

**R + Connection =
Learning**
where R = Regulation

- Self-Regulation
- Co-Regulation
- Collective Regulation



What we will cover:

- Principles of Regulation
- Self-Regulation, Co-Regulation and Collective Regulation
- Brain Development & States
- Autonomic Nervous System
- Safe & Social; Fight & Flight; Freeze
- Regulate, Relate Reason
- Window of Tolerance
- Neuroception of Safety & increasing safety
- Which strategies to use when



Some disclaimers

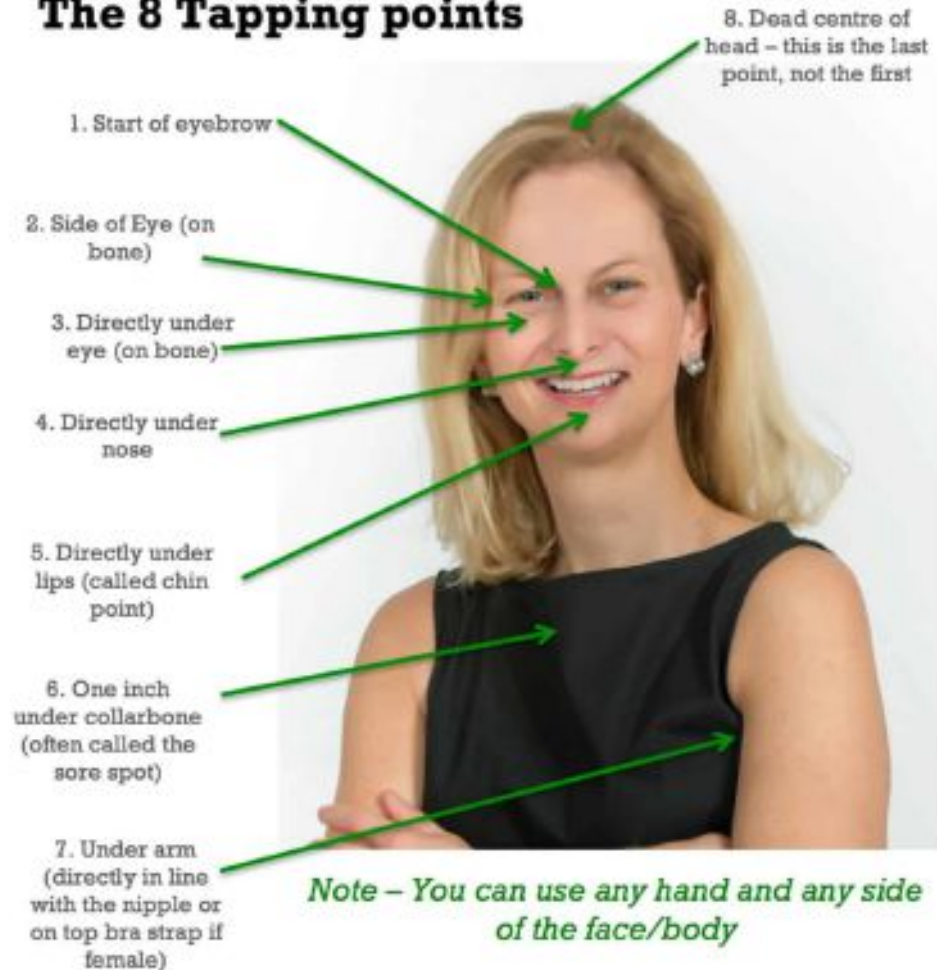
- It is not possible to have all the answers or all the strategies.
- Despite our best efforts – at times students are going to dysregulate and we will become dysregulated too.
- None of the strategies are magic. They work some of the time.
- The bigger our toolbox – the better equipped we are.
- An understanding of brain development and the states of regulation can help us to be more effective more of the time.
- You will already have strategies that work – you may see how or why they work within this model and use them more often.

Emotional Freedom Technique (Tapping)

Dr Peta Stapleton

- Bond University
- Tapping in the Classroom
- Stress-reduction technique
- Rate level of distress, stress, anger etc.
- Even though I am..... (name it to tame it)
- I'm an awesome kid or I accept this about myself (positive affirmation or acceptance)
- Uses acupoints from Chinese Wisdom
- Uses rhymlal tapping which calms the amygdala (responsible for fight or flight).
- Deep breath
- Rate again
- Suitable for adults and kids

The 8 Tapping points



Principles of Regulation

- Children need a lot of practice with **co-regulation** before they can self-regulate. If this has not happened in early years, it is harder to learn. Regulation takes practice.
- We need to be well regulated ourselves, before we can assist anyone else. **Put your own mask on first!** Being regulated takes ongoing commitment to your own wellbeing.
- Due to experiences both before and after birth and because of neurodiversity, our **“window of tolerance”** varies. (Note: applies to everyone – students, staff and parents)
- States of regulation are transmitted within the group/class. **Our brains are wired to connect.** We can use this knowledge to gain/maintain collective regulation.





Self-Regulation

Put your own mask on first

Ongoing self-care



Before entering classroom

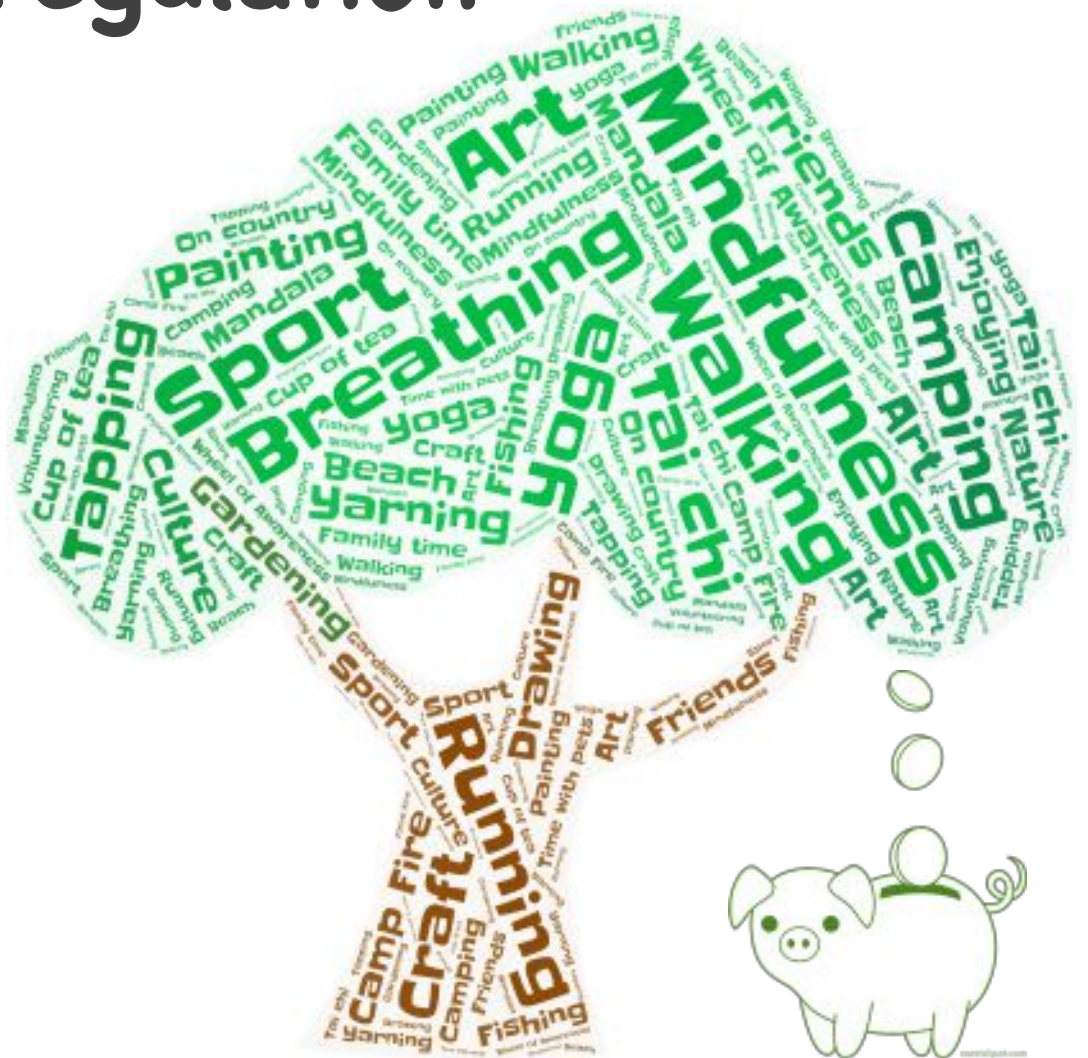


Staying regulated



Increasing self-regulation

- Activity options are endless, but what we chose needs to be a regular part of what we do.
- These activities put deposits in the “regulation bank” so when we need to make a withdrawal – we have something there.
- The aim is to be in the “zone” – where your focus is only on what you are doing
- What is your “thing”?
- When will you do it next?
- Can you make a commitment to yourself to do it ?



Before entering classroom

- Check that you are ok. It is really important that our own physical needs are met.
- Do a **body scan** – notice anywhere you are feeling tense. Take a deep breath and relax shoulders.

Be aware of your

- Posture
- Facial expressions
- Tone of voice

Our non-verbal communication can transmit either a **sense safety** or a **sense of unpredictability and danger** to students.

What we say needs to align with what the students are reading from our body language. If they don't match, this can also create a sense of unpredictability and lack of safety.





Brain Development and States

Period of most active growth

Responsible for – as relates to school and learning

Neural System linked and ready for learning.

Neural System disconnected. Need to re-connect system

Cortex

3 - 6 years

Executive functions – learning, thinking, planning, reasoning, concentrating, impulse control, empathy. Continues to develop into 20's.

Limbic System

1 - 4 years

Emotional response and connection to others.

Mid Brain

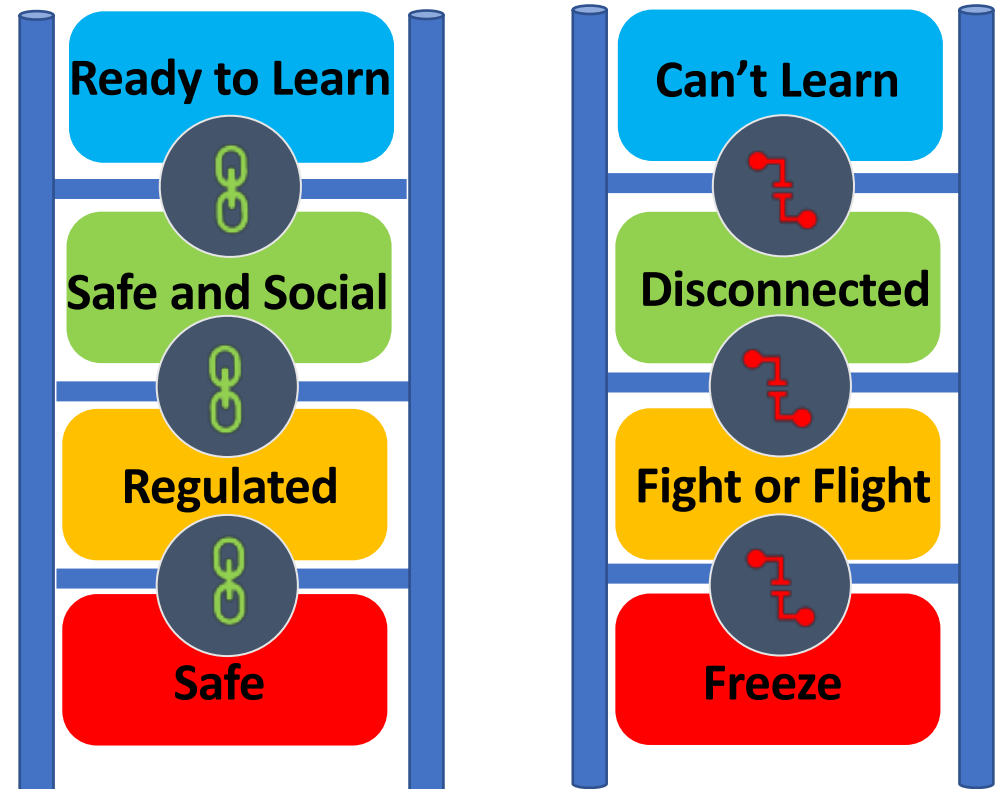
6 months – 2 years

Coordination and movement, regulation; fight and flight

Brain Stem

0 - 9 months

Basic survival: breathing, heart rate, swallowing and body temperature. Fight, flight, freeze or collapse



Autonomic Nervous System States

Ready to Learn

Safe & Social

Fight or Flight

Freeze



Ready to learn

Ventral Vagal System

Safe and Social

Calm, engaged, connected,
grounded, secure

Mobilised

Alert

Sympathetic Nervous System

Fight or Flight

Vigilant, aggressive,
avoidant, stressed

Dorsal Vagal System

Freeze

Shutdown, numb, disconnected,
foggy dissociated, depressed

A Neuroception of Safety is

- not dependent on “actual” safety
- impacted by history & what happened this morning
- a “felt” sense of safety.
- an instantaneous, subconscious processing of safety and risks.
- Neuroception will determine state (safe & social, fight & flight and freeze)



Increasing the neuroception of safety



- Provide a **calm, predictable environment**
- Make the **unknown known** (saying what the plan is for that session, visual timetables, what should they do if upset or angry, where should they go, who can they see).
- Be **aware of non-verbal communication**. The spoken word only accounts for part of communication. Gestures, personal space, posture, facial expression, tone and rhythm of speech communicate a lot.
- Be **authentic** – children are very good at reading non-verbal cues.





The Safe and Social State

Ventral Vagus Nerve State

These are important as they show us how we need to be perceived to be a “safe enough” person.

The body signs are particularly important as they provide a felt sense of safety.

Feelings	Body Signs	Behaviours
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joy • Hope • Awe • Buoyance • Connection • Contentment • Curiosity • Compassion • Grounded sadness • Security • Centeredness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calm heart • Soft expressive gaze • Deep regular breathing • Open body language • Relaxed posture • Increased prosody (rhythmic variation of vocal tone) • Hearing tuned to human voices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative thinking • Problem solving • Conversation • Collaboration • Arts and Music • Prayer • Meditation • Mindfulness • Connection with nature • Expressive movement • Tears of joy or release • Safe touch and intimacy



Fight or Flight

Sympathetic Spinal Chain Nerve Circuit

In some situations this state is essential for survival.

In other situations it may be adaptive to get needs met.

This state can also give us motivation and the ability to push ourselves.

Students running out of class, hiding under desks, hitting others etc. – are in this state.

Feelings	Body Signs	Behaviour
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Motivation Excitement Anger Frustration Annoyance Disgust Hate Crisis, stress Anxiety Fear Desire to move 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fast heart rate Wide alert gaze Fast shallow breath Quick monotone voice Mid-range hearing loss Muscle bracing/pain Hunched posture Hyperarousal Hyper-focus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical Labour Movement Intense crying Yelling, shouting Shaking, trembling Running away Social avoidance Dominance Aggression Attempts to control Lying, violence

Memory and knowledge are "State Dependent"



Shutdown State (Freeze)

Dorsal Vagus Nerve Circuit

It is Important to look out for the kids that just shut down. Sometimes a child will go through fight/flight to shut down – for others this will be their default position when faced with stressors that overwhelm them.

These children sometimes do not attract as much attention as their behaviour does not impact on others.

Feelings	Body Signs	Behaviour
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shame • Grief • Confusion • Sense of doom • Sinking, drowning • Terror • Life-threat • Extreme distress • Unworthiness • Hopelessness • Disconnection • Nothing, numbness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slow heart rate • Cold, pale skin • Slouched posture • Downward gaze • Low blood pressure • Waking apnoea • Higher pain tolerance • Increased numbness • Little to no movement • Systemic inflammation • Illness or nausea 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Isolation • Memory loss • Dissociation • Catatonia • Quiet crying • Low motivation • Self-medication • Depression naps • Suicidal ideation • Self-harm • Catastrophic thinking • Collapse, fainting

Regulation using the 3 R's

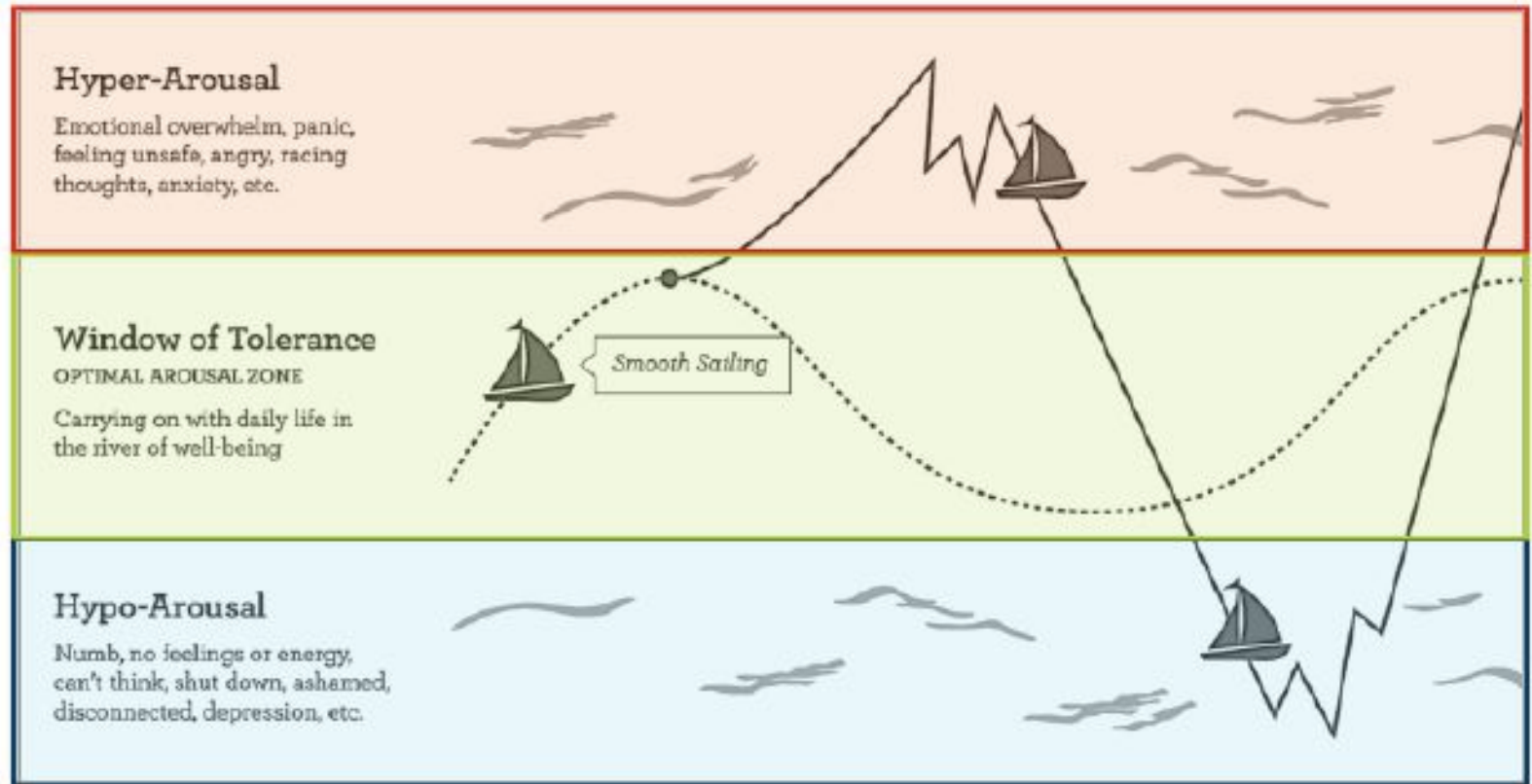
A bottom up approach is necessary as a child cannot reason when in fight, flight or freeze mode, and won't learn from the experience if not in a connected relationship.



Window of Tolerance

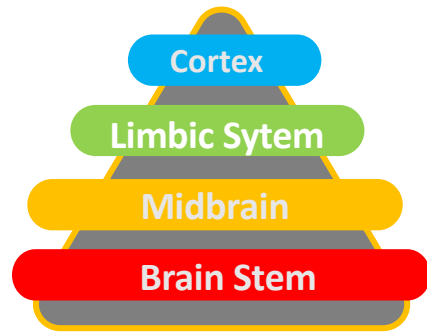
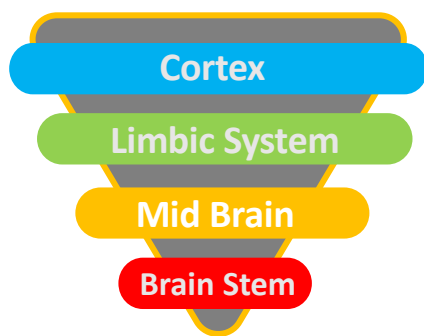
People who have experienced trauma or are neurodivergent often have a narrower window of tolerance and go out of it more easily.

With counselling I aim to work at the borders to increase tolerance.



Trauma could look like:

- Neglect, abuse or domestic violence
- Mum or Dad having a mental health issue or addiction
- Mum going away to have another baby and the very young child needing to be left in the care of someone else they are not familiar with.
- Separation because of ill health of mum or bub.



Trauma impacts on brain development as the brain prioritises survival over higher level functions.

In utero exposure to maternal stress, alcohol and drugs can also impact on brain development

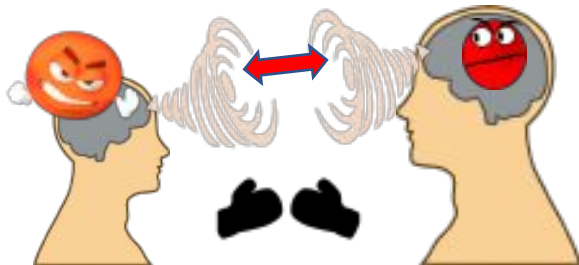
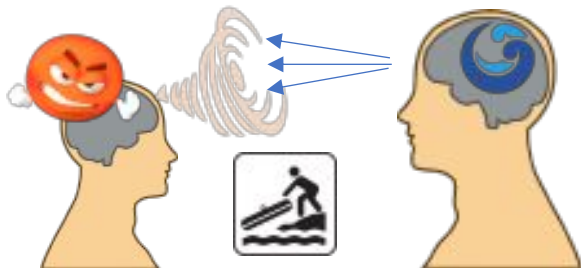
Brains can also develop differently due to neurodiversity.

Co-Regulation and Mirror Neurons

Anger is contagious – but so is happiness, fun, motivation, smiles and an atmosphere of learning



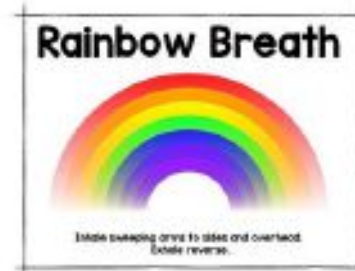
Attunement and Resonance (Dan Siegel)



- **All behaviour is communication.** What are they communicating?
- Model self-regulation. Name feelings. Show empathy for feelings (not behaviour)
I see/understand you are...
- **How is the child making you feel?** This can give you a hint as to how they are feeling. They too use their mirror neurons to communicate. Are you feeling helpless in the situation? Frightened? Not good enough? Maybe that is what they are communicating. If you don't "get it", they may intensify their efforts. If they know you "get it" they are likely to regulate much more quickly.
- **If early in escalation** - give a choice – provide a life raft. Ensure options are within boundaries. Going for a walk and colouring/drawing can both **lower cortisol (stress hormone) levels**. Using play dough can provide **sensory needs**
- Notice if you are being sucked into the student's emotions.
- **Model self-regulation** (take another breath, walk away if you cannot regain your sense of calm.
- Say "we can talk about this later – do you need to get a drink etc...."

Collective Regulation

- Tapping (EFT)
- Body Percussion
- Breathing activities – Rainbow Breathing
- Music and Movement/Action Songs
- Clapping Games
- Yoga poses
- Cross crawl
- Brain-Gym activities
- Rhythmical activities can be used to up-regulate and down-regulate



What strategy when....

Step back, give space,
self-regulate

Watch for overt anger
Minimize stressors
Don't ask to make choices.
Model calming strategies.
Make use of mirror neurons

Watch for increasing
agitation, frustration
Assist to leave the triggering
event if possible

Watch for early signs of
distress, restlessness or
distraction, disengaging

Ensure Safety

Alternate activity –
aimed at regulating &
connecting

STOP!

**Whole Class Regulation
when rejoining**

Use Sensory Break e.g
play dough, quiet time

Go for a walk, get a drink

Whole Class Regulation

Bee Breath, Snake Breath

“Be with” in classroom

Whole Class Regulation

Only goal is to calm and connect.
Do not problem solve or discuss

Name it to Tame it; Empathy
Be aware of your own regulation
Self-regulate
Encourage to relax rather than
make decisions

Not yet in space to discuss.
Could re-escalate
Use encouraging supportive
words. If possible, don't
discuss the incident

Calm redirection if
possible

Discuss and reflect when
reconnected and calm

I can STOP! I am in control of my anger... my anger does not control me!



- **STOP! Freeze!**

As soon as you start to feel a tiny bit annoyed..... Stop... Keep hands and feet still (and to yourself)



- **Take some slow, deep breaths**

Snake Breath:

Breathe in through your nose and breathe out through your mouth with a long, slow hissing sound. How long a hiss can you make? Engage your smart brain



- **Observe what is happening**

Is someone pressing your buttons? Did you take the bait? Are they reeling you in?



- **Plan what to do**

Who wins if you lose it? Who wins if you walk away and cool down



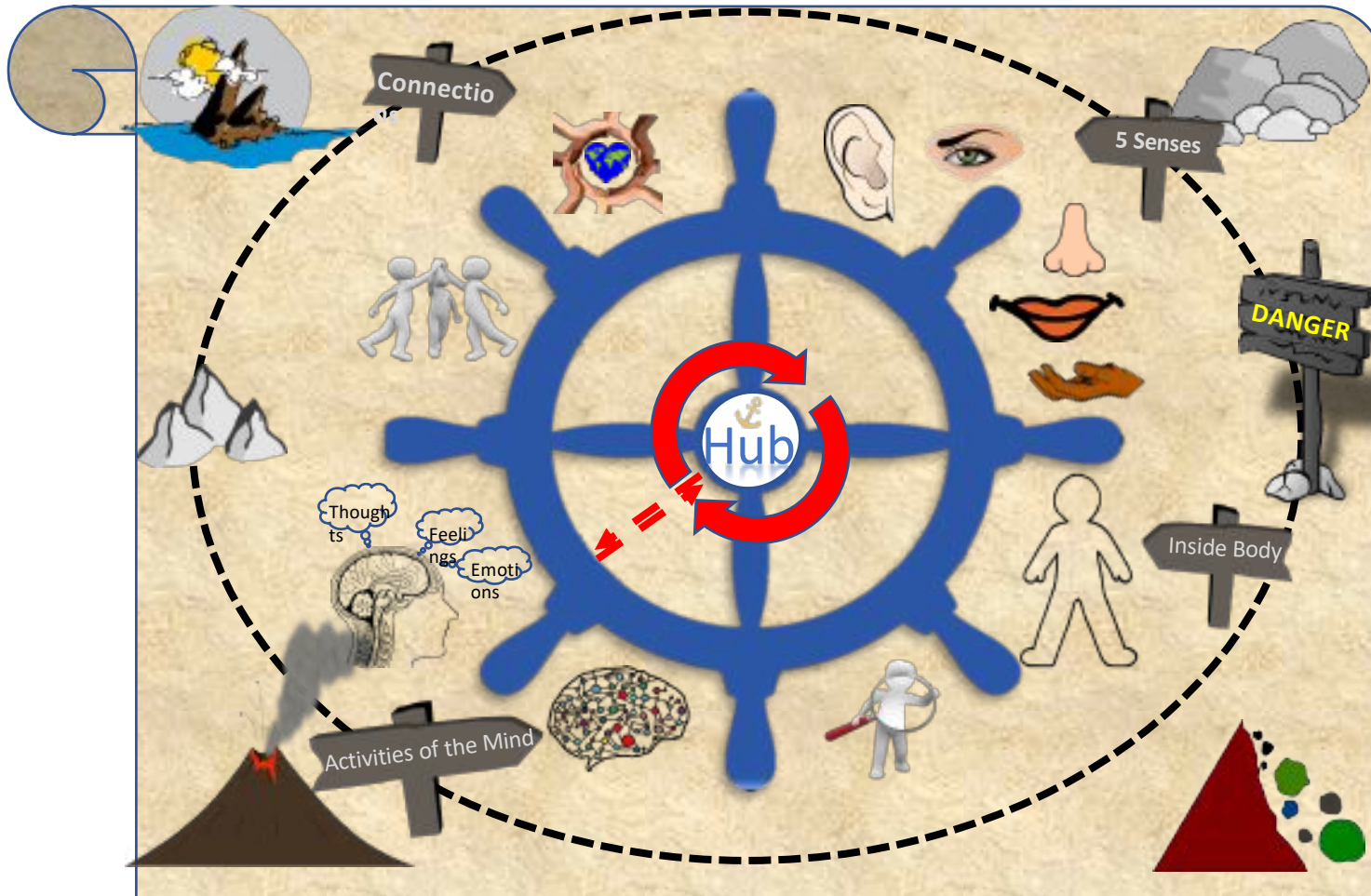
The Stop Strategy

This can be a useful strategy but needs to be used early. Once the thinking brain is disengaged – remembering to use the strategy is less likely unless there has been lots of practice.

Remember

- It is not possible to have all the answers or all the strategies.
- Despite our best efforts – at times students are going to dysregulate and we will become dysregulated also.
- None of the strategies are magic. They work some of the time.
- The bigger our toolbox – the better equipped we are.
- An understanding of brain development and the states of regulation can help us to be more effective more of the time.
- You will already have strategies that work – use these.
- Some of the strategies may appear like you are “giving in”. What you are doing is helping the child to return to a place where they can discuss, reflect and repair.
- It is much easier to teach students to stay regulated than to try to regulate a dysregulated child. Prevention is key.

The Wheel of Awareness



The **Wheel of Awareness** is a tool to increase wellbeing. With practice you can flexibly direct your attention from the “hub” to your

- Five senses
- Inside your body
- The activities of your mind
- Your connections to others.

Getting “stuck” on any of these can be problematic. Being aware that you are stuck, is the first step in re-directing.

Wheel of Awareness

Anne Maree Taney

Based on Siegel (2007)

Videos & links referred to in session

Dr Bruce Perry. Stress, Trauma and the Brain – Information for Educators. Part 1

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3is3XHKKs>

Dr Bruce Perry. How stress impacts the brain function. Part 2

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=COMwl2akgqM>

Dr Bruce Perry. The Power of Connection. Part 3

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oEIS6AGwuxU>

Dr Bruce Perry. Regulating yourself and your classroom Part 4

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nqW2Xv16bWw>

Dr Bruce Perry.. Educator Strategies for the Classroom Part 5

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cNzkyFPA7Lc>

Dr Peta Stapleton: Tapping in the Classroom

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HkNFNORIGZc>

Body Percussion (InRhythm)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IVsDoCN8ELo>

Wheel of Awareness (good for own wellbeing)

https://www.drdansiegel.com/resources/wheel_of_awareness/