



Trauma – more than just an event

Conventional Definitions
 A deeply distressing event or experience (e.g., rape, domestic or community violence)
 Serious physical injury, e.g., burns or a blow to the head

Most definitions ignore the social environment
Event + Social Environment (e.g., caregiver, bystanders) together **create the experience**
 The personal **interpretation** of the event gets stored in the body and brain. It is used by the brain to **predict** future events.
 The experience of trauma is subjective and depends on the individual's developmental stage.

Finish the sentence:
Trauma is ...

It's not what happens to you externally that defines the trauma, but what happens internally to you as a result.
 (Dr. Gabor Maté, *In the Realm of the Hungry Ghosts* - 2019)

Resilience – More than Bouncing back

- PAST**
- ✓ Recognize your own "imprinting" as a result of how you were raised
 - ✓ Identify and process personal trauma or ACEs



- PRESENT**
- ✓ Recognize triggers based on past experiences
 - ✓ Practice self-regulation
 - ✓ Practice co-regulation
 - ✓ Know how to break the cycle of unhelpful behaviors and habits
 - ✓ Express emotions

- FUTURE**
- ✓ Advocate for yourself and others
 - ✓ Use skills and tools acquired from past situations to adapt to change and challenging new situations



Resilience is an ongoing process,
... not something we are born with

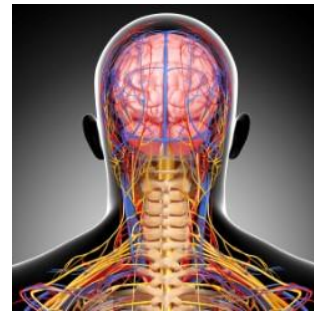
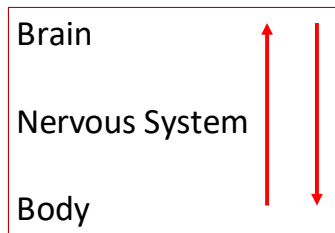
Finish the sentence:
Resilience is ...



Resilience means to:

- ✓ **develop** self-awareness and regulation skills (with oneself and others)
- ✓ **apply** these skills in order to **adapt** to changing or challenging circumstances
- ✓ **build** positive relationships with others as a human support system

The Brain-Body Connection



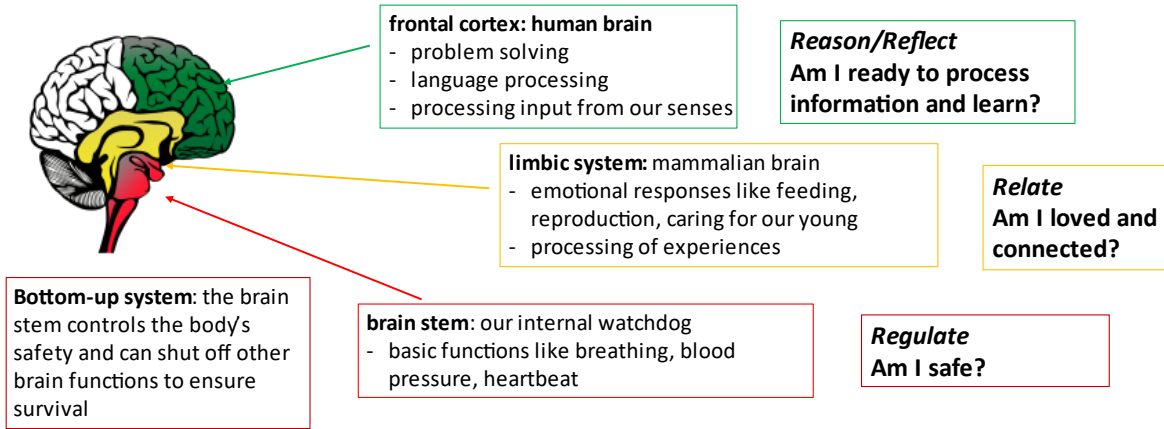
The myth that there's a clear dividing line between *diseases of the body*, such as cardiovascular disease, and *diseases of the mind*, such as depression still dominates today's practice of medicine.

(Lisa Feldman Barrett, 2021)

Finely calibrated system of internal and external body connections. 80% of signals sent between the brain and the body come from within to manage vital functions (interoception). They are below the threshold of conscious awareness (perception).

Our Human Control Center: the BRAIN

The most important job of the brain is to ensure our survival, even under the most miserable of circumstances!

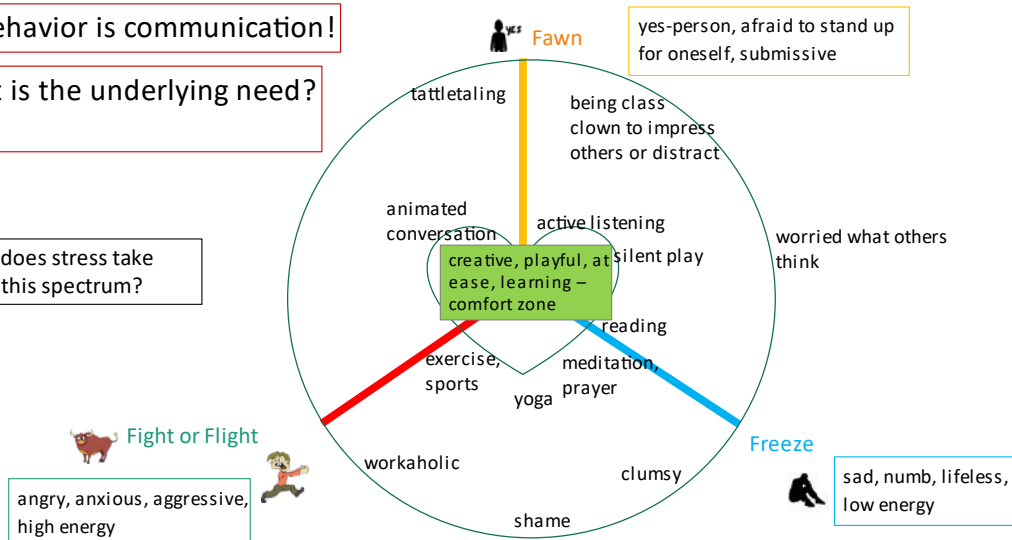


The Behavior Spectrum

All behavior is communication!

What is the underlying need?

Where does stress take you on this spectrum?



Does the state I'm in right now serve me and those around me?

What brings you calm?

What makes you feel energetic and ready to face the day?

What makes you feel accepted and loved?

Who or what makes you feel safe?

Self-Regulation and Co-Regulation in Practice: resilience in process and progress

Be a HERO

- H** Hold your tongue
- E** Examine your own state of calm or chaos
- R** Regulate (e.g., by taking a deep breath)
- O** Offer yourself and the child an affirmation



Q-TIP

ROLES

- R** – *Recognize* your own triggers and behavior patterns.
- O** – *Observe* the child to spot signs of dysregulation.
- L** – *Label* (name) the behavior you are seeing without judging.
- E** – *Elect* to respond with positive intent.
(Move from “What’s wrong with you? To “What is going on with you?”)
- S** – *Solve* the crisis by focusing on win – win.
(Always make sure to focus on the need: safety, connection, making sense/learning.)

HERO and ROLES, © CRI, 2022

Attunement: The Sweet Spot of Co -Regulation

Attachment is the dance of the limbic system between the child and the parent (...caregiver)

Dr. Alan N. Schore

A child’s **secure attachment** is the result of **attunement**, also called *Serve and Return*

- The ability of the parent or caregiver to “read” the child’s need expressed by the behavior
- To respond to the child by giving (returning) what the child is asking for (serving)
- Facial expression, voice and gentle touch are very important in communicating safety



Lack of attunement to the child’s needs will teach the child to:

1. Exaggerate the behavior to get more attention
2. Become withdrawn and suppress the need

In what ways do children express their needs at different ages? What are the behaviors you can see? What needs do they represent? How do you respond to these needs?

Top-Down vs. Bottom-Up Regulation

Top-Down

- Coming through the higher brain
- Being aware of the present
- Logical thinking guides feeling
- Not effective when the lower brain is in survival mode
- *Examples:* mindfulness, attentive listening, talk therapy, blindfolded sensory test



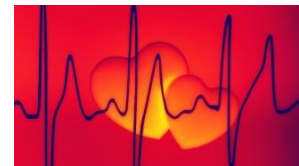
Bottom-Up

- Coming through the brain stem and limbic system (emotions)
- Naturally regulates body sensations and emotions
- Builds safety and connection before analytical thinking occurs
- Integrates the entire brain (emotions and logic)
- Effective with children in a state of dysregulation
- *Examples:* breathing (loooooong out), rhythm exercises, sensory -motor games (target practice, building things), tensing/relaxing muscles, crunchy snacks

Building Attunement and Resilience

Avoid distractions (e.g., cell phones) when communicating with a child.
Be intentional and present!

Help children express their emotions. If they can't do it verbally, help them act them out, draw, etc. Use creative ways to help them communicate especially when they are in a dysregulated state.

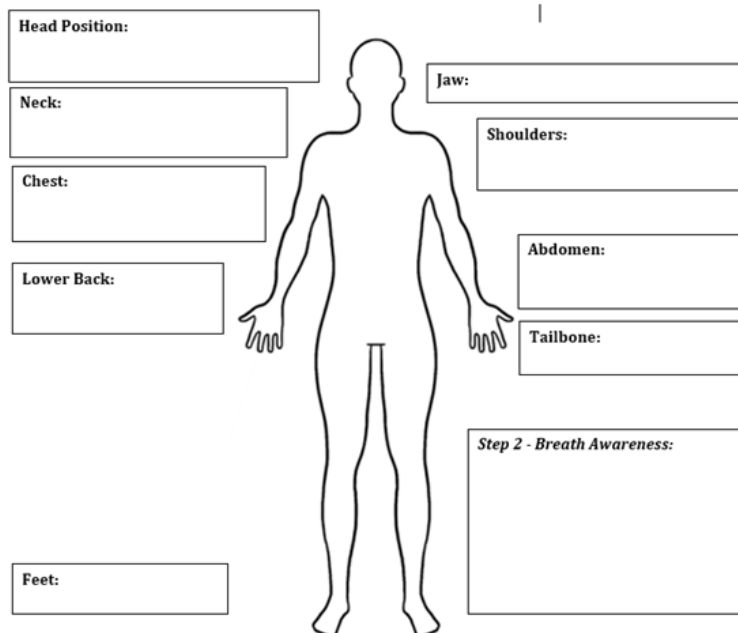


Resilience means being in synch with the world around you. Help children build that skill through dancing, throwing balls, singing, rhythmic exercises, etc. Rhythm conveys safety to the nervous system and brain (bottom- up approach).

Make sure that the message you convey in words mirrors your facial expressions and gestures

Watch children's breathing when they are dysregulated. Help them get their breathing back under control.
Teach them how to breathe intentionally!

Self-Regulation Exercises for Children and Adults



Get Your Witness in Play
Track how your body feels over the course of the day.
These are snapshots in time, but they will help you identify what sends you off balance or keeps you in balance.
“We teach our kids to wash their hands, but we don’t teach them how to breathe.”

Brain Balloon Up

- Imagine your head is a helium balloon or you have a balloon attached to each ear by a string.
- Gently use your hands to guide your head upward. Breathe deeply as you are floating up.
- What changes in your body as your balloon floats up and up?



Candles (or Dandelions)

Take a long breath in. Slowly blow your breath out toward the candle. Just make it flicker. Don’t blow it out.

Take another long breath in. Slowly blow your breath out to make it flicker again.

Take another long breath in. This time blow out the candle with a big loud whoosh sound.



Turtle



Humans have an inner turtle shell. When neck muscles tighten, we bring in our limbs and head into the shell of shoulders, while our rib cage and breastbone collapse. Our vision is limited to our nasal field.

Let’s swim out of our shell just like turtles do. This brings our posture and limbs into the peripheral visual field which gives us a much wider view of our surroundings.

Notice your breath inside and outside of the shell.

Fly like a Bird



- Start with brain balloon up and lift the sternum (breastbone). This is the way birds can defy gravity. If the sternum is dropped we can't fly.
- Get your wings ready to fly by opening them into your peripheral visual field. Now, your wings can move in full range of motion.
- Cormorants and pelicans air out their wings after they fly and dive into the water.
- Birds move in synch with their breath: On the inhale say "So" and bring wings up, on the exhale make the sound of the wings with a "Hum" and let the wings down.
- Notice how big your breath is when you are flying.



Hot Chocolate (or any hot drink the child prefers to imagine)

Bring your cup up to your nose. Take a long breath in to smell the delicious scent. Then slowly blow out the air to cool off your hot chocolate. Take another long breath in and slowly blow the air out. Now, take a tiny little sip of your hot chocolate and say Mmmmmmm. Make the Mmmmmmm sound as long as you can. Take another little sip and this time say Yum, yum, yum!

Take 5

Adults often say "Take 5" to take a break. But what if we take a break and actually breathe, counting to 5? Take a deep breath in through your nose and count to 5. Then blow out through your mouth and count to 5. Repeat at least one more time.

Your Favorite Color

What is your favorite color? Imagine a balloon with your favorite color inside your body. Can you feel it? Where is it? In your belly, in your legs, in your chest near your heart? Take a deep breath in and imagine the balloon getting bigger and bigger until it fills up the whole inside of your body. Everything inside you is your favorite color. Now imagine that everything around you also is the color of your balloon and feels warm and cozy. Now, breathe all the way out and make a sound like the wind.

Pretzel Breathing

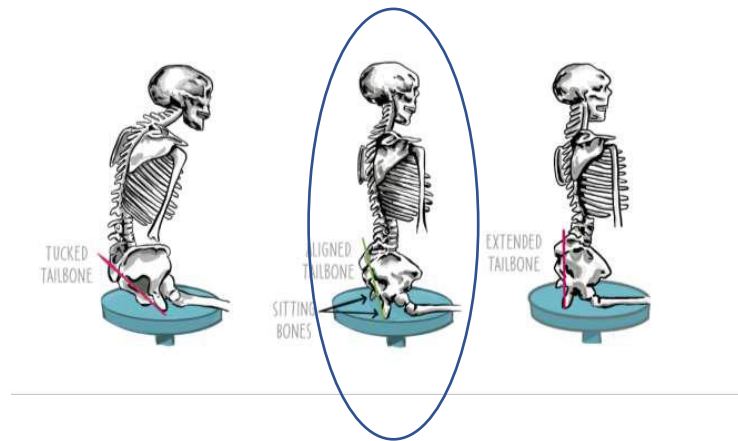
Small children: Cross arms and put hands on opposite shoulders. Breathe in through the nose, out through the mouth and repeat a few more times.

Older children: Cross arms, put thumbs down, clasp hands, bring hands through arms and put the left thumb on your chin to center your body. Breathe in through the nose, out through the mouth and repeat a few times.



Alternate version: Make the pretzel and breathe in through the nose as you bring the hands through the arms, then breathe out through the mouth as you bring the hands back out to the starting position.

Wag your Tail



1. Stand up, as you are able (or lean forward in your seat).
2. Imagine you are a peacock and flip out your tail feathers. Send your tailbone out and back as you sit down.
3. Set your seat to where your pelvic bones are resting evenly.
4. Feel the strong foundation created when your sitting bones and tailbone are balanced.
5. Imagine your favorite animal and gently wag your tail.
6. Continue to breathe deeply.
7. What else moves in your body as you wag your tail?

Scissor Winks



Calm yourself down by doing a couple of 4-7-8 inhalations. In for 4, hold for 7, out for 8 seconds.

Make scissors with your index and middle fingers on both hands. Hold them next to your eyes.

Close the scissors in your right hand and the eye on your left, and vice versa. How fast can you do it?

Lion's Roar

Take a deep breath in. Bring up your hands and make claws.

Breathe out while sticking out your tongue and roaring as loud as you can.

Relax your arms and bring them back down.



Come to Your Senses



Raise your head and focus on a point in the distance, maybe a beautiful tree or the clouds in the sky. Now bring your gaze back to your immediate environment. Look around you and notice the details in the room. Name 5 things you see, hear, smell or taste. Say them aloud, as your body loves to hear your voice.

Rub your hands against the fabric of your pants, skirt or dress, or rub your skin. What do you notice?