



# Mindful Parenting: Nurturing Mental Wellness for You and Your Child

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THE IMPORTANCE OF MINDFULNESS, COMPASSION AND SELF-SOOTHING IN THE WORLD OF PARENTING, WHICH IS EQUALLY IMPORTANT FOR THE MENTAL HEALTH OF BOTH YOU AND YOUR CHILD.



HOW MINDFULNESS CAN ENHANCE YOUR PARENTING JOURNEY THROUGH REGULATING YOUR OWN NERVOUS SYSTEM, PROMOTING RESILIENCE AND DEEPENING YOUR CONNECTION WITH YOUR CHILD.



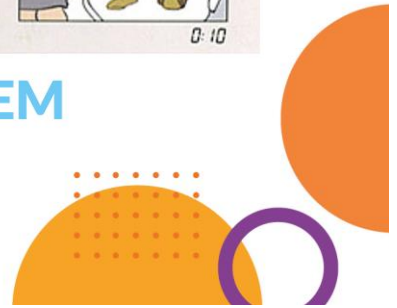
PRACTICAL STRATEGIES, TIPS AND ADVICE TO LEAVE YOU FEELING EMPOWERED, CALMER AND MORE GROUNDED.



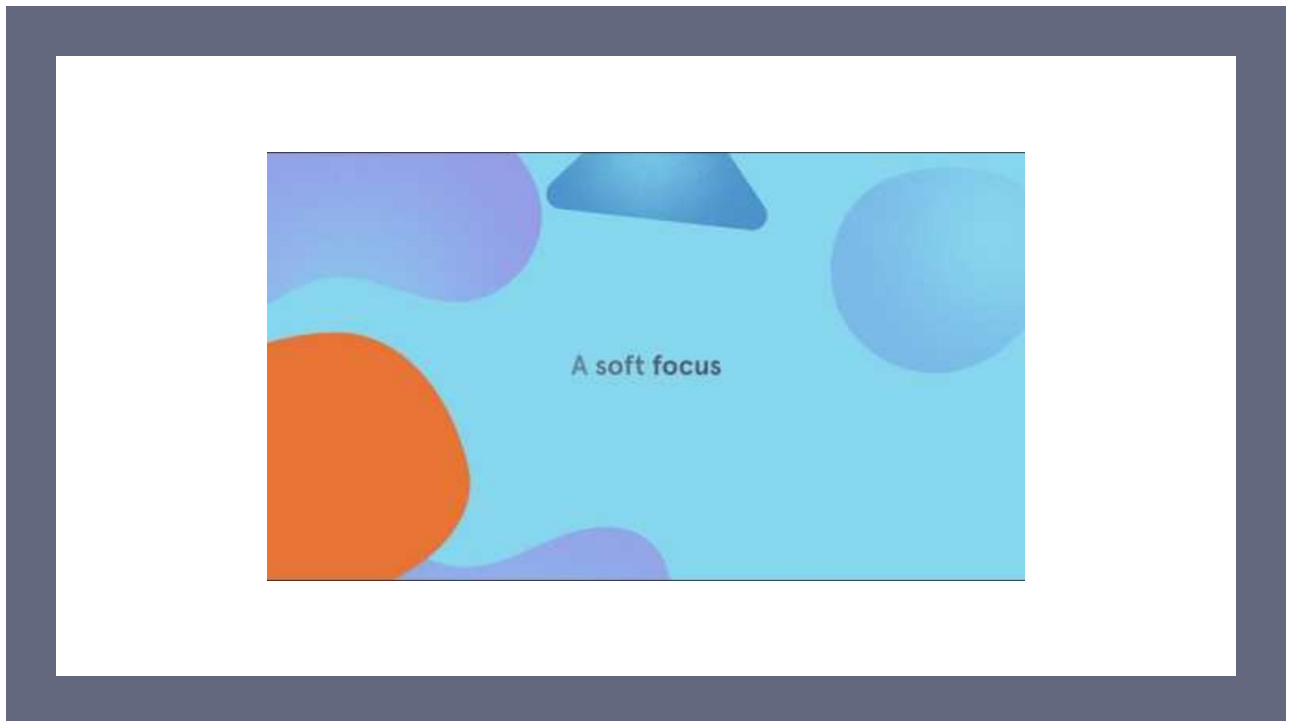
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## HELP YOU, HELP THEM



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‘Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way; *on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally.*’

Jon Kabat-Zinn



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## Mindful parenting (Wong et al, 2019)

listening to your child with your full attention

non-judgementally accepting yourself and your child

being emotionally aware of yourself and your child

using self-regulation in your relationship with your child

having compassion for yourself and your child

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## Benefits of mindful parenting

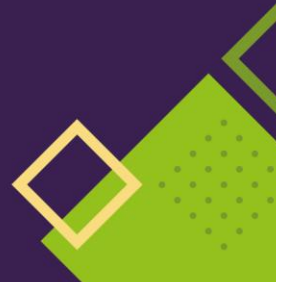
- Allows parents and carers to fully attend, be in the present moment, be less reactive and engage in more meaningful interactions to make a positive change in children's lives (Fuller & Fitter, 2020)
- Parents who reported more mindful parenting engaged in more positive and less negative parenting behaviour, which was then linked to more positive behaviour in their children, including less anxiety, depression, and 'acting out' (Parent, McKee, Rough & Forehand, 2016)
- Greater improvement on wellbeing when both parents and children engage in mindfulness training together (Anand, Sadowski, Per & Khoury, 2021)



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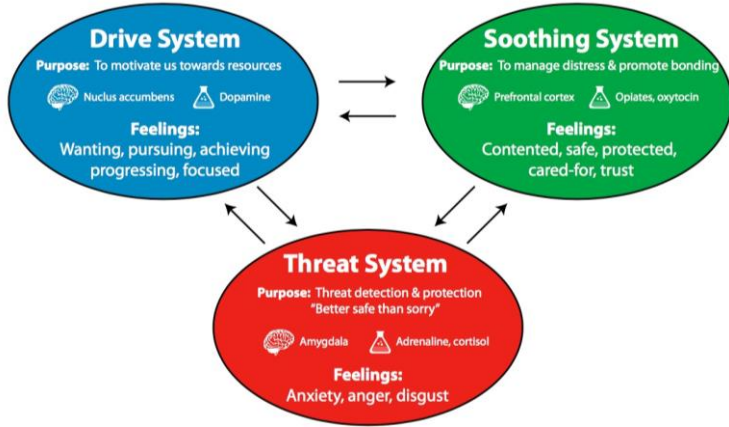
## Finding safeness

- How do you know when you are safe?
- How do you know when you are unsafe?
- What triggers you to feel safe?
- What triggers you to feel unsafe?
- How do you move from feeling unsafe to safe?



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# Emotion regulation system (Gilbert, 2010)



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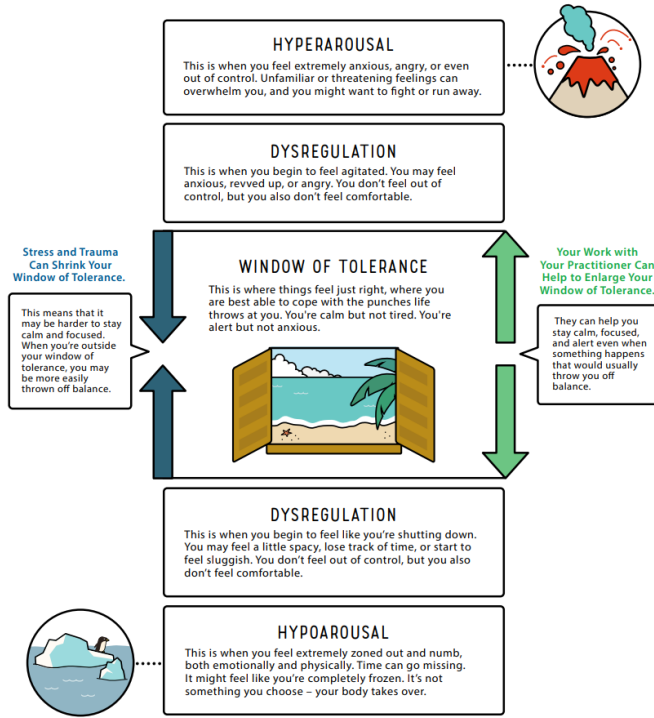
## Think of a recent conflict with your child

What system were they in? What system were you in?

What could you do to help bring their soothing system online?

What could you do before the interaction to prepare yourself and bring your soothing system online?

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## We need to own our state

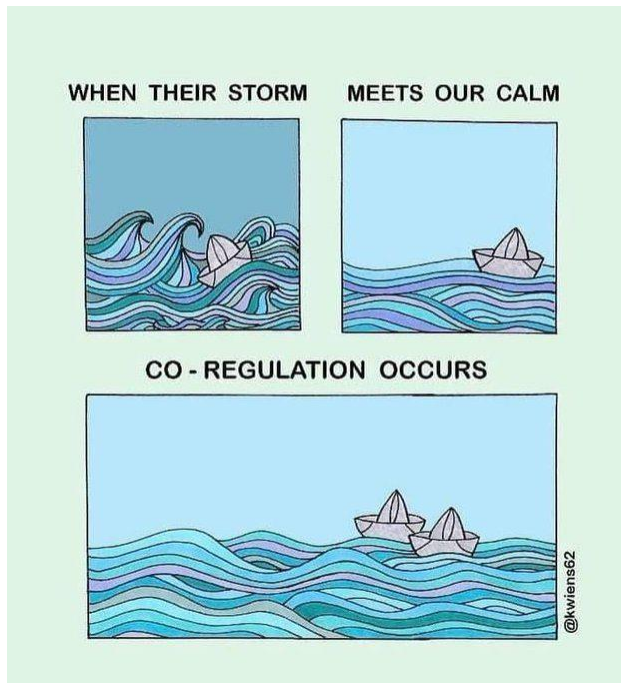
How do you know that you are within your window of tolerance?

What do you feel when you are outside of it (either above or below)?

What do you do to come back into your window?

What strategies to you use? Who do you go to for helping you to regulate?

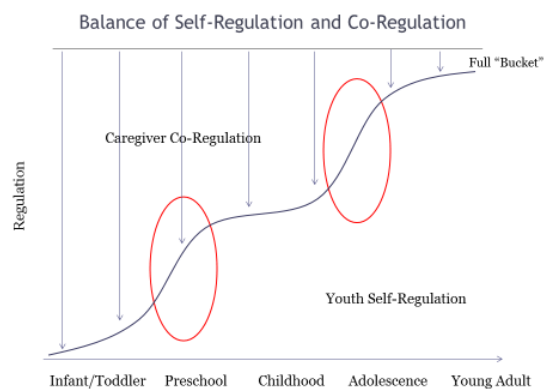
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## Self-regulation and co-regulation

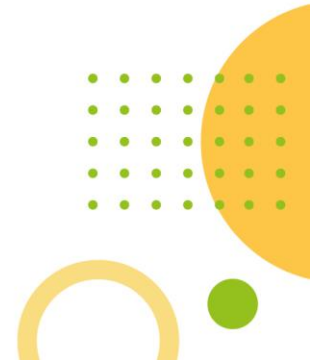
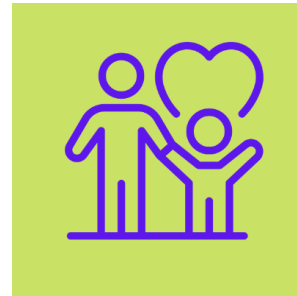
- Ability to self-regulate increases throughout developmental stages
- People develop self-regulation under the guidance of caregivers through co-regulation
- Our ability to self-regulate is impacted by:
  - **Childhood experiences, including our parents' ability to regulate themselves and us**
  - **Developmental stages**
  - **Trauma**
  - **Neurodivergence – ADHD and ASC**
  - **Learning needs, learning disability**



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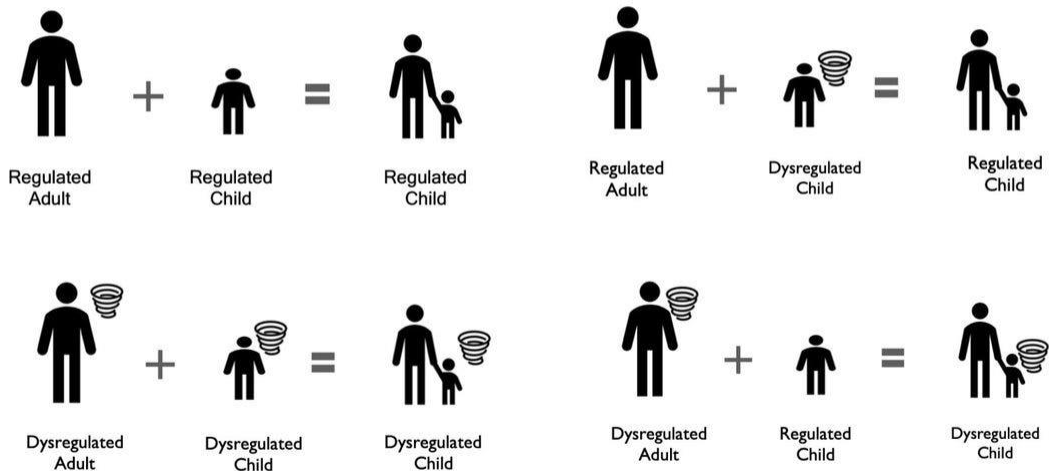
# Co-regulation

- A process where adults and children influence each other's emotional and physiological states, both positively and negatively
- Children highly sensitive to adult's cues
- Adults highly sensitive to child's distress (can heighten stress, creating a negative loop of unhelpful co-regulation)
- Role of adult (stay calm, offer comfort, help soothe, reassure, offer sense of safety and security)
- Co-regulation over time teaches children to anticipate the soothing response of caregivers and internalise the belief that help will come and emotions can be calmed (van der Kolk, 2005)



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## Dynamics of Co-regulation



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## Cues of presence

- Cues of presence are physiological gestures that help us feel safe with each other, they only work when they are genuine – ‘presence is only possible when one is present’ (Kase, 2023)
- Think of a time when you felt seen, heard, connected and validated by someone
- Recall their facial expressions, tone of voice, body language and physical gestures
- What was it they did to make you feel safe and connected in that moment?

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**‘Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around’**

LEO BUSCAGLIA

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## COAL: Curiosity, Openness, Acceptance and Love

- Take a few deep breaths.
- Bring a soft gaze to your child. Look carefully and pay close attention to what you see without judging. Wait patiently for your child to initiate a connection. What expressions do they make? What movements do they make? What sounds or words do they use? Notice where they are directing their attention.
- Watch closely and wonder what your child is expressing. When they initiate a connection, respond to them with warm support and notice how this feels for you. Wait again, and watch closely through several more back-and-forth interactions, until your child indicates they are ready to end the activity.

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Take a breath and pay attention to what is going on for them

Focus on the emotions driving the behaviour rather than the behaviour itself

Provide a warm, responsive relationship. They need a calming and soothing presence instead of anger and shame

Provide support and empathy in times of intense emotion, this may include supportive silence.

A soothing tone of voice and communication that acknowledges the young person's distress

When in crisis the brain is focused on perceived threat and the need for safety therefore we need to deescalate not teach a lesson as when we are flooded with emotion we can't understand or learn in a rational way

Model, monitor, and coach more sophisticated self-regulation skills across different contexts – when dysregulated it is not a teachable time

Monitor and limit opportunities for risk-taking behaviour

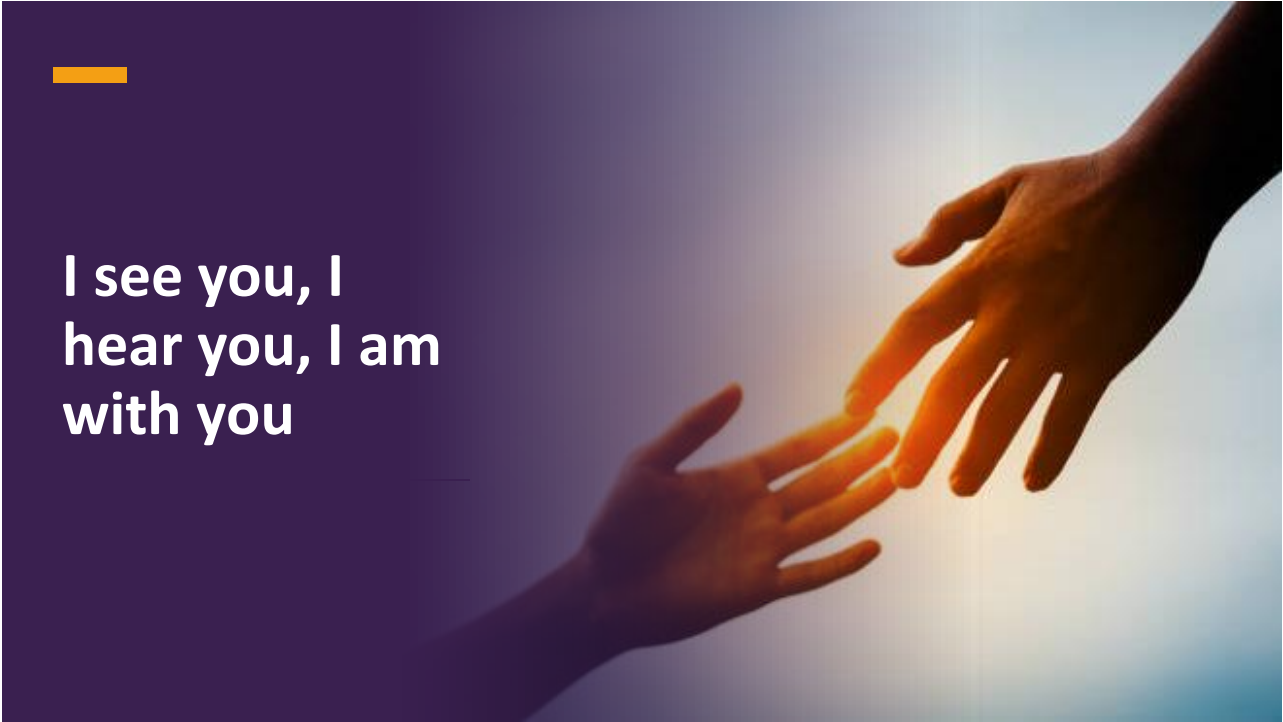
We need to recognise and manage our own counter-aggressive impulses and know that it is hard to provide support for someone who is fighting against it

It is hard to provide support for someone who is fighting against it - 'the willingness to absorb the rage of a furious adolescent is a gift that can be given, modelling the self-restraint they so desperately need' (Cozolino, 2006)

Give time and space to calm down in times of conflict

When appropriate, an invitation to reflective problem solving, provide opportunities to make decisions and self-monitor behaviour in less risky situations

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**I see you, I  
hear you, I am  
with you**

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## Connecting with our heart

- Start by placing your hand over your heart. You can close your eyes if you feel comfortable or just let your focus soften
- Now notice the connection that you've made with yourself. You may find yourself wanting to take a deep breath. If you do, go ahead.
- With your hand you can feel your body just as it is right now. Picture yourself sending warmth through your hand into your heart.
- From inside, feel the gentle pressure of your hand right where you would feel a hug. Let yourself receive warmth and kindness through that spot.
- Your own compassion and strength are supporting you and helping to ground your body in this moment.
- Sit with this connection as long as you need to.
- You can use this technique any time you're feeling panicky or anxious. Each time you do you're helping your mind learn that it's possible to calm down from even the most intense moments.

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# Regulating resets



**MINDFUL  
MOVEMENT**



**PLAYFULNESS**



**DANCING AND  
SINGING**



**BREATHE**



**SAFE SMELLS**

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## GLIMMERS

**Brings us to an anchored state**

Internal or external cues that brings us to a sense of joy or peace. Glimmers foster our thriving state of being.

**Empathic response**

Feeling of being seen, heard, understood and validated. Ventral Vagal system promotes feelings of social connectivity

**Comfort and learning zone**

It evokes feeling of safety, coziness and security within a space or with an individual. Encourages us to explore possibilities and pursue activities with excitement.

**Micromoments of goodness**

Help release the build up of cortisol and improve our speed of return to our state of calmness, inclusion and safety.

## TRIGGERS

**Brings us to survival state**

This gives us a cue to danger. It can make us feel antsy and withdrawn. There is a release of stress hormones - adrenaline, cortisol.

**Sympathetic or parasympathetic response**

The sympathetic is our fight or flight response and our parasympathetic response causes us to inaction (freeze or fawn).

**Panic and danger zones**

In the panic zone we feel uneasy and we spend time using our energy to manage our fears and anxiety. It can lead to a point of shutdown, collapse, and dissociation (danger zone).

**Associates with past traumas**

Scents, sights, sounds, people, actions or words that can remind us of previous traumatic experiences.

**Take a breath and reflect on your glimmer cues**

**What happens in your body that lets you know you are in a glimmer moment? What do you feel, think or do?**

**Set an intention to be open to finding unexpected glimmers**

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## Finding Glimmers

Noticing micro-moments of ventral vagal energy

- How you feel inside when something beautiful catches your eye
- The sensation of tasty things
- The warmth of the sun or breeze on your face
- Seeing a friendly face
- Moments of connection and belongingness
- Pleasant sounds

DR. JUSTINE @HEYDRJUSTINE



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**‘The energy of compassion is a positive force; it fosters trust and is, I believe, an antidote to fear’**

Anderson (2021; p39)

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## Compassion-focused parenting

Compassion-focused parenting not only is motivated towards reducing suffering and threats in the child's environment but also providing the opportunity for exploration and social, emotional and behavioural growth.

These are facilitated when parents themselves feel secure. When parents feel threatened and uncertain, they are more likely to engage defensively, responding potentially impulsively



**'What we don't  
need in the midst  
of struggle is  
shame for being  
human'**

Brene Brown



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## What to do in the most hectic moments (Headspace)

Step 1: Take a deep breath.

Step 2: Focus the mind on drawing that breath in and releasing it slowly.

Step 3: Acknowledge your fear/anxiety/annoyance, but don't let it overwhelm you. We're not trying to make the feelings go away. We're just trying to observe them without acting on them. In doing this — checking in with ourselves in this way — we give ourselves some perspective to keep us in the moment on an ongoing basis. And when we are out and about, commuting, or waiting at the school gates, we can remind ourselves to bring our attention back to the body and back to our physical surroundings, which roots us to the present moment and provides an opportunity for us to breathe.



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## STOP method

1. **Stop.** Pause. Wait a few moments before reacting to your child.
2. **Take** a few deep breaths. Breathe in through the nose and out through the mouth. Feel your muscles soften and relax.
3. **Observe.** Notice and pay attention with curiosity to your thoughts, sensations, and emotions.
4. **Procced.** Return to whatever you were doing, responding to your child from a clearer, calmer mental state.



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**Acknowledge their courage** – know that it will have taken so much to have started this conversation, tell them how proud they should be for saying something

**Reassure them** – that you are there for them, will not judge them, it is not their fault and they are not alone

**Give your time** – really listen, sit back, pay attention and give them space to talk at their pace. Think about your body language, turn towards them

**Resist the urge to fix** – don't focus on trying to make it better right now, let them share and validate what they are saying

**Try different forms of communication** – if they are struggling to share they might find it easier to write a letter/text or talk over the phone

**Check in with yourself** – stay calm and pay attention to what comes up for you, if you feel any (understandable) discomfort take a deep breath, notice the seat beneath you and pick one thing in the room to anchor you

**Share with consideration and empathy** – sharing can normalise what they are saying however remember the conversation is about them

**Offer ongoing reassurance** – don't expect everything to be resolved in one conversation

**Set next steps and respect their boundaries** – be patient with them, offer both emotional and practical support

### Compassionate communication:

### Talking about difficult subjects





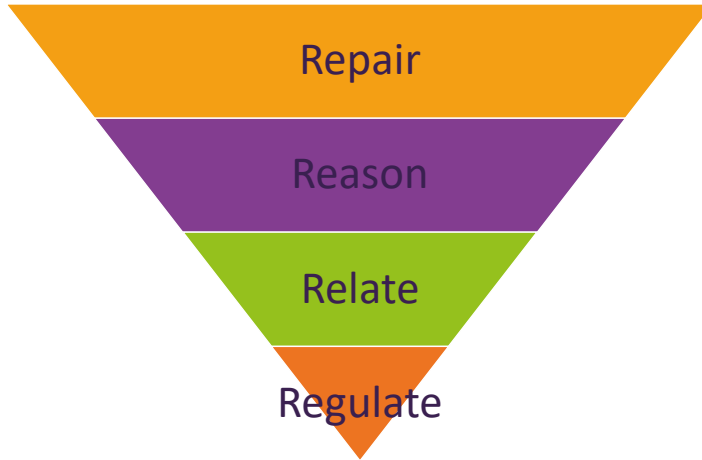


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## 'The 4 Rs' Perry, Bomber (2020)

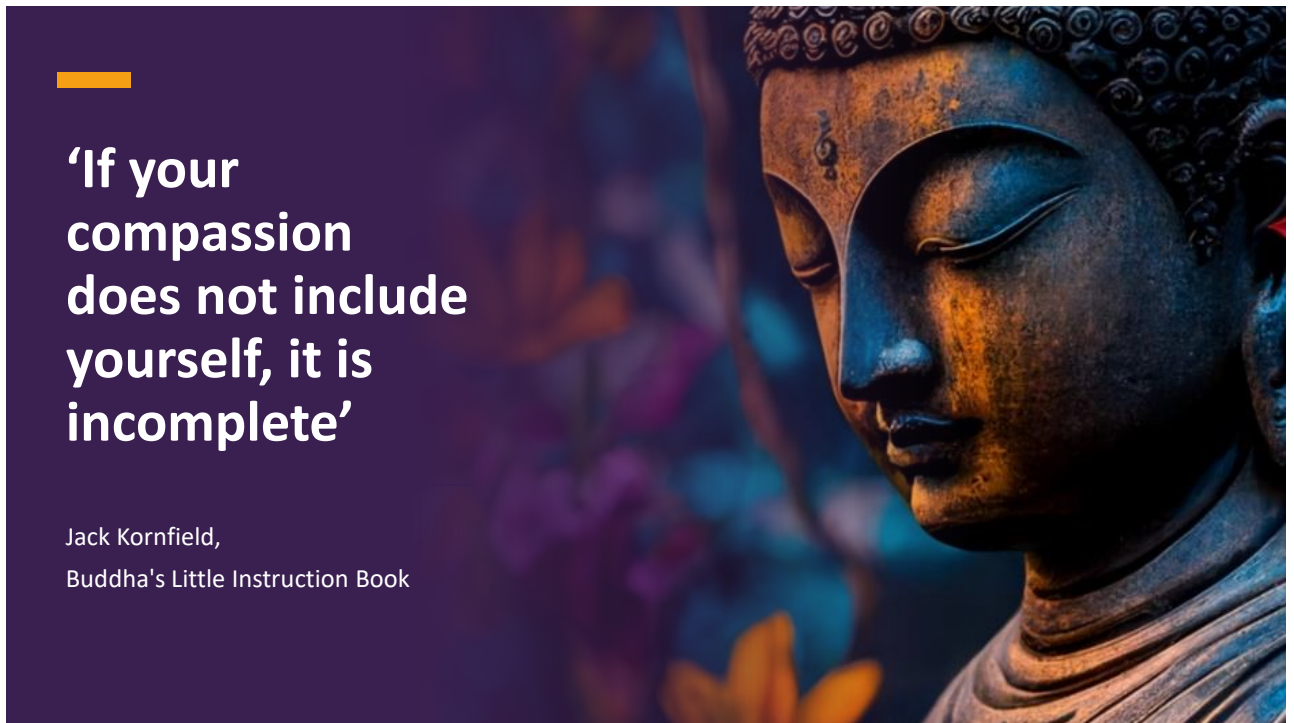


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**'If your  
compassion  
does not include  
yourself, it is  
incomplete'**

Jack Kornfield,  
Buddha's Little Instruction Book

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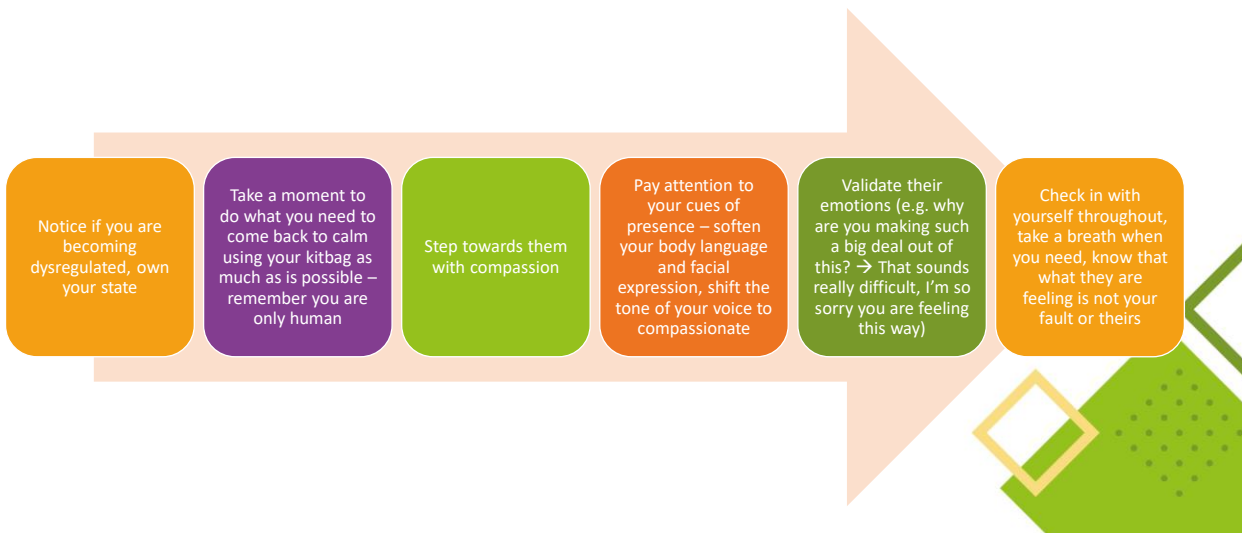


# Compassionate kitbags (Lucre, 2020)

 <p><b>Smells</b></p> <p>Essential oils (both calming and uplifting) in an inhaler, diffuser or lava stone jewellery</p> <p>Hand lotion</p> <p>Candles/incense</p>	 <p><b>Imagery</b></p> <p>Photographs and pictures representing safe places and joyful moments</p> <p>Favourite quotes printed</p>	 <p><b>Music</b></p> <p>Uplifting playlist for when you feel your body shutting down</p> <p>Calming playlist for when you need to calm overwhelming signals in your body</p>	 <p><b>Touch</b></p> <p>Soothing items (e.g. weighted blanket, microwavable heat bag)</p> <p>Objects that have personal meaning (e.g. trinkets bought for you)</p> <p>Objects that are calming to hold (e.g. stones/crystals)</p>	 <p><b>Taste</b></p> <p>Strong flavours (e.g. sour sweets, mints)</p> <p>Warm drinks (e.g. herbal tea)</p> <p>Eating something slowly and mindfully</p> <p>Nostalgic tastes</p>	 <p><b>Other</b></p> <p>Compassionate letter writing/ postcards/ take what you need tokens</p> <p>Guided meditations/ mindfulness/ soothing scripts/ regulating exercises</p> <p>Colouring in</p>
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# Regulating your child



Notice if you are becoming dysregulated, own your state

Take a moment to do what you need to come back to calm using your kitbag as much as is possible – remember you are only human

Step towards them with compassion

Pay attention to your cues of presence – soften your body language and facial expression, shift the tone of your voice to compassionate

Validate their emotions (e.g. why are you making such a big deal out of this? → That sounds really difficult, I'm so sorry you are feeling this way)

Check in with yourself throughout, take a breath when you need, know that what they are feeling is not your fault or theirs

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