



Emotion Coaching Workshop

Thursday 4th December 2025

Mrs K Baker and
Mrs K Russell



KING EDWARD VI
SCHOOL LICHFIELD

Emotion Coaching Workshop

“Thinking of a child as behaving badly disposes you to think of punishment.

Thinking of a child as struggling to handle something difficult encourages you to help them through their distress.”



How emotionally full are you?

If 90% full we can
only be 10%
present.

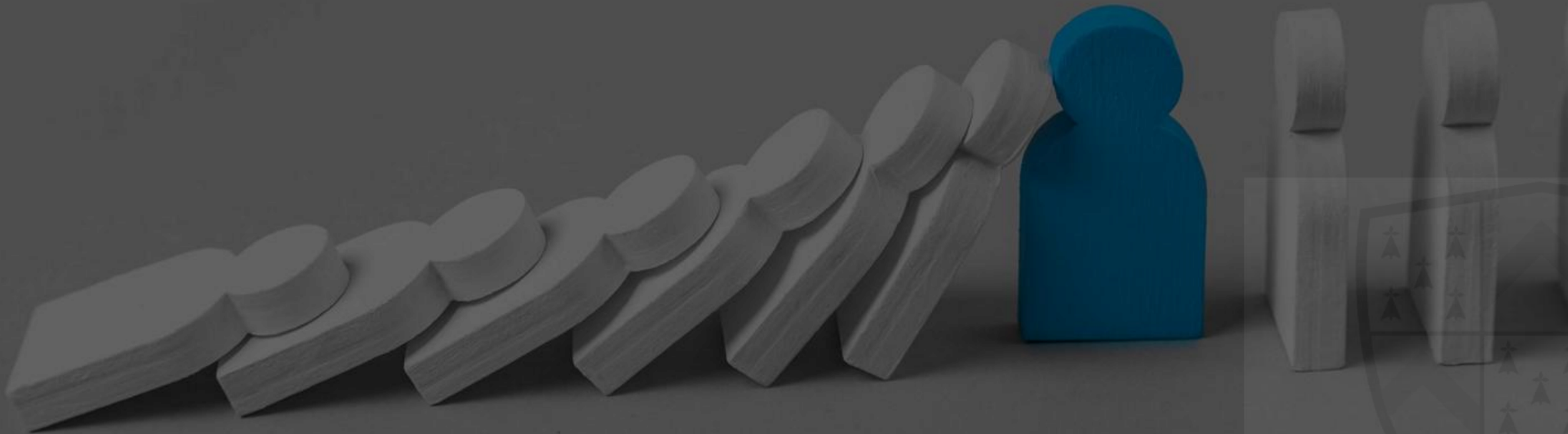


How emotionally full are you?

To support
young people –
must support
ourselves



No blame, no shame



Attachment



Attachment can be defined as a deep and enduring emotional bond between two people in which each seeks closeness and feels more secure when in the presence of the attachment figure.

This is often a parent but can be another family member, friend or care giver.

It only needs to be 'good enough' for children to thrive.



The Still Face Experiment

- ❑ Babies are predisposed to seek closeness to their parent(s) in times of need
- ❑ Babies use relationships with parent(s) as a secure base to explore the world
- ❑ 'Good enough' parenting (Winnicott) will facilitate secure attachment
- ❑ The quality of the secure attachment is particularly evident at times of stress.

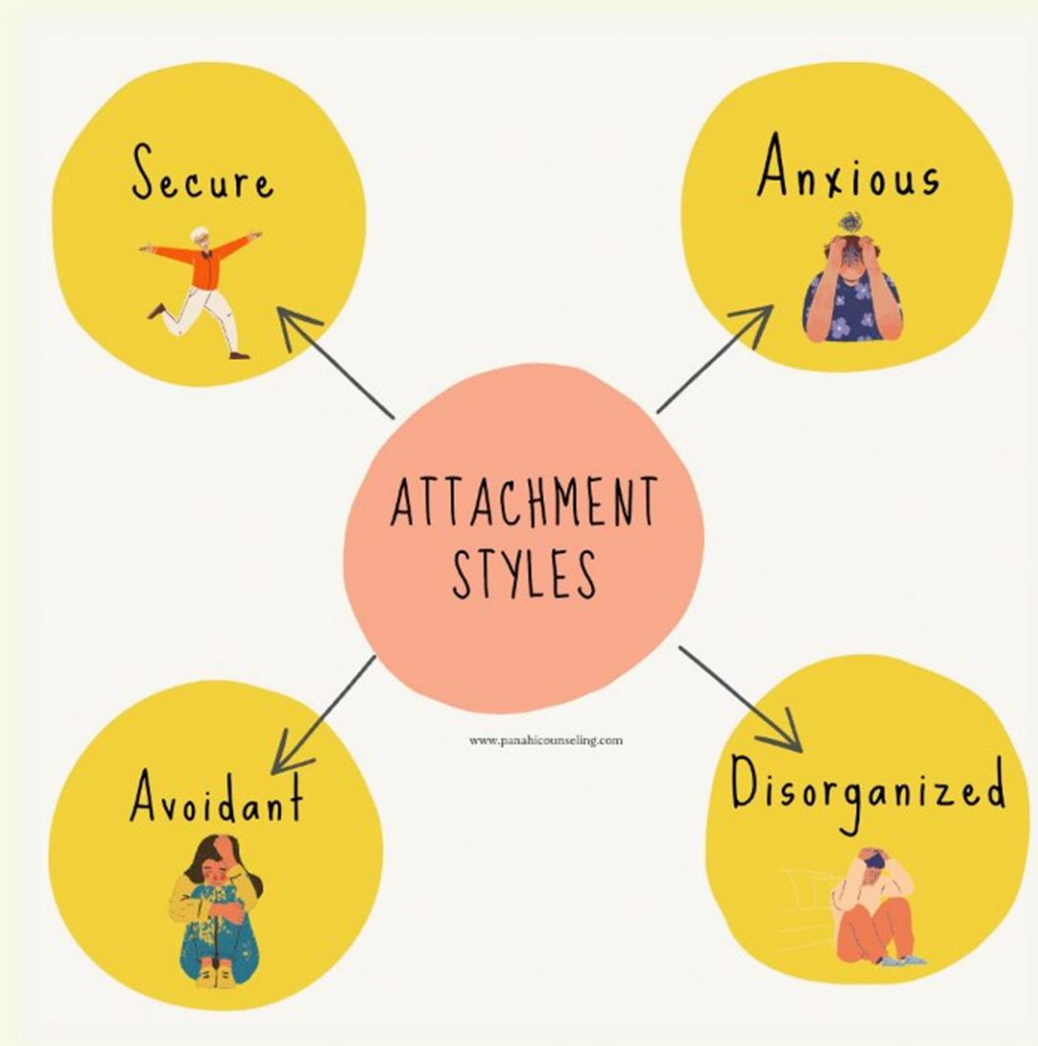


Children and young people learn more from what they see and feel from you than what they hear from you.

**Consistent and
persistent**



Types of Attachment



Attachment Behaviours

☐ Healthy Attachments



☐ Unhealthy Attachments



Simple Trauma

- ❑ Simple trauma involves a time-limited, but awful, event that usually involves intense emotions and a period of suffering. Such events could involve:
 - ❑ the death of a loved one
 - ❑ being in a car accident
 - ❑ parents separating or divorcing

I'm sure you can think of other events that your children, or even you or other loved ones, have experienced that fit the definition of simple trauma. It happens to us all!

With teenagers, something that seems small to us can be huge to them, so it is important to respect their feelings and validate them rather than telling them it's silly.

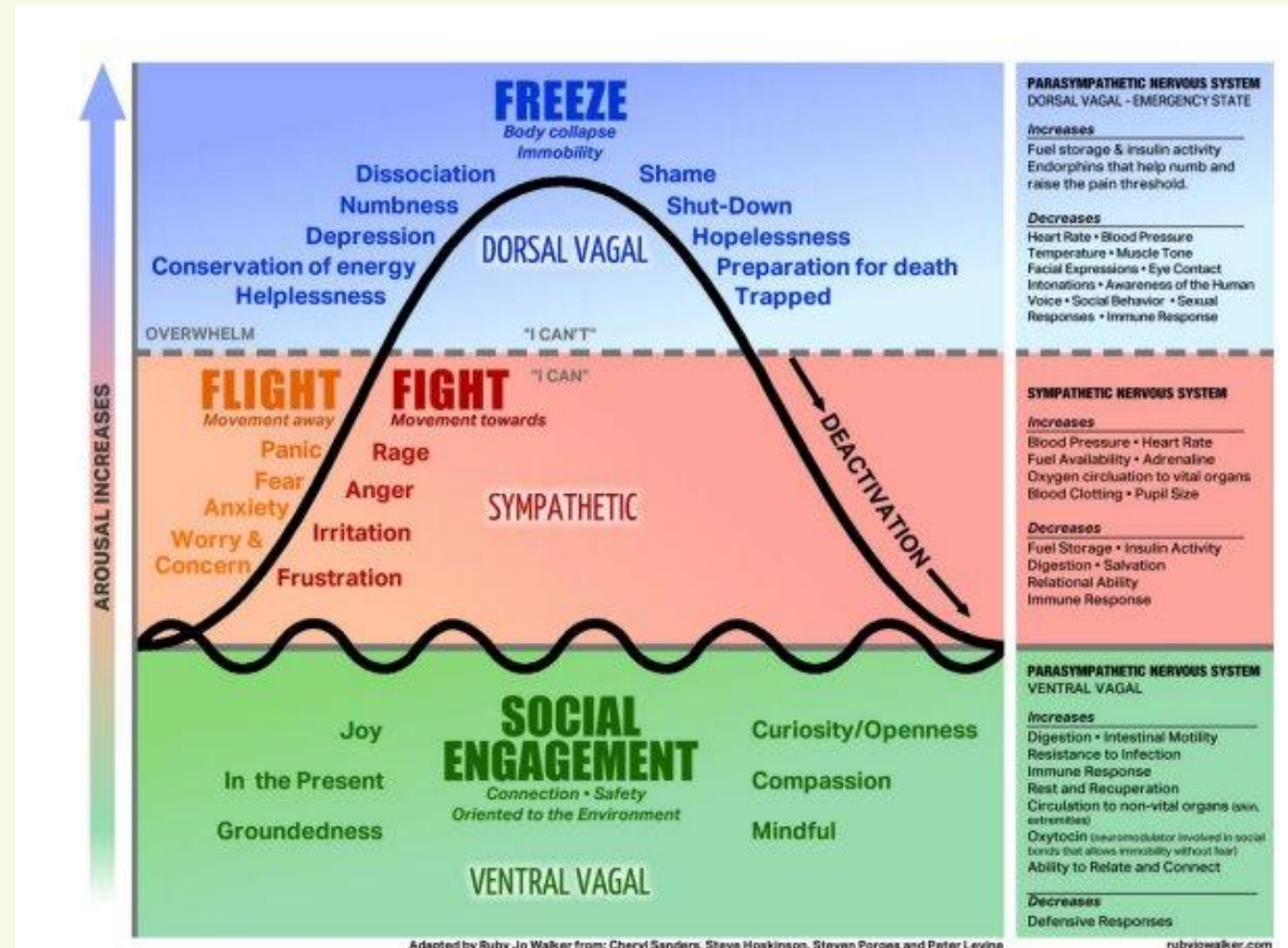


So, what is
going on
when a young
person is
struggling???

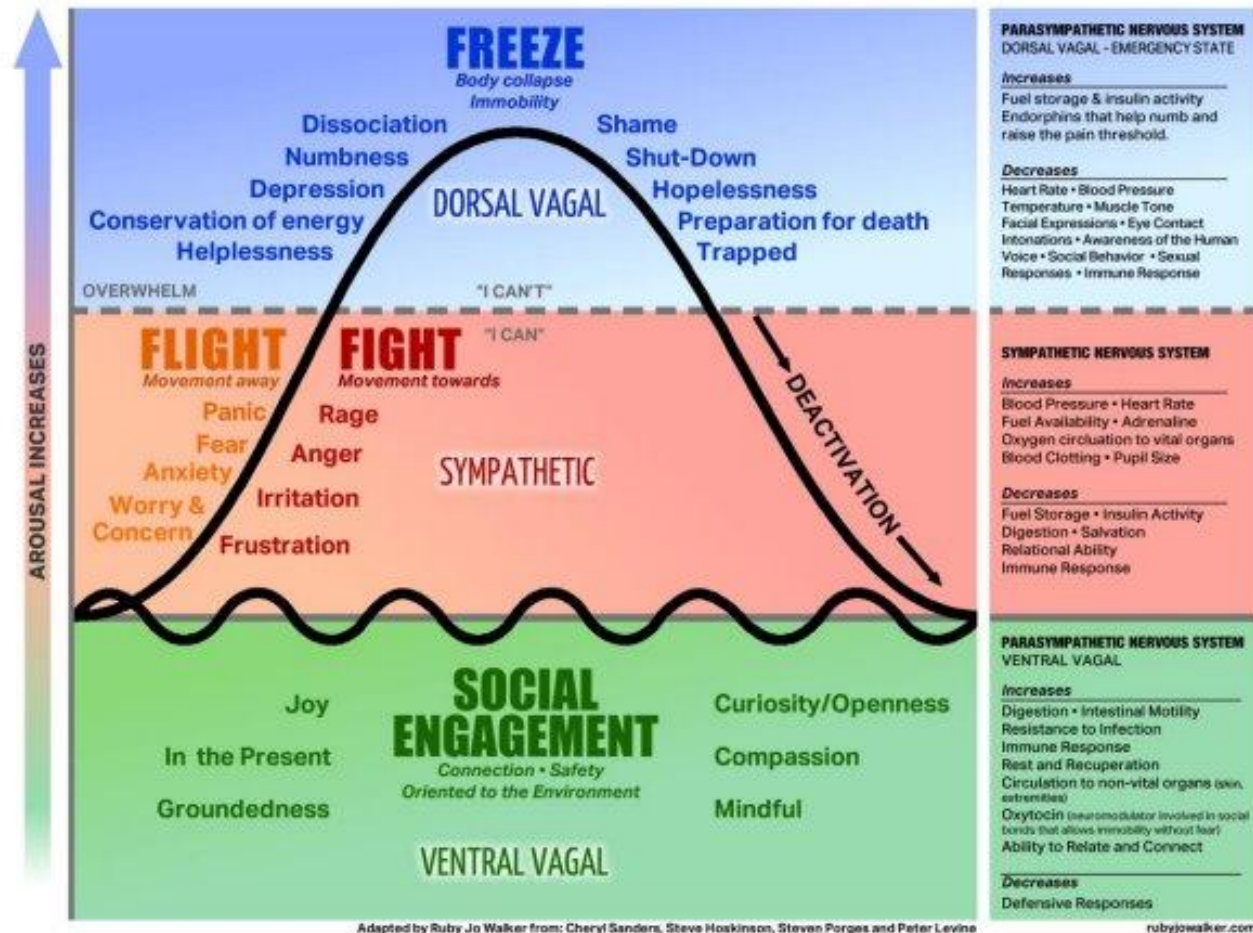


Steven Porges

- ❑ When we do not feel safe, the body prepares itself to respond to danger
- ❑ If the danger seems very great, the nervous system is activated in such a way that we have a very high tolerance for pain, and often become very still
- ❑ In this 'freeze' state, which is the state of greatest stress, children sometimes appear to 'zone out', show confusing behaviours such as laughing inappropriately as though they cannot stop, or even appear to fall asleep
- ❑ Sometimes this is called "dissociation"



Perception of Threat

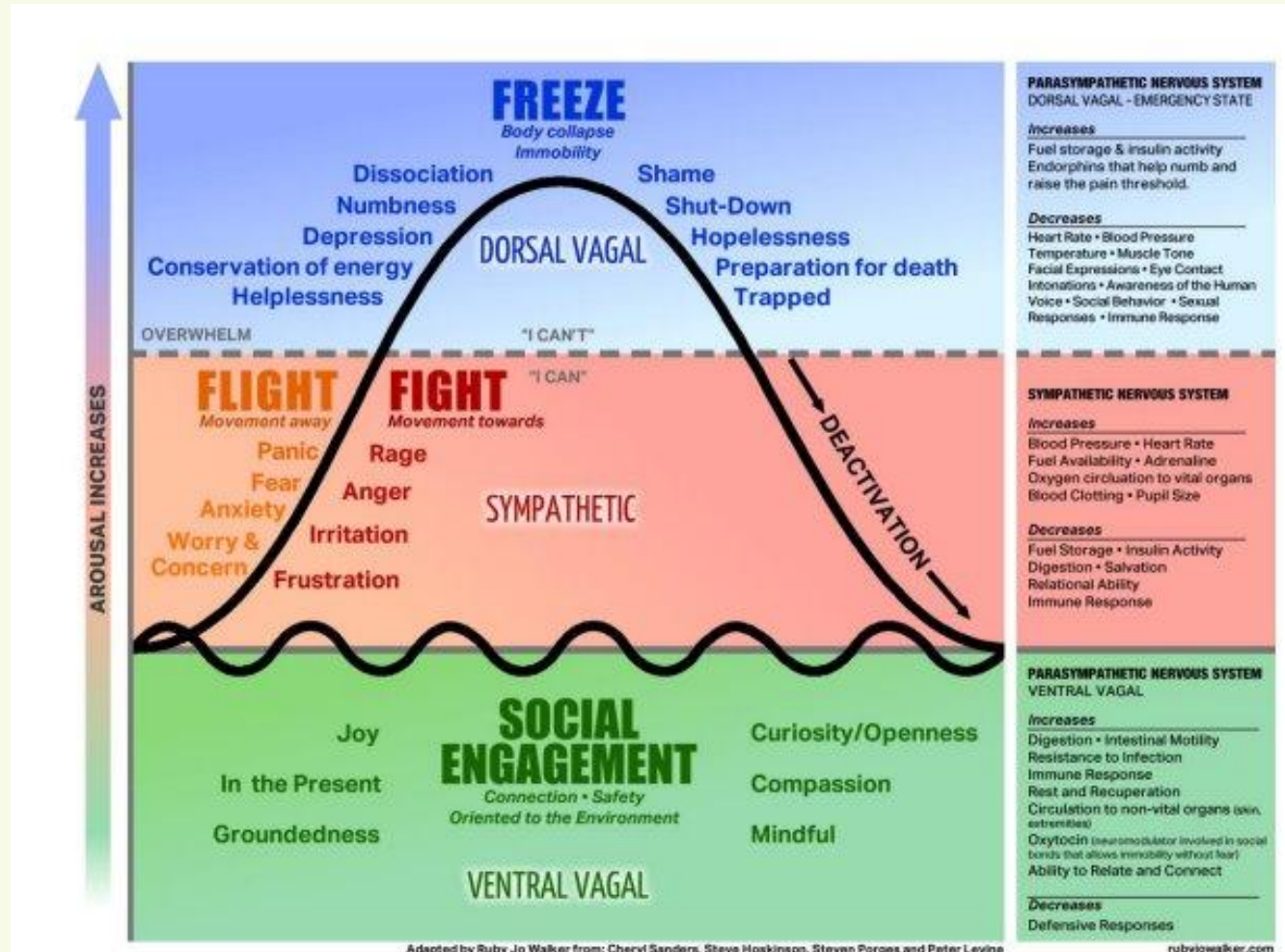


- ❑ When we perceive threat that is not at the highest level the body prepares itself for defence
- ❑ Sometimes we call this “fight or flight”
- ❑ It is likely that you have seen this response on many occasions
- ❑ Children who have **experienced trauma** escalate into this state very quickly
- ❑ It may look as though there was **no trigger**, or that the apparent trigger was very small

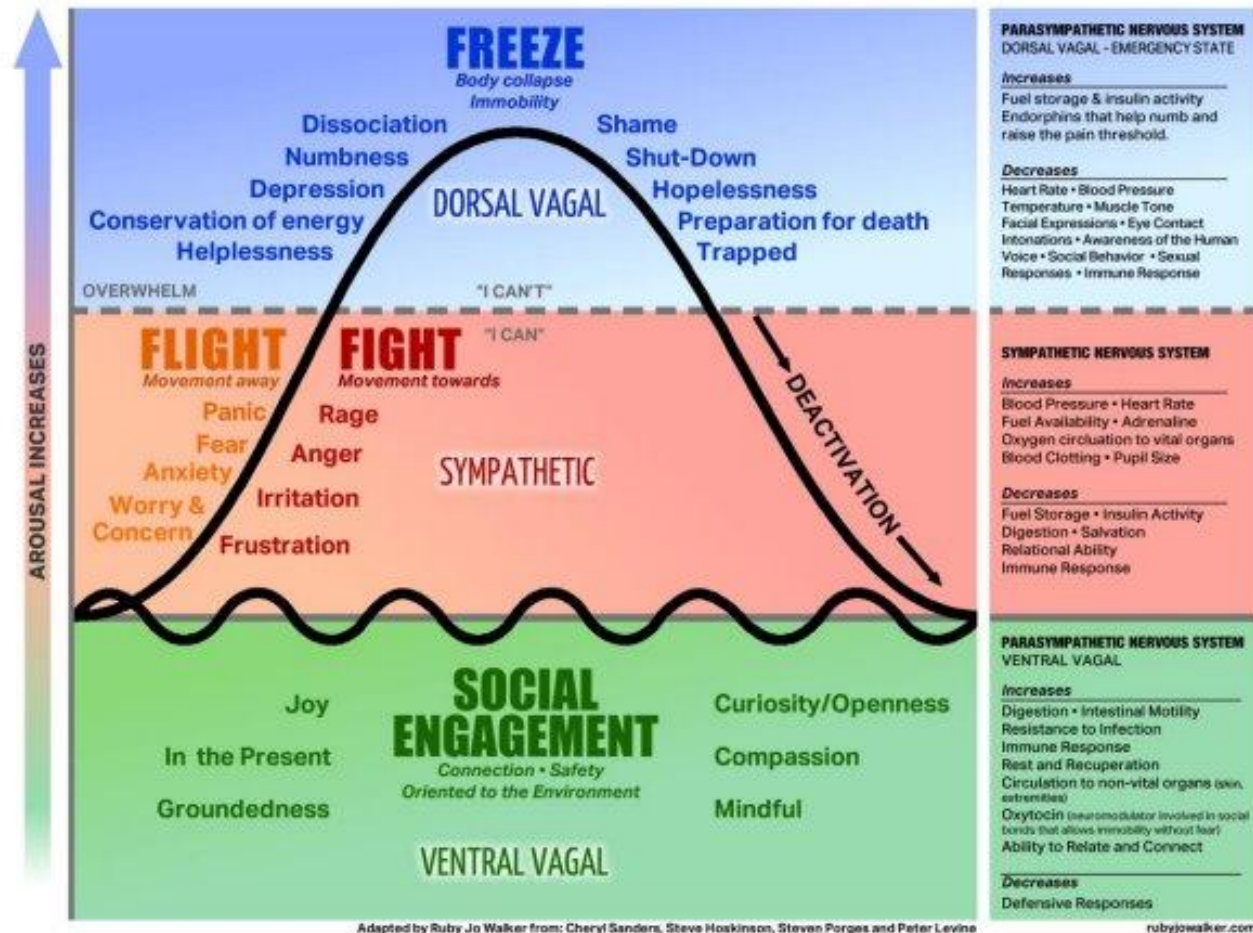
Fight or Flight

- ❑ Children can experience 'fight, flight or freeze' reactions in everyday situations
- ❑ This reaction is not conscious, is completely involuntary and **out of their control**
- ❑ For children to be **open to a conversation**, they need to be in the 'green' calm, open and engaged state described in the graphic here
- ❑ Only in this state can they engage with you and others to think about what has happened and how you can understand it together

Can you think of examples of how this presents in the home?



Our Reactions



- ❑ When a child is challenging or threatening to you, when you feel helpless or frustrated by the child, **your own defences** are likely to kick in
- ❑ At this point it is **very difficult for you** to be in a calm, open and engaged state too
- ❑ Some people are more likely at this point to revert to more traditional behaviour management styles which, unfortunately, **do not work with children who are in fight or flight**
- ❑ Very often this is the point at which **communication breaks down** between you and the child and the situation escalates

Why do Emotion Coaching?

Emotion Coaching is an Evidence-based Strategy based upon the work of John Gottman and colleagues

Children are better able to:

- ☐ Control their impulses
- ☐ Delay gratification
- ☐ Self soothe when upset
- ☐ Pay attention



Emotion Coached Children:

- ☐ Achieve more academically in school
- ☐ Are more popular
- ☐ Have fewer behavioural problems
- ☐ Have fewer infectious illnesses
- ☐ Are more emotionally stable
- ☐ Are more resilient

(Gottman et al, 1996)

Emotions

We all have emotions, and they are hardwired for our survival.



Distress



Fear



Anger



Surprise



Disgust



Joy

Emotion Coaching works with the anatomy and physiology of brains to support the development of emotional regulation.

Belonging



Feel what they feel

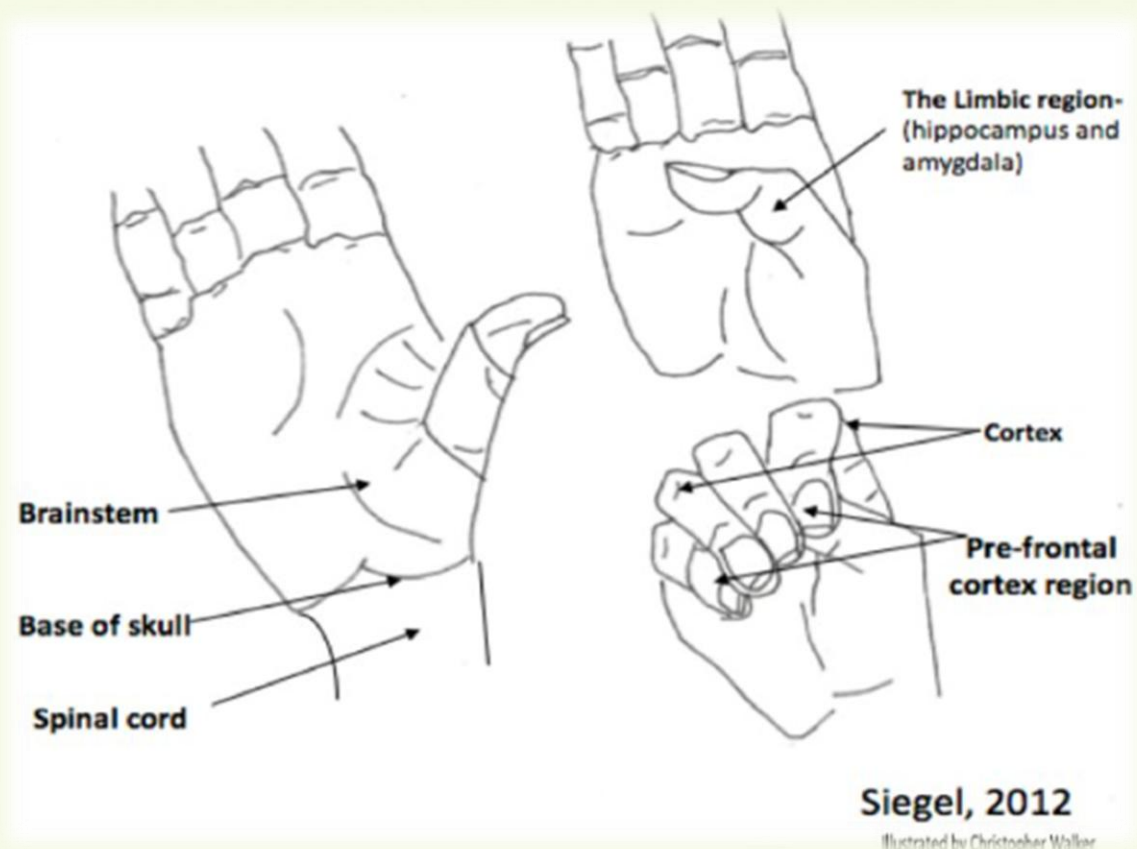


Support young people



Our Hand-Held Brain

A simple model to show how parts of the brain are connected and work together



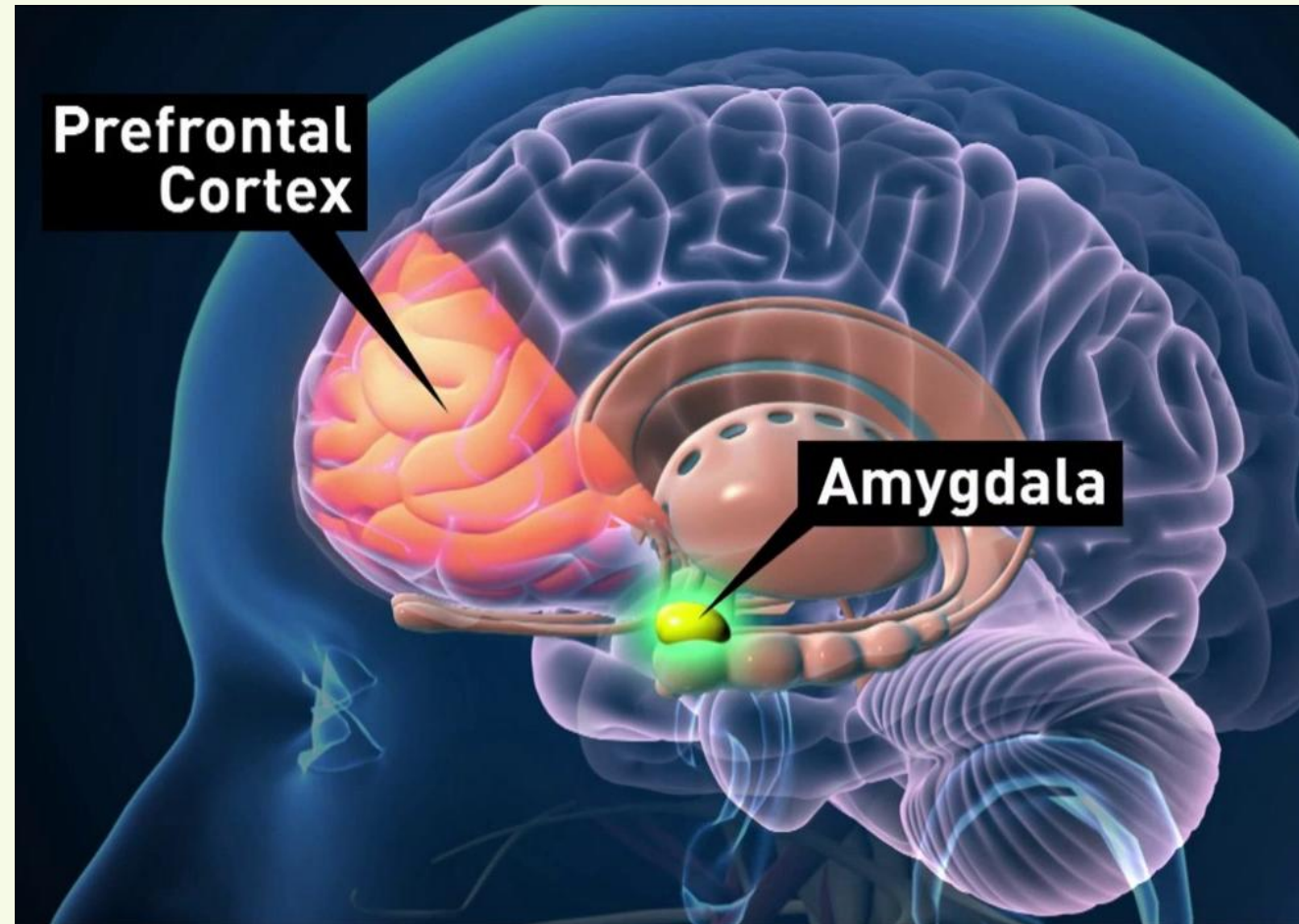
The 'Downstairs' or lower brain (e.g. Limbic system) and

'Upstairs' or high brain (e.g. prefrontal lobes) function

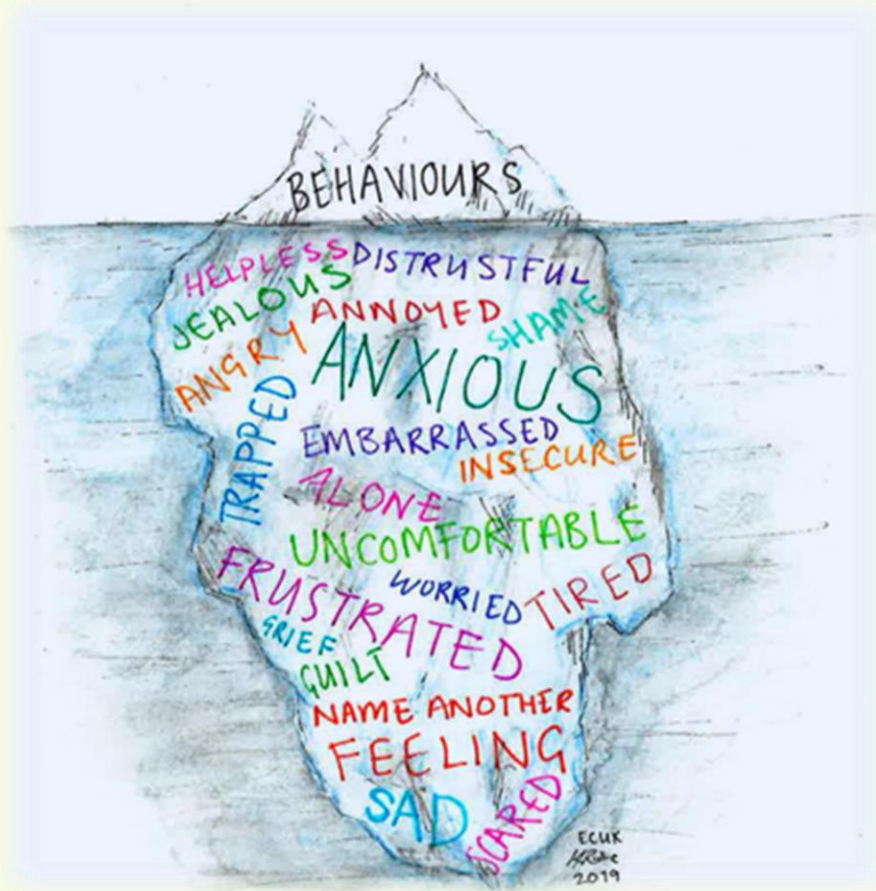


Behaviour and the Brain

- Am I safe?
- Is there a potential threat to my safety?
- Is FOFR required?



Behaviours



Behaviours are a communication of our *emotions*.

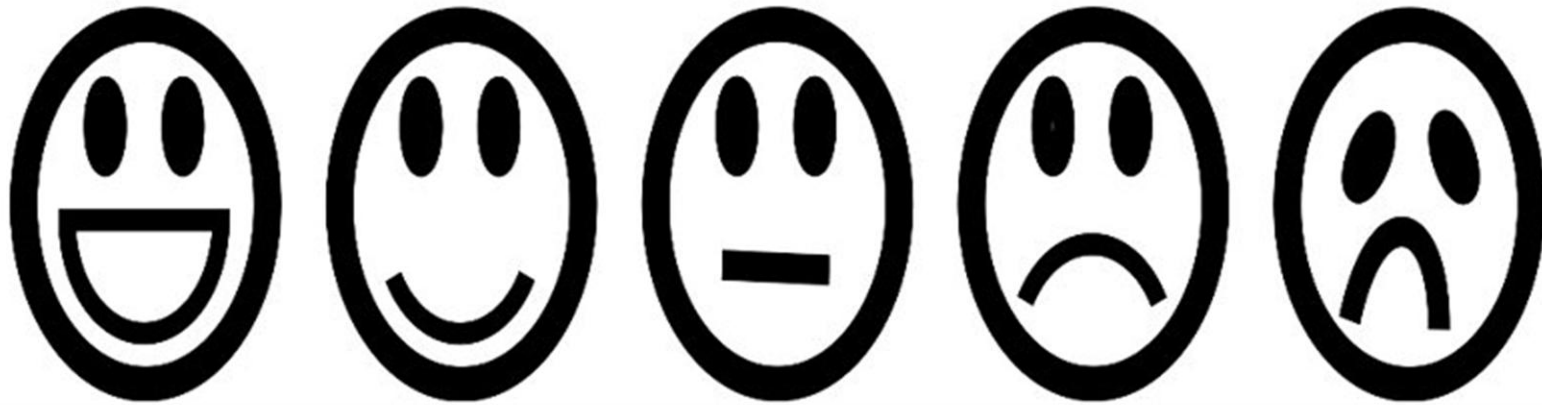
Through our relationships with *others*, we learn to understand our experiences and regulate our emotions.

Relationships, Experiences and Environments matter when developing the whole person.



Dealing with Emotions

Adults' Different Styles in Dealing with Emotions:



- ☐ Emotion Dismissing
- ☐ Emotion Disapproving
- ☐ Laissez-Faire
- ☒ Emotion Coaching



Dismissing Style

- ☐ Despite good intentions (wants child to feel better) is uncomfortable, fearful, anxious, hurt, annoyed or overwhelmed with difficult emotions
- ☐ Wants difficult emotions to go away quickly
- ☐ Considers paying attention to emotions will make them worse and prolong them
- ☐ Tries to stop difficult emotions by reducing/minimising/making light of their importance/significance
 - ☐ E.g. *'it's no big deal', 'don't worry about it', 'be a big girl', 'that's life', 'you'll be fine'*
- ☐ Often motivated by need to rescue and make things better, fix the problem
 - ☐ E.g. *'have a biscuit', 'I'll buy a new one', 'you need to do this'*
- ☐ Focuses on getting rid of the emotion with logic or distraction rather than understanding the feelings



Disapproving Style

- ☐ Disapproves of difficult emotions – viewed as a sign of weakness, lack of control, unconstructive
- ☐ Lacks empathy, noticeable critical and intolerant
- ☐ Tries to get rid of difficult emotions via discipline, reprimand, punishment
- ☐ Focuses on the behaviour rather than the emotions generating the behaviour
- ☐ More likely to view strong emotional displays as a form of manipulation, lack of obedience, sign of bad character
- ☐ Often motivated by need of control and regain power and/or to ‘toughen up’ child



Laissez-Faire Style

- ☐ Freely accepts all emotional expression from the children
- ☐ Offers comfort to the child experiencing difficult feelings
- ☐ Offers little guidance on behaviour
- ☐ Does not teach the child about emotions
- ☐ Is permissive; does not set limits
- ☐ Does not teach problem-solving methods to the child
- ☐ Believes there is little you can do about strong, difficult emotions other than ride them out
- ☐ Believes that managing difficult emotions is a matter of hydraulics: release the emotion and the work is done!



Example Situation

How would each style play out?

Jack comes home in a highly agitated state – he is adamant that a member of staff at school has treated him unfairly; that he's done nothing wrong but has received a detention anyway.

Produce some possible responses representing each of the following:

- ☐ Dismissive style
- ☐ Disapproving style
- ☐ Laissez-faire style

What impact do you imagine each of these responses has on Jack?



Effects of Style

Effects of Dismissing, Disapproving and Laissez-faire Styles of Dealing with Emotions

- ☐ Child learns '*what I am **feeling** is **not right**, my assessment of the problem is **wrong**, I must not feel this way*'
- ☐ Child does **not learn to trust own feelings** affecting decision-making
- ☐ Not given **opportunities to experience** emotions and deal with them effectively, so grow up unprepared for life's challenges
- ☐ Not given opportunities to **self-regulate or problem-solve**
- ☐ Can lead to **suppression of natural emotions**, less or lack of self-regulation, reliance on distraction to get rid of emotion
- ☐ Generates more **negative feelings** – resentment, guilt, shame, anger



Suis-je bovvered????



For the most effective behaviour support, it's not what you do, it's who you are when you do it."

**Consistent and
persistent**



Step One

Recognising the Child's Feelings and Empathising with Them

Be a **STAR**



STOP – Don't act or react straight away



THINK – What is going on for the child right now? What feeling might lay underneath the behaviours I'm seeing?



ATTUNE – Yourself with that feeling by putting yourself in the child's shoes and maybe...



REFLECT - What would be an equivalent situation for you that could cause you to feel that way?



Step Two

Label and Validate the Feelings

- ❑ Use words to reflect back the child's emotions and help the child to label the emotion
 - ❑ *'I can see that you get angry when that happens. I would feel angry/upset if my friends didn't invite me. It's okay to feel like that.'*
- ❑ Simply observe – saying what you see rather than asking probing questions to which young people might not know the answer
 - ❑ *'I've noticed you've been a bit withdrawn lately. Is everything ok?'*
- ❑ Telling the child that you understand their emotional situation and that you don't blame them (you are focussing on what they are feeling and not just on their behaviour) is believed to help soothe and calm



Step Three

Setting Limits (If needed)

- ☐ State the boundary limits of acceptable behaviour (use positive limit setting)
- ☐ Make it clear certain behaviours cannot be accepted
- ☐ ALWAYS retain the child's self-dignity

'You're angry that I've taken away your phone...but these are the rules everyone in the house has to follow...I will keep it safe for you.' (Rose, 2014)



Step Four

Problem Solving with the Child

When the child is calm and in a relaxed, rational state:

- ☐ Explore the feelings that give rise to the behaviour/problem/incident
- ☐ Scaffold alternative ideas and actions that could lead to more appropriate and productive outcomes
- ☐ Empower the child to believe they can overcome difficulties and manage feelings/behaviour

‘Can you think of a different way to deal with your feelings?’

‘I can help you to think of a different way to cope’

‘Can you remember what we said before about...?’



To sum up...

EC helps children to *understand* the different *emotions* they experience, *why* they occur and *how* to handle them.

(Gottman and Declaire 1997)

Step One:

Recognising the child's feelings and empathising with them

Step Two:

Validating their feelings and labelling them

Step Three:

Setting limits on behaviour (if needed)

Step Four:

Problem-solving with the child



Beautiful Example of Emotion Coaching



Emotion Coaching Scenario

Your child seems out-of-sorts and you realise they have been spending a lot of time scrolling on their phone.

You suggest putting limits on their screen-time and they respond with anger.

How do you respond using an Emotion Coaching approach?

- 1. Validate the emotion**
- 2. Set limit**
- 3. Problem-solve**
- 4. Boundaries**



If you do nothing else...have empathy

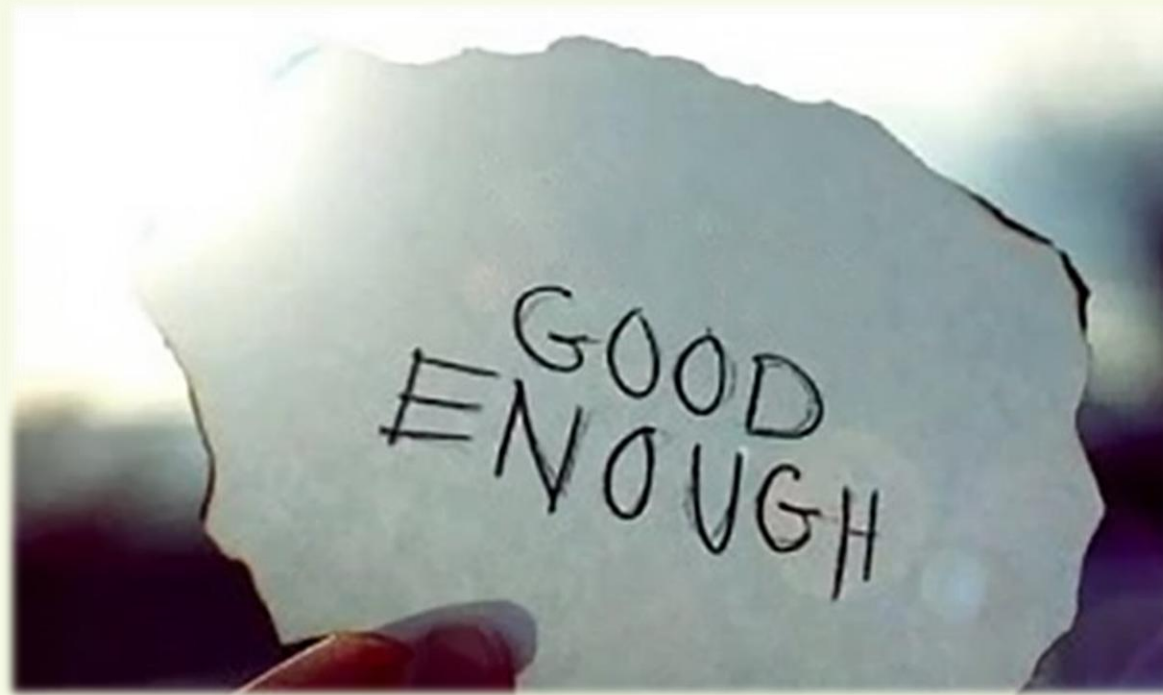


Emotion Coaching

**You're human, we
do not need to strive
for perfection.**

**Good enough, is
good enough.**

Any questions?



Emotion Coaching

Acceptance and empathy are your
Emotional A&E.

They are at the heart of the child
starting to feel safe, which reduces
conflict, stress and withdrawal.



Feedback

Emotion Coaching Workshop
Evaluation Form for Parents and
Carers 4.12.25



Suggested Reads for Parents/Carers

