

RECLAIMING OUR STUDENTS

**CHAPTER 8
THE CHILD WHO IS ANXIOUS**

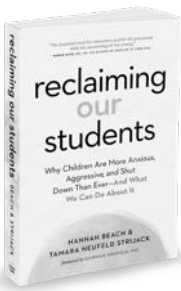
**ON-LINE
BOOK STUDY**

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 **CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE
FOR BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT**

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ABOUT US PROJECTS CORONAVIRUS RESOURCES ARTICLES LIBRARY EVENTS

THE CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT (CEBM)

Welcome to our site! As a support to the 10 English School Boards of Quebec, the CEBM aims to enable boards and their staff to find developmentally friendly and trauma informed interventions that are effective in helping students who are struggling with behavioural challenges in the school setting.

Website: <https://www.cebm.ca>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Centre-of-Excellence-for-Behaviour-Management-258831034630381/>

YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCaV0_4xlo7282eYxcFdp-ww?view_as=subscriber

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KEY INSIGHTS

- We all experience alarm on some level. Not only is it normal, but it is telling us something.
- Alarm is a natural and necessary emotion, which protects us from danger.
- Some individuals are more at-risk for developing anxiety problems.
- In a classroom, anxious students aren't necessarily disruptive or harmful to others.
- Certain behaviors don't appear to be anxiety-related, but in fact they are (e.g. inattentiveness, being silly, lashing out).
- We cannot address anxiety by focusing on the symptoms directly.

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**WHAT IS AT THE
ROOT OF ANXIETY?**

SYMPTOM



CAUSE

anxiety



ALARM

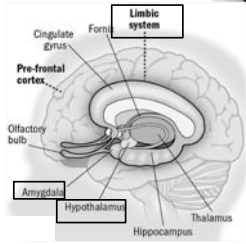
*Primal **emotion**
(instinct-based)*

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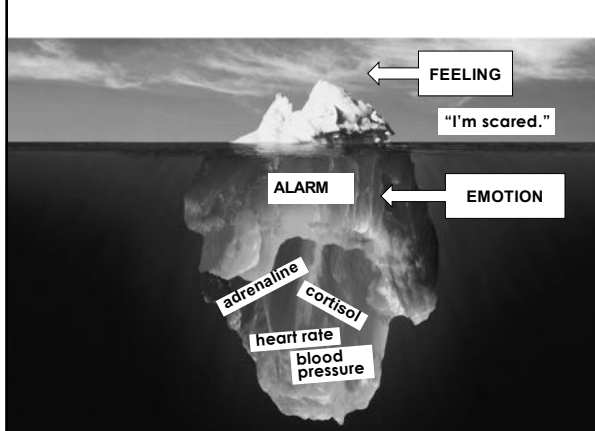
**WHERE DOES
ANXIETY
COME FROM?**

BRAIN'S ALARM SYSTEM:

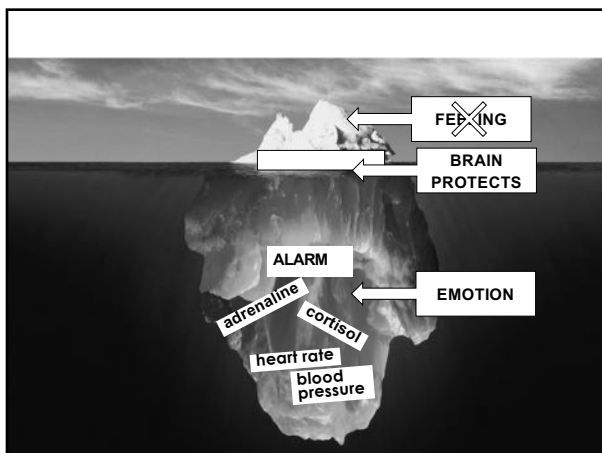
- Mediated by the **LIMBIC SYSTEM**
- **Amygdala** registers the threat (like a smoke detector)
- **Hypothalamus** orchestrates the response (it links the nervous system to the endocrine system via the pituitary gland)
- Which triggers the **SYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM**



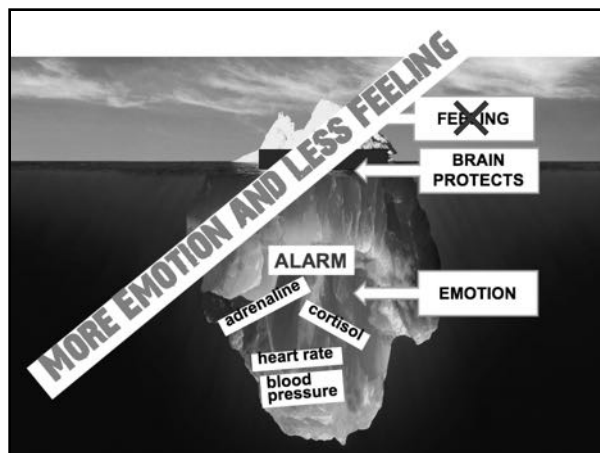
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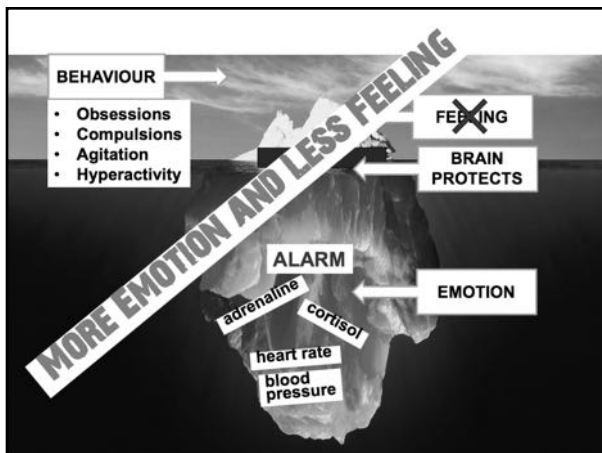
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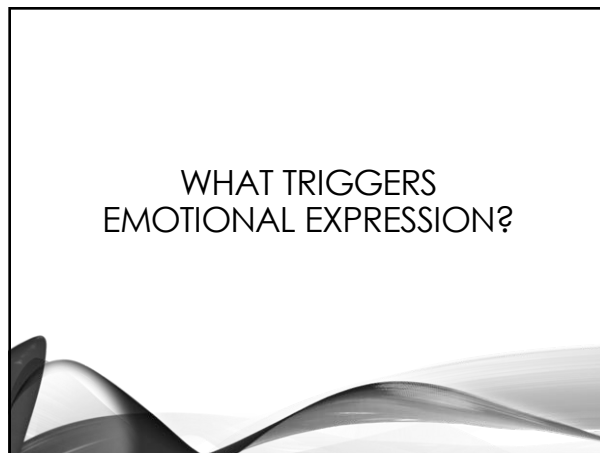
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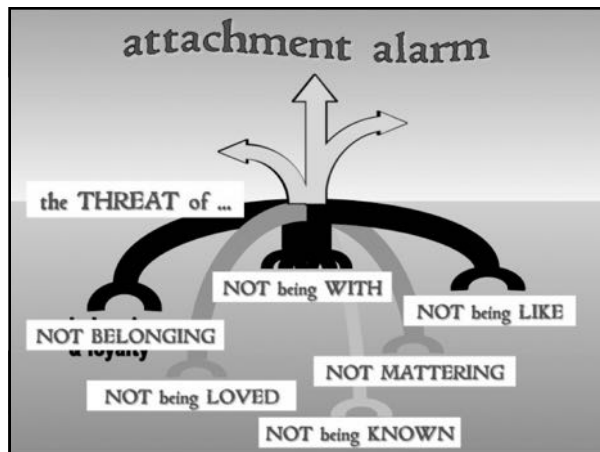
ATTACHMENT ALARM

ATTACHMENT = SURVIVAL

Attachment is people's most preeminent need, but also their biggest threat.

The impact of separation is more studied in research than any other single phenomenon (e.g. isolation research across species, human loneliness research, analysis of different population groups suffering loss and lack, longitudinal studies, etc.)

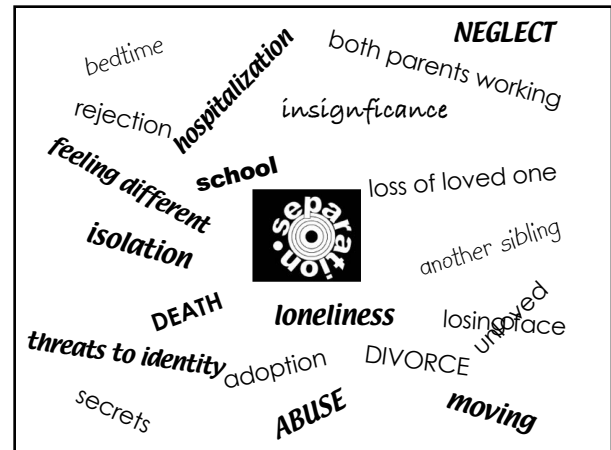
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ATTACHMENT THREAT	ALARMING FEELING
Not being with	I'm alone, nobody is paying attention to be, no one wants to be with me, I feel rejected, etc.
Not being like	I'm different, I have nothing in common, I'm not normal, I feel prejudice against me, etc.
Not belonging	I don't feel included, Nobody is taking my side, no one has my back, people are against me, etc.
Not mattering	I don't feel noticed or listened to, I don't feel useful or important, people don't respect me, I don't feel esteemed or admired, my opinion doesn't count, my role doesn't matter, etc.
Not being loved	I don't feel taken care of, I don't feel warmth from anyone, I feel unlovable, etc.
Not being known	I don't feel truly seen or heard, I don't feel understood, I cannot share my secrets, I cannot truly be myself, etc.

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COVID-19

As students head back to school during this turbulent time, we need to expect that they will be arriving to us with their emotions stirred up.

- ✓ **Alarm** – *will I be safe?*
- ✓ **Frustration** – *why can't I do it?*
- ✓ **Worry** – *how will I know what to do?*
- ✓ **Excitement** – *I am looking forward to seeing my friends and teachers*
- ✓ **Disappointment** – *there will be no graduation...*
- ✓ **Sadness** – *will things ever be the same?*

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HELPING STUDENTS COPE IN SCHOOL

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“Beneath every behavior is a feeling. And beneath every feeling is a need. And when we meet that need rather than focus on the behavior, we begin to deal with the cause not the symptom.”

— Ashleigh Warner
Psychologist

edutopia

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Our ROLE as the adult

teacher
Educator
Principal
COACH
Technician
Attendant
counsellor

Adjusting our VIEW

- Acknowledging emotions happen to us as opposed to under our control
- Understanding maturation as key to managing emotions

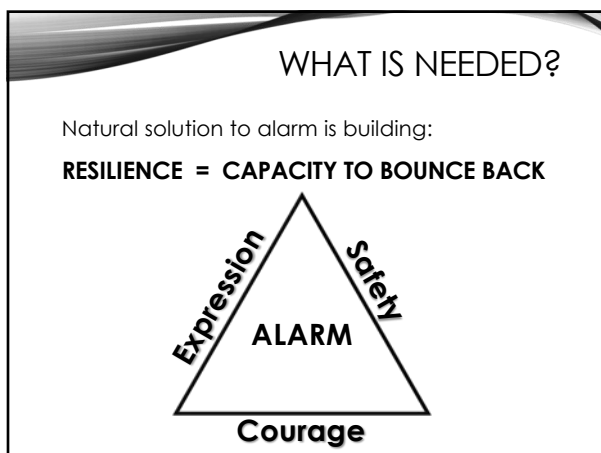
Adjusting our STANCE

- Not alarming them with our own alarm, frustration or disapproval
- Normalizing the experience of alarm and its energy to move us

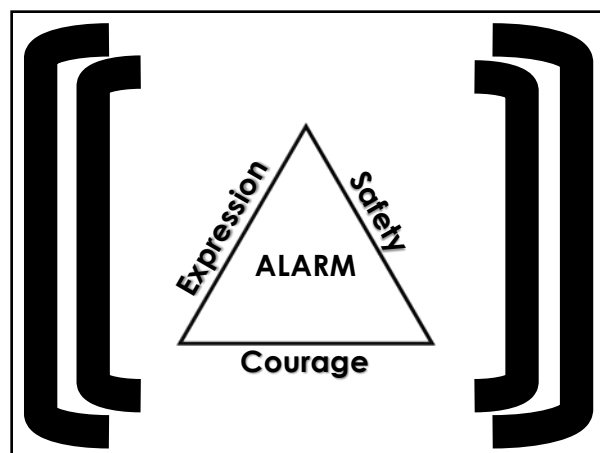
Making ROOM for

- Emotions that come up
- Type of expression and release
- ...even for the uncomfortable stuff

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Children need an adult leading and guiding them. Children were not meant to take care of themselves.

Hannah Beach & Tamara Strjack
Reclaiming our students

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ATTACHMENT AND ALARM

- Health and emotional growth in children require adult collaboration = **co-regulation**
- Emotional experiences in a caring/supportive relational context allow children to develop their resilience (sense of security and confidence)

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CARING & TRUSTING ADULT

Adult's role:

- ✓project calm and confidence
- ✓IF NECESSARY, FAKE IT UNTIL YOU CAN MAKE IT!
- ✓reassure and take the lead

seeking	providing
dependent instincts	alpha instincts
to get one's bearings	to orient and inform
to serve and obey	to protect & defend
to seek assistance	to guide and direct
to look up to	to look out for
to belong	to possess
to follow	to lead
to wait for orders	to give the orders
to look for guidance	to transmit one's values
to comply and conform	to command and prescribe

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DON'T overwork the alarm system

REFRAIN

- ... from raising one's voice
- ... from warnings, threats and ultimatums
- ... from upping the ante

COMPENSATE

- ... by using simple rules, procedures and routines
- ... by keeping the child out of harm's way

BE THE TRAFFIC DIRECTOR

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PLAY AND ALARM

PLAY AS A NEURAL EXERCISE

Dr. Porges describes play as a “neural exercise” healing behavioral and emotional dysregulation.

It's a neural exercise in that it flexes the “muscle” of emotional regulation through reciprocal interactions under conditions of safety with others.

Stephen Porges, The Polyvagal Theory, 2011

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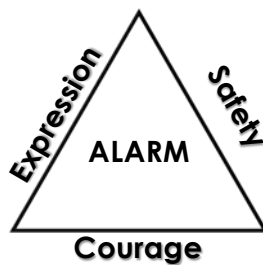
WHAT PLAY OFFERS EMOTION



- a work-free space for development to take place
- protection for feelings
- expression without repercussion

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WHAT IS NEEDED?



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SENSE OF SAFETY

How can we help a student feel SAFE enough when faced with stressful and wounding situations?

- Through the presence of a **warm and trusting adult**, which allows the child to experience some **emotional rest**
- Through the experience of **well-being** in a **safe place**
- Through the **experience of safety** when pretending/imagining to face something stressful or dangerous (**emotions at play**)

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SAFETY IS IN THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

Not whether we (adults) think that the child is in a safe place or whether we believe the child should be feeling safe, but rather it's the child's own subjective experience and interpretation.

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STUDENT GREETING




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CHECK-IN

Purpose:

- To connect with the student
- To demonstrate genuine interest in their well-being
- To inquire about their morning and how they're feeling
- To provide encouragement and support for the day in manageable pieces
- To remind the student of their progress and resources/strategies



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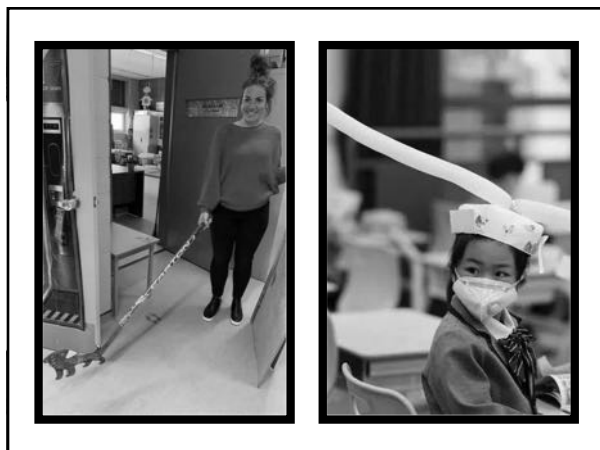


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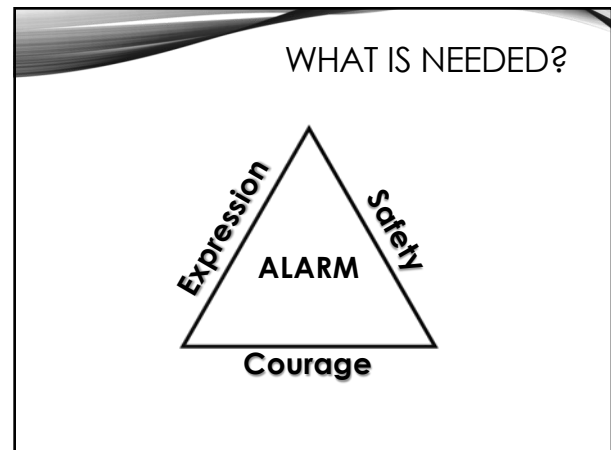
COVID-19

- Sense of safety has much less to do with their surroundings and more to do with their connection to adults.
- A child doesn't feel lost when they can count on their adults to show up for them and to lead.
- Finding ways to increase their sense of safety:
 - ✓ Being playful and address safety issues, such as in a drill
 - ✓ What is the SAME vs. DIFFERENT game
 - ✓ Physical distancing games

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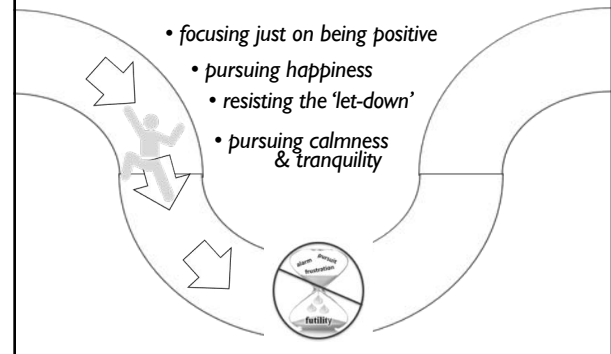
EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION

How can we provide opportunities for emotional expression when a student is up against that which one cannot change?

- Through adult **warmth and comfort**
- Through inviting children to **express and name** their feelings
- Through emotional expression one-step-removed (**in the play mode**): drawing, drama, dance, signing, music, etc.

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THE PROBLEM WITH "RIGHT" THINKING



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To come alongside a person's feelings is to...

- accept their existence regardless of how irrational and unreasonable they may seem;
- normalize the feelings rather than treat their existence as a problem;
- Make room for the feelings rather than try to get rid of them.

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ACCOMPANYING WITH EMPATHY

- Typical examples that dismiss and invalidate:
 - ✓ Don't be silly
 - ✓ There's nothing to be scared of
 - ✓ Why are you afraid of that?
 - ✓ You see, everything turned out fine, all that worrying for nothing
- Empathic acknowledgements:
 - ✓ Wow, that was really scary
 - ✓ You look a little frightened, would you like to hold my hand?
 - ✓ Everyone gets scared at times, even grown-ups. Yes, even me!
 - ✓ Even though everything worked out, I know you were really worried

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PSEUDO-RESILIENCE



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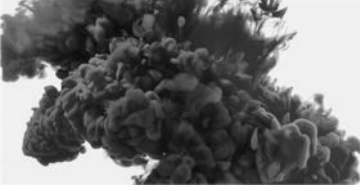
Emotional Playgrounds

- laughter and humour
- drawing and painting
- drama and theatre
- dance and movement
- singing and music
- irony and wordplay
- stories and writing
- teasing and silliness

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COVID-19

Finding healthy ways to pre-emptively channel this emotional energy for our students, they are going to cope better – and we are going to cope better.



<https://hannahbeach.ca/supporting-our-students/>

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HELP FIND WAYS TO EXPRESS OR RELEASE



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EXPRESSION AND RELEASE FOR AN OLDER CHILD



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WAYS TO CHANNEL AND REDUCE ALARM


- Sensory materials
- Movement (yoga, poses, dance)
- Music (rhythm, drumming)
- Scribbling, doodling, art
- Building and creating
- Play – drama – dress-up
- Cocoon area
- Alternate seating and work stations

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WHAT IS NEEDED?



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COURAGE

How can we help a student feel STRONG & CONFIDENT enough in the face of adversity and discomfort?

- Through **normalizing** the alarm and conveying to the student your **belief in their capacity**
- Through helping the student **discover their courage**
- Through experiencing some sense of control **in the play mode** (e.g. role playing)

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THE TREASURE AND THE DRAGON



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DESIRE	Cultivating Courage	ALARM
to engage in an activity		to be away from home
to take part in some fun		to be laughed at
to ask one's question		to appear stupid
to stand up for a friend		to lose popularity
to wear what one prefers		to be seen as different
to share one's story		to not be interesting
to express one's opinion		to meet disapproval
to get attached & involved		to have to let go
to pursue a passion		to not measure up
to be oneself		to be alone

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Did you Know
PLAY HELPS FEARS?

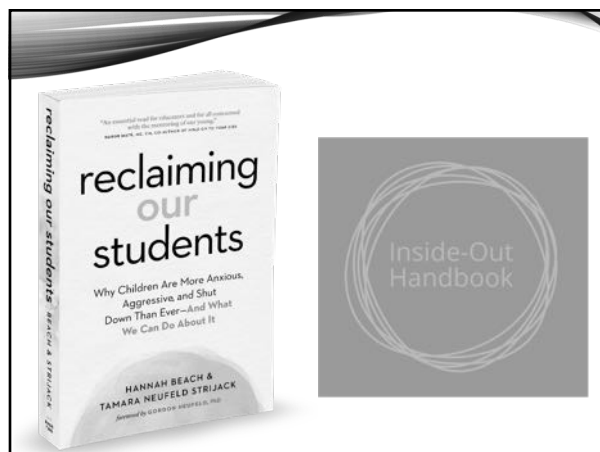
COVID-19

Cultivating COURAGE through play:

- dress-up, masks
- risk-taking play
- super-hero play
- taming the monster play

It reduces the levels of alarm and it increases the sense of strength.

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Eva de Gosztanyi, Martine Demers, Catherine Korah
Centre of Excellence for Behaviour Management

<https://www.cebmb.ca>

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News & Updates

New event:
BOOK STUDY - Reclaiming our students

Featured Resource

LEAD - PLAY - LEARN TOGETHER:
Supporting students in the time of pandemic
by Eva de Gosztanyi

A website that helps schools to use a Developmental Approach.

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