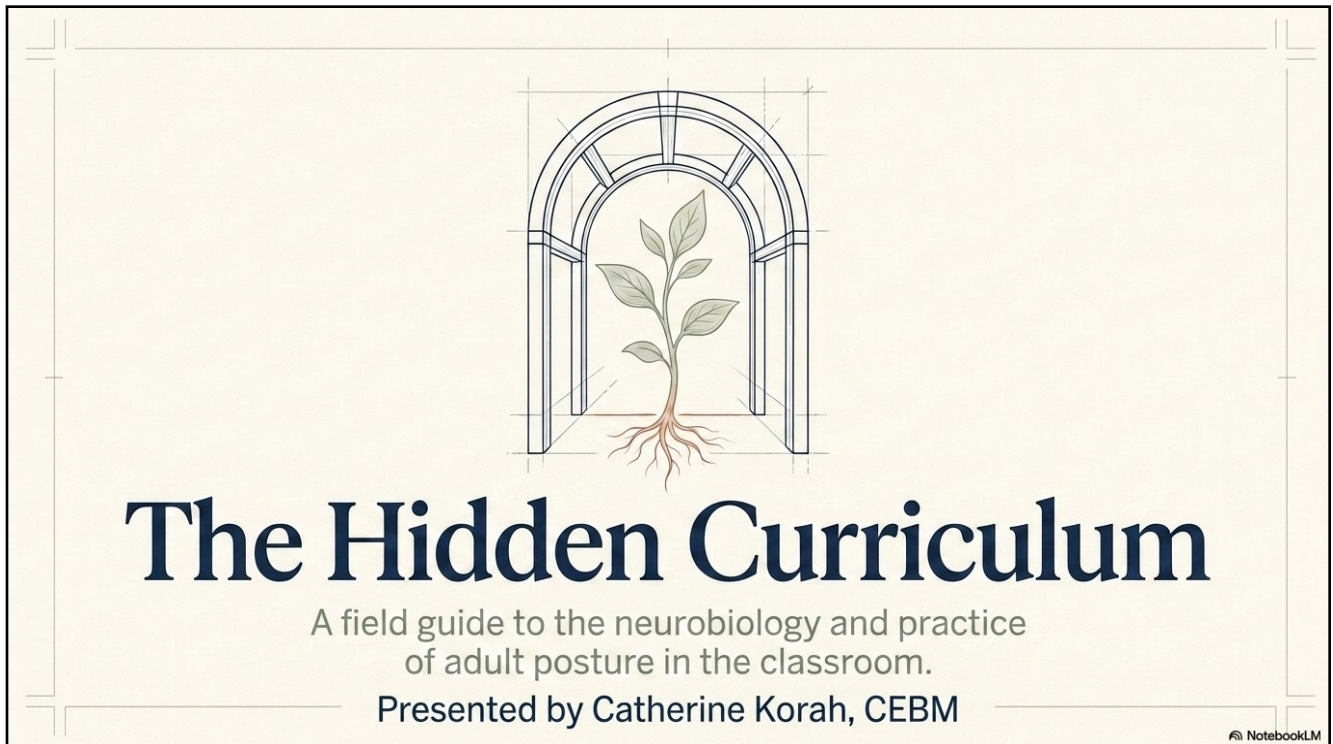
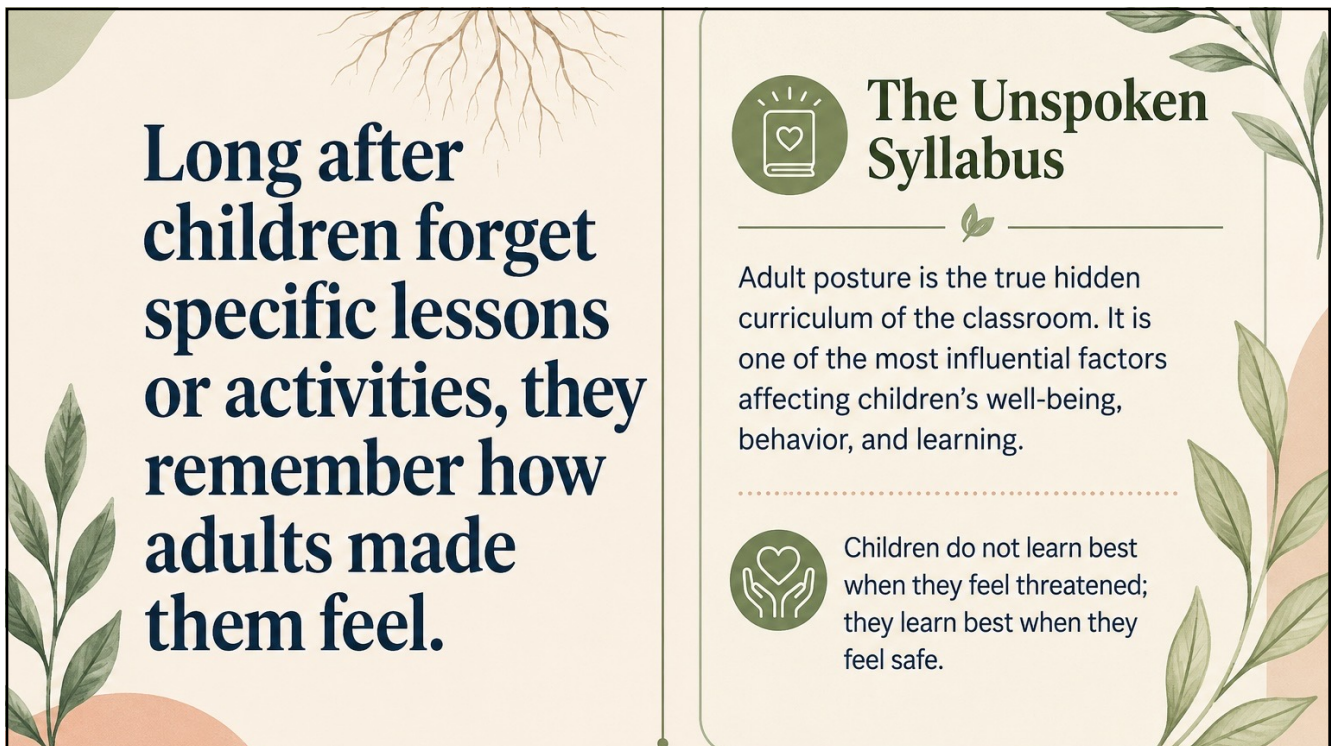




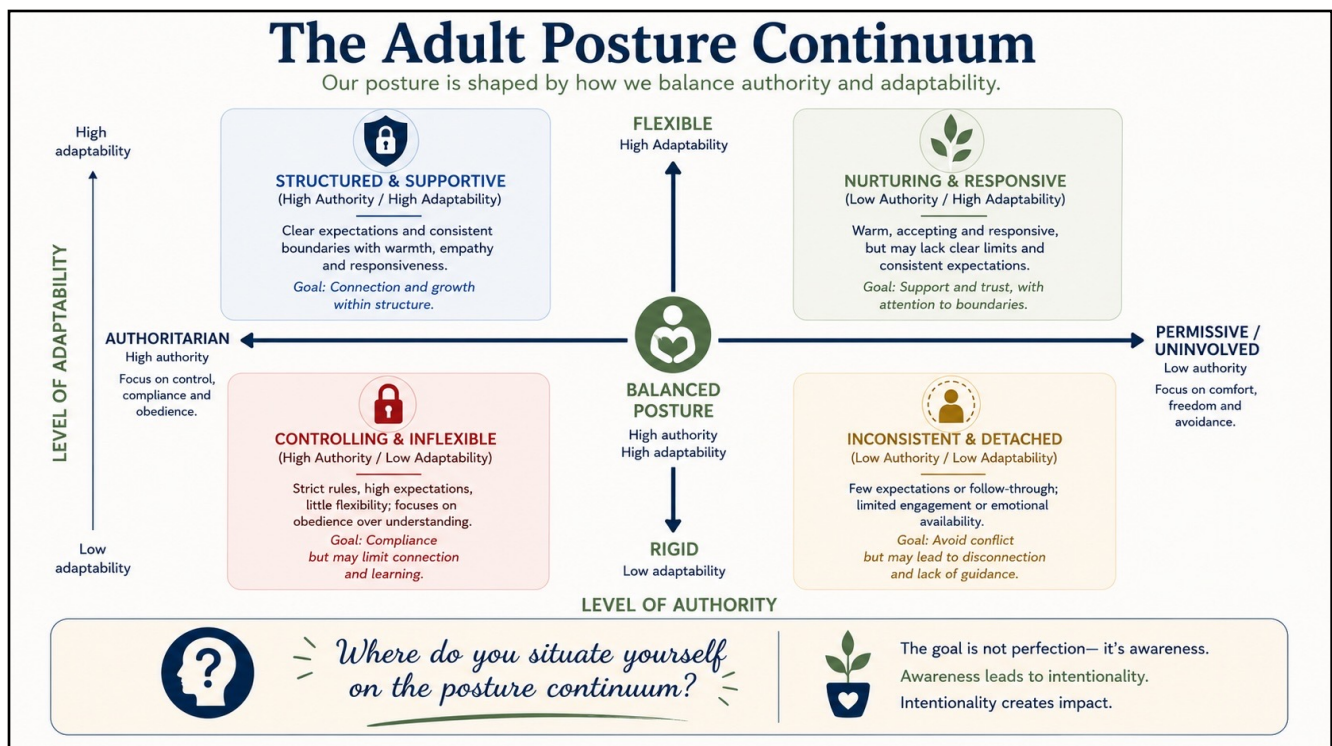
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4

THE POSTURE AUDIT

- ☐ Do children experience me as safe and approachable?
- ☐ How do I respond when children are distressed?
- ☐ Am I leading with connection before correction?
- ☐ Do my words communicate dignity and respect?
- ☐ Am I reacting to behavior, or understanding what is driving it?
- ☐ What emotional climate am I creating in my classroom?

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5

THE ARCHITECTURE OF POSTURE: PARADIGM SHIFT

Shifting the Posture: Control vs. Connection

	 CONTROL PARADIGM <i>Traditional Control</i>	 CURIOSITY PARADIGM <i>Relational Connection</i>
 THE CORE QUESTION	How do I make this child behave?	How do I help this child succeed?
 THE FOCUS	Reacting to the visible disruption (The tip of the iceberg).	Uncovering the unmet need driving the action.
 PRIMARY GOAL	Gaining compliance, stopping disruptions, enforcing rules	Understanding the child and addressing the root need
 THE ADULT'S ROLE	Enforcer of rules and authority	Guide and supporter
 CHILD'S EXPERIENCE	Feels managed, judged, or threatened.	Feels understood, connected, and safe to cooperate.
 THE LIKELY OUTCOME	Power struggles, resistance, or shame	Maintained expectations combined with the support needed to meet them




When we shift our posture, we shift outcomes.
 From controlling behavior to connecting with the child.
 From managing moments to building trust that lasts.



6



7

The Power of Adult Posture

Benefits of a Strong and Confident Adult Posture in the Classroom

A calm, confident adult is one of the most powerful influences on a child's emotional regulation, behaviour, and learning.

A strong adult posture is not about being authoritarian. It is about being calm, emotionally regulated, relationally connected, and confidently in charge.

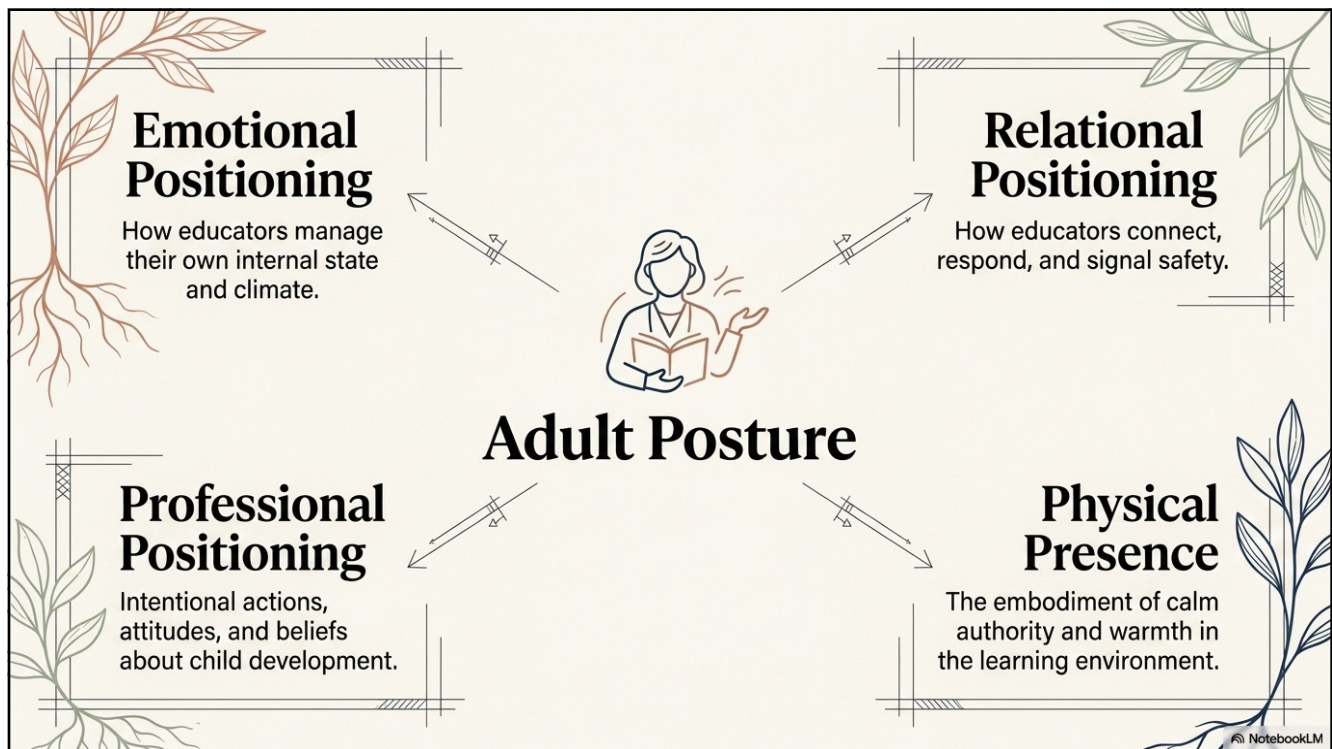
1 Creates Emotional Safety A calm, predictable adult communicates: "You are safe." "I can handle this." "You don't have to manage my emotions." Benefits • Reduced anxiety • Greater sense of security • Increased engagement • Improved regulation	2 Supports Co-Regulation Students borrow regulation from regulated adults before they can regulate themselves. Benefits • Faster de-escalation • Fewer power struggles • Reduced intensity • Long-term self-regulation	3 Strengthens Relationships A confident, caring adult communicates: "I'm here." "I can help." "I won't abandon you." Benefits • Stronger relationships • Greater cooperation • Increased trust • Higher engagement	4 Reduces Challenging Behaviour Consistent emotional leadership reduces the need for students to test limits. Benefits • Fewer behavioural incidents • Reduced conflict • Less oppositional behaviour • Greater classroom stability	5 Builds Student Confidence Confident adults provide support without rescuing or taking over. Benefits • Increased resilience • Greater persistence • Improved problem-solving • Higher self-efficacy	6 Improves Learning The brain learns best when it is regulated and feels safe. Benefits • Increased attention • Better executive functioning • Improved performance • Greater participation	7 Models Emotional Regulation Students learn by watching how adults respond to stress, mistakes, and conflict. Benefits • Increased emotional intelligence • Improved conflict resolution • Better peer relationships • Stronger SEL skills	8 Creates Consistency & Predictability Predictable adults help students feel secure and conserve mental energy for learning. Benefits • Reduced anxiety • Increased independence • Improved transitions • Greater classroom responsibility	10 Protects Adult Well-Being Strong posture helps educators stay grounded, set boundaries, and respond rather than react. Benefits • Less burnout • Reduced compassion fatigue • Greater job satisfaction • Increased professional confidence	KEY TAKEAWAY A strong adult posture is not about being the loudest, strictest, or most controlling person in the room. It is about becoming the calmest, safest, and most emotionally grounded presence.
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THE RIPPLE EFFECT OF ADULT POSTURE

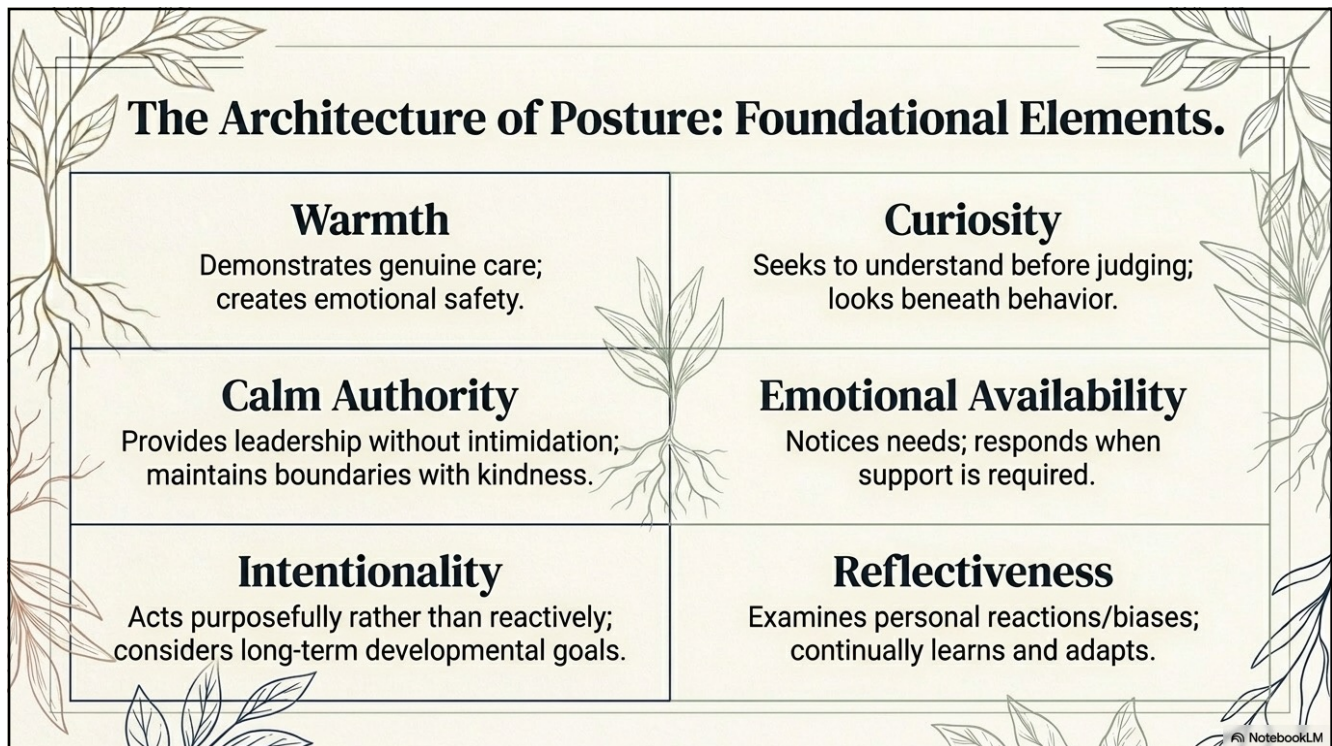
Emotional Climate Students feel safe, calm, and supported.	Relationships Trust, belonging, and cooperation increase.	Behaviour Fewer power struggles and more proactive problem solving.	Learning Greater engagement, attention, and academic success.	Self-Regulation Students gradually internalize regulation skills.	Culture Increased respect, empathy, and psychological safety.	Well-Being Reduced stress and greater resilience for educators.
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“When educators consistently embody this posture, they become a source of stability from which students can explore, learn, take risks, recover from mistakes, and develop the capacities needed for lifelong success.”

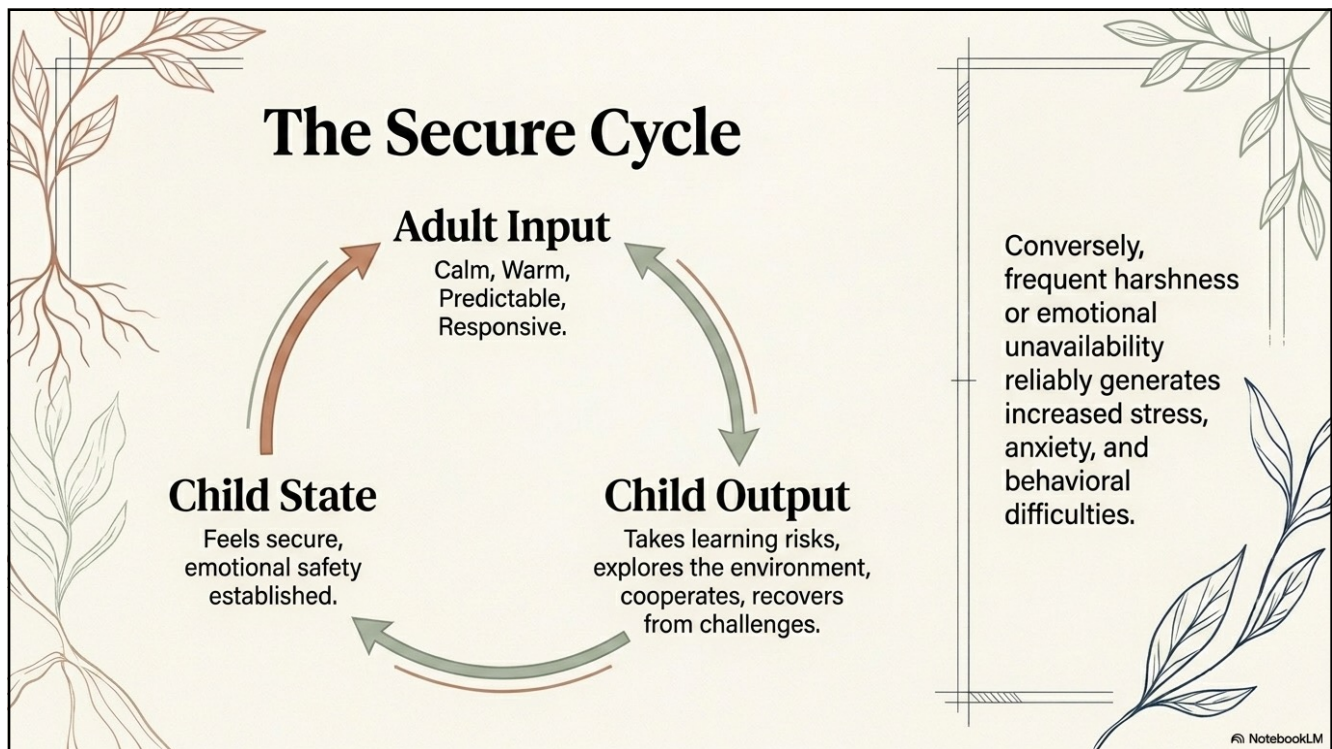
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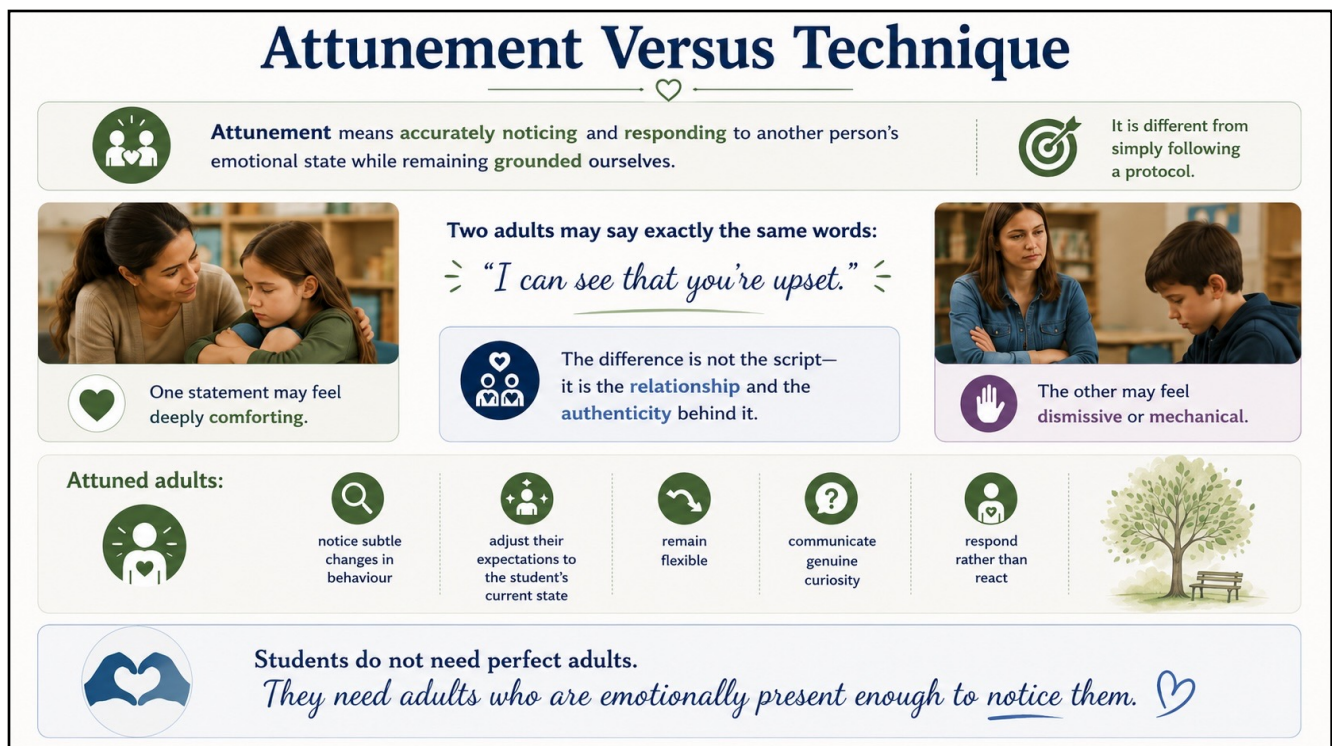
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12

Adult Authenticity



Students quickly recognize **authenticity**.



They do not expect adults to be **perfect**.



They expect adults to be **genuine**.



AUTHENTICITY MEANS:



acknowledging mistakes



apologizing when necessary



modelling emotional regulation



demonstrating humility



showing consistency between words and actions



When adults repair relational ruptures, they teach one of the most valuable lessons children can learn:

Relationships can experience difficulty and still remain safe.



This models **resilience** rather than **perfection**.



13

Relational Trust as a Protective Factor



Trust develops through thousands of **predictable interactions** rather than occasional grand gestures.



Students build trust when adults are:



emotionally consistent



respectful



dependable



fair



calm during conflict



available after mistakes

Relational trust creates psychological safety.



When trust is strong:

✓ students seek help earlier

✓ they tolerate challenge more effectively

✓ they recover more quickly from setbacks

✓ they accept feedback more readily

✓ they remain engaged despite difficulties



Trust functions as a **protective factor** that buffers stress and supports learning.



14



Relationship *as the* Foundation for Cooperation





Children are naturally more inclined to *cooperate* with adults with whom they feel *safe, connected, and valued*. When children experience adults as allies rather than adversaries, they are more likely to:

-  Accept guidance
-  Follow expectations
-  Repair mistakes
-  Seek help when needed
-  Take responsibility for their actions



This is because *relationship creates influence*.
The strongest source of adult influence is not authority alone but connection.



“ As developmental psychologist Gordon Neufeld often emphasizes, children are most receptive to guidance from adults to whom they feel attached.
Connection opens the door to cooperation. ”



15



Relationship creates influence and unlocks receptivity to guidance.



**“Friction vs. Flow”
Comparison Matrix**

	 Disconnected Adult Posture	 Connected Adult Posture
 Limits & Boundaries	 Experienced as criticism, control, or rejection. 	 Easily accepted limits; trusts the adult behind the boundary. 
 Mistakes	 Defensiveness and shame. 	 Willingness to learn from correction and repair mistakes. 
 Difficult Situations	 Resistance. 	 Cooperation and seeking help when needed. 

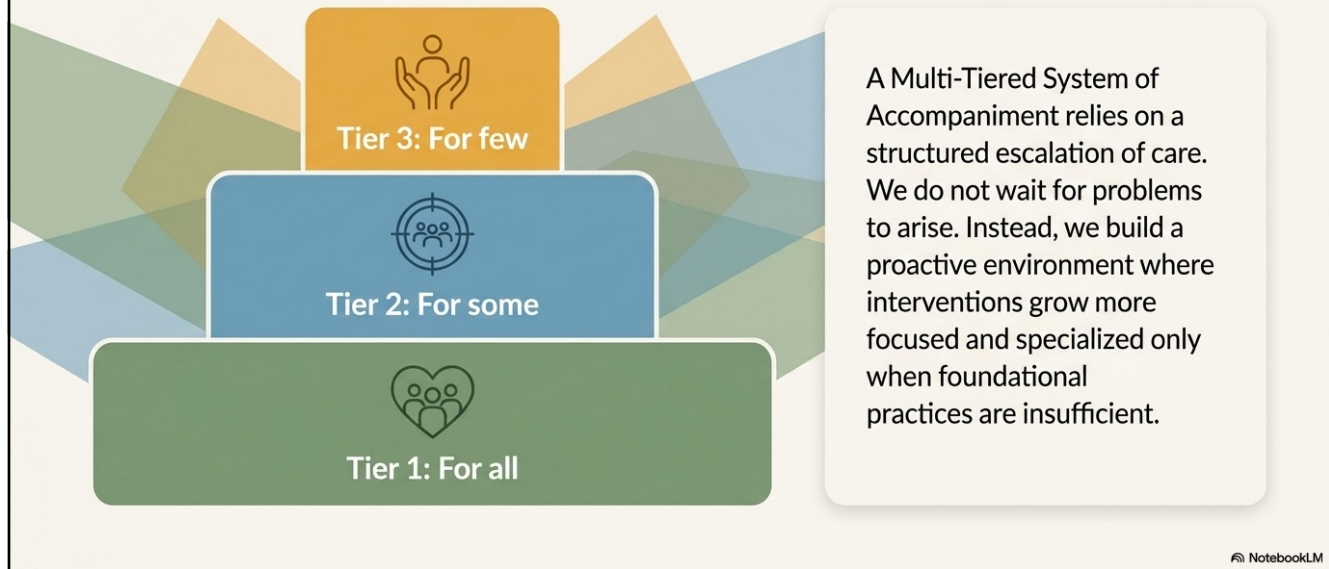


Children are more likely to follow the lead of adults they feel connected to than adults who simply hold authority over them.

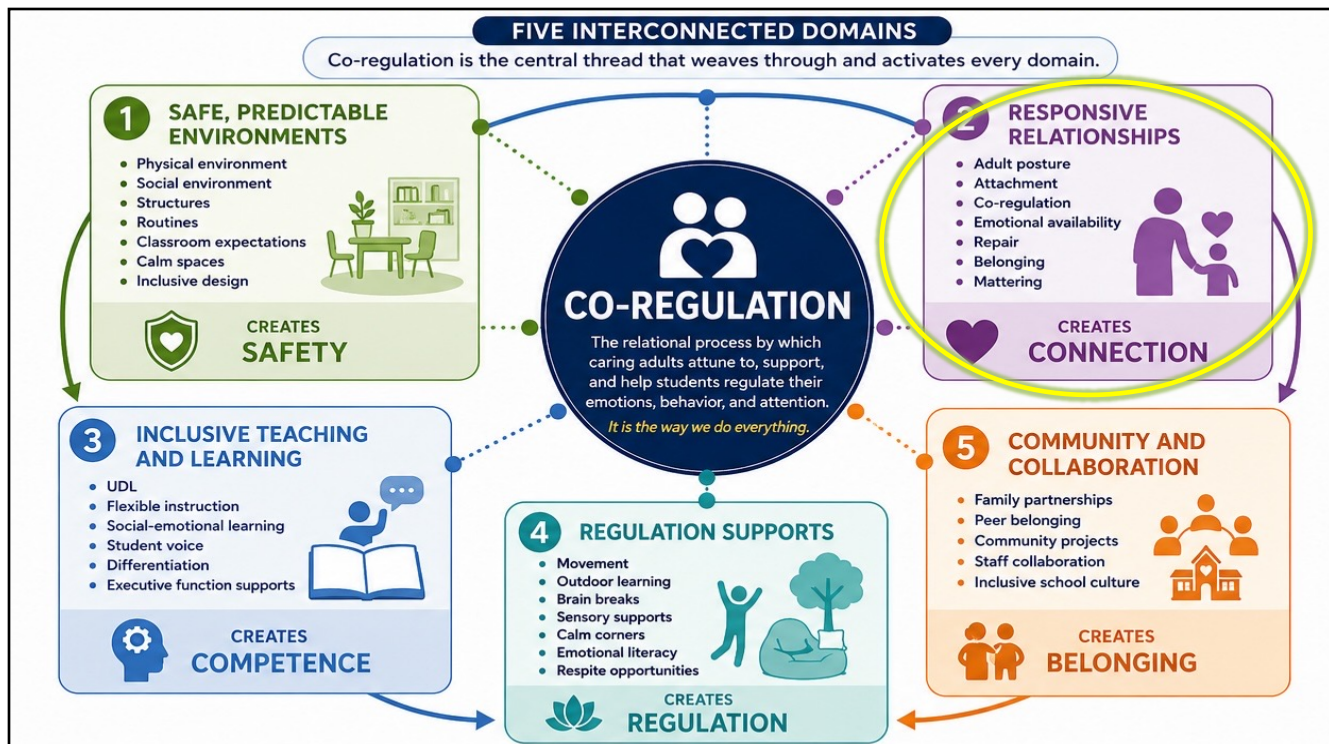


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Support scales with student needs

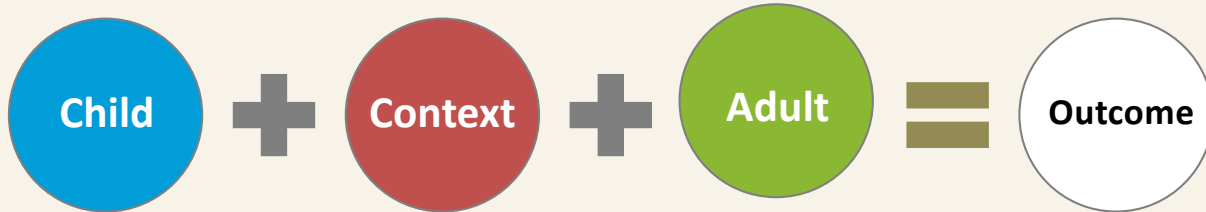


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Considering all the elements involved



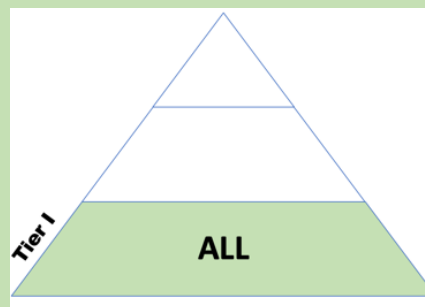
- Chronological age
- Brain maturation
- Neurodiversity/ Sensitivity
- Level of emotional and social development
- Family history (trauma)
- Stuck or guarded emotionally
- Etc.

- Physical impact of the space
- Sensory input
- Level of structure/ predictability
- Social impact (makeup of the group, dynamics with peers)
- Support measures in place
- Support from other staff

- Relationship with the child (engaged the child's attachment)
- **Adult posture**
- Level of stress
- Level of insight
- Capacity to be reflective
- Preventive vs. reactive
- Aim at co-regulation vs. behaviour management
- Type of response (posture, tone, etc.)

- Shift in child/adult dynamic
- Possibly an escalation or a de-escalation in the child's behaviour
- Outcome becomes problematic or is resolved
- Debrief/follow-up?

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TIER 1 UNIVERSAL Practices

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TIER 3
TIER 2
TIER 1

Examples of a *Strong Adult Posture* at Tier 1



We belong.
We matter.
We can.

Tier 1 universal practices

Proactive, preventative practices that create safe, predictable, and inclusive learning environments for all.

1 **Providing a caring leadership posture** (warm, confident, taking the lead, taking responsibility, setting clear limits, being consistent with expectations while remaining flexible, being calm and grounded before responding).

2 **Intentionally building relationships without befriending students** (they need that natural healthy hierarchy to feel safe and taken care of).

3 **Approaching students with authenticity, curiosity and interest**, rather than with judgment.

4 **Relying on the key elements to effect change:** structures, routines, etc. (these are preventive/proactive at Tier 1 and establish a predictable foundation).

5 **Conveying explicitly what is expected of them** (with the help of visuals if needed) and establishing coherent and concrete limits and boundaries (without getting upset if the student's push back).

6 **Speaking clearly**, giving information and instructions in a concise and clear manner (they may get lost in lengthy explanations).

7 **Managing the circumstances and the environment** rather than trying to directly control student behaviour (relying on **co-regulation** and **de-escalation strategies** if needed).

8 **Adjusting when things don't go as planned** (making it look like as if it was your plan all along) and ensuring to have a backup plan as an alternative solution.

9 **Honouring the student's personal space** and providing enough time for them to assimilate and complete the task at their own pace.

10 **Actively engaging the student** in communicating their needs and where they are at in their emotional regulation process.

11 **Being mindful** that the adult expectations may vary depending on the student's profile, maturity level and individual differences.

A strong adult posture is grounded in connection, consistency, and compassion.

It's not about perfect responses, but about a **purposeful presence**.

SAFETY
Create physical and emotional safety.

RELATIONSHIP
Build trusting relationships and a sense of belonging.

STRUCTURE
Use predictable routines and clear expectations.

REGULATION
Support co-regulation and self-regulation.

BELONGING
Foster inclusion, respect and connection for all.

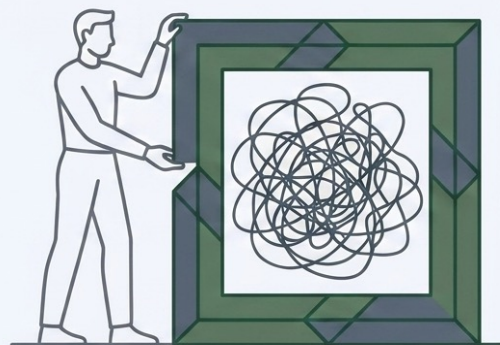
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The Core Insight of a Strong Posture

We cannot directly control student behaviour. We manage the circumstances and the environment, relying on co-regulation and de-escalation.



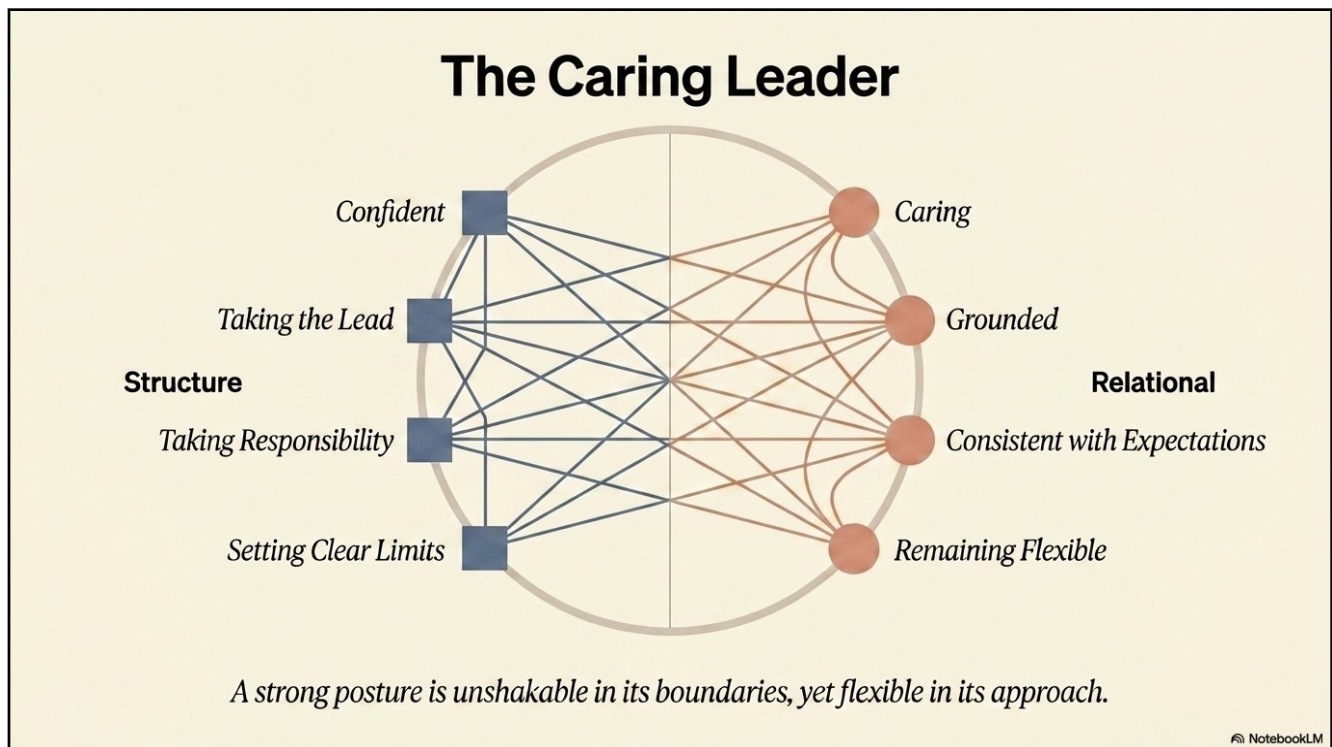
Controlling the Uncontrollable



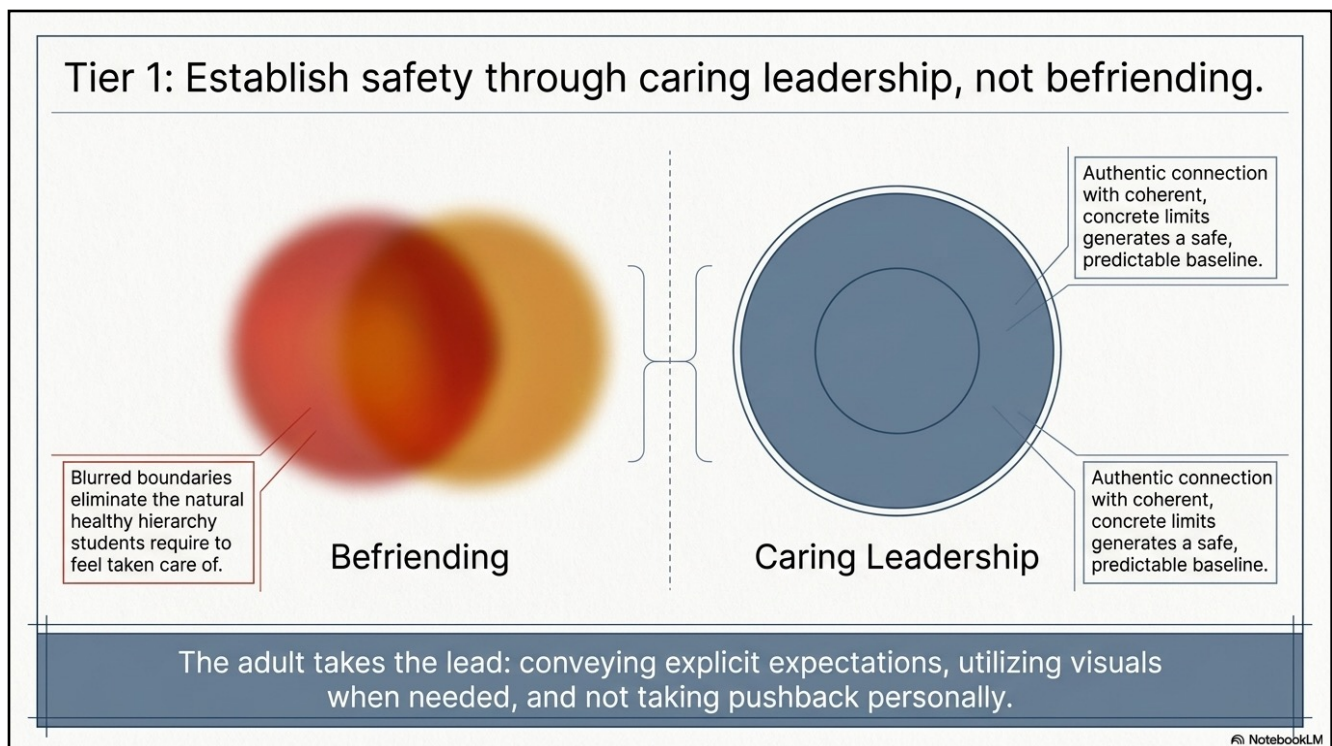
Managing the Environment

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24

Well established classroom structures and routines

⇒ To create consistency and predictability. ⇒

Our Classroom Routine



Hang up your coat and book bag.



Put your papers in the basket.



Answer the question of the day.



Write your name on your paper.

Today we have _____.

music
art
gym
guidance

Some of the key suggestions:

- 
 - Having a clear and explicit routine around the morning arrival, transition, or end-of-day/period departure
- 
 - Offering homework/assignment turn-in trays with labels
- 
 - Setting up structure around independent work time & asking for help
- 
 - Notifying students, when possible, of any changes in routine (special activities, teacher absences)

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Clear and explicit classroom expectations

⇒ To help clarify with students what a positive learning environment looks like. ⇒

Some of the key suggestions:

- 

Regularly modeling the classroom expectations throughout the school year
- 

Providing a variety of engaging and playful ways to prompt students (through stories, chants, role-playing, games)
- 

Offering a variety of visuals to help prompt students (poster of classroom expectations, hand signals for common requests)

IN OUR classroom

-  WE ARE ON TIME, PREPARED, AND READY TO LEARN
-  WE CLEAN UP AFTER OURSELVES
-  WE RESPECT OTHERS AND RESPECT OURSELVES
-  WE LISTEN WHEN OTHERS ARE TALKING
-  WE ALWAYS USE KIND WORDS
-  WE BELIEVE IN OURSELVES AND TRY OUR BEST

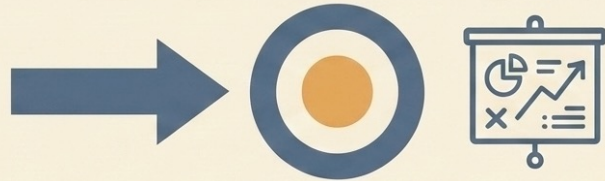


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Explicit Expectations



Lengthy explanations cause students to get lost.



Speak clearly and give instructions in a concise, direct manner.

Convey explicitly what is expected of them.
Use visuals if needed to bypass cognitive overload.

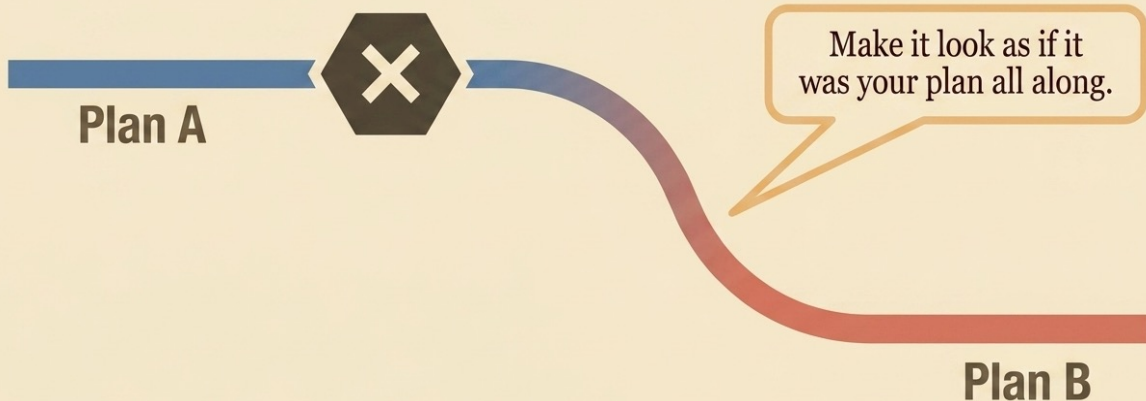
Establish coherent and concrete limits and boundaries.

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The Art of the Pivot

Adjust flexibly when things don't go as planned.
Ensure you have a backup plan as an alternative solution.



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THE ARCHITECTURE OF POSTURE: RESPONSE SCRIPTS.

 Scenario	 The Reactive Response (Instead of...)	 The Posture Response (Try this...)
 During Conflict	Figure it out yourselves.	Something happened between you two. Let's work through it together.
 During Emotional Upset	Stop crying. You're fine. / Calm down.	You're having a hard time right now. I'm here.
 During Mistakes	That's wrong.	You haven't figured it out yet. Let's try another way.
 During Challenging Behavior	What's wrong with you?	Something seems difficult for you right now. Let's see what you need.

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What Adult Posture Looks Like in Practice

DURING CONFLICT: From Separation to Guided Problem-Solving



Conflict between children is inevitable and developmentally important. It is often where children learn negotiation, empathy, perspective-taking, and emotional regulation. However, the adult response can either shut down learning or transform the moment into a powerful teaching opportunity.



In practice, this might involve helping each child share their perspective, naming emotions, slowing the interaction down, and supporting repair. The adult becomes a facilitator of connection rather than a referee or judge.



Over time, children learn that conflict is **not a threat to belonging**, but an **opportunity for understanding and growth**.

INSTEAD OF
A DISTANCING RESPONSE
SUCH AS:

"Figure it out
yourselves."



AN EDUCATOR WITH A
RELATIONAL POSTURE
MIGHT SAY:

"Something happened
between you two. Let's
work through it together."



THIS SHIFT COMMUNICATES SEVERAL IMPORTANT MESSAGES:

-  The relationship matters.
-  Conflict is not something to avoid or abandon.
-  Children are not left alone in difficult social moments.
-  Adults are present to guide, not to punish or withdraw.

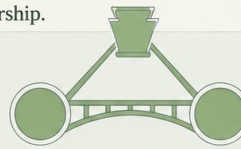
Scenario 01: Navigating Conflict.

The Shift: Isolation → Partnership.



"Figure it out yourselves."

Objective neutrality.
Removes immediate
blame.



Something happened between you two.
Let's work through it together.

Establishes a
co-regulatory
partnership.
You are a resource,
not a judge.

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What Adult Posture Looks Like in Practice.



During Emotional Upset: From Control to Co-Regulation



When children experience emotional overwhelm, they need **presence** more than instruction.

Their nervous system is not ready for reasoning or correction; it is seeking safety and regulation.



INSTEAD OF
a directive such as:

"Calm down."



AN ATTUNED ADULT
might say:

"You're having a hard time right now. I'm here."



This subtle shift is powerful.

"Calm down" often feels dismissive or demanding, so a child who is already overwhelmed. It signals that emotional expression is unacceptable.

In contrast, "I'm here" communicates steadiness, safety, and support.

In these moments, the adult posture focuses on:



Staying physically and emotionally grounded



Reducing stimulation and pressure



Naming the emotional experience



Offering calm presence rather than immediate solutions



The goal is not to rush the child out of **their emotion**, but to help them move through it safely. The adult becomes an **emotional anchor** until the child can regain regulation.



Scenario 02: Emotional Upset.

The Shift: Dismissal → Validation.

DISMISSAL



Denies the individual's internal reality.

Stop crying.
You're fine.
Calm down.

VALIDATION



Validates the present emotional state without trying to immediately fix it.

You're having a hard time right now. I'm here.

Radical proximity. Safety is established through presence, not solutions.

Invites collaboration to solve the root cause of the behavior.

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What Adult Posture Looks Like in Practice.



During Mistakes: From Correction to Learning Opportunity



Mistakes are a natural and essential part of learning.

However, the way adults respond to mistakes shapes whether children associate error with **shame** or with growth.



INSTEAD OF:

"That's wrong."



AN EDUCATOR MIGHT SAY:

"You haven't figured it out yet. Let's try another way."



THIS RESPONSE DOES SEVERAL IMPORTANT THINGS:

- It removes judgment from the learning process.
- It separates the child's identity from the outcome.
- It normalizes struggle as part of learning.
- It invites persistence and exploration.



WHEN CHILDREN CONSISTENTLY EXPERIENCE MISTAKES AS OPPORTUNITIES RATHER THAN FAILURES, THEY DEVELOP:



Persistence



Curiosity



Confidence in problem-solving



Willingness to take academic risks



Over time, they begin to internalize the idea:

"I can learn, even when I don't get it right the first time."

Scenario 03: Managing Mistakes The Shift: Judgment → Process-Orientation

That's wrong.

Focuses on the person, not the process.



Finality. The interaction ends in failure.

You haven't figured it out yet. Let's try another way.



Focuses cognitive energy on the process, not the person.

Anatomy of a Script:
The Growth Mindset Trigger
Transforms a permanent failure into a temporary step in the learning process.



This is a foundation for *lifelong learning and resilience.*



When adults respond with curiosity, compassion, and calm leadership, *children feel safe, supported, and able to regulate.*

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What Adult Posture Looks Like in Practice.

During Challenging Behaviour: From Judgment to Understanding



Challenging behaviour can easily trigger frustration in adults, especially when it disrupts learning or impacts others.

However, an adult posture grounded in curiosity and connection reframes behaviour as communication rather than character.

❌ INSTEAD OF:

"What's wrong with you?"



✅ AN EDUCATOR MIGHT SAY:

"Something seems difficult for you right now. Let's see what you need."



💡 This subtle shift is powerful.

"Calm down" often feels dismissive or demanding to a child who is already overwhelmed. It implies that emotional expression is unacceptable.

In contrast, "I'm here" communicates steadiness, safety, and support.

🔍 From there, the adult can explore:

😞 What the child might be feeling

❓ What need is not being met

🧠 What skill is still developing

💚 What support might help in the moment

Scenario 04: Challenging Behavior. The Shift: Blame → Curiosity.

BLAME

Forces the nervous system into immediate defense mode.



What's wrong with you?

CURIOSITY

Something seems difficult for you right now. Let's see what you need.



Anatomy of a Script:
Re-frames reactive behavior as an unmet need or a lack of skill, not a character flaw.

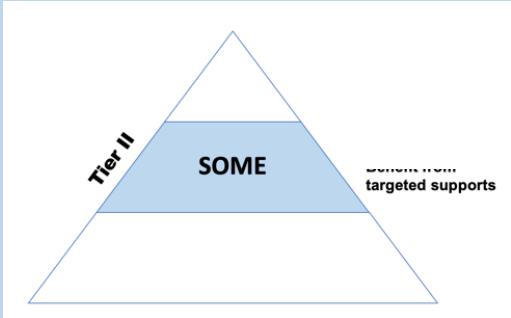
Anatomy of a Script:
Invites collaboration to solve the root cause of the behavior.


This does not remove expectations or boundaries. Instead, it changes the pathway to addressing behaviour—from punishment and correction toward support and skill-building.




Children are far more likely to cooperate when they feel *understood* rather than judged.

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TIER 2

TARGETED Practices

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Tier 3
Tier 2
Tier 1

Examples of a *Strong Adult Posture* at Tier 2

Tier 2 targeted practices

Intentional, responsive strategies for students who need some extra support to feel safe, regulated and successful.

1 **Understanding** that when a student at **Tier 2** is overwhelmed emotionally, which results in behavioural manifestations, the first step and priority of the adult should be to re-establish a sense of **safety for the student** (whether by managing the circumstances and environment, or by **co-regulating** with the student).

6 When a student is upset, **waiting until a more appropriate time** to address the situation (when the student has returned to a regulated state and is open and receptive) – Relying on **co-regulation**, as well as **de-escalation strategies**, if needed, to defuse the situation.

2 Relying on the **key elements to effect change**: structures, routines, predictability, respite, movement, being preventive/proactive, etc., including adapted scheduling if needed (these are **essential at Tier 2**).

7 **Conveying to other students** that you are aware the student in question is upset, that you are handling the situation, and they can focus on their own task at hand.

3 Being careful with **applying pressure** towards a task accomplishment, which could be triggering the student.

8 Actively engaging the student in **communicating their needs** and where they are at in their emotional regulation process, while understanding students at **Tier 2** may require **co-regulation support** to do so.

4 Being **calm and grounded** before responding to an upset student, and not taking their behaviour personally.

9 **'Bridging'** by making the **relationship** (not the behaviour) the bottom line and restoring the connection following any fallout.

5 Being mindful about displaying **neutral/gentle** facial expressions, a non-threatening stance, a stable voice volume, tone, speech rate, or talking too much.

10 **Reassuring** the student that you are there for them and they can always come to you for help.

A strong adult posture is grounded in **connection, consistency and compassion**.
It's not about perfect responses, but about a purposeful presence.

SAFETY

RELATIONSHIP

STRUCTURE

REGULATION

35

Tier 2: When a student becomes emotionally overwhelmed, the priority immediately shifts to re-establishing safety.

Emotional overload results in behavioral manifestations.

The adult must be calm and grounded before responding.

Approach with authenticity, curiosity, and interest—never judgment.

Preventative elements, such as routines, scheduling, and respite, transition from proactive tools to essential supports.

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Co-Regulation Is Not the Same as Permissiveness






Supporting children through emotions does not mean allowing all behaviours.
An effective adult posture combines empathy with leadership.

For example:

“I can see that you’re angry because it’s time to stop playing.
It’s okay to be angry.
I won’t let you hit.”



The adult accepts the emotion while maintaining the boundary.





Children need both:

- Acceptance of their feelings
- Guidance around their actions





This balance helps children learn that all emotions are acceptable, even when some behaviours are not.

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The Self-Regulation Fallacy

Children are born with the ability to manage frustration and control impulses. Meltdowns are a choice or a manipulation.



The brain systems responsible for emotional regulation and impulse control are still under construction. Dysregulation is not a choice; it is an experience of a system overload.



Children are not choosing to be dysregulated; they are experiencing dysregulation.

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Judgment last to develop

The area of the brain that controls “executive functions” — including weighing long-term consequences and controlling impulses — is among the last to fully mature.

Brain development from childhood to adulthood:

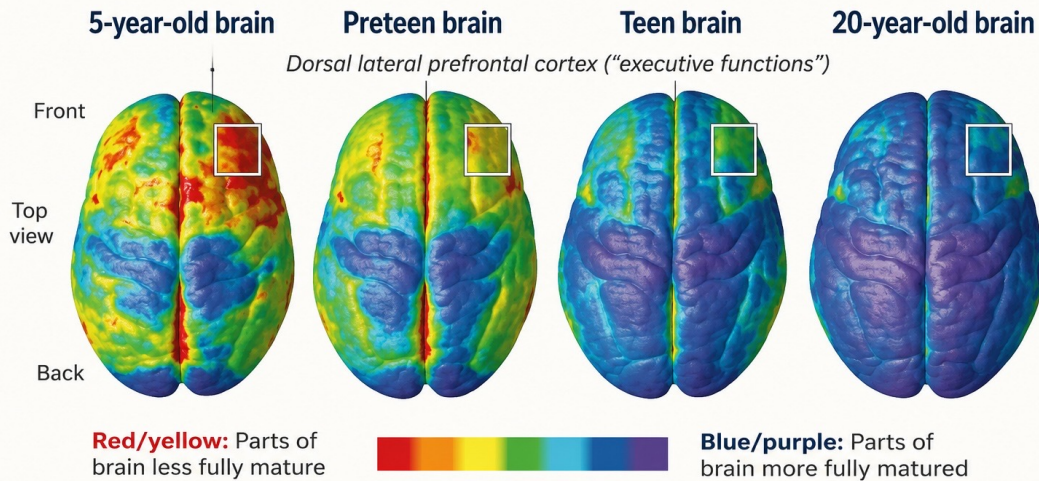


Image from the National Institute of Mental Health; Paul Thompson, Ph.D., UCLA Laboratory of Neuro Imaging

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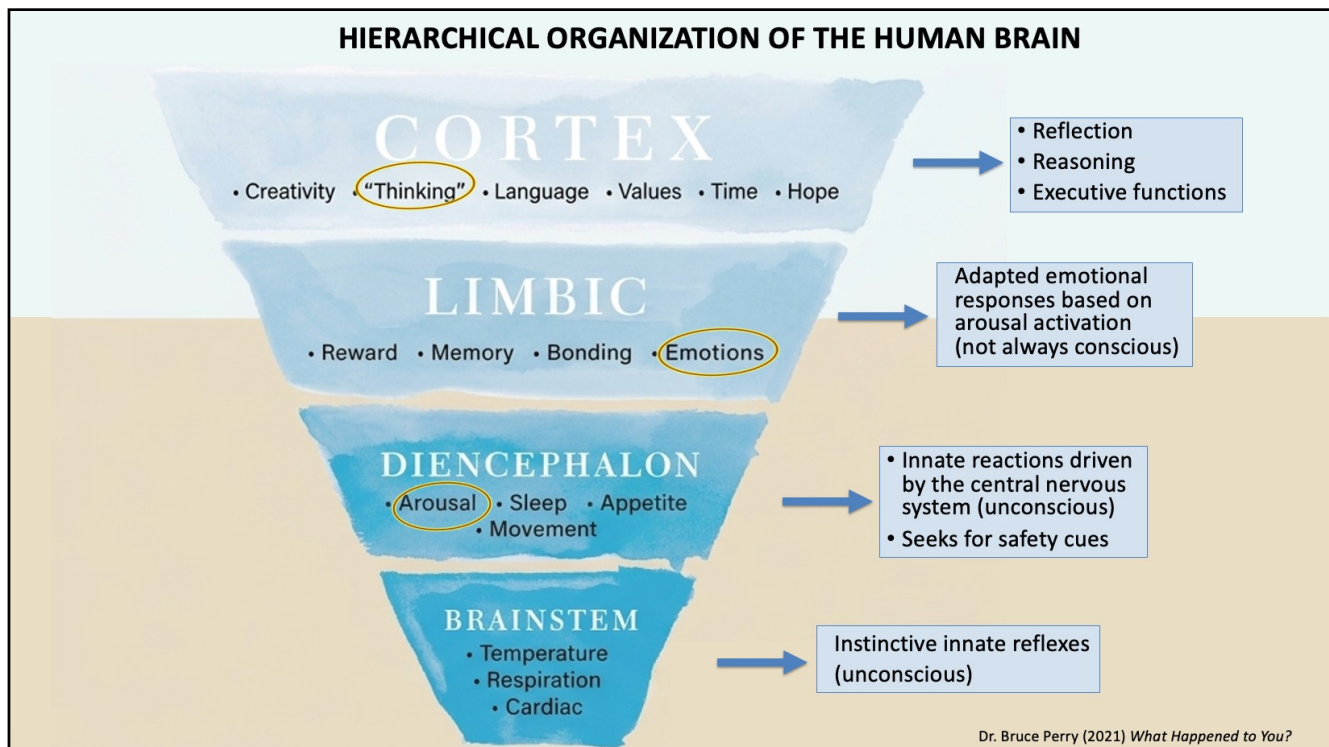
Elements That Influence Children’s Emotional Maturity

Factors in today’s world that can impact social-emotional development



Emotional maturity develops through relationships, play, emotional expression, and supportive experiences—
not simply with age.

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The Brain Learns Best in a State of Safety

Research in neuroscience has shown that children's brains are designed to prioritize safety before learning.

When children feel **emotionally safe**, the parts of the brain responsible for thinking, problem-solving, creativity, and learning are more accessible.

When children feel **threatened, overwhelmed, or disconnected**, the brain shifts into **survival mode**.

SAFE & CONNECTED LEARNING MODE

Prefrontal Cortex (Thinking Brain)

Calm. Curious. Open. Ready to learn.

↔

THREATENED & STRESSED SURVIVAL MODE

Amygdala (Survival Brain)

Alert. Defensive. Overwhelmed. Focused on staying safe.

In a state of stress, children are more likely to:

- Become reactive or impulsive
- Have difficulty concentrating
- Struggle to follow directions
- Experience emotional outbursts
- Withdraw from participation
- Have difficulty retaining new information

This means that before children can fully engage in learning, they must first experience a sense of **emotional security**.

A child who **feels safe** is far more available for learning than a child who is focused on managing anxiety, uncertainty, or fear.

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Educator's Field Guide

You Cannot Reason with an Overwhelmed Brain

The Biological Reality

In moments of stress, frustration, or conflict, a child's "thinking brain" becomes less accessible. They are operating entirely from emotional overwhelm.



The Intervention Failure

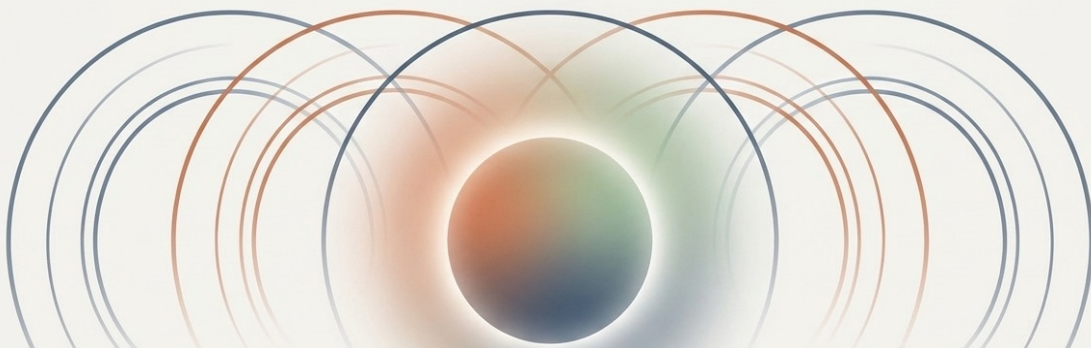
Because the reasoning centers are offline, lectures, consequences, and logical reasoning process as mere noise to the child's nervous system.



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The Posture IS the Intervention



At Tier 2, you cannot talk a student into feeling safe.
Safety is an autonomic experience.

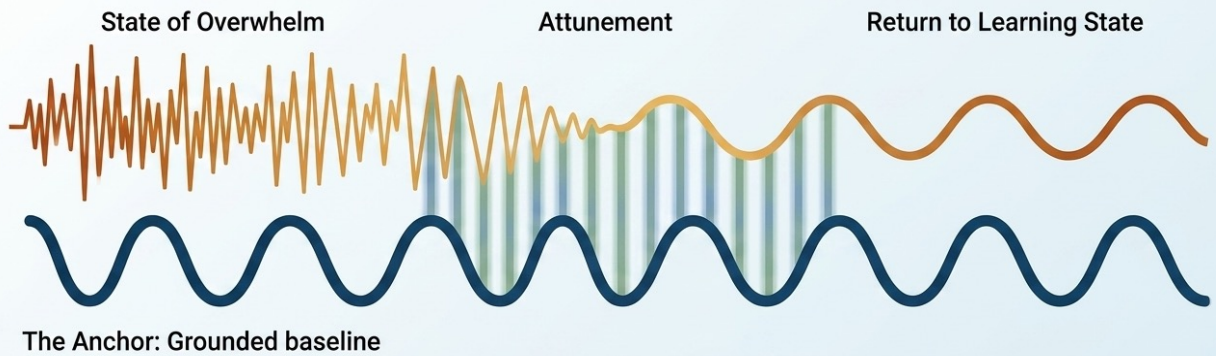
Your **predictability**, your strategic timing, and your unwavering **physical calm** are not merely the prerequisites for an intervention.

They are the intervention itself.

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Neural Resonance: The Biology of Calm



Calm meets Calm. The adult's grounded nervous system absorbs and neutralizes the child's dysregulation.

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The Emotional Storm

Calm Authority



1. Staying calm

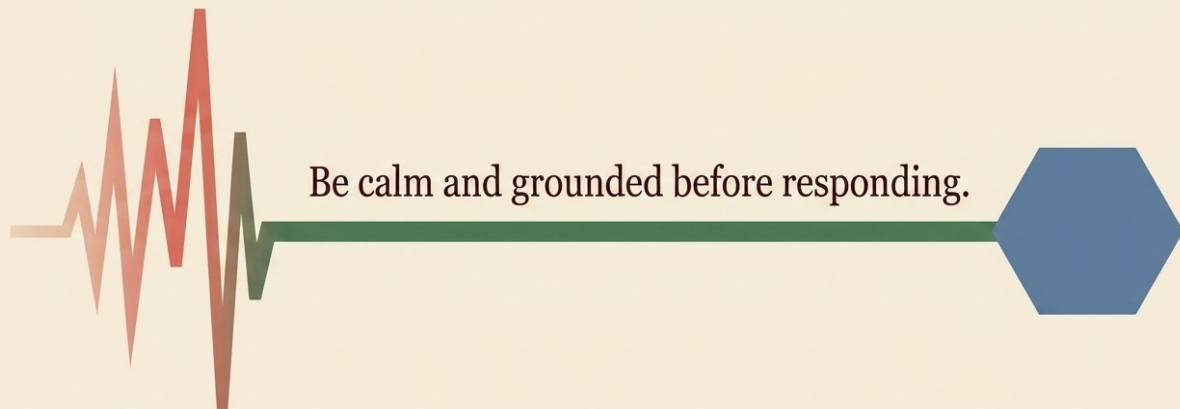
2. Offering comfort and reassurance

3. Naming emotions without judgment

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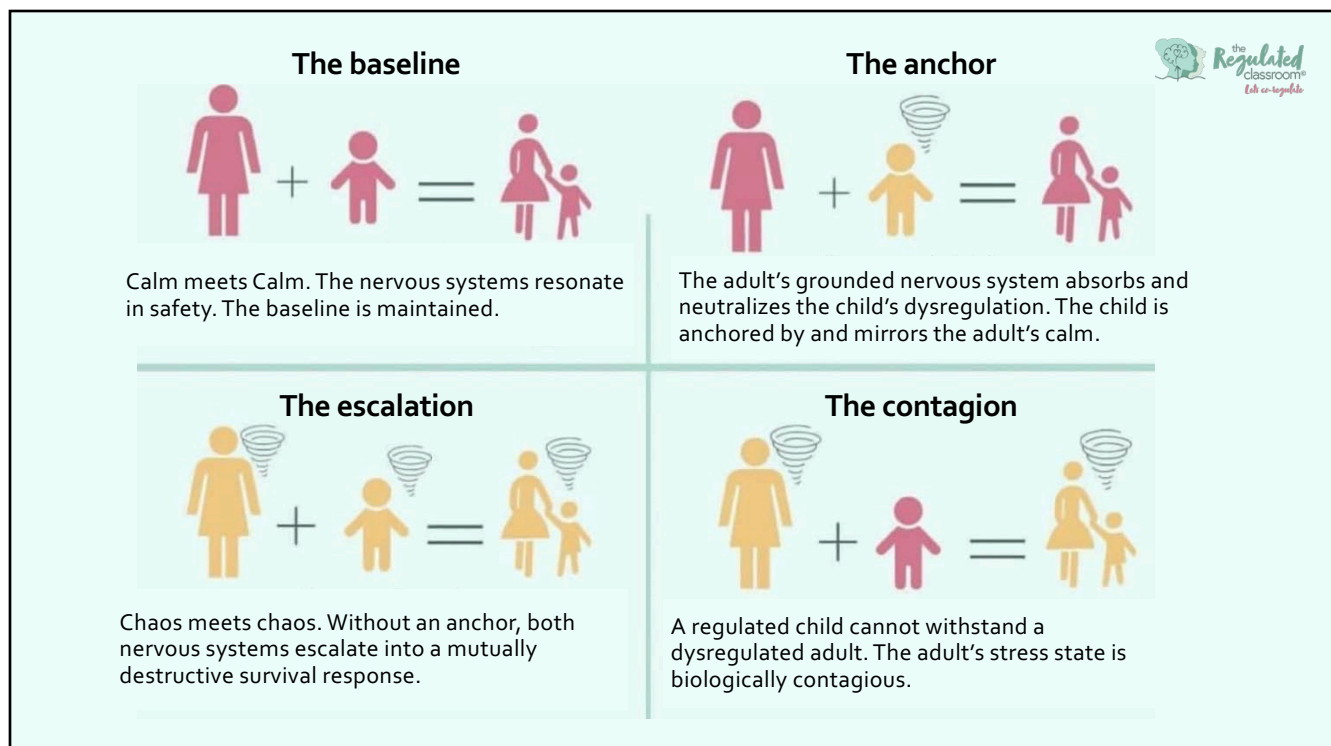
The Pre-Response Pause



You cannot co-regulate a student if you are dysregulated.
The deliberate pause is where the strong posture is maintained.

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The Educator's Pause: A Diagnostic Tool

When challenging behaviour occurs, hit pause and ask yourself:

1. What might this child be communicating through this behaviour?

2. Is this child giving me a hard time, or having a hard time?

3. What need, emotion, or skill deficit might be contributing to this situation?

4. How can I maintain the boundary while strictly preserving the relationship?

5. What specific support does this child need to be successful right now?

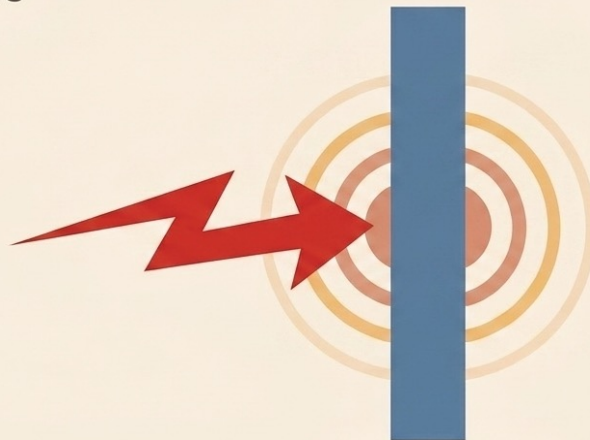


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The Grounded Pushback Response

Establish concrete limits without getting upset if the student pushes back.



Pushback is a data point, not a personal attack.
Manage the environment through co-regulation rather than emotional reaction.

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The Power of Consistency

The Alignment Matrix

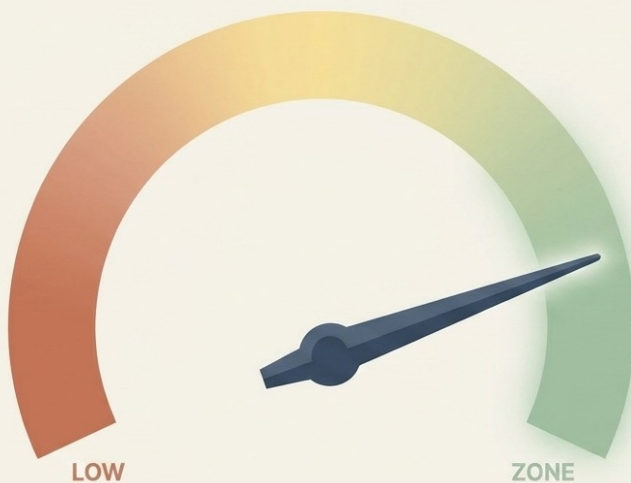
	Inconsistent Modeling	Consistent Modeling
The Scenario	Teaching kindness while speaking harshly. Promoting emotional regulation while reacting impulsively.	Embodying the exact social and emotional skills being taught.
The Child's Experience	Cognitive Dissonance and Confusion.	Authentic, meaningful learning and deep internalization.

Children learn most effectively when the behaviour that adults model is in perfect alignment with the values that they teach.

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The Bridge: The Discipline of Timing



The Waiting Period

When a student is upset, do not attempt to process the event or give corrective feedback immediately.

Strategic Patience

Wait until a more appropriate time to address the situation.

The Green Zone

You may only cross the bridge to address the behavior when the student has fully returned to a state of calm and is neurologically open and receptive.

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Student Preventive Action Plan

 **STUDENT ACTIVE PREVENTION/SAFETY PLAN** (giving priority to prevention) – in **Elementary** TEMPLATE DOCUMENT

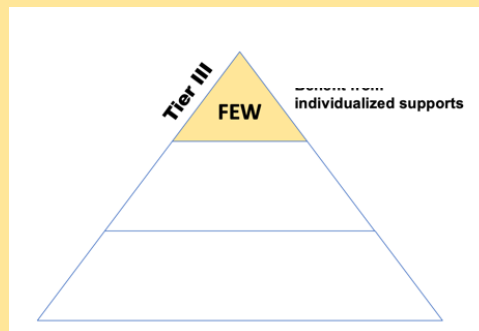
Student name: _____ DOB: _____
 School/Board: _____ Grade Level: _____ Homeroom Teacher: _____

Student's needs/challenges/triggers	Specific objectives* related to the needs/challenges/triggers	Best practices/approaches** related to the objectives	Selected tools/support measures related to the practices
Plan B for a difficult time or activity		Plan B for a difficult day	

* The objectives are meant to be anchored in the adult posture and the selected support measures to scaffold/compensate for the needs and challenges
 ** The practices are meant to be preventive/proactive rather than waiting for the problem to arise to intervene. The division of adult roles and responsibilities must be clearly defined

<https://www.cebmmember.ca/tier-2-targeted-practices>

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TIER 3 INDIVIDUALIZED Practices

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Examples of a *Strong Adult Posture* at Tier 3

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- SAFETY FIRST**
Always prioritize safety for all.
- RELATIONSHIP DRIVEN**
Connection is the foundation.
- NEURODEVELOPMENTAL LENS**
Understand behaviour as communication.
- COLLABORATIVE**
Work together for consistent support.
- STRENGTHS BASED**
Focus on abilities, build on strengths.

Tier 3 individualized practices

Intensive, individualized practices that prioritize **safety, connection, and collaboration** to meet complex needs.

- 1** **Understanding** that when a student at Tier 3 is triggered and dysregulated, they are not receptive to our interventions in the moment (must focus on establishing safety for all first).
- 2** **Relying on the key elements** to effect change: structures, routines, predictability, respite, movement, being preventive/proactive, etc., including adapted scheduling if needed (these are **non-negotiable** at Tier 3).
- 3** **Being familiar** with the student's profile, needs and triggers to avoid unnecessary blowouts.
- 4** **Not being alienated** by their behaviour and keeping the posture of a nurturing provider.
- 5** **Being neutral, steady, and grounded** when intervening and keeping the students' wellbeing in mind.
- 6** **Backing away from conventional discipline** (in attempt to negatively punish or forcefully control the behaviour) and ultimatums, which may trigger the student further.
- 7** **Relying on co-regulation**, as well as **de-escalation strategies** if needed to defuse the situation. Keeping a safe and respectful distance that feels comfortable for the student (being attuned to the student's non-verbal shifts in facial expressions and demeanour).

- 8** **Ensuring** that all staff working with the student are on the same page concerning the student's profile, needs, triggers, and support measures in place (making the time to co-create a **Student Action Plan/Safety Plan** in order to share best practices and to increase a more coherent approach).
- 9** **Ensuring that the designated adults** familiar with the student's case are the ones who are intervening with them when the situation has escalated.
- 10** **Relying on the power of teamwork** to share the weight and responsibilities (this will help adults keep their posture intact).
- 11** **Implementing the safety plan** when needed. All students need to feel safe and taken care of.
- 12** **Conveying to other students** that you are aware the student in question is upset, that you are handling the situation, and they can focus on their own task at hand.
- 13** **Actively engaging the student** in communicating their needs (keep in mind they may not be self-aware or available to do so) and where they are at in their emotional regulation process, while understanding students at Tier 3 rely on ongoing **co-regulation support**.
- 14** **'Bridging'** by making the relationship (not the behaviour) the bottom line and restoring the connection following any fallout.
- 15** **Reassuring** the student that you are there for them and they can always come to you for help.

A strong adult posture is grounded in connection, consistency, and compassion.
It's not about perfect responses, but about a **purposeful presence**.

SAFETY
Create physical and emotional safety.

PREDICTABILITY
Use routines, structure, and predictability.

REGULATION
Support co-regulation and self-regulation.

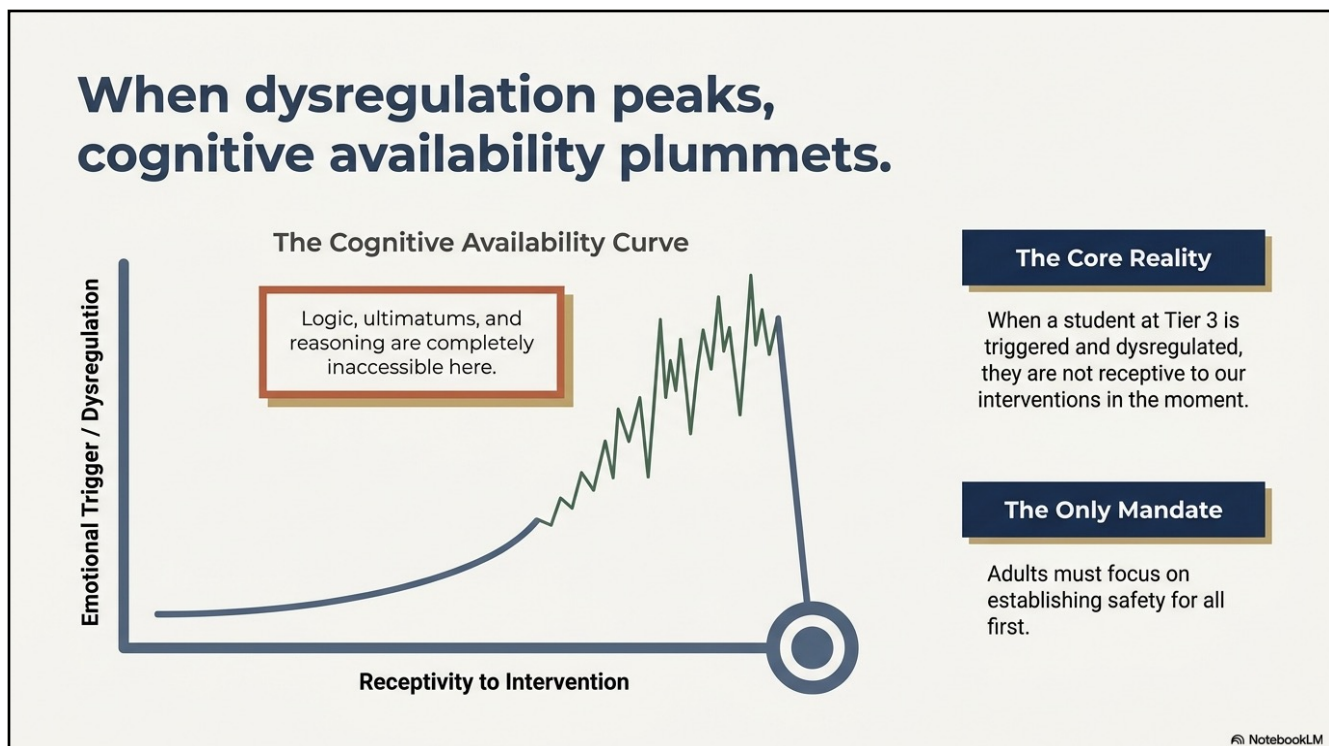
CONNECTION
Build trusting relationships.

TEAMWORK
Share the weight. Support one another.

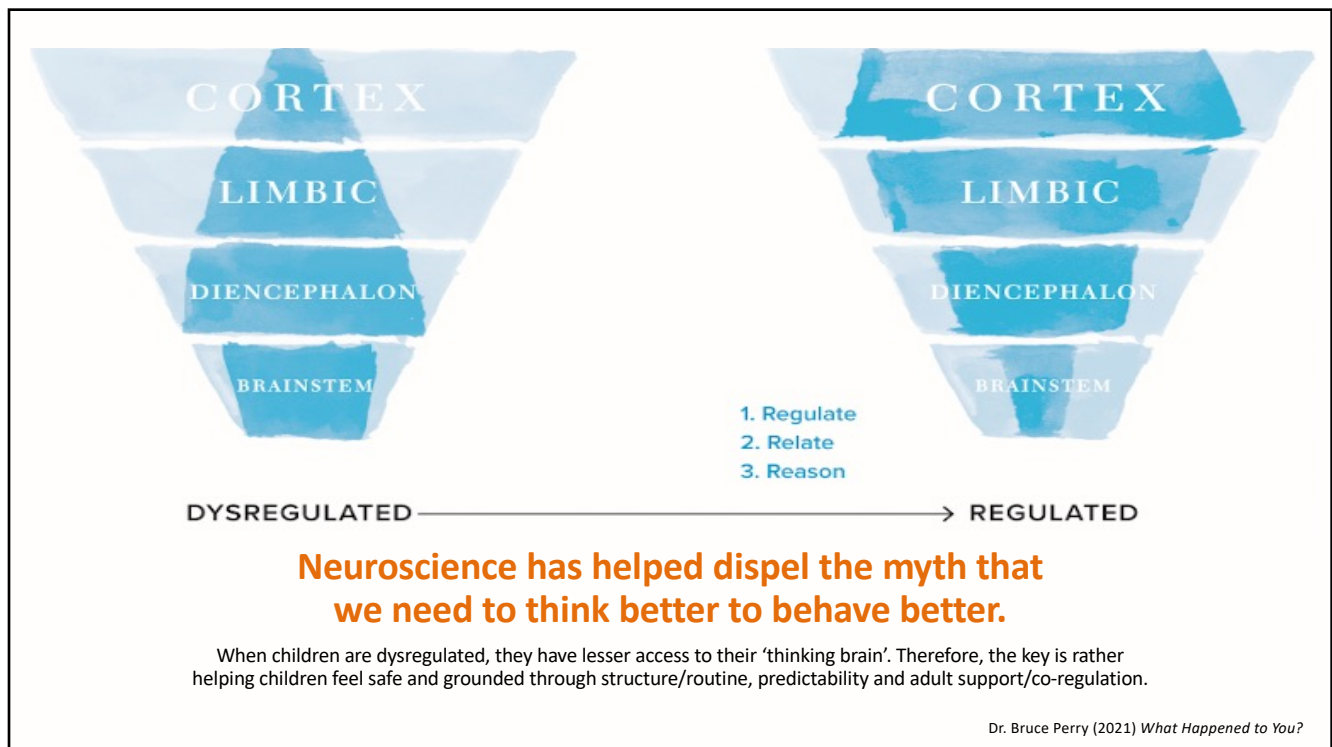
PLANNING
Plan ahead. Implement safety plans.

BELONGING
Foster inclusion, respect and dignity.

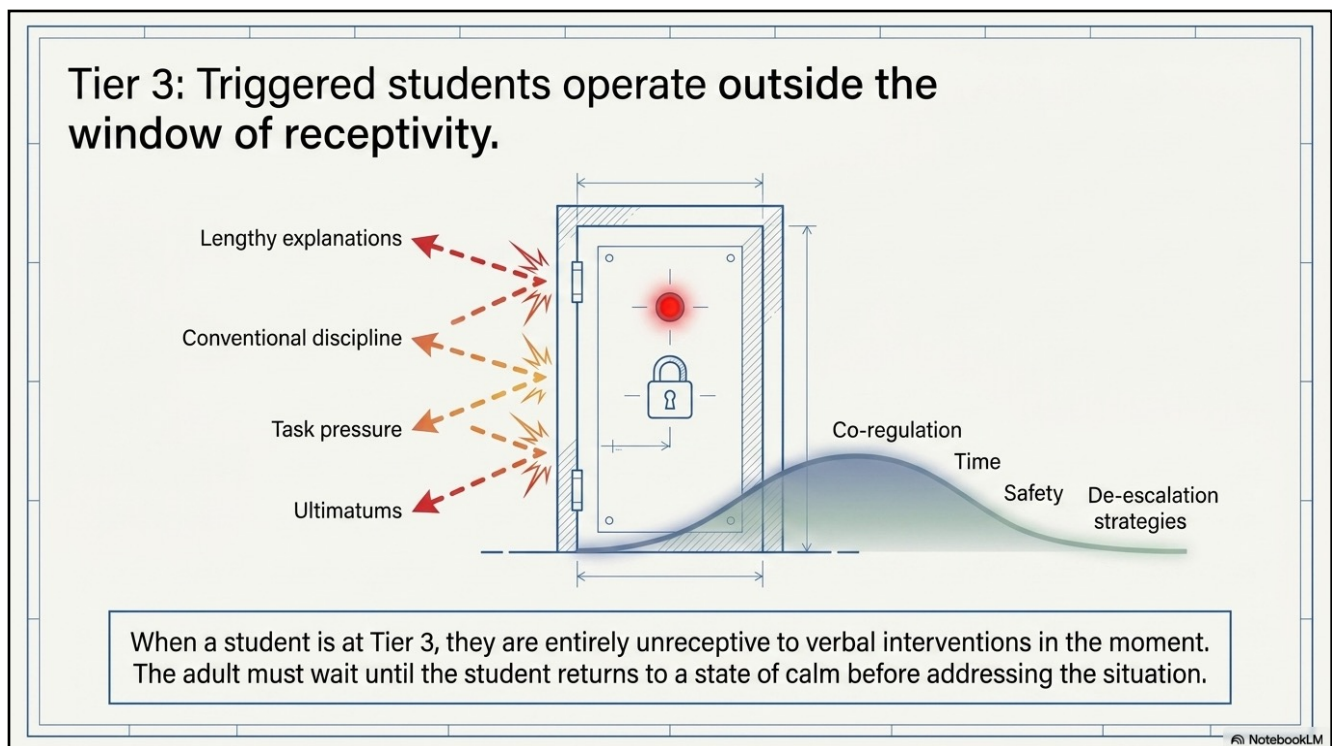
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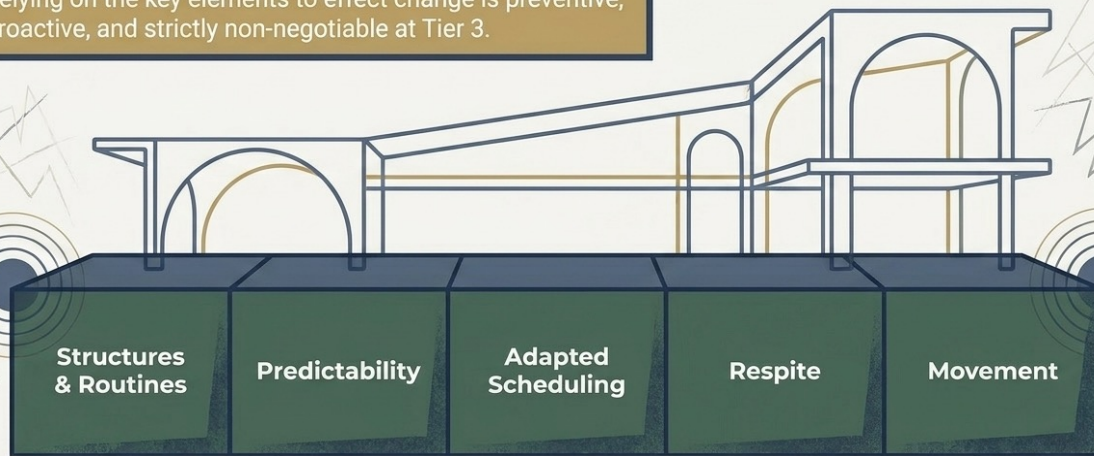
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Tier 3 demands a non-negotiable, proactive foundation.

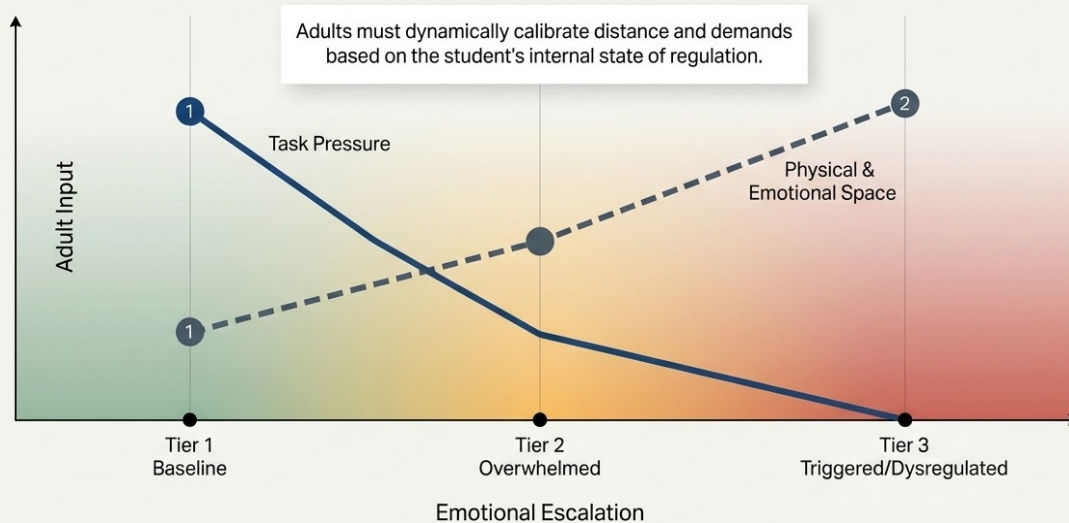
Relying on the key elements to effect change is preventive, proactive, and strictly non-negotiable at Tier 3.



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The escalation inverse: Task pressure must drop as emotional dysregulation peaks



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The Operating Metaphor: Reacting vs. Setting

The Thermometer



Reacts to the environment.
Merely rises and falls with the
student's emotional state.
Driven by the heat of the moment.

The Thermostat



Sets the environment.
Holds a steady temperature.
Acts as a stabilizing anchor
for co-regulation.

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The Anatomy of a Regulated Presence

Mind (Awareness):

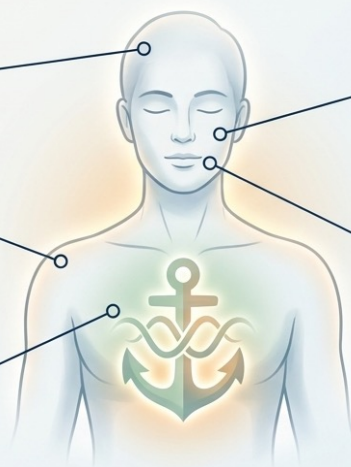
Self-reflective. Exploring why rather
than jumping to consequences.

Body (Posture):

Soft posture, relaxed shoulders.
Non-threatening proximity.

Lungs (Breath):

Slow, steady, audible breathing.
(Providing the biological
rhythm to borrow).



Face (Expression):

Receptive, relaxed facial muscles.
(Students constantly scan for
safety cues).

Voice (Tone):

Speaking slowly and warmly.
Tone is more powerful than
vocabulary.

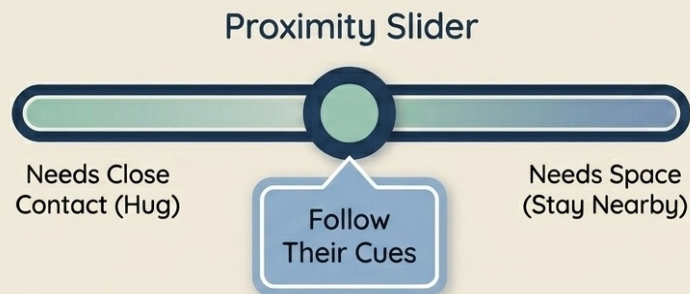
**Co-regulation doesn't happen in a manual.
It happens in the hallway, the classroom, the cafeteria line.**

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Stay close, but not too close

Some children want you close. Others need space but want you to stay nearby. Offer comfort they can accept—comfort helps the child's brain calm down.



Comfort Choices



Blanket



Quiet Space



Favorite Object



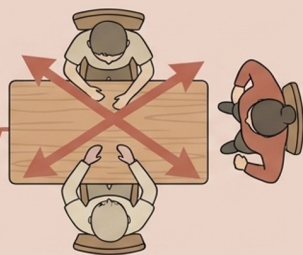
Hug

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The Body: De-escalating through physical presence

The Confrontational Stance ❌



DON'T use threatening body language. Avoid towering over, crossing arms, or pointing fingers—biological cues of threat.

The Parallel Stance ✅



DO practice parallel regulation. For students with autism or trauma histories, sitting or walking alongside them balances power and reduces confrontational threat. Get to eye level and keep facial expressions gentle.

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What Co-Regulation Sounds Like

These are not scripts to memorize, but grounding options for adults who want to stay connected.

When a student shuts down completely:

"It's okay to need some quiet. I'm going to sit near you for a bit."

Building agency in moment:

"That was a lot. I'm proud of you for getting through it. Let's talk."

When a student refuses to participate:

"You don't have to talk right now. I'll be here when you're ready."

Building agency in the moment:

Instead of asking "How can I help?", try asking "What would help you right now?"

When a student begins to escalate:

"Let's take a few breaths together. We can handle this."



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Cultivate the internal posture of a nurturing provider.

Your internal posture is the ultimate intervention tool.

Do not be alienated

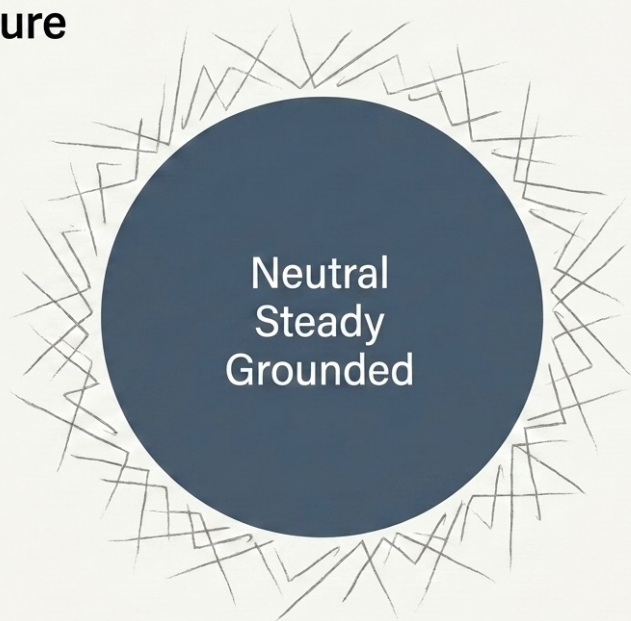
Look beyond the behavioral manifestations to the underlying dysregulated nervous system.

Back away from ultimatums

Recognize that rigid demands during a crisis will only trigger the student further.

Hold the center

Keep the student's baseline wellbeing in mind, rather than focusing on immediate compliance.



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Student Safety Plan

 **STUDENT ACTIVE PREVENTION/SAFETY PLAN – in Elementary** TEMPLATE DOCUMENT

Student name: _____ DOB: _____
 School/Board: _____ Grade Level: _____ Homeroom Teacher: _____

Student stress level	Observable signs	Adult posture and practices suggested	Adult posture and practices to avoid
When the student is regulated, engaged, and receptive			
When the student appears to be tense, annoyed, or frustrated			
When the student's stress response or frustration level is activated and beginning to escalate			
When the student's stress response has fully escalated and is disorganized. No longer receptive towards the adult.			
Post-intervention – following an acting-out episode			

<https://www.cebmmember.ca/tier-3-individualized-practices>

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Examples of de-escalation strategies



Removing any audience. If possible, taking the student for a walk or accompanying them to a safe and private space.



Honouring the student's personal space (needing to consider individual differences in terms of tolerance for physical proximity).



Being mindful of our verbal, non-verbal and paraverbal cues (e.g., triggering language, tone/volume of voice, speech rate, body positioning, facial expression, sudden gestures, walking fast towards the student, etc.)



Being aware of our level of stress, affect, emotional intensity, and type/level of energy reflected.



Avoiding intense eye contact (this can feel quite threatening to some students). Sitting side-by-side or standing at an angle can help with this.



Demonstrating active listening; reducing the amount of talking and allowing for moments of silence.



Being empathetic and non-judgmental; focusing on the emotion(s) experienced by the student rather than their behaviour.



Offering support or a pause; trying to accommodate and reassure the student.



If possible/available, providing a space for them to let off steam.

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Examples of de-escalation strategies



Avoiding getting caught in a power struggle, anticipating potential refusal from the student and perceiving their challenging questions/comments as needing to vent.



Moving away from trying to teach a lesson or reason with the student, especially when their behaviour appears erratic and irrational.



Setting simple, concise, and realistic limits by offering options/alternatives in a supportive manner; being careful to not overload with too many directives.



Allowing time/space for decision making (not pressuring for an immediate response) and choosing wisely what is insisted upon.



Coming alongside the student's frustration, by naming and validating it.



Sometimes, using humour, when appropriate, can be helpful to diffuse the situation.



Not taking it personally; being careful to not overreact (lenses and mirrors).



Ensuring that adults passing by don't step in and impose themselves in an ongoing intervention.



Having another adult support or step in if the situation is not defusing. It's okay for the adult to tap out if they are being triggered.

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The Relationship Bridge

"The relationship is bigger than the altercation."

Unconditional Warmth

Altercation / Discipline

Creating an invitation into relationship means letting students know that even when they mess up, you still care. Bridge the discipline by **empathizing with where they are**, rather than just telling them where they should be.

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Modeling repair builds trust more effectively than never getting it wrong.

The Rupture



Ruptures are inevitable. When an adult loses their cool or a student has a melt down, the connection is severed. Regulation isn't about being unshakable; it's about being reachable.

The Repair



Repair is co-regulation applied to relationships. Wait for regulation, revisit without blame, and focus on metacognition over consequences.

Scripting the repair:
I'm sorry I raised my voice. You didn't do anything wrong. I got frustrated, and that's not your fault. We'll figure it out together.

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Systemic Support: We Cannot Pour From an Empty Vessel



Adult Regulation
 If an educator is burned out, running on empty, they cannot be emotionally available for a dysregulated classroom.

Student Co-Regulation
 Our students count on us to have calm to share with them.

What fuels the adult's vessel?

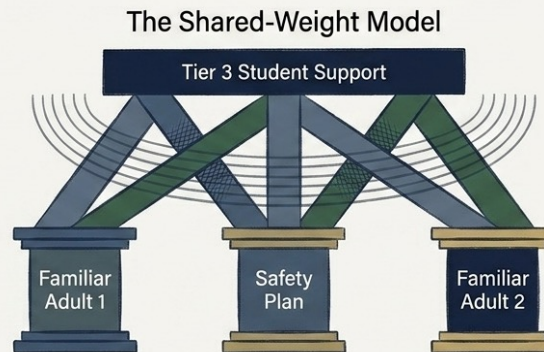
 Protected time for planning	 Compassionate leadership communication	 Regular trauma-informed professional learning	 Spaces where staff feel seen
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Distribute the emotional weight through a coordinated ecosystem.

The emotional weight of Tier 3 is too heavy for one pillar. Coherence protects your posture.



Co-Created Safety Plans

Ensure all staff are on the exact same page concerning the student's profile, needs, triggers, and support measures.

Designated Responders

Ensure that only designated, familiar adults intervene when a situation escalates.

Shared Responsibility

Rely on the power of teamwork to share the weight, allowing adults to maintain their relational posture over time.

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The educator is not only teaching the curriculum—the educator is part of the curriculum.

A calm, caring, intentional, and relationship-focused posture creates the definitive conditions for children to develop socially, emotionally, and academically.



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Centre of Excellence for Behaviour Management

www.cebm.ca



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THE CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT (CEBM)

As a support to the 10 English School Boards of Quebec, the CEBM aims to help boards and their staff to find effective and developmentally friendly interventions for working with students who experience significant behavioural challenges in the school setting.

Also visit the CEBM Resource Center

<https://www.cebmmember.ca/>

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