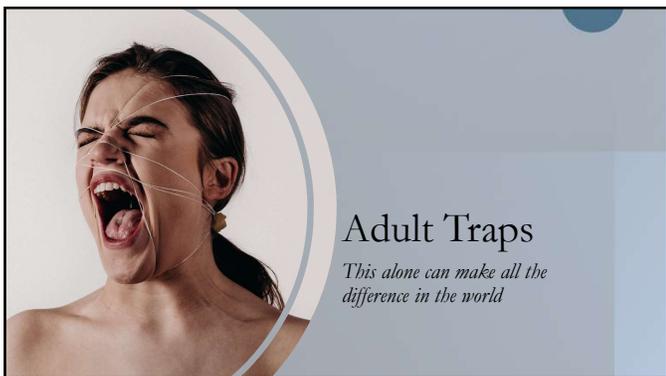
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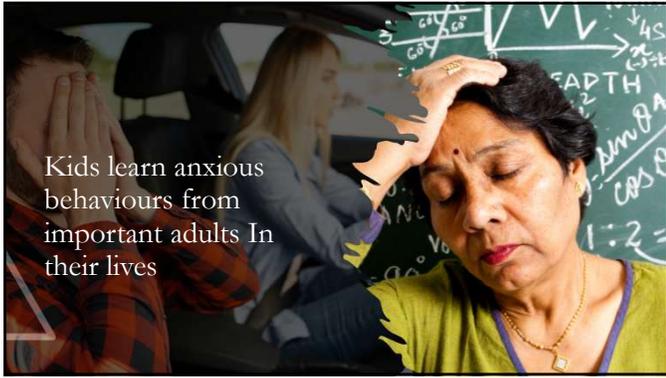
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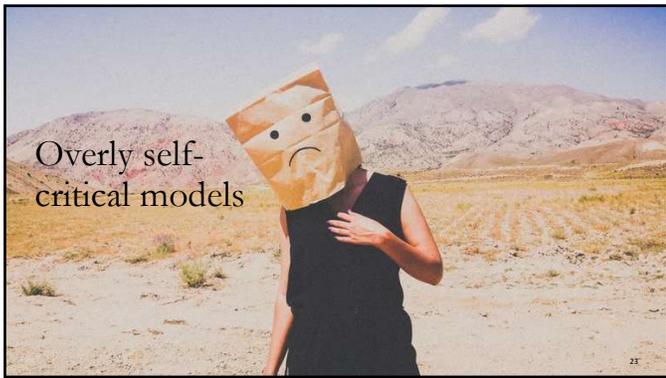
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### Over-Nagging and Unrealistic Demands

- We place more demands on children than adults
- Constant correction and nagging can erode relationships and discourage autonomy
- Would we treat our coworkers or friends the same way?



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Just Breathe



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### Reassure or Co-compulse



Reassure everything is going to be fine!



Answer the same anxiety-driven question (e.g., "Am I safe?", "Is this okay?") more than once.

Creates dependency. Makes it a big deal. Feeds the anxiety loop.

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Saying "Don't worry" doesn't work

Minimizing/ Dismissing

Get stuck in constant need for reassurance

No skills developed

Creates shame

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Brain in high stress state = amygdala kicks in and becomes a stop sign for information and any rational thinking

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**FRAGILE**

- Decreases self-confidence
- Start to doubt their interpretation of the world

**HANDLE WITH CARE**

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Accommodations worsens anxiety & emotional dysregulation long-term

More impairing and severe with poorer treatment outcomes

- Fail to learn anxiety tolerance
- Fail to develop coping skills (and autonomy and self-efficacy)
- Prevents corrective learning and habituation
- Reinforce maladaptive beliefs
- Reliance on reassurance reinforces an overestimation of threats and **undermines confidence**
- Increased risk for other problems
- Decreased academic confidence and success**
- Increased dependency
- Reinforced negative reinforcement cycle

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Accommodation Behaviours

- Participation
  - Assist in checking behaviours
  - Assist in avoidance
  - Reassure
- Modification
  - Prevent distressing situations

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**Anxiety...**

- Wants certainty
- Wants predictability
- Wants comfort

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**You accommodate**

- You can't stand watching them suffer
- It stops the tantrum/meltdown NOW
- You're afraid of making it worse
- It works...but doesn't

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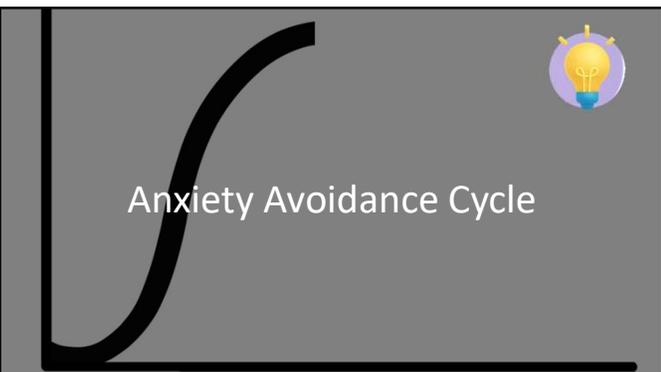
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**Anxiety Avoidance Cycle**

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Remember: The Brain is A Prediction Machine

QUICKLY DETERMINES WHAT BEHAVIORS ARE MOST REWARDING



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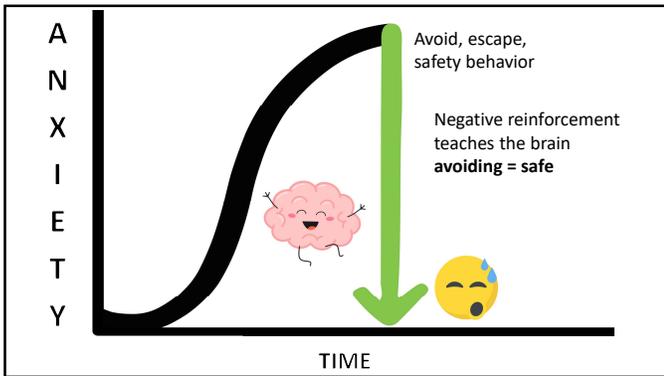
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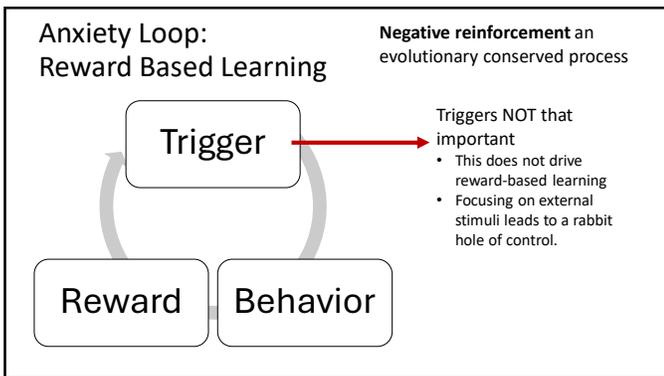
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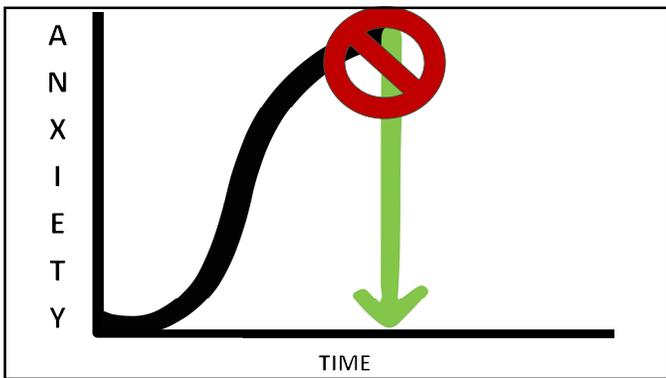
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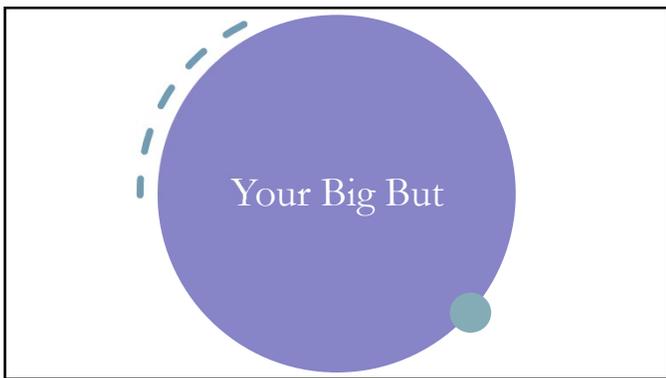
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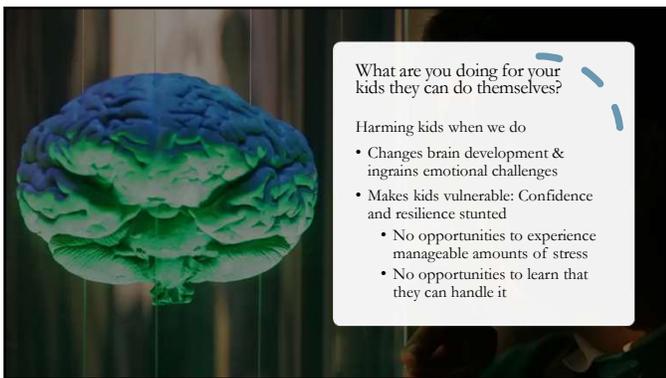
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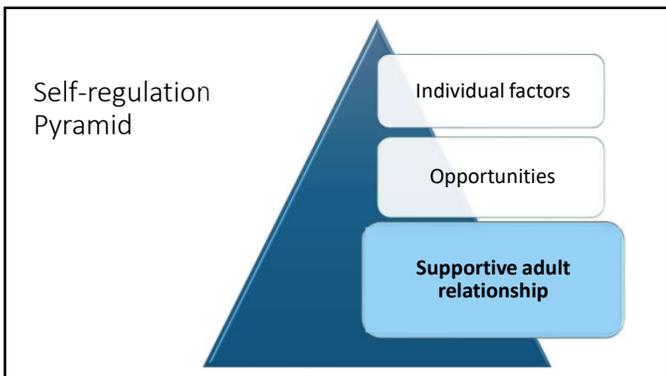
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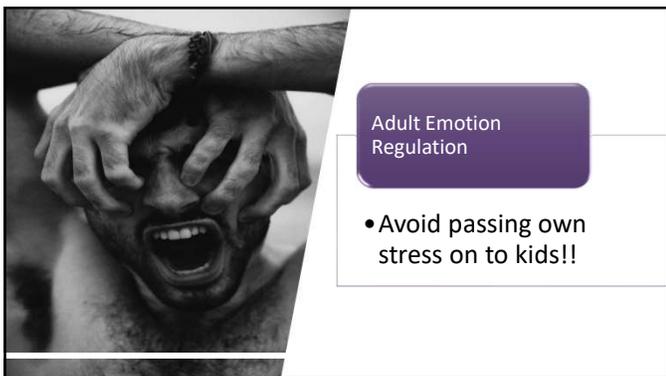
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Connection is a bottom-up process

Self-regulation is a top-down process

Always start from the outside in

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### Modelling Resilience

Show kids how to handle mistakes and challenges.

Make comments like, *"I am worried about this but this is what I am going to do..."*

Use reflective problem-solving aloud: "This didn't go as planned—let's figure it out."

Show emotions BUT model how you manage them

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## Emotion Coach

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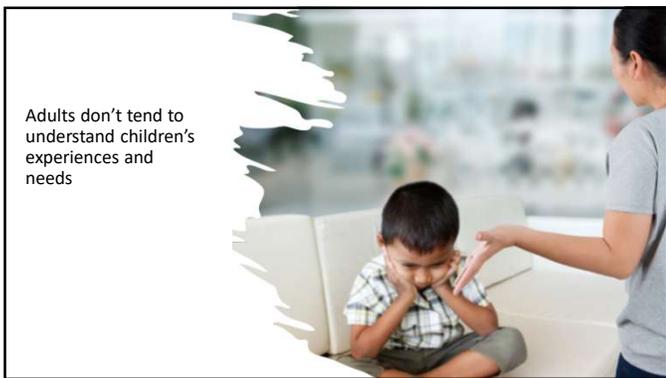
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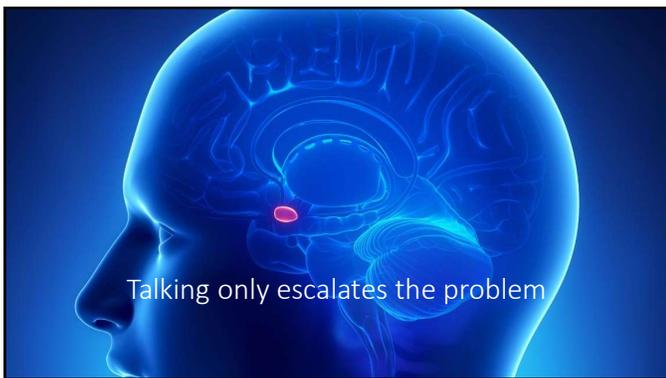
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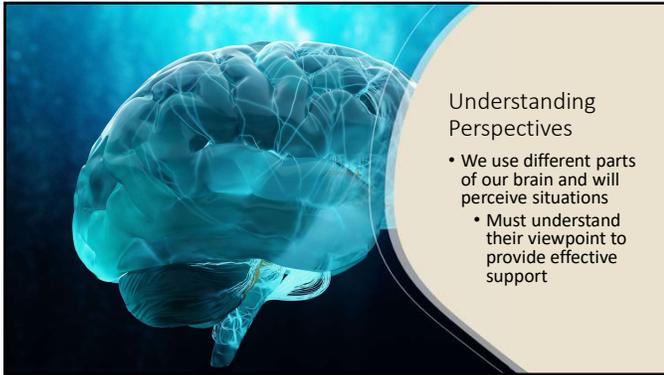
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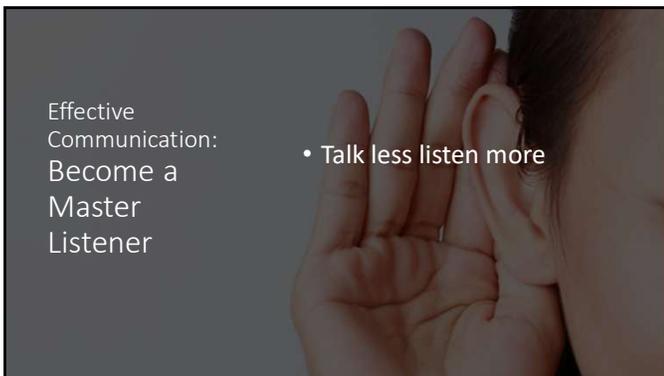
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OR, even better... ADJECTIVE!

Let me see if I got that. You said...

Did I get it?

Is there more?

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How we talk is important

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Replace negativity with curiosity



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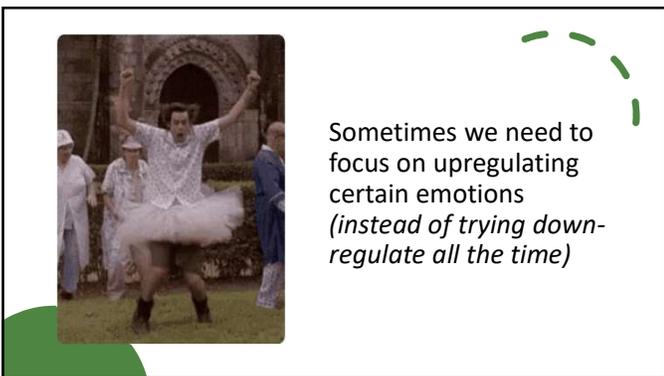
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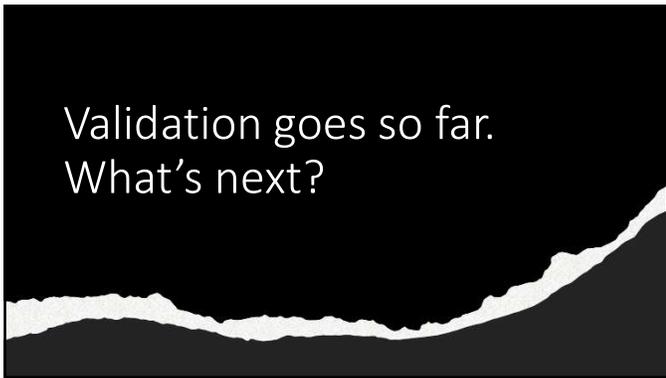
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<p>What is our job?</p>	<p>NOT To</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fix</li><li>• Solve</li><li>• Reassure</li><li>• Make them feel better</li><li>• Be their therapist &amp; treat anxiety</li></ul>	<p>To</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Help them be the bravest versions of themselves in this unpredictable life</li><li>• Remove obstacles to kids' own capability building!</li></ul>
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### What Are You Accommodating?

Checking & Reassurance	Modification	Participation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Answering "what if" questions repeatedly</li> <li>• Confirming plans multiple times</li> <li>• Providing guarantees about outcomes ("You'll be fine, I promise")</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adjusting schedules to avoid triggers</li> <li>• Speaking for your child in social situations</li> <li>• Doing tasks they're capable of because it's "easier"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staying during activities they can do alone</li> <li>• Sleeping in their room (or them in yours)</li> <li>• Monitoring symptoms/bodily sensations with them</li> </ul>

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Homework!

- **Map the Accommodations**
  - List things you *do* (e.g., checking homework five times) or *don't do* (e.g., not going to restaurants) because of anxiety.
  - Choose *one* specific accommodation to reduce.
    - Do not try to change everything at once.
    - Let them know the plan *before* the trigger occurs, during a calm moment.

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They will escalate!  
**Front-Load the Conversation**

Before you change ANYTHING, you must prepare your child.  
**Without front-loading:** "Why aren't you helping me anymore? Don't you care?"

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*What to say (WHEN THEY'RE CALM!)*

I've been thinking about how I've been helping you with [specific accommodation]. I realize that when I [describe what you do], it might be sending you the message that I don't think you can handle this on your own.

But here's what I actually believe: You ARE capable of handling this. Your brain just hasn't learned it yet because I keep stepping in.

So I'm going to start doing something different. When you feel worried about [trigger], I'm still going to be here. I'm still going to support you. But I'm not going to [specific accommodation] anymore.

This is going to feel hard at first. You might get mad at me. That's okay. I'm doing this because I believe in your strength, not because I don't care.

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### Front-Loading Effectively

<p><b>DO THIS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Name the specific accommodation you're stopping (just ONE to start)</li> <li>• Explain WHY you're changing (belief in their capability)</li> <li>• Acknowledge it will be uncomfortable</li> <li>• Separate your support from the accommodation</li> </ul>	<p><b>NOT THIS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make it a negotiation</li> <li>• Apologize for changing</li> <li>• Give multiple options</li> <li>• Do this during an anxiety episode</li> </ul>
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### They WILL Test You!

But you ALWAYS helped me before!	I did. And I was wrong to. You're more capable than I was giving you credit for.	<p><b>Stay consistent. They're not asking for accommodation. They're asking if you really believe they can do this.</b></p>
You don't love me anymore!	I love you so much that I'm willing to let you be uncomfortable so you can grow stronger.	
Escalation, tantrums, tears	This is their nervous system's last attempt to get you back to the old pattern.	

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**The Loving No**

When they ask for accommodation **AFTER** front-loading:

- You are not being mean.
- You are not withdrawing love.

You are declining to participate in the maintenance of their anxiety.

**Validate + Remind + Redirect**




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**They will escalate!**

**VRI**  
Your **CONSISTENT** response will end the escalation (eventually)

**V (Validate the feeling)**  
I can see you're really worried right now, I know this is hard.

**R (Remind of their capability)**  
AND you've handled hard things before.

**I (I'm going to strengthen your brave brain, not your worried brain and ...)**  
...let you go to school without calling the teacher.  
...Not going to answer that 'what if' question.

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**They will escalate!**

**VRI(D)**  
Your **CONSISTENT** response will end the escalation (eventually)

**V (Validate the feeling)**  
w, I know this is hard.

**R (Remind of their capability)**

**I (I'm going to strengthen your brave brain, not your worried brain and ...)**

**Disengage from the *behaviour*.**  
Don't debate logic with an anxious brain.

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WORRY	OLD RESPONSE	VRI RESPONSE
What if I throw up at school	You won't throw up. You never do. Remember, you haven't thrown up in 3 years. Your teacher knows to call me if you don't feel well. Do you want crackers in your backpack just in case?	I can hear how worried you are about that. [V] AND you know what to do if your stomach feels weird—you've handled feeling sick before. [R] I'm making your brave brain stronger and won't make a plan for 'what if' because we know that just makes the worry bigger. [I]

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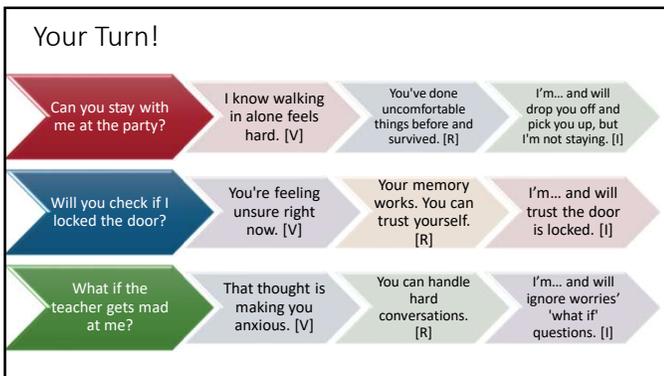
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Even with all of this, they are still capable!

**Stay the course!**

**They will**

- Push back
- Escalate emotions
- Try different strategies
- Say you're being damaged

Their temporary distress is teaching their nervous system: **"I can survive without the accommodation. I am capable."**

you're damaging them

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**The Loving No is NOT Punishment**  
*(or forcing them to suffer or into situations alone)*

It is

- Refusing to participate in avoidance
- Maintaining relationship while withdrawing accommodation
- Communicating belief in their capability
- Teaching their brain they can handle discomfort
- Strengthening their self-regulating brain

You're present. You're connected.  
 You're just not doing the thing that maintains their anxiety.

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**Supporting Without Accommodating**

Helpful	Unhelpful
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sit nearby while they do the hard thing</li> <li>• Acknowledge their courage</li> <li>• Celebrate small wins</li> <li>• Problem-solve AFTER they've tried</li> <li>• Validate their feelings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do it for them</li> <li>• Remove the discomfort</li> <li>• Provide guarantees</li> <li>• Answer reassurance-seeking questions</li> <li>• Make the anxiety go away</li> </ul>

Support moves them toward capability.  
 Accommodation keeps them stuck.

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Sometimes we just need to step back and wait a bit

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Use Mirror Neurons  
Show confidence  
= FEEL confidence

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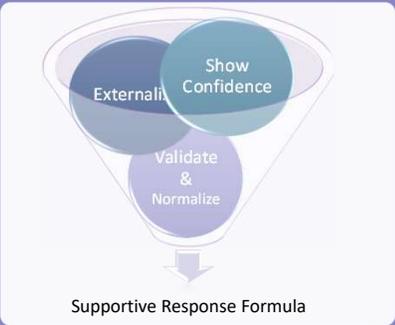
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*Our confidence in them is one of the most important factors to success*

Supportive Response Formula

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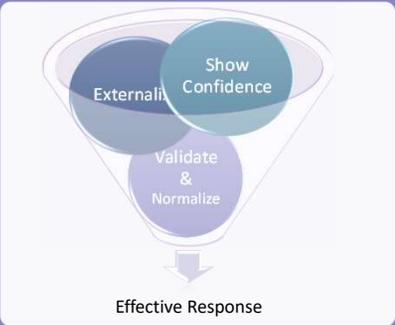
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*Foster autonomy!*  
Kids need to figure out their own challenges: Put it back to them!

Effective Response

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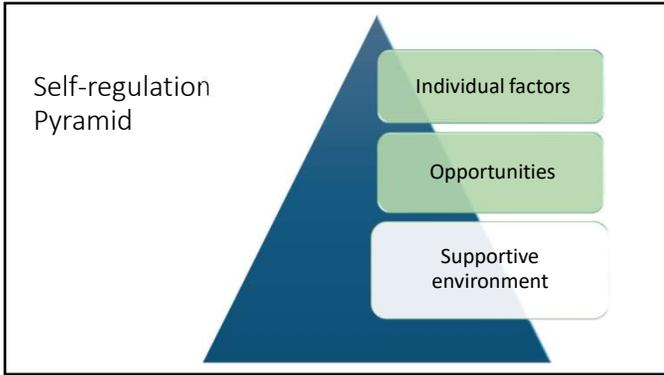
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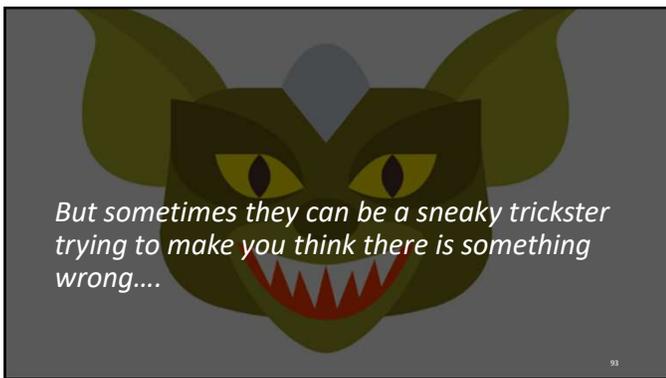
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Saying it out loud gives us more power

- ✓ To expose it
- ✓ To take control and use helpful coping strategies

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How do emotions show up?

**Sounds like:**  
List the worried thoughts and images that come up:

**Feels like:**  
List physical symptoms associated with worries:

**Looks like:**  
List behaviours that result from the worries, including avoidance:

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Externalize  
They are not their behaviours

Practice practice practice – make it so automatic they don't have to think about it

- Mean Jean
- Explosive Bob
- Worry Wanda
- Yelling McGee

- When does it show up?
- How does it show up?
- What can you do?
- What support do you need?

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They start to worry about the physical feelings, which are distressing, which they will do anything to stop

Become reactive  
Misinterpret and leads to more sensations...



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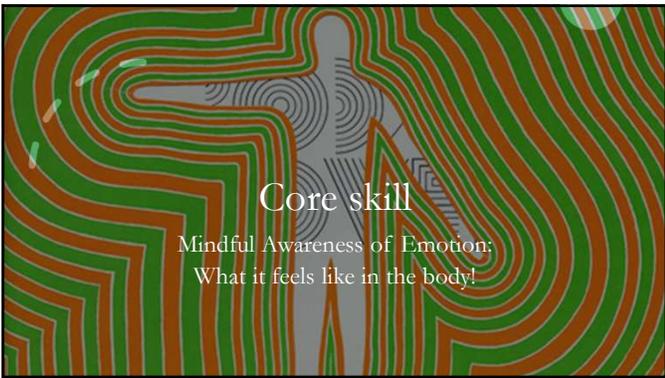
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Core skill

Mindful Awareness of Emotion:  
What it feels like in the body!



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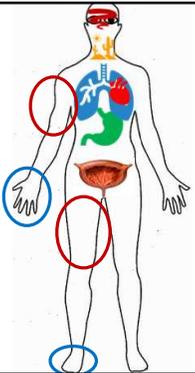
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Emotions show up in the body



They need to know that we MUST have physical reactions to alert us to what is happening

- Cannot change reactions without this understanding

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Now we can respond in helpful ways!

Validate the suckiness!

That makes sense!  
No wonder - your adrenal glands have sent out all that yucky stuff.

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Build Acceptance & Tolerance

- NOT fix, resist, control, or eliminate emotions
  - Only makes it worse
- Goal is to function WHILE feeling big feelings
- Focus on **ending fear of discomfort**
  - I am uncomfortable but I am going to do this anyway

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Emotion Dial      Acceptance Dial

0      100      0      100

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Did you know?  
Fear and excitement  
feel the same in the body?  
But how we think about it makes all the  
difference in the world...

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**Threat vs. Challenge Response**  
*Not good or bad, different purposes*

**Threat response:** Goal is survival in situations we aren't equipped to handle

- More cortisol to defend and protect

**Challenge response:** Opportunity for growth where we tackle hard but manageable situations

- More testosterone and adrenaline to help us achieve our goal

104

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Different hormones released to prepare for what's to come.

How does our body know?

Depends largely on our evaluation of the situation, which COMES FROM EXPERIENCE!

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**Amygdala Relies on Past Experiences**

The amygdala is often mistaken

- Doesn't have all the relevant information.
- Will always rather be safe than sorry.
- Does not know what will happen

Needs to be corrected!



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**Emotions are Predictions (Not Reactions)**

Past experience

**Students need experiences!**



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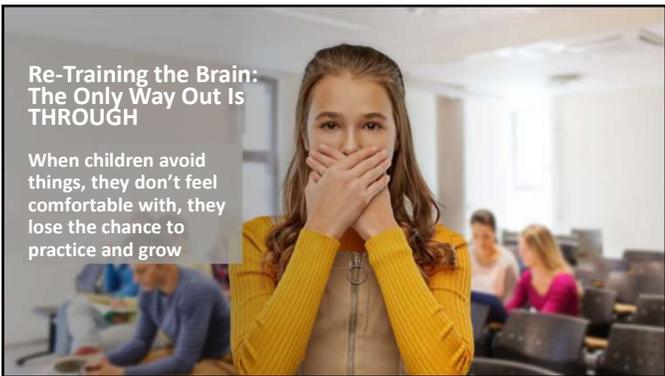
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**Re-Training the Brain: The Only Way Out Is THROUGH**

When children avoid things, they don't feel comfortable with, they lose the chance to practice and grow



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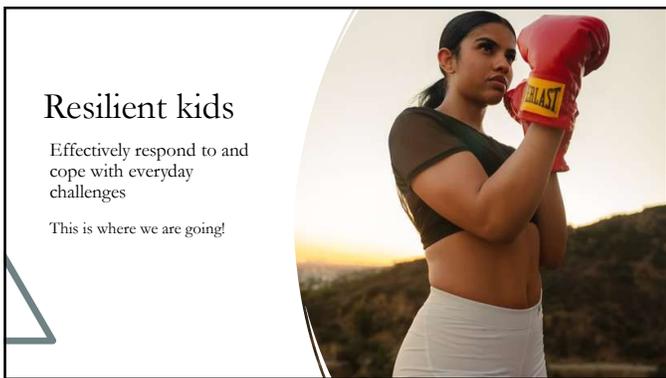
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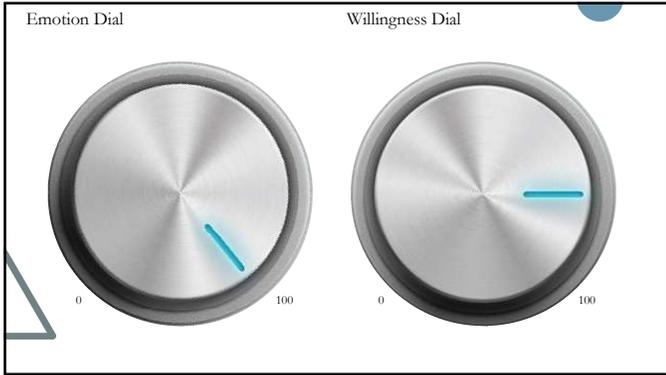
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Talking & thinking does NOT retrain the amygdala

Learning based on associations

The ONLY way the thalamus and amygdala learn is by EXPERIENCING

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Talking & thinking does NOT retrain the amygdala

The ONLY way the thalamus and amygdala learn is by EXPERIENCING

The ONLY way to teach your alarm system that you're safe:

- Face the scary thing
- Feel the feelings without trying to escape or fix them.
- Do nothing to make the anxiety go away — just let it be there.

The more you practice, the more your brain learns

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Practice Coping with Uncertainty and UNCOMFORTABLE Feelings!

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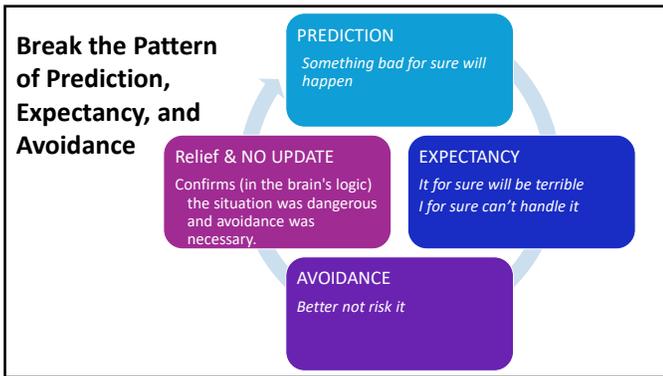
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**Integrate Skills through Emotion Exposure**

Integrate skills to master adaptive responses

- Talking not enough to change the brain!
- Doing makes stronger memories
- Doing gives us experience
- Quicker progress
- Provoke **STRONG EMOTIONS** - MUST show up for learning to happen

122

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Become so good at managing ANY emotion that comes up

Learn to *respond differently*

**LOTS OF EXPERIENCE**

- Anxiety
- Shame
- Guilt
- Rejection
- Disappointment
- Frustration
- Self-doubt

**REINFORCE BRAVERY!**

*The more microsucks throughout the day, we build resilience, motivation and tenacity.*

*Practice practice practice – make it so they don't have to think*

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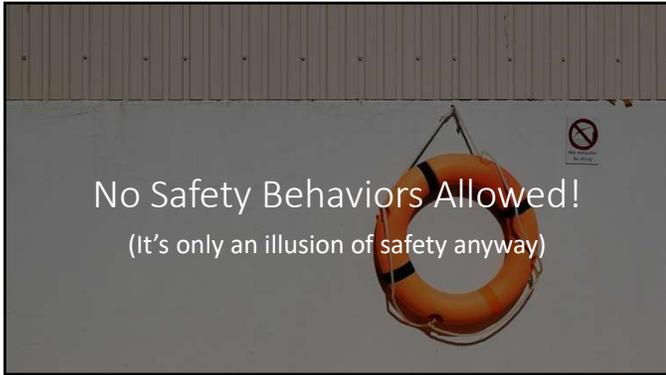
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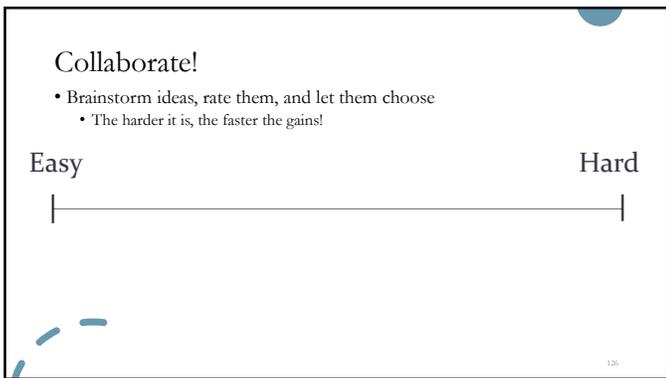
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**Hypothesis Testing**

Lots of experiments and experiences needed!

- What do you think will happen?
- How sure? (1-10)?
- Was the hypothesis right?
- What did you learn?



127

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*Exposure to LEARN*

Despite feeling anxious, I still did it

And... I can still live life and do anything, even while feeling anxious!



128

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*Exposure TO LEARN*

No matter what happens, I can handle it!

On my own

- Without others
- Without safety behaviours



129

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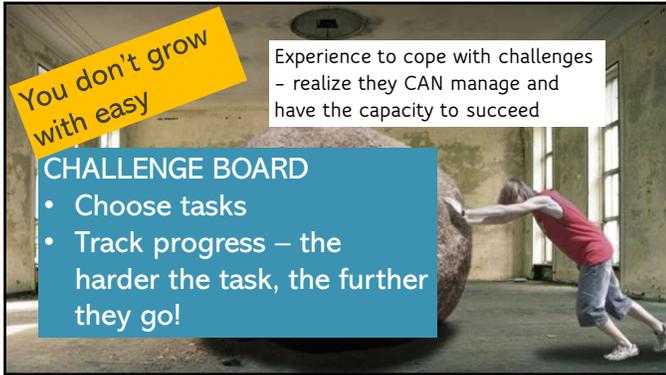
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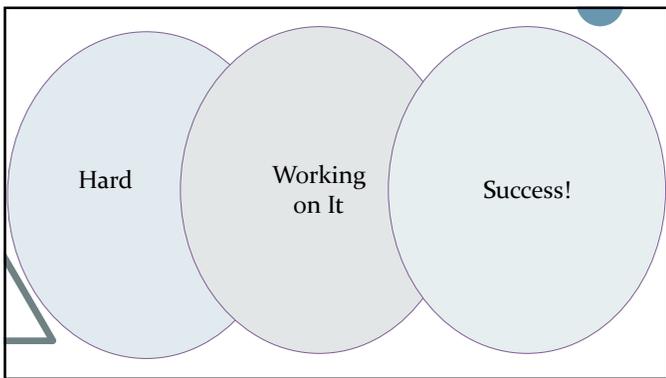
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**Missions for Self-Exposure**  
*You're only limited by your own creativity!*

Create themes for the week

- Imperfection
  - Make a guess when don't know
  - Focus on quantity vs. quality in a timed task
  - Fast decision making
  - Leave a mistake
- Talking to people
  - Ask stranger for time or directions
  - Ask someone to play
  - Compliment someone



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**Opportunities to Be Comfortable in the World**

Promote independence!

- Give kids the chance to do, think, be, and make their own decisions and mistakes
- Encourage kids to try new things, even when scared
  - They need to know you support and trust them!



134

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**Opportunities for Independence**

- Give more responsibility
- Give kids the chance to do, think, and make on their own
  - Get ready to go home
  - Check their homework
  - Solve conflicts
  - Make their own friends
  - Fix mistakes
  - Solve problems
  - Students to come to you with concerns
  - Assert their needs (set up opportunities)
  - IPP goals
- Teach kids to be comfortable in the world



135

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### Opportunities: Use Real Challenges!

Challenges are part of life. Dealing with them is part of learning.

- Use teachable moments
  - Solve their own problems
  - Figure things out on their own
  - Take accountability
  - See the consequences of their behaviours
- Work through next steps and how to fix things
- Let them fail (don't set them up though)



136

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### LET THEM HELP!!!

With IMPORTANT things  
Sooner vs. later



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### LET THEM PLAY!!!



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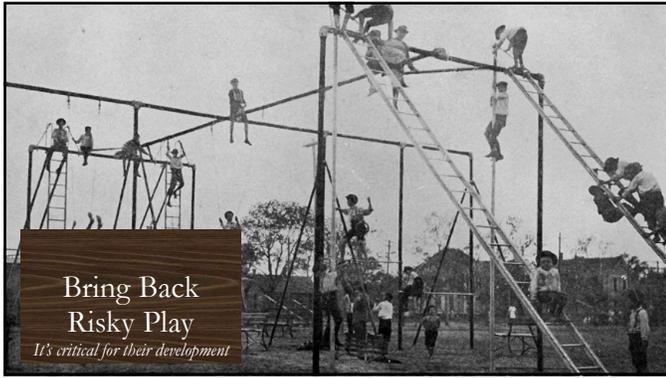
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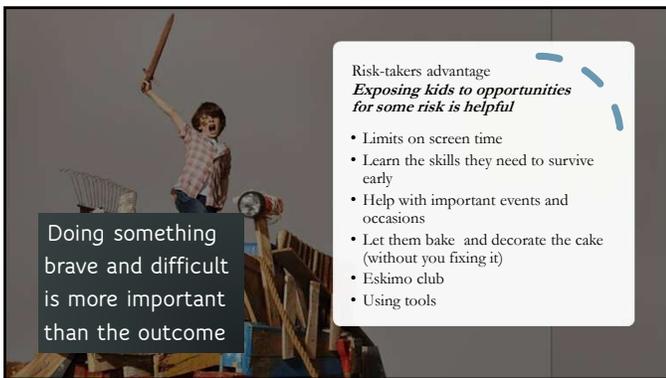
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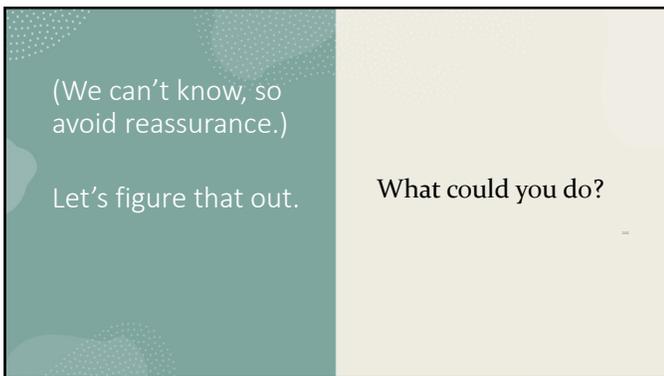
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Kids need to figure out their own challenges: Put it back to them!

Confidence

Validation

Effective Response

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What I know	What I don't know
• We are going to the zoo	• If I have to go to the bathroom
• We are going by bus	• Where the bathrooms are
• We are leaving at 9:10	• Who will be in my group
• We will get back at 2:55	• If I will get lost
	• Where to go if I get lost
	• What parent will be in our group
	• if we will see the gorillas
	• If I will fall down and get hurt
	• If I have an allergic reaction

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What I know	What I don't know
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• We will get back at 2:55	• If I will get lost
	• Where to go if I get lost
	• What parent will be in our group
	• if we will see the gorillas
	• If I will fall down and get hurt
	• If I have an allergic reaction

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