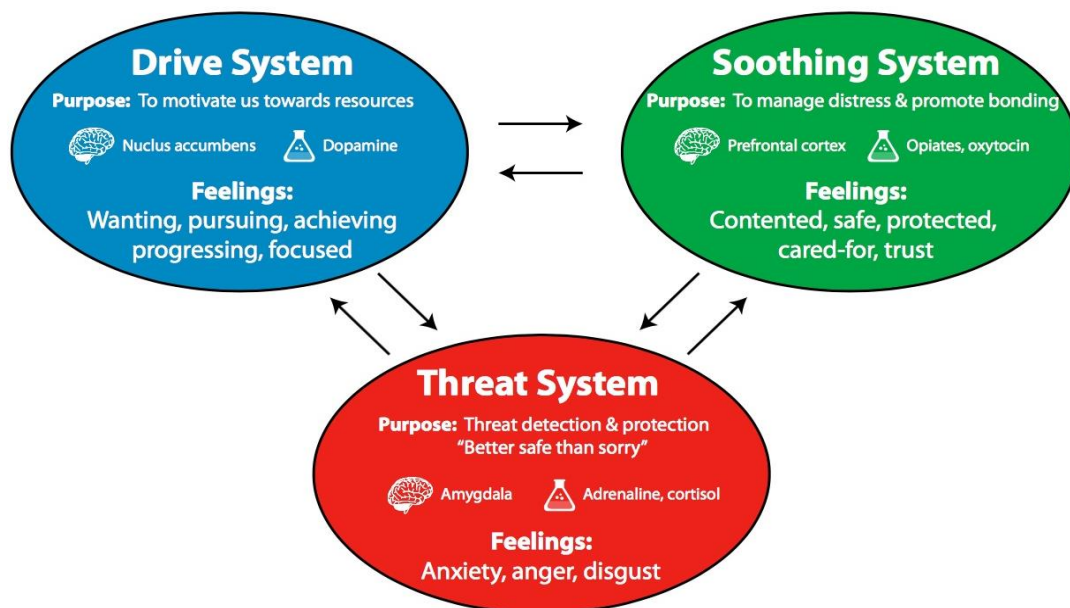


Mindful parenting

Mindful Parenting Principles (Wong et al, 2019)



Emotion regulation system (Gilbert, 2010)

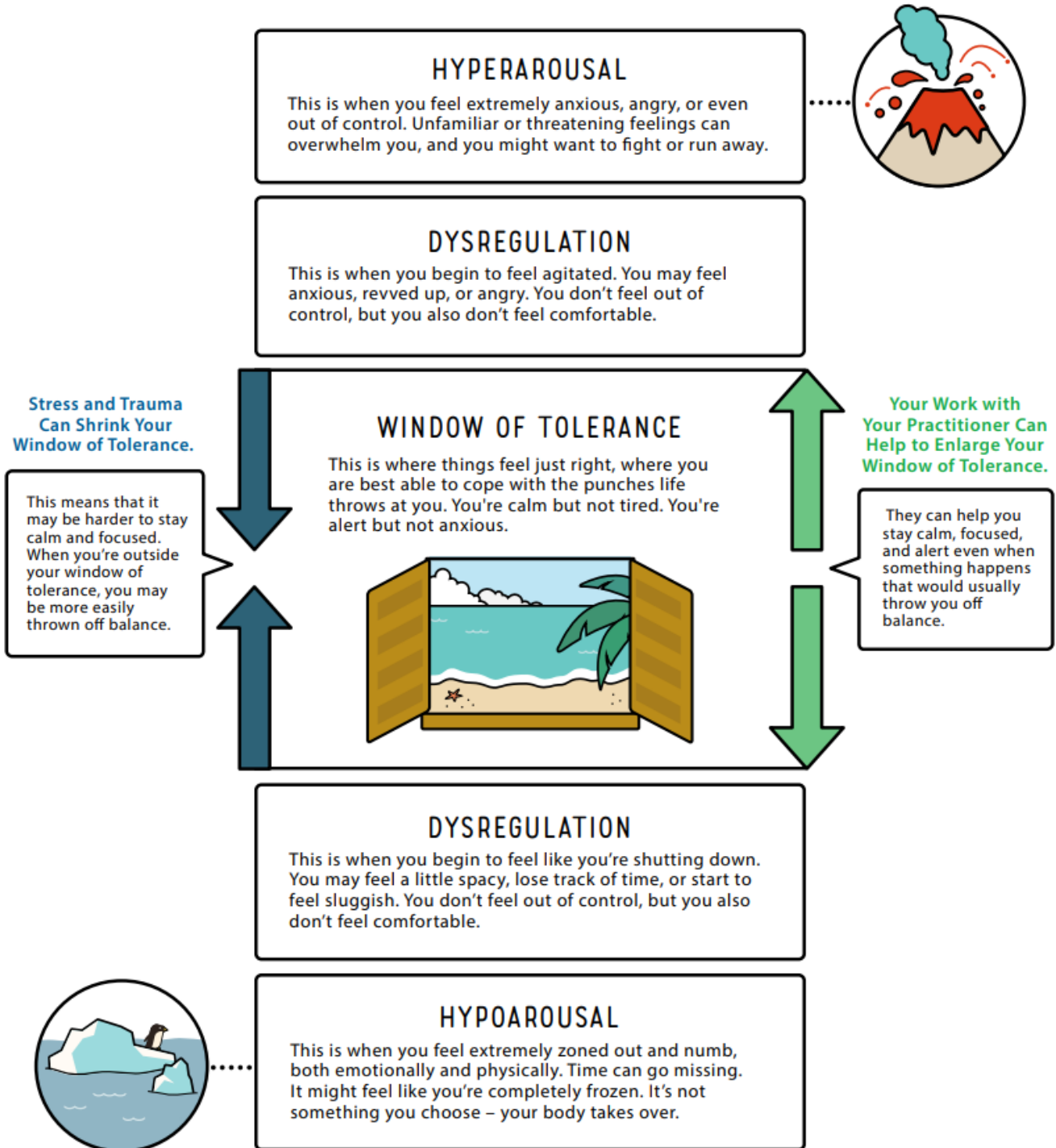


Threat system: Function is to pick up on threats and give bursts of feelings including anger, anxiety or disgust to protect us. Activates our survival response (fight or flight).

Drive system: Function is to give us positive feelings that motivate us to seek out what we want and need in order to prosper.

Soothing system: Enables us to soothe, find calm and contentment when we are feeling safe and do not need to protect ourselves or achieve anything.





- 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 do you use? Who do you go to for helping you to regulate?



Hyperarousal – how do I feel when I am feeling too hot? (*Anxious, angry, out of control, overwhelmed, sad, distressed*)



Skills I can use to calm me down

Window of Tolerance – how do I feel when I am just right? (*Calm, relaxed, happy, positive, able to cope, carefree, light*)



Skills I can use to keep me just right/safe

Skills I can use to wake me up when I am feeling too cold

Hypoarousal – how do I feel when I am too cold? (*Sad, low, hopeless, stuck, numb, zoned out, disconnected*)



Practical strategies

COAL: Curiosity, Openness, Acceptance and Love

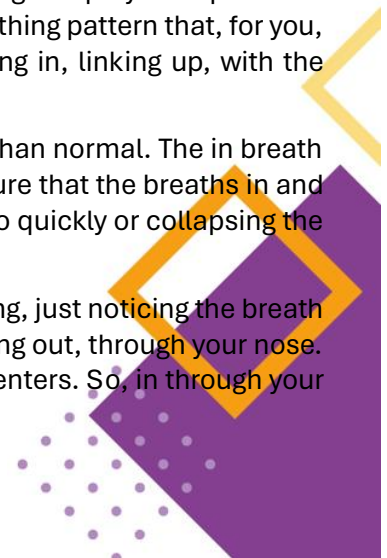
- Take a few deep breaths.
- Bring a soft gaze to your child. Look carefully and pay close attention to what you see without judging. Wait patiently for your child to initiate a connection. What expressions do they make? What movements do they make? What sounds or words do they use? Notice where they 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.

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.

Soothing Rhythm Breathing (Gilbert, 2010)

- Find a position that feels comfortable, place both feet flat on the floor about shoulder's width apart and rest your hands on your legs.
- Close your eyes, or look down at the floor if you prefer. Allow yourself to have a gentle facial expression may be a slight smile.
- Now just gently focus on your breathing. As you breathe try to allow the air to come down into your diaphragm (that's just at the bottom of your ribcage in the upside down 'V'). Feel your diaphragm, the area underneath your ribs, move as you breathe in and out. Just notice your breathing and play an experiment with your breathing. Breathe a little faster or a little slower until you find a breathing pattern that, for you, seems to be your own soothing, comforting rhythm. It is like you are checking in, linking up, with the rhythm within your body that is soothing and calming to you.
- What you will usually find is that your breathing is slightly slower and deeper than normal. The in breath is about 3 seconds ... hold ... and then take 3 seconds for the out-breath. Ensure that the breaths in and out are smooth and even. So, for example, notice if you're breathing in a bit too quickly or collapsing the out breath.
- Now spend a little while – for as long as you wish - just focusing on our breathing, just noticing the breath coming down into the diaphragm, your diaphragm lifting and then the air moving out, through your nose. Sometimes it's useful to focus on the point just inside the nose where the air enters. So, in through your



mouth and out from your nose, in through your mouth and out through your nose..... Just focus on that for a while.....

- Now turn your attention to your body. Sensing the weight of your body resting on the chair and the floor underneath you.... Allowing yourself to feel held and supported.....coming to rest...in the present moment....
- Remember that it is perfectly ok for your mind to wander. Simply notice it happening with curiosity about where your mind has gone and then gently guide your attention back to an awareness of your body as best as you can. Now just sense the flow of air coming in and out of your nostrils....just gently observing....no need to change anything.....just allowing things to be as they are.
- If you find focusing on your breathing a bit difficult (and some people do) then allow your attention to rest on an object. Find something you might like to hold such as a smooth stone or a soft ball – something that gives you the feeling of gentleness and calmness. Now as you just focus on your breathing also focus on your object that you're holding noticing how it feels in your hand resting your gaze on your object as best as you can.... staying with the sensations of holding it in your hand.
- When you feel ready, slowly open your eyes and bring yourself back to the present moment. Sometimes it helps if you just have a gentle stretch and a deep breath to prepare you to carry on with your day.

Creating a Safe Place (Gilbert, 2010)

- Engage in your soothing rhythm breathing and when you're ready try to create a place in your mind – a place that could give you the feeling of safeness and calmness.
- Imagine looking around you, what can you see? It might be a beautiful wood where the leaves of the trees dance gently in the breeze. Powerful shafts of light caress the ground with brightness. Or it may be a beautiful beach with a crystal blue sea stretching out to the horizon where it meets the ice blue sky. Or relaxing next to a log fire.
- Now focus on what you can feel, like the sensation of the sun on your face or a breeze caressing your hair. Or can you feel soft, white fine sand underfoot, which is silky to the touch.
- Next think about what you can hear. Can you hear the rustle of the leaves on the trees, or birds, or crackling fire or the gentle hushing of the waves on the sand
- Now think about whether you can smell anything such as the salty smell of the sea or the smell of wood smoke or a sweetness of the air.
- When you bring your safe place to mind allow your body to relax. Think about your facial expression; allow it to have a soft smile of pleasure at being there.
- Imagine that, *the place itself takes joy in you being here*. Allow yourself *to feel* how your safe place has pleasure in you being here. Explore your feelings when you imagine this place is happy with you being there. Even if it is just a fleeting sense of where the image might be, try to create an emotional connection to this place.

Compassionate Colour(s) (Gilbert, 2010)

- Engage in your soothing rhythm breathing and, when you're ready, imagine a colour that you associate with compassion, or a colour that conveys some sense of warmth and kindness. It might only be a fleeting sense of colour but when you are ready, imagine your compassionate colour surrounding you.
- Then, imagine this entering through your heart area and slowly through your body. Or you might prefer to think of colour like a mist or light that just flows though you. As this happens try to focus on this colour as having wisdom, strength and warmth, with a key quality of total kindness. Create a facial expression of kindness on your own face as you do this exercise.
- Now, as you imagine the colour flowing through you focus on the feeling that the sole purpose of this colour is to help you, to strengthen you and support you.



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.

Another way parents can create a mindful pause is by using the **STOP** method:

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

Regulating resets



MINDFUL MOVEMENT:

Just 10 minutes a day of moving your body in a mindful way e.g. walk, yoga, work out, wander in the garden



PLAYFULNESS:

Find moments to play with your child or pet as this activates our social engagement system and brings us back up to ventral



DANCING AND SINGING:

Create a playlist of uplifting music that brings you joy – play this and sing along or dance when you notice your body shutting down as this will bring you back up to ventral



BREATHE:

Anchor your awareness to your breath if you notice your nervous system reacting and activating



SAFE SMELLS:

Explore different essential oils to pick ones that bring you calm, wear this on lava stone jewellery, an essential oil inhaler or put it in an essential oil diffuser




Finding our glimmers

- Glimmers and glows are the opposite of our triggers.
- You can re-shape your nervous system by intentionally seeking out glimmers.
- *'A glimmer could be seeing a friendly face, hearing a soothing sound, or noticing something...that makes you smile'* (Dana, 2022)
- When you find a glimmer, take a moment to really notice how it shows up in your body
- Take a breath and reflect on your glimmer cues (the things that let you know its happening)
- 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. You could do this with you family, possible create glimmer posters to reflect on the day and log the different glimmers you have noticed, spend time together thinking about the glimmers from the day




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



Compassionate kitbags (Lucre, 2020)

Make one of these for you and your child to support you at times of increased stress and distress. Think of things that remind you to be compassionate to yourself.



Smells

Essential oils (both calming and uplifting) in an inhaler, diffuser or lava stone jewellery
Hand lotion
Candles/incense



Imagery

Photographs and pictures representing safe places and joyful moments
Favourite quotes printed



Music

Uplifting playlist for when you feel your body shutting down
Calming playlist for when you need to calm overwhelming signals in your body



Touch

Soothing items (e.g. weighted blanket, microwavable heat bag)
Objects that have personal meaning (e.g. trinkets bought for you)
Objects that are calming to hold (e.g. stones/crystals)



Taste

Strong flavours (e.g. sour sweets, mints)
Warm drinks (e.g. herbal tea)
Eating something slowly and mindfully
Nostalgic tastes



Other

Compassionate letter writing/postcards/ take what you need tokens
Guided meditations/mindfulness/soothing scripts/regulating exercises
Colouring in

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



Other resources



Apps	<p>Calm Headspace Headspace for teens The Self Compassion App Wysa: Mental Health Support</p>
Websites	<p>Parents mental health and support: https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/explore-mental-health/a-z-topics/parenting-and-mental-health#:~:text=Remember%2C%20all%20parents%20have%20hard,shame%20in%20needin%20extra%20support.&text=This%20could%20mean%20eating%20well,GP%20about%20di%20fferent%20treatment%20options.&text=Find%20people%20you%20can%20rely%20on%20fo%20r%20practical%20and%20emotional%20support https://chosen.care/resources/ Regulating children: https://drarielleschwartz.com/children-emotional-regulation-polyvagal-theory-dr-arielle-schwartz/ https://www.thetherapistparent.com/ Mindfulness for children: https://www.mindful.org/mindfulness-for-kids/ https://www.bbcchildreninneed.co.uk/schools/primary-school/mindfulness-hub/</p>
Documents	<p>Regulate, relate, reason – https://beaconhouse.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/The-Three-Rs.pdf Polyvagal theory – https://www.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/2380501/Polyvagal-ladder.pdf Self-compassion for parents – https://self-compassion.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Self-Compassion-for-Parents-Greater-Good.pdf</p>
Videos	<p>Window of tolerance – https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZVEDueyZ2C4 Co-regulation – https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RRMBHQ-Bmk0 Empathy not sympathy – https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Ewgu369Jw&vl=en-GB 1 minute mindfulness – https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IReEu2kl6ol Soothing rhythm breathing technique – https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zS4pA17JMUw Blaming – https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RZWf2_2L2v8</p>

