



De-stressing Family Life

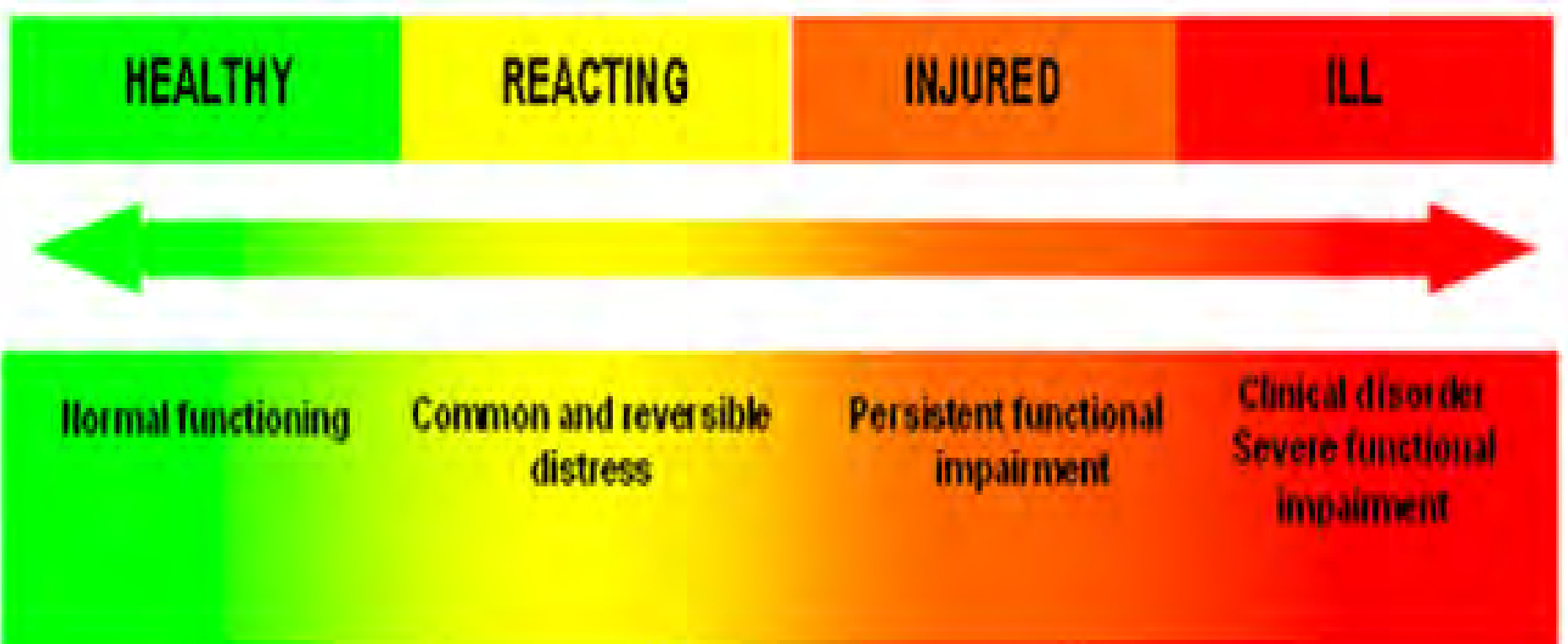
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Resiliency

A Core Feature of Mental Health

Holistic Approach





It
is
better
to
bend
than
to
break.

Why is this important?

- Long term impacts of chronic stress
- Brain adapts to protect itself
- We can model coping strategies and stress reduction for our kids
- Reduced parental stress= Reduced child stress

A case of the....

Ya buts.....

The Relationship to Mental Health

Wellbeing is not about absence of illness but about health and resiliency:

- Self regulation
- Self concept
- Self acceptance
- Connectedness/Belonging

Who we are and how we engage in the world are much stronger predictors of how our children will do than what we know about parenting. The question isn't are you parenting in the right way? It is Are you the adult you want your child to grow up to be?

Brene Brown

Neurobiological Approach: The Power of the Brain

A bit about the brain

- Designed to keep our body in balance
- Our body craves homeostasis
- The brain supports *adaptive functioning*
- It is hardwired to protect us

Why is this important?

Flight,

Fight,

or

Freeze

A Helpful Brain Model for Families

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DD-lfP1FBFk>

Self Regulation: Putting on the Brakes

- We need our brain to have the alarm system
- Dealing with escalating emotions
 - Higher level cortical functions
 - Self-awareness and coping stress
- Training our brain
 - Plasticity allows us to strengthen our brains

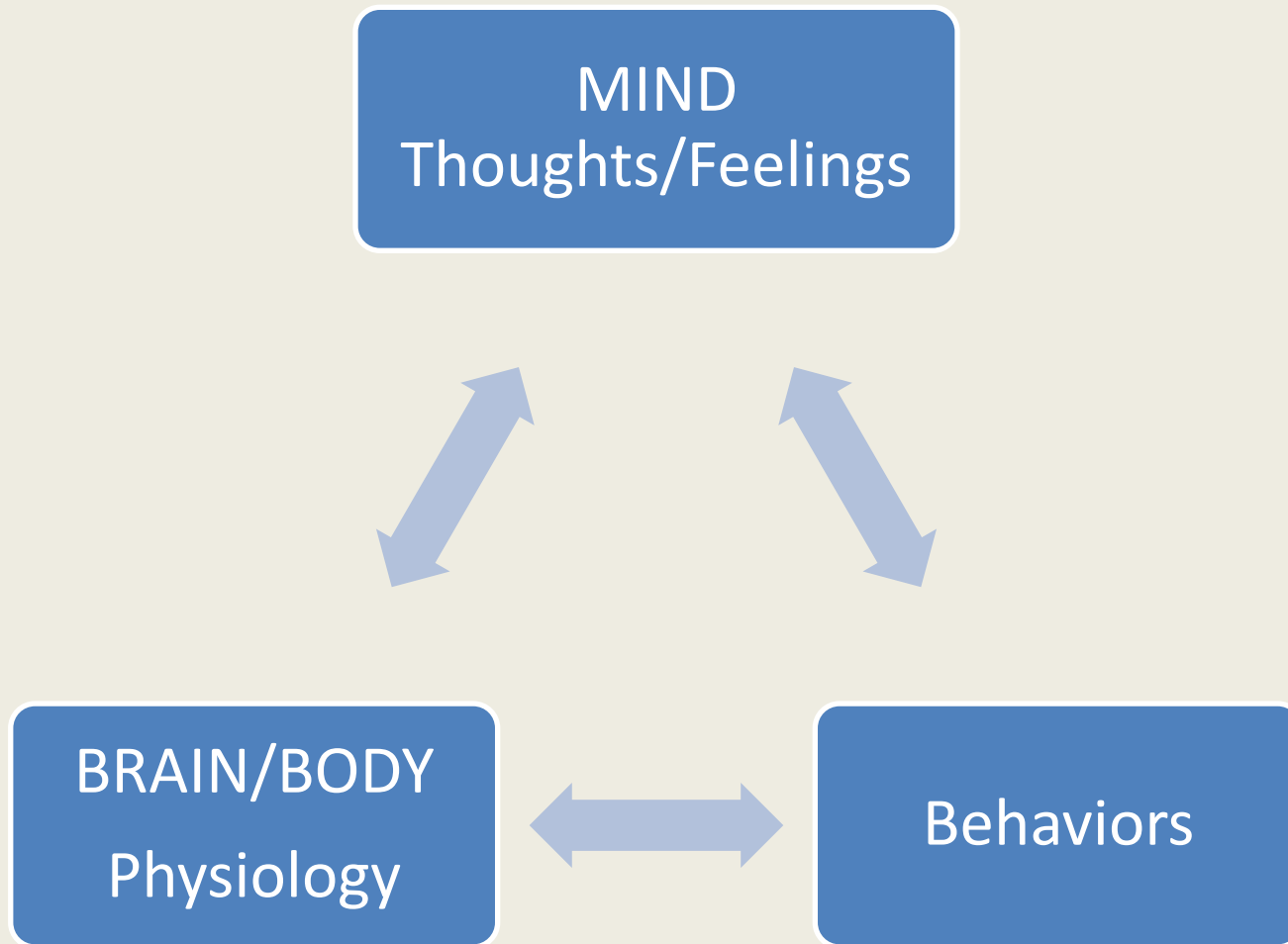


Changing Our Response

Responses to Stress: Mind-Body-Behaviour Relationship

- **Mind** (cognitive response):
negative thoughts, attitudes and feelings
- **Body** (physiological response):
physical symptoms and bodily reactions
- **Behaviour** (behavioural response):
things you do to cope

Understanding the Triad



Exercise

You are sitting in your room at night reading.

You hear a noise/knocking at the window.....

Your first thought is.....

Exercise

What was your ***thought***?

i.e. animal, branch, person/burglar

What did you say to yourself?

i.e. “no big deal” (branch)

“oh no, I’ve got to get out of here” (burglar)

What ***feeling*** did your thoughts lead you to have?

i.e. fear/dread (burglar)

How would that feeling influence your ***behavior***?

i.e. run/hide/shake/tremble

Understanding Our Needs

The foundation for finding the calm
in the chaos

Caring Relationships and Belonging

- Brain is hardwired for belonging and connection
- Survival instinct
- This is a pivotal mediator in identity development

Connectedness and Belonging

The energy that exists between people when they feel seen, heard, and valued; when they can give and receive without judgement; and when they derive sustenance and strength from the relationship.

Brene Brown

Connectedness and Attachment

Dr. Gordon Neufeld

Hold on to Your Kids

Why kids need us more than their peers.

Competing attachment

What is happening?

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UIMkWJY5T_w

The Marshmallow Test Revisited



Increasing Connectedness

- One on One time (pick from the jar)
- Create structure, set your family up for success
- Tech Free Time
- Talk over problems in a relaxed way, not when your primal brain is driving the process
- Use scaling questions as a way to restore the calm

Family Mealtimes

1. Schedule them if you have to
2. No technology, including answering the phone
3. Structure the conversation, must be positive
4. Play soothing dinner music, have each family member create a playlist and rotate them
5. Devote one meal month to each family member (choice of meal, pick the positive conversation starter, and 1 affirmation)**identity development

What we *are* teaches the child
more than what we say, so we
must *be* what we want our children
to become.

Joseph Chilton Pearce

Taking Care of You

How to integrate self care



We all own the responsibility

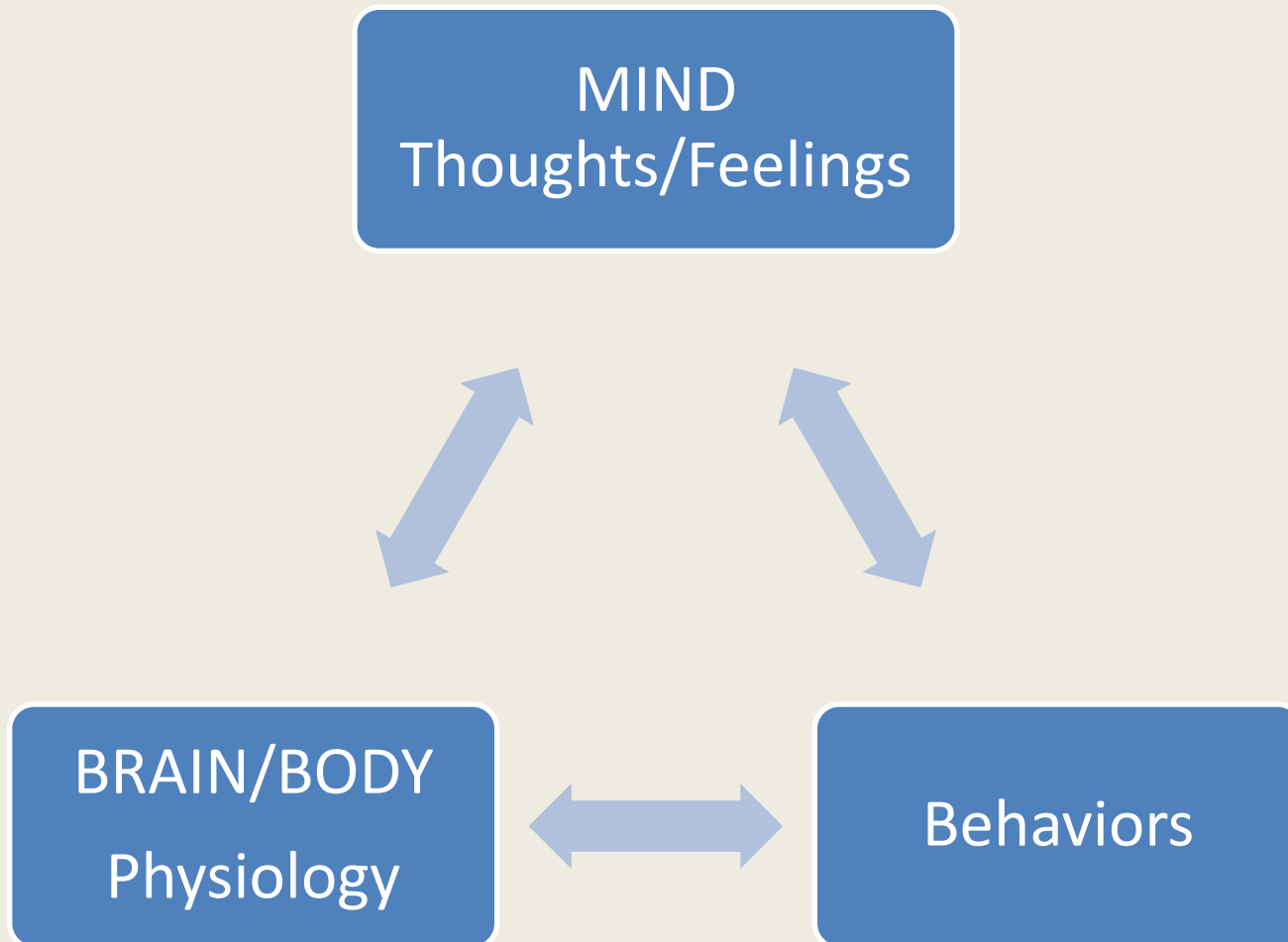
- Self care
- What does our behavior say about what we value most?

Managing your Own Response

- Your own brain's response
- What attributions are you making?
- What reactions are you having when you feel powerless?
- How do you continue to convey acceptance for them when you are frustrated?

*....teach me HOW to
calm down
don't just TELL
me to...*

Understanding the Triad
S.O.S
STOP....OBSERVE....SHIFT



Shifting the Triad: *Modifying Physiology*

Sensation/Physiology

Strategies: Take up Smoking

Just kidding!

Why this works:



- Taking a break physically from place/environment which generates stress
- Deep breathing
- 3 breath hug

Let's practice...

Mindfulness



Strive to focus on the present

Mind, Body, and Behavior

Mindfulness

Paying attention to the present...

Without judgement

Without expectations

Without fear

Just accept it as it is....

Let's practice

Mindfulness

- A seated meditation may be easiest OR a body scan

Seated Body Scan

- MARC.ucla (Mindfulness Awareness Resource Centre) meditation recordings iTunes U

Guided Mindfulness

(free audio guided meditations)

Shifting the Triad: *Modifying thoughts*

Thoughts/Feelings

***Man can alter his life by altering
his thoughts.***

William James

The Power of Mindset

Cultivating a mindset which
promotes mental health

Neurons that fire together...

Wire together

- Where you focus attention stimulates certain parts of the brain
- We are wiring our pathways
- Let's learn how to control it
- CHOOSE to focus on the positive

“...wherever we focus our attention, we're making lasting change, for better or worse.”

@RuthBuczynski

Taming the Mind

- ✓ Cognitive reframing
- ✓ Interrupt the negative pattern
- ✓ Retrain the pattern

Car analogy—automatic to manual

Picture a Snow Globe



Many thoughts in our mind = Storm (Stress)



Settling our thoughts = Calm

Optimism

A True Optimist

The Power of Optimism

- Aim for *Realistic Optimism*
- Explanatory style:

Questions to change your “explanation”

- *Was this out of my control, or did I cause it?*
- *What parts of the situation can I change?*
- *Is this something that affects all aspects of my life or just a part?*
- *How long will this really be a problem for?*

Cognitive Reframing

Adapted from: D. Bilsker, M. Gilbert, D. Worling & E. J. Garland

Situation	Thoughts Thinking Error	Realistic Thoughts
	All or Nothing Thinking Overgeneralization Mental Filter Disqualifying the positive Jumping to conclusions Magnification/Minimization Emotional Reasoning Should statements Labeling and Mislabeling Personalization	What proof do I have? Would most people agree with this thought? If not, what would be a more realistic thought? What would I say to a friend in a similar situation?

Taking Stock: Taking Control



Practice Letting Go

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rSrSemQUe](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rSrSemQUeSI)
[SI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rSrSemQUeSI)

*If the day ever came when we
were able to accept ourselves
and our children exactly as we
are and they are, then, I
believe we would have come to
an understanding of what
"good parenting" means.*

Fred Rogers

Self Compassion

Not about judging ourselves positively, but a way of relating to ourselves kindly, embracing ourselves lovingly flaws and all



Self Compassion

The thing that is really hard, ,and really amazing, is giving up on being perfect and beginning the work of becoming yourself.

Anna Quidlen

<http://www.self-compassion.org/>

- Treating yourself as you would a good friend

Impact of Self Compassion on Self Regulation

- Particular impact on willpower
- Donuts and Dieters: resultant increase in ability to self regulate (Adams & Leary, 2007)
- The power of self compassion/forgiveness is demonstrated to prevent relapse :
 - ✓ Alcohol
 - ✓ Quitting smoking (*more effective than the patch*)
 - ✓ Gambling
 - ✓ Procrastination

Self Compassion Script

1. Notice your feelings (*self doubt, criticism etc.*)
2. Acknowledge common humanity (*all people struggle/give in sometimes, it is just part of change*)
3. Replace with encouragement over criticism (*what would you say to your best friend*)

Shifting the Triad: *Modifying Actions*

Actions

Your “You First” Day

- Who is there?
- Are you alone?
- Where are you?
- What is happening? (what would you eat, music or silence)

The Power of Healthy Relationships

Cultivating relationships which
promote mental health

The Significance of Social Support

Research shows that people in toxic working conditions are more stress resistant and are less likely to get sick when they have a loving family and good friendships. [Those who are socially isolated] are more vulnerable to distressing conditions. Talking with friends and family diminishes the impact of difficulties and increases feelings of self-worth and self-confidence.

~Al Siebert, The Resiliency Center

Social Support

- Is it social support or social stress?
- Toxic friendships: Mirror neurons
- Introversion vs. Extraversion
- Sensory Capacity: *HSP*

BEHAVIOR

- Keeping our social connections
- Not isolating ourselves when the going gets tough
- Allowing ourselves to be vulnerable and seek support
- Integrating more joy giving activities into our lives

Are you ready to change the lens?

http://www.ted.com/talks/shawn_achor_the_happy_secret_to_better_work?language=en

The 21 day Challenge

Daily:

1. Write down 3 new things you were grateful for that day
2. Journal one positive experience
3. Exercise
4. Meditation
5. One random act of kindness

Take Care of You and You will take care of your family

- Make time for yourself
- Build a support network
- Practice stress reduction
- Get help if you feel your stress level is impacting you in ways you cannot manage

Applaud yourself

- Your job is HARD
- All parents are doing the best job they can with the skills they have
- Celebrate yourself

**RESPECT YOUR
PARENTS.**

**THEY PASSED SCHOOL
WITHOUT GOOGLE**

Resources

Websites:

[Parents for Children's Mental Health](#)

[Anxiety BC](#)

[Anxiety BC Parent Toolkit](#)

[Mind Your Mind](#)

Books:

- *Building Emotional Intelligence* (Linda Lantieri)
- *Flourish* (Dr. Seligman)
- *The Mindful Child* (Susan Kaiser Greenland)
- *Brainstorm: The Power and Purpose of the Teenage Brain* (Daniel Siegal)
- *The Highly Sensitive Child: Helping Our Children Thrive When the World Overwhelms Them* (Elaine Aron)