

A group of diverse young children, including boys and girls of various ethnicities, are smiling and huddled together. The background is a bright blue wall. The text "Welcome!!!" is overlaid in large white letters at the top. Below it, a blue-bordered box contains the text "Thanks for Joining Us Today." At the bottom, a semi-transparent grey box contains the text "Please use chat to sign in with your name." in blue.

Welcome!!!

Thanks for Joining Us Today.

Please use chat to sign in
with your name.



A Closer Look at Executive Function Skills in the “EMOTION” Bucket - Critical Brain Skills to Nourish, Flourish and Thrive



May 19, 2021
BrainWaves Live! Webinar Series

Kelly Spanoghe, Ed.S.
Chief Organizational Learning Officer

Housekeeping for Webinars

- **This meeting is being recorded**
- **Be on video** if possible.
- **Use the chat** for questions and reflection at any time throughout the presentation.
- **Please mute your audio.**

- **Stay Engaged.**
- **Community Mindset.**
- **Speak Your Truth.**
- **Be Open to New Ideas.**

Let's Get Started!

Today's Topic?

**Executive
Function (EF)
“EMOTION”
Skills**



Let's Engage in a Poll

What **age group** is the most stressed?

What Do YOU Think?

What Age Group is the Most Stressed?

12-17	18-23
25-40	45-60

SOURCE - APA's 2020 Stress in America survey

How Prevalent is Stress?

According to The American Institute of Stress:

- About **33 percent** of people report feeling extreme stress.
- **77 percent** of people experience stress that affects their physical health.
- **73 percent** of people have stress that impacts their mental health.
- **48 percent** of people have trouble sleeping because of stress.

Unfortunately, for about half of all Americans, **levels of stress are getting worse instead of better.**

Common Symptoms of Stress

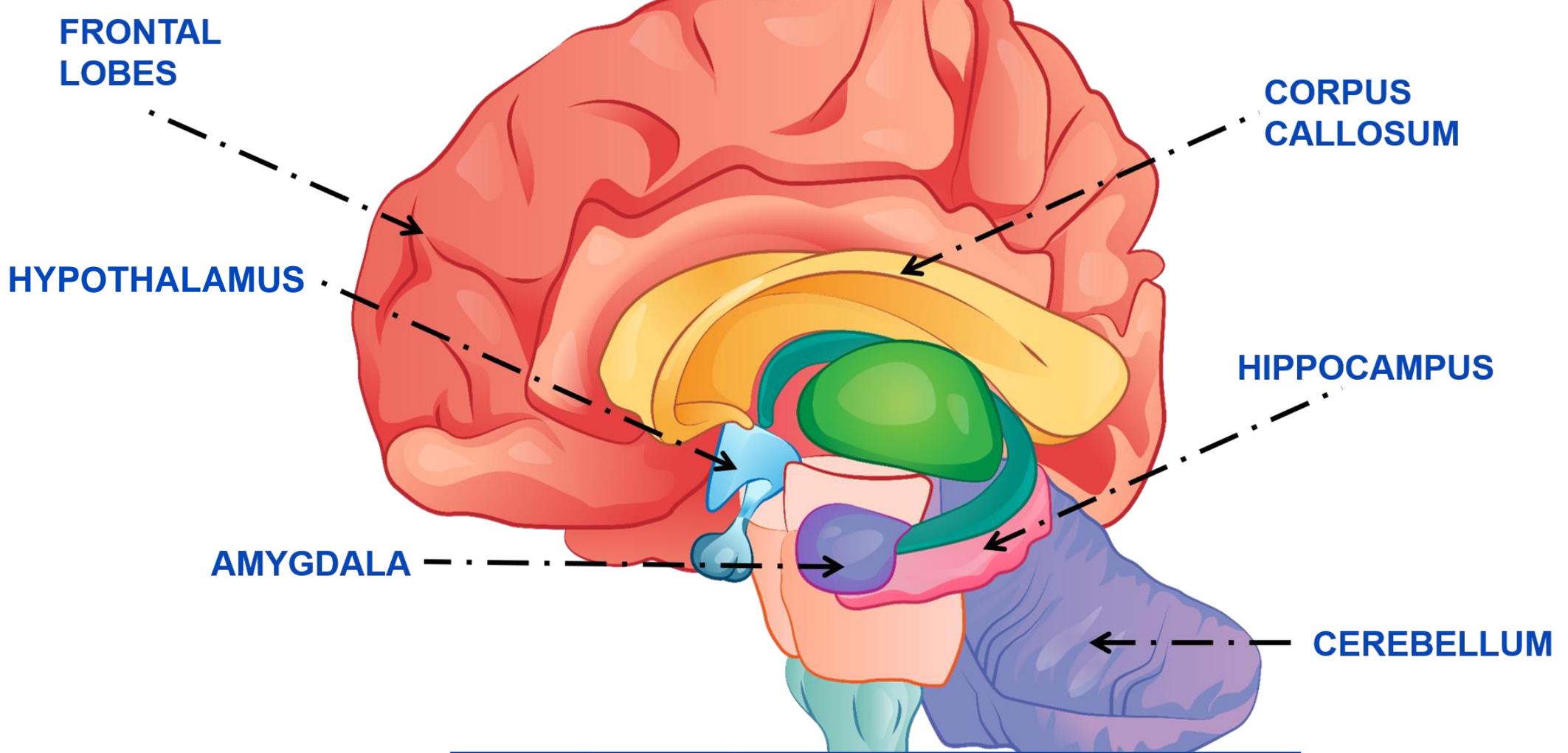
- Irritability and anger: 45 percent
- Fatigue or low energy: 41 percent
- Lack of motivation or interest in things: 38 percent
- Anxiety, nervousness or worry: 36 percent
- Headaches: 36 percent
- Feeling sad or depressed: 34 percent
- Indigestion, acid reflux or upset stomach: 26 percent
- Muscle tension: 23 percent
- Appetite changes: 21 percent



Source: Recovery Village; 11/06/20

Emotion control and stress tolerance executive functions are essential to our well-being!





HIPPOCAMPUS The Mail Carrier	AMYGDALA Palace Guard	HYPOTHALAMUS Thermostat	CORPUS CALLOSUM Bay Bridge	CEREBELLUM Mover & Shaker	FRONTAL LOBES Co-Pilot
					

Super Heroes to the Rescue!

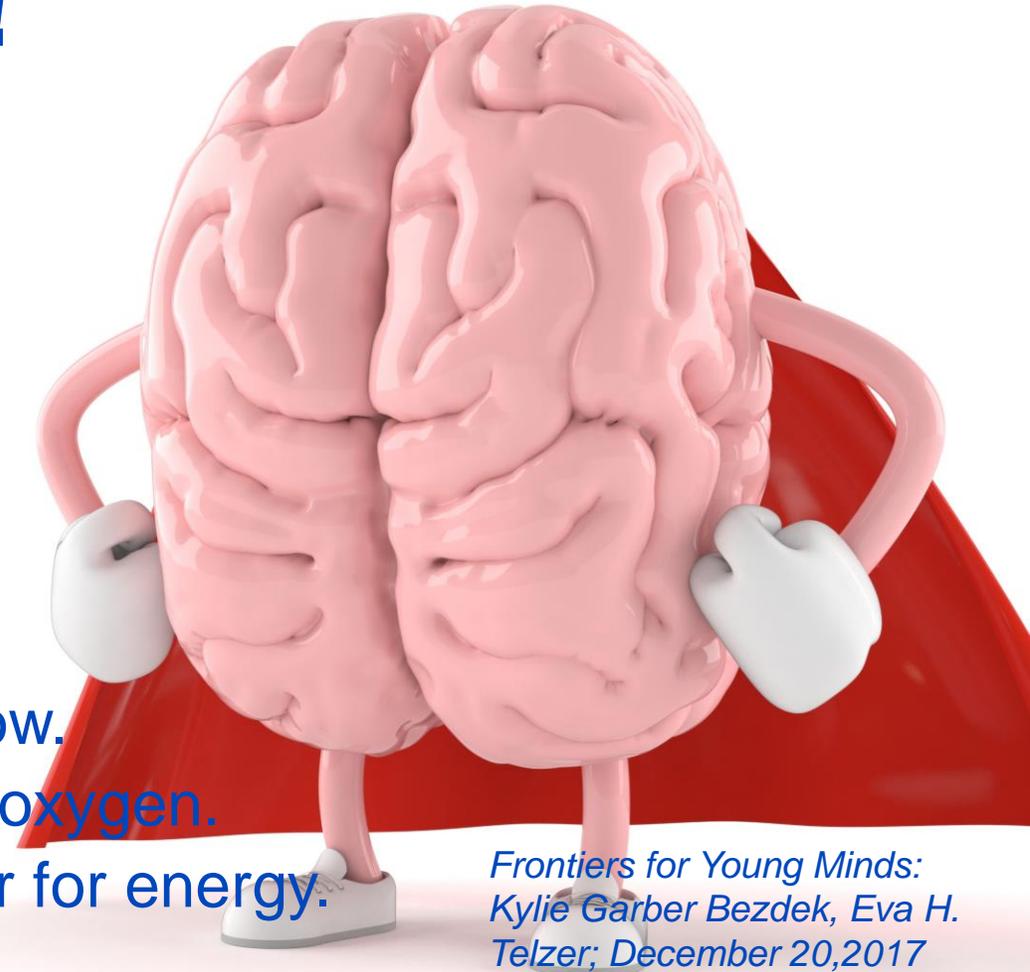
Stress response system is the team that **helps the brain combat stress!**

- ✓ Hypothalamus
- ✓ Pituitary
- ✓ Adrenal
- ✓ Amygdala
- ✓ Prefrontal Cortex

= HPA

Helps by:

- Speeding up your heart to increase blood flow.
- Speeding up your breathing to take in more oxygen.
- Slowing your digestion to store fat and sugar for energy.



*Frontiers for Young Minds:
Kylie Garber Bezdek, Eva H.
Telzer; December 20,2017*

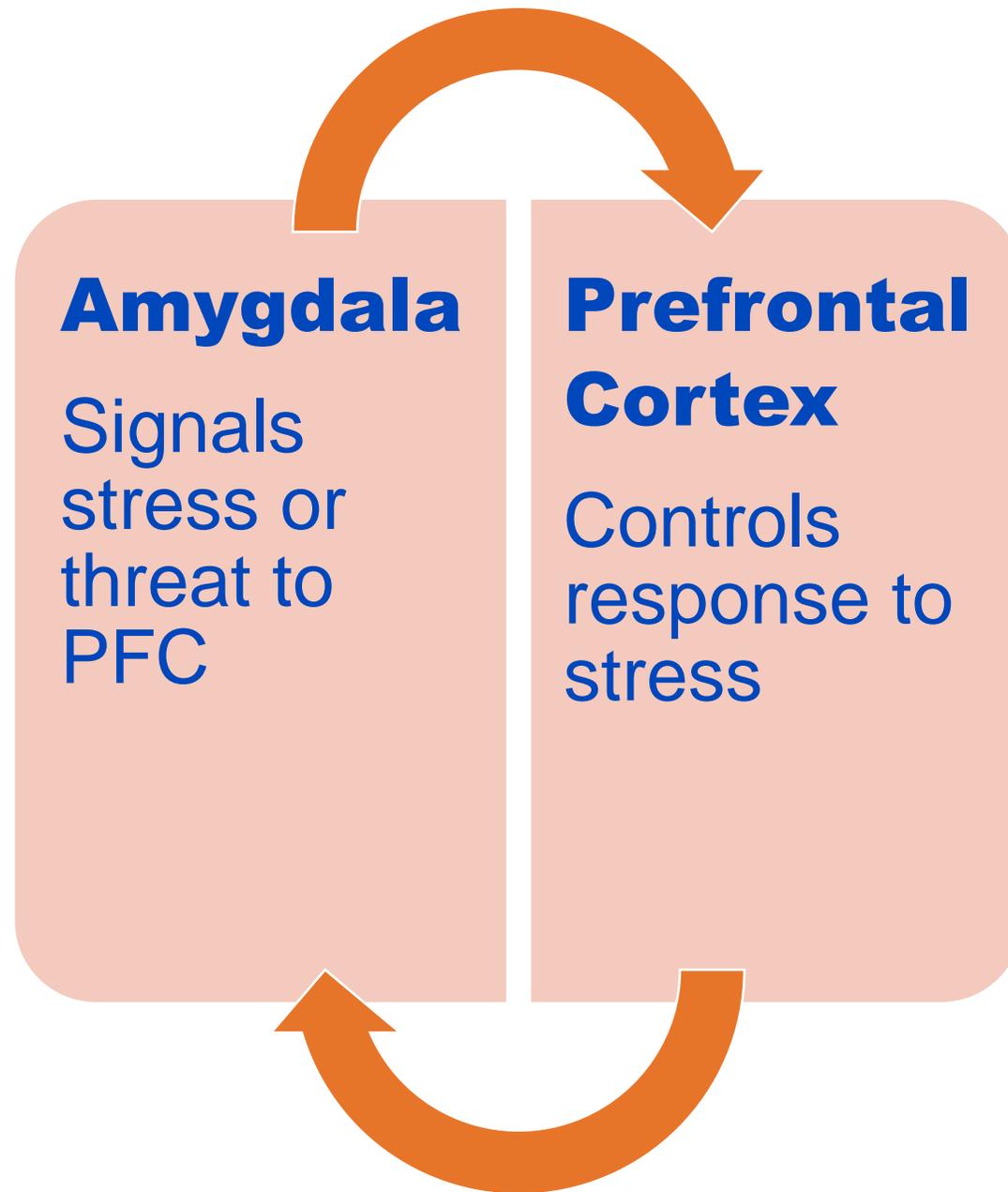
Amygdala detects stress: emotional or biological.

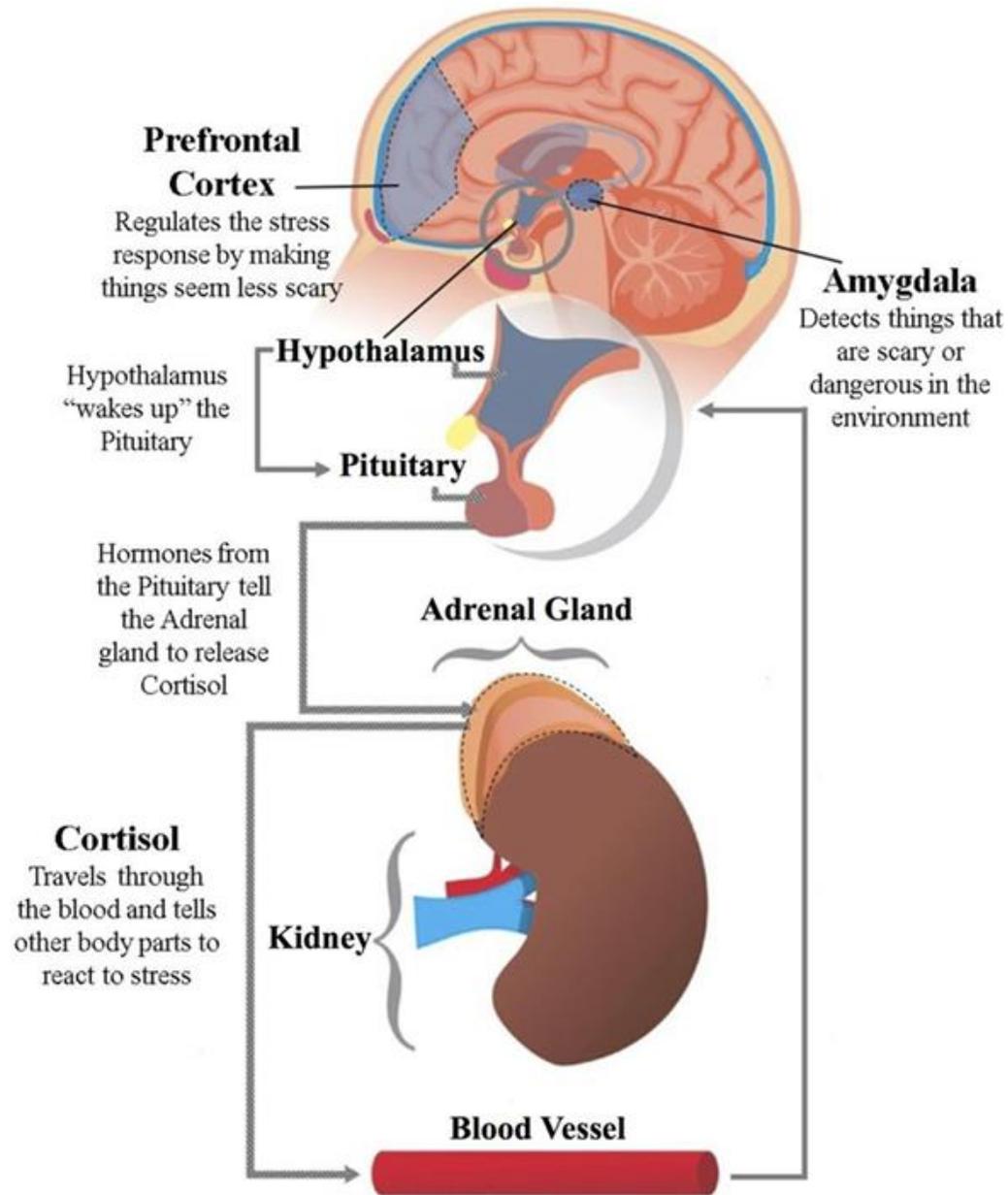
Stress response system goes into effect: Hypothalamus, pituitary, adrenal (HPA).

Hypothalamus receives a signal from the amygdala.

Hypothalamus sends a signal to the pituitary gland to release hormones.

Adrenal glands release cortisol into the bloodstream which prepares the body to interact with the stress. Cortisol helps the brain think clearly and sends energy to your muscles, heart rate and breathing.





Executive Function Traffic Controller Center

The mental processes that enable us to plan, focus attention, remember instructions, and juggle multiple tasks successfully, just as an air traffic control system at a busy airport safely manages the arrivals and departures of many aircraft on multiple runways, the brain needs this skill set to filter distractions, prioritize tasks, set and achieve goals, and control impulses.

*Center on the Developing Child
at Harvard University*



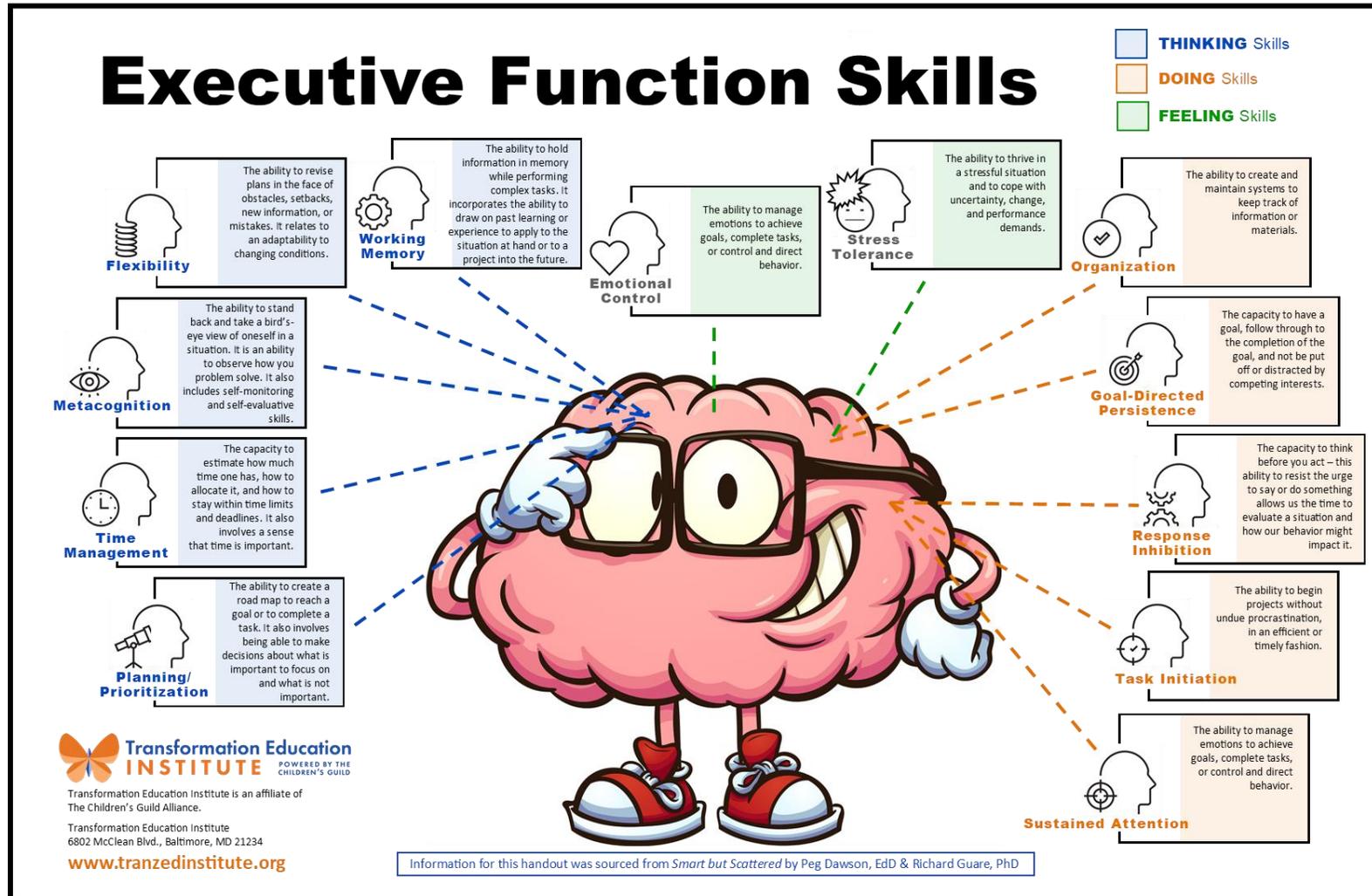
Basically
everything we
need to get
stuff done!



Executive Function Skills = 3 Buckets



Executive Function Skills Placemat



Visit our website to download your **FREE** copy

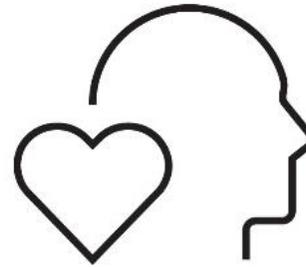
Childrensguild.org

Emotion Bucket

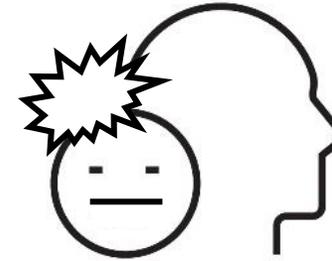


Includes **Feeling States:**

Emotion



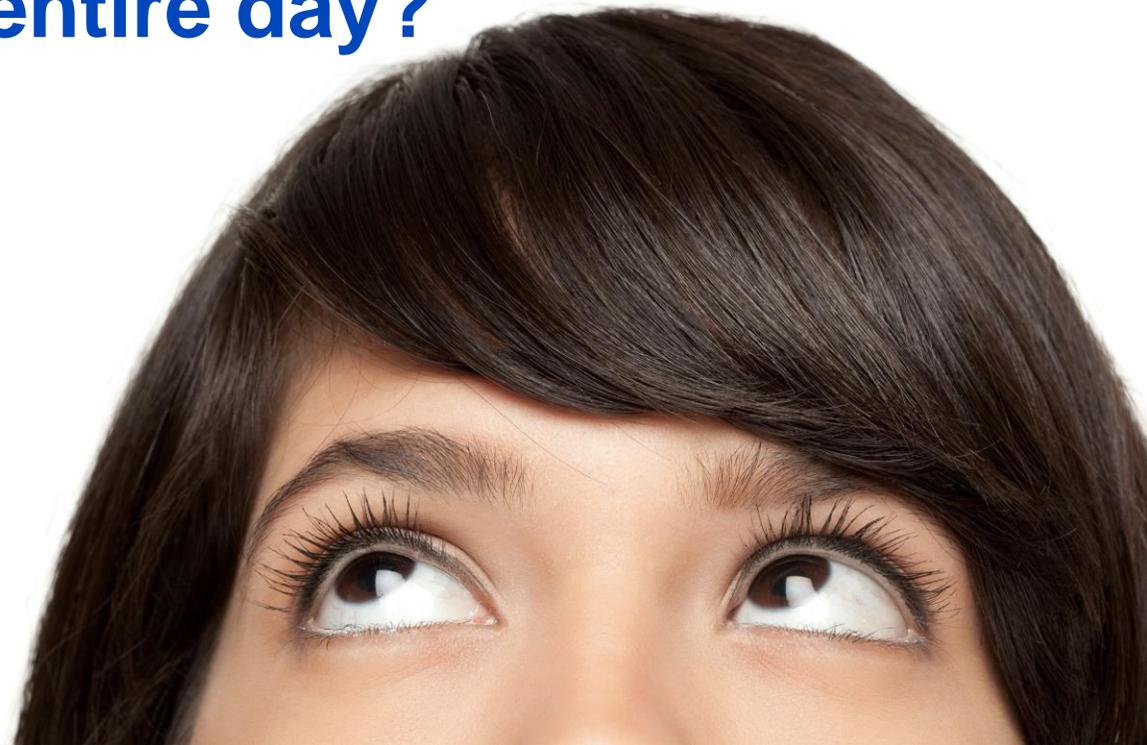
Emotional Control



Stress Tolerance

Do You...

- ✓ Experience **quick changes in your emotions?**
- ✓ Feel **self-conscious?**
- ✓ Let a **setback ruin your entire day?**
- ✓ **Worry constantly?**
- ✓ Have **mood swings?**
- ✓ Have **outbursts, intense emotional responses?**





You might have
difficulty
with
emotional
control

Emotional Control



ability to **manage emotions** to achieve goals, complete tasks or control and direct behavior

Emotional Control

- the ability to manage and control your emotions in order to achieve a goal or complete a task.
- the ability to stay calm if you're anxious or bounce back from a setback without letting disappointment or frustration take over.

Emotional control, then, is all about **how you respond to and control your feelings.**

Strategies

7 Habits of Brain Health

- Quality sleep
- Regular movement
- Nutritious food
- Down time
- Focus time
- Social time
- Challenge time



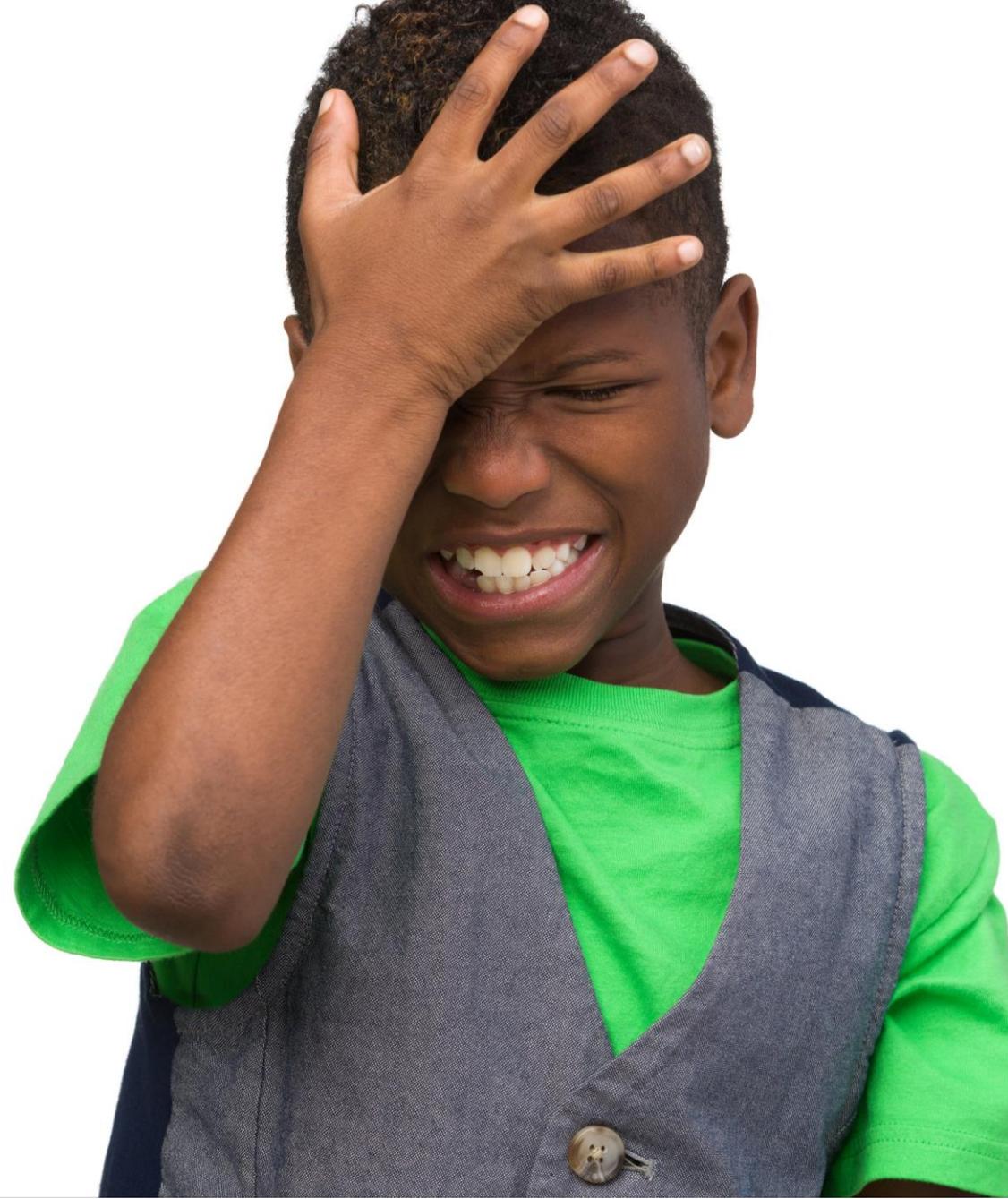
BrainFirst

Do You...

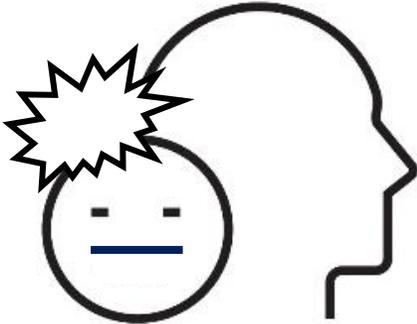
- ✓ **Frequently procrastinate** due to an inability to tolerate the frustration associated with a tough or boring task
- ✓ **Impulsively attempt to “fix” a situation due to impatience** rather than waiting for the issue to correct itself
- ✓ **Exaggerate temporary discomfort**
- ✓ Insist on pursuing **immediate gratification**
- ✓ **Give up immediately** when presented with a challenge or obstacle
- ✓ **Grow irritable or angry** about everyday stressors
- ✓ Think or insist, **“I can’t stand this.”**
- ✓ **Avoid tasks** that might cause distress



You might have
**poor stress
tolerance or
low frustration
tolerance**



Stress Tolerance



**Stress
Tolerance**

ability to **thrive in a stressful situation**
and **to cope** with uncertainty, change and
performance demands

POSITIVE

- Source of adrenaline
- Motivates us
- Helps us focus



NEGATIVE

- Anxiety
- Panic attack
- Health concerns
- Brain Architecture

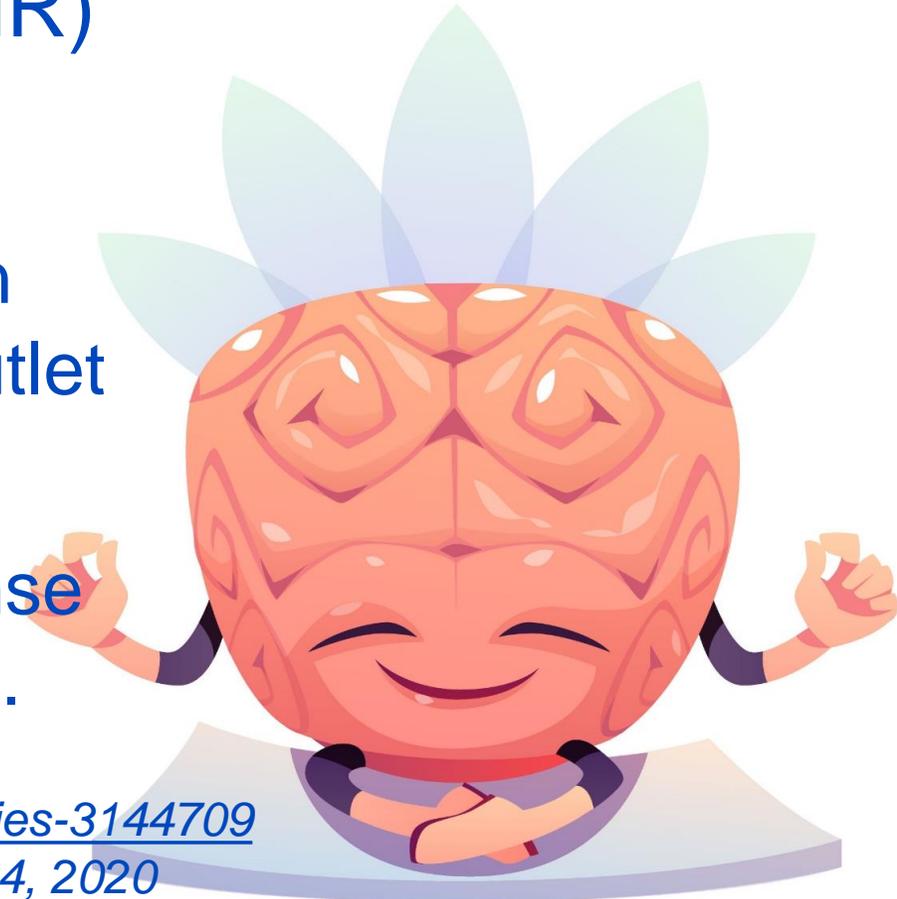


Stress Tolerance Strategies

- Focus on one issue at a time.
- Take a time out.
- Talk positively.
- See the big picture.
- Talk it out.
- Pay attention
- Evaluate priorities
- Avoid being hijacked

5-Minute Stress Reduction Strategies

- **Breathing Exercises**
- **Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)**
- **Aromatherapy**
- **Quick Burst of Exercise!** Exercise can provide a distraction, endorphins and an outlet for frustration.
- **Have a Good Laugh.** Maintaining a sense of humor can relieve stress in several ways.



<https://www.verywellmind.com/stress-relief-strategies-3144709>

Verywellmind: Elizabeth Scott MA, February 14, 2020

Let's Engage!

What are some strategies you use to reduce stress?

Share your comments in the Chat Box

Progressive Muscle Relaxation



Negativity Bias

Research has shown that across a wide array of psychological events, **people tend to focus more on the negative as they try to make sense of the world.**

The tendency to dwell on the negative more than the positive is simply **one way the brain tries to keep us safe.**

Not only does negative stimuli trigger more neural activity, but research shows negativity is detected more quickly and easily. The amygdala—the brain region that regulates emotion and motivation—uses about **two-thirds of its neurons to detect bad news.**

Emotional Regulation Through Cognitive Change

- Reappraisal – different neural network – attentional deployment
- Increased PFC activity
- Reduced amygdala activity
- Increase PFC activity = less negative affect

Cognitive reappraisal is most effective method.

3 Types of Reappraisal

- ▶ 1. Reinterpret **emotional stimulus**
- ▶ 2. Reinterpret **via perspective** – more objective, detach
- ▶ 3. Reinterpret **emotional response** – non-judgmental view of emotion; change mindset

Reinterpret Emotional Stimulus

- Negative event – more positive outcome.
- Interpret in less negative way, look for good in the situation.

Emotional Coping Style

- Tendency to either **accept or avoid** negative internal experiences
- Negative internal experiences:
 - Thoughts
 - Feelings
 - Sensations
 - Memories

Avoidance Style

- Unwillingness to remain in contact with distressing thoughts, feelings, memories, even when doing so, **creates harm in the long run.**
- Psychological problems:
 - Makes people more vulnerable to stressors
 - Moderator of mental health issues
 - Catastrophizing
 - Emotions don't make sense
 - Negative view: out of control, shameful
 - Attempts to control – suppression, elimination, drugs, alcohol

Acceptance Style

- Adopting non-judgmental view of emotion.
- Accept and make room for emotion – an activity of the brain.
- Emotions motivate us to act.
- Increase acceptance through:
 - Mindfulness attention training
 - Anytime gratitude
 - Anytime mindfulness
 - If/then rules

Reinterpret Emotional Stimulus

- 1. What is presenting problem?**
- 2. What triggered (precipitated) this problem?**
- 3. What perpetuates the problem?**

Emotion Coping Style

Emotional Coping Style Scale

1	2	3	4	5	6
very untrue of me	somewhat untrue of me	slightly untrue of me	slightly true of me	somewhat true of me	very true of me

Avoidance Coping Style Score (____ /42)

Lower scores reflect a less "avoidance style"

I avoid situations if there is even a slim chance of getting hurt ____

I can't allow myself to experience certain types of emotions ____

I often won't do something if there is a possibility it will upset me ____

I prefer to stick to what I'm comfortable with, rather than try new things ____

I try to get rid of unpleasant emotions as soon as possible ____

If I'm unsure about doing something, I just won't do it ____

You have to guard yourself against having certain emotions ____

Acceptance Coping Style Score (____ /42)

Higher scores reflect a more "acceptance style"

When working on something important, I won't quite even when things get difficult ____

We should face our fears ____

Even if I have doubts, I continue working towards my goals ____

When I feel uncomfortable I don't give up working towards things I value ____

I am willing to put up with pain and discomfort for things that matter to me ____

I don't let "negative" thoughts stop me from doing what I want ____

Anxiety or fear won't stop me from doing something that's important to me ____

Note: This is an educational resource and not a clinical diagnostic tool.

BRAINFIRST

Reappraisal Questions

Reappraisal Questions

Reinterpret Emotional Stimulus

Direct Questions

- How could you be thinking about this/that (situation) differently?
- What else could this/that situation mean? (that would be more helpful)
- What's a different perspective, that would change how you feel (about this/that situation)?

Imagination Questions

- What's it like when... (you see situations differently)?
- What's it like when... (you see situations like this a different way)?
- What would it be like if... (you saw this/that situation in a different light)?

Time-Travel Questions

- What experiences have you had like this... (that meant something else other than what you're feeling)?
- a Month from now, looking back at this/that situation, how would you like to have experienced it instead?

Identity

- Aren't you the kind of person that... (can see this situation a different way)?

Action

- What would have to happen... (for you to view this differently)?

State

- Aren't you amazed/curious/astonished at... (how we/our mind/brain is able to change the meaning of things/situation)?

Reality

- Isn't it true that... (this situation could mean something else)?

Executive
functioning skills are
frequently associated with
completing a task.
**However, they also
relate to how we
regulate our emotions
and behavior.**



Address Challenging Behaviors with Effective EF Skills

Research has shown that **children with autism and related developmental disabilities** struggle with challenging behaviors because of **deficits in executive functioning skills.**

Amy Sippl: Life Skills Advocate

Behavior - Choice?

- A child's ability to succeed is based on a capacity to **understand what is being required** and **regulate their behavior** to meet that requirement.
- When children's executive function is working smoothly and expectations are developmentally appropriate, they develop a flexibility of thinking that supports follow-through or the acquisition of the skill.



Behavior - Choice?

- When execution function is delayed or impaired, **children are more likely to fail at, or miss, our message.**
- They are more likely to function out of **their fight-or-flight response.**

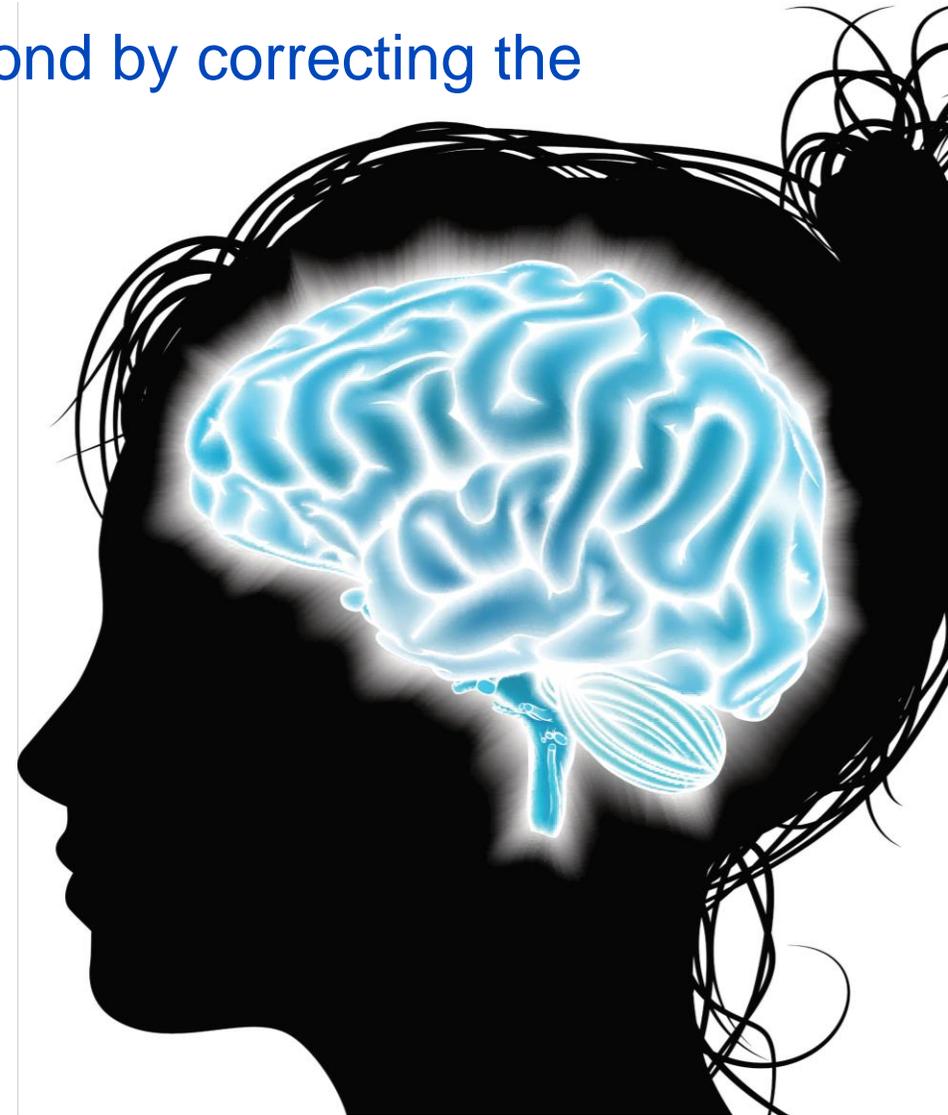


Correct Behavior or Understand It?

- When misbehavior occurs, adults typically respond by correcting the behavior rather than trying to understand it.
- Power struggle ensues.
- **Adult and child become disconnected.**

Instead

- Use this opportunity to **build a relationship** with the child by trying to **understand what is motivating his/her behavior.**
- Understanding the behavior **builds empathy and connection** as well as **opportunities for constructive problem-solving.**



New Perspective

Altering our perception also helps us adapt a more positive mindset.

“KIDS DO WELL IF THEY CAN”

“Your explanation guides
your intervention”

*Ross W. Greene, The Explosive Child:
A New Approach for Understanding and
Parenting Easily Frustrated, Chronically
Inflexible Children*



Child Development Theory

- Dr. Ross Greene identifies difficult behavior as a learning disability.
- Students lack the crucial cognitive skills that are essential to handling frustration and demands for flexibility and adaptability or have significant difficulty applying them when they are most needed.

Key Components of Executive Functioning

Response Inhibition

Working Memory

Emotional Control

Task Initiation

Sustained Attention

Planning/Prioritization

Organization

Time Management

Flexibility

Metacognition

Goal-Directed Persistence

Stress Tolerance

Starting Homework/ Projects

Response Inhibition

Working Memory

Emotional Control

Task Initiation

Sustained Attention

Planning/Prioritization

Organization

Time Management

Flexibility

Metacognition

Goal-Directed Persistence

Stress Tolerance

Cleaning their bedroom

Response Inhibition

Working Memory

Emotional Control

Task Initiation

Sustained Attention

Planning/Prioritization

Organization

Time Management

Flexibility

Metacognition

Goal-Directed Persistence

Stress Tolerance

Decluttering your home/ cleaning your garage/basement

Response Inhibition

Working Memory

Emotional Control

Task Initiation

Sustained Attention

Planning/Prioritization

Organization

Time Management

Flexibility

Metacognition

Goal-Directed Persistence

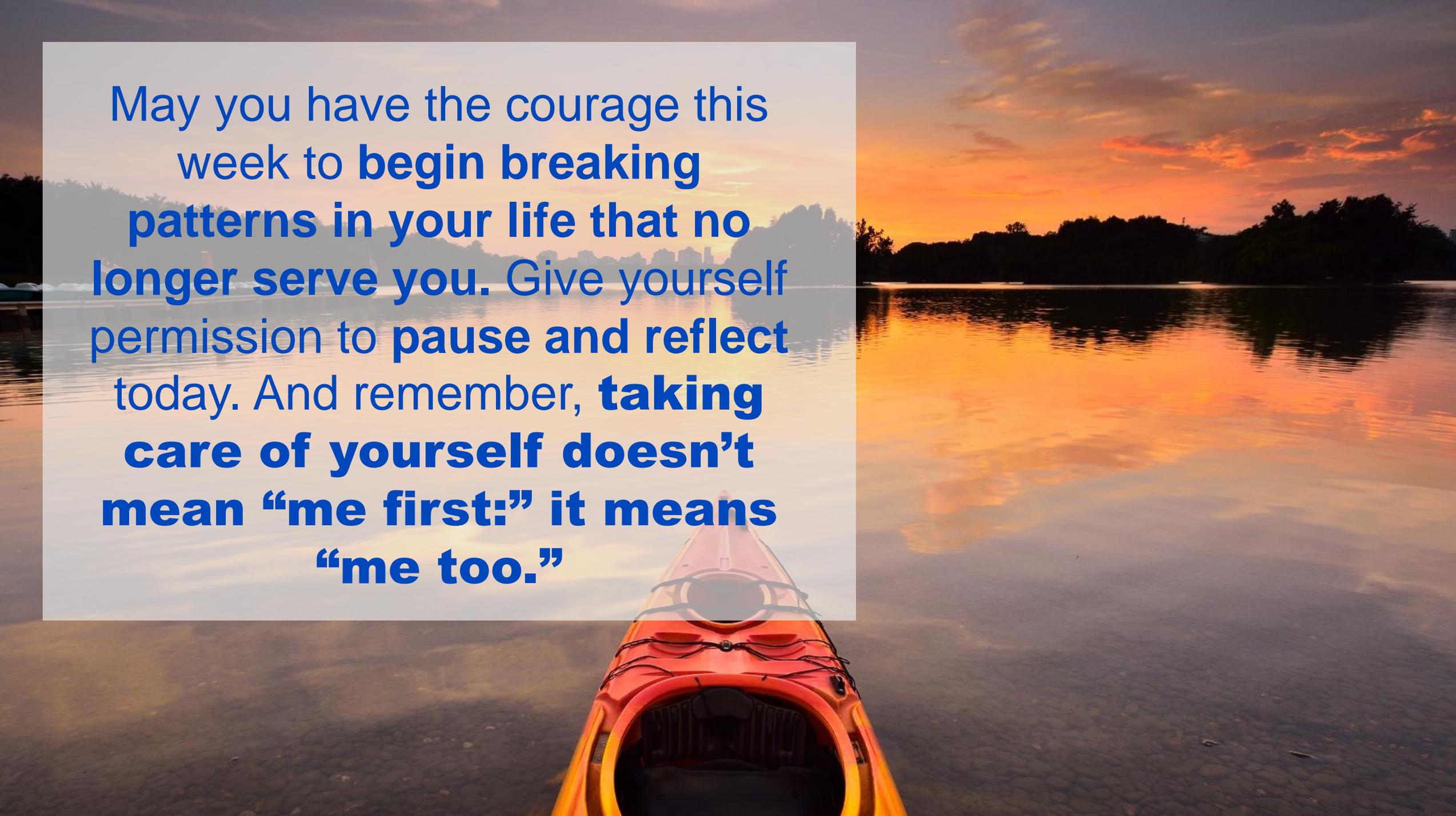
Stress Tolerance

Before You “Label” the Behavior, Consider...

- ✓ Symptom
- ✓ Reason
- ✓ Skill needed

LASTING

CONSIDER
THIS

A photograph of a sunset over a calm lake. The sky is filled with soft, orange and yellow clouds, which are reflected in the still water. In the foreground, the nose of a red kayak is visible, pointing towards the horizon. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

May you have the courage this week to **begin breaking patterns in your life that no longer serve you.** Give yourself permission to **pause and reflect** today. And remember, **taking care of yourself doesn't mean "me first:"** it means **"me too."**

Visit the website for free resources:

- Today's **PowerPoint and Recording***
 - **Resources**

<https://childrensguild.org/webinars/>

*Webinar recording available in 7-10 days – you will receive notice via email when available.

Questions or Comments?

info@tranzed.org

