


# Understanding Ourselves Through Anger and Reactivity

Based of Nonviolent Communication, Neuroscience & Mindfulness

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- “Violence in all forms is a tragic expression of unmet needs.”
  - Marshall B. Rosenberg The Center for Nonviolent Communication
- “Behind every act of violence is an unhealed wound.”
  - Gene Knudsen Hoffman, International Peacemaker



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## When Faced With Recurrent Triggers: What Is Below The Surface?




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- WHAT IS TAKING ME **OUT** OF RELATIONSHIP?



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## TWO IMPORTANT WORDS

### REGULATION:

The ability to experience and maintain stress within ones window of tolerance. Generally referred to as being calm, focused, or relaxed. This term is utilized by literally every scientific discipline.

### DYSREGULATION:

The experience of stress outside of ones window of tolerance. Generally referred to as being stressed out, or in a state of distress. It is believed that affect dysregulation is a fundamental mechanism involved in all psychiatric disorders (Taylor et al, 1997.)

## Brain/Mind States

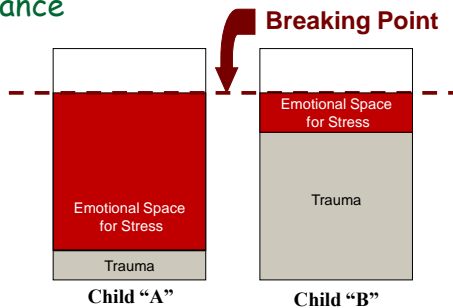
### Regulated

- PRIMARY EMOTION: LOVE
- MODE: APPROACH
- EXPRESSION OF LOVE
- "THANK YOU"
- FULLNESS
- INTRINSIC NEEDS
- POWER WITH/PARTNERSHIP/INTERDEPENDENCE
- RESPONSIVE MODE
- FULL CHOICE-OPTIMAL INTEGRATED FUNCTIONING
- REQUEST
- Integrity, Responsiveness, Mutuality, Reciprocity, Connection, Empathy, Acceptance, Compassion, Presence, Reaching Out...

### Disregulated

- PRIMARY EMOTION: FEAR
- MODE: WITHDRAWAL
- CRY FOR LOVE
- "PLEASE"
- DEFICIT
- EXTRINSIC NEEDS
- POWER OVER-UNDER/DOMINATION/DEPENDENCE-INDEPENDENCE
- REACTIVE MIND
- SURVIVAL MODE (Fight/Flight/Freeze)
- DEMAND
- Anger, Blame, Guilt, Compliance seeking, Obedience, Defiance, Control, Arguing, Screaming, Resistance, Shame, Depression, Anxiety, Withdrawal, Disconnection...

## Neurological Window of Stress Tolerance



## The Two Faces of Disconnection: The Anger/Withdrawal Spectrum

- Hyper/Hypo arousal
- Fight/ Flight



- Do I tend to get **angry** or do I tend to **shut down** emotionally to my kids?

## STRESS



- Biologically based body/mind evolutionary response of an organism due to disturbances of equilibrium characterized by:
- High level of activation (heart beats faster, adrenalin flows, mind starts racing)
- Negative emotions (frustration, anger, anxiety, fear)
- Increased sense of self (self-referencing: thinking about yourself, what kind of person you are for not getting the rewards "I am a flop")

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## Stress Symptoms



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## Dysregulation at the Root of Disconnection

Stress has an immediate impact on our unconscious mind triggering the following to occur:

- Reacting From The Past
- Obsessing About The Future
- Taking Us Out Of The Present

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CONFUSED

AND

*DISORDERED*  
(distorted)

THINKING

(50 IQ Points)

(constricted)



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## EMOTIONAL REGRESSION

What is My Age Right Now?  
What is My Child's Age Right Now?

- Chronological Age
- Emotional Age
- Cognitive Age



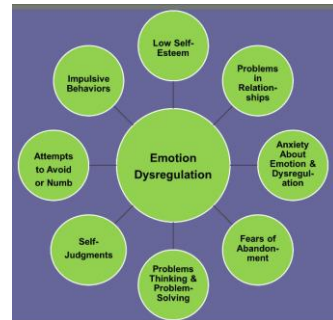
- When we shift brain states we shift emotionally as well.



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## Dysregulation



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## Regulation/Dysregulation

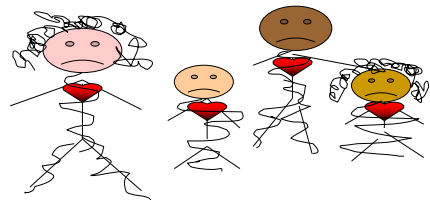
The ability to develop/stay in relationship is dependent on the state of regulation

- Without regulation, a parent cannot provide a safe base for the child to connect in relationship.
- Safe
- Seen
- Soothed
- Secure

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## If Mom/Dad Ain't Happy, Nobody's Happy!



- One's awareness of one's own emotional tolerance establishes the foundation for any relationship.

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## Expanding Our Window of Stress Tolerance

[http://drdansiegel.com/resources/healthy\\_mind\\_platter/](http://drdansiegel.com/resources/healthy_mind_platter/)

### The Healthy Mind Platter™



The Healthy Mind Platter, for Optimal Brain Matter™

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## Self-Regulation



- Learning to regulate our attention and knowing when and where to place our attention helps us regulate our emotions.
- Attention regulation leads directly to emotional regulation.

Christopher K. Germer, Ph.D.

The most natural effortless activity for self-regulation is breathing



## The Power of Breath

- Breathing keeps us connected to our bodies
- Enables us to stay present
- To regulate
- To think clearly
- To remember
- To love
- To live

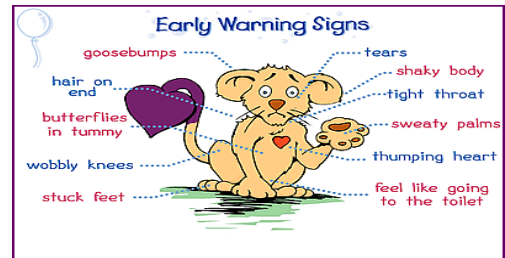


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## Body Attunement

Anchor your attention in the body. Even strong emotions can be scaled back through body awareness.



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## The Power of Mindfulness



- *The simple truth is that how we focus our attention, how we intentionally direct the flow of energy and information through the neural circuits, can directly alter the brain's activity and its structure.*



■ Daniel Siegel, MD

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## Self-Investigation With Self-Compassion



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- Much of our **reoccurring emotional reactivity** stems from our own unfinished business.
- Left over issues and unresolved trauma and loss.
- It is not our child we are reacting to, it is our past.

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- Experiences that are not fully processed may create unresolved and leftover issues that influence how we react to our children.
- These issues can easily get triggered in the parent-child relationship.
- When this happens our responses toward our children often take the form of strong emotional reactions, impulsive behavior, distortions of perceptions or sensations in our bodies. [...]
- At this time parenting seems to “bring our the worst in us.”

■ Daniel Siegel, M.D.

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## Healing Trauma

- We can learn to identify a traumatic experience by **exploring our own reactions**.
- It has a feel that is unmistakable once it is identified.
- We all have the innate capacity to heal our traumas.

□ Peter Levine

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“The most significant predictor for a child to become securely attached is for the child to have an attachment figure who has a **realistic and coherent insight** into how their own childhood relationships worked with their attachment figures. In other words, for the child to have a securely attached caregiver.”

■ Richard Bowlby

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- Research has clearly demonstrated that our children's attachment to us will be influenced by what happened to us when we were young if we do not come to **process** and **understand** those experiences.

Daniel Siegel, M.D.

- The ability to **consciously process** stressful and traumatic life events creates the possibility for positive change via the growth and integration of neural networks.

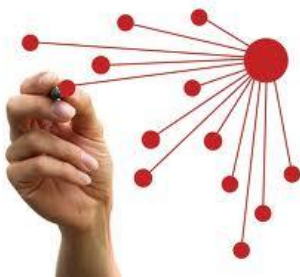
■ Luis Cozolino, Ph.D.

## TRIGGERING SENSORY EVENTS

Triggers = Sensory reminders of past events  
**that activate our core jackal voices.**



## Connect The Dots



## TRIGGERING SENSORY EVENTS

- What is taking me out of the present moment and takes me into dysregulation?
- What sense is involved that preceded the dysregulation?
- Pay attention to the environment and your senses.
- Develop Mindful Presence : Observe without judgment.



## The Power of Compassionate and Curious Self-Awareness:

- How does dysregulation feels in my body?
- When does it happen?
- How does it happen?
- Where does it happen?
- Is there a pattern?
- What early events in life does it remind me of?
- When was it the first time I experienced this brain state?
- What thoughts are involved?
- What core beliefs are involved ?
- What needs are involved?



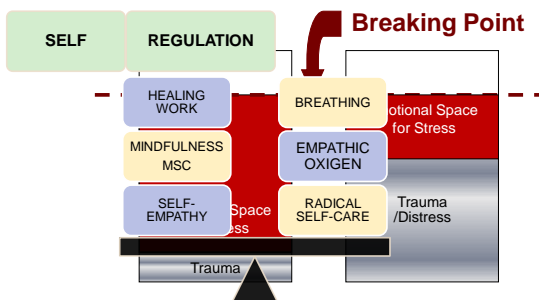
## Memory is all about Associations

Memory is the way an event from the past influences us in the present.

D. Siegel, M.D.



## Neurological Window of Stress Tolerance



## SELF-COMPASSION



- Self-Compassion is a form of acceptance of ourselves while we experience pain.
- When we stop striving to feel better/be better etc. (mental self-improvement projects) => heart work.
- We care for ourselves **because** we are suffering
- We accept ourselves, the pain & our reactions to the pain (i.e. suffering)

## Am I on my own side here?

- *Am I looking out for my own best interests?*
- *Being on my own side, what's the best thing to do here?*
  
- When you take care of your own needs and pursue your own dreams, then you have more to offer others, from the people close to you to the whole wide world.

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## Self-Acceptance Break

- This is a difficult moment.
- May I accept the circumstances of my life.
- May I accept myself just as I am.



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## Daily Self-Compassion Check-In

- "Am I loving myself right now?"
  
- "What is the most compassionate thing I can do for myself right in this moment?"



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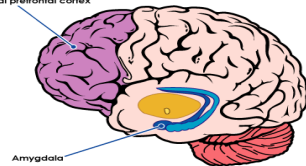
## FEAR



## What am I afraid of?

Fear Extinction and the Brain

Medial prefrontal cortex



Amygdala

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- *It's not an exaggeration to say that the kind of relationships you provide to your children will affect generations to come.*



- Daniel Siegel M.D.