

# THE POWER OF CONNECTION.

How can we support our kids and ourselves in these challenging times



- Jean M Clinton BMus MD FRCP(C)
- Clinical Professor
- McMaster University
- @drjeanforkids





Consider the interest of the next 7 generations  
when decisions are being made

## The Wisdom of the Elders

# What is Mental Well-Being?

A state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.

World Health Organization, 2014

**More than the absence of  
illness!  
It is about FLOURISHING!**



# *First Nations Mental Wellness Framework*

- A Sense of Purpose
- Having Hope
- A Sense of Belonging
- Meaning in Daily Life

[nnapf.com/first-nations-mental-wellness-continuum-framework/](http://nnapf.com/first-nations-mental-wellness-continuum-framework/)



# Four Challenges to a Healthy Mind



- Distractibility
- Loneliness
- Negative self-talk and depression
- Loss of Meaning and Purpose in Life

# Four Pillars of a Healthy Mind



- Awareness
- Connection
- Insight
- Purpose
  
- Dr Richard Davidson



Ontario



# New survey shows parents' mental health hard-hit by COVID lockdowns

Liz Braun

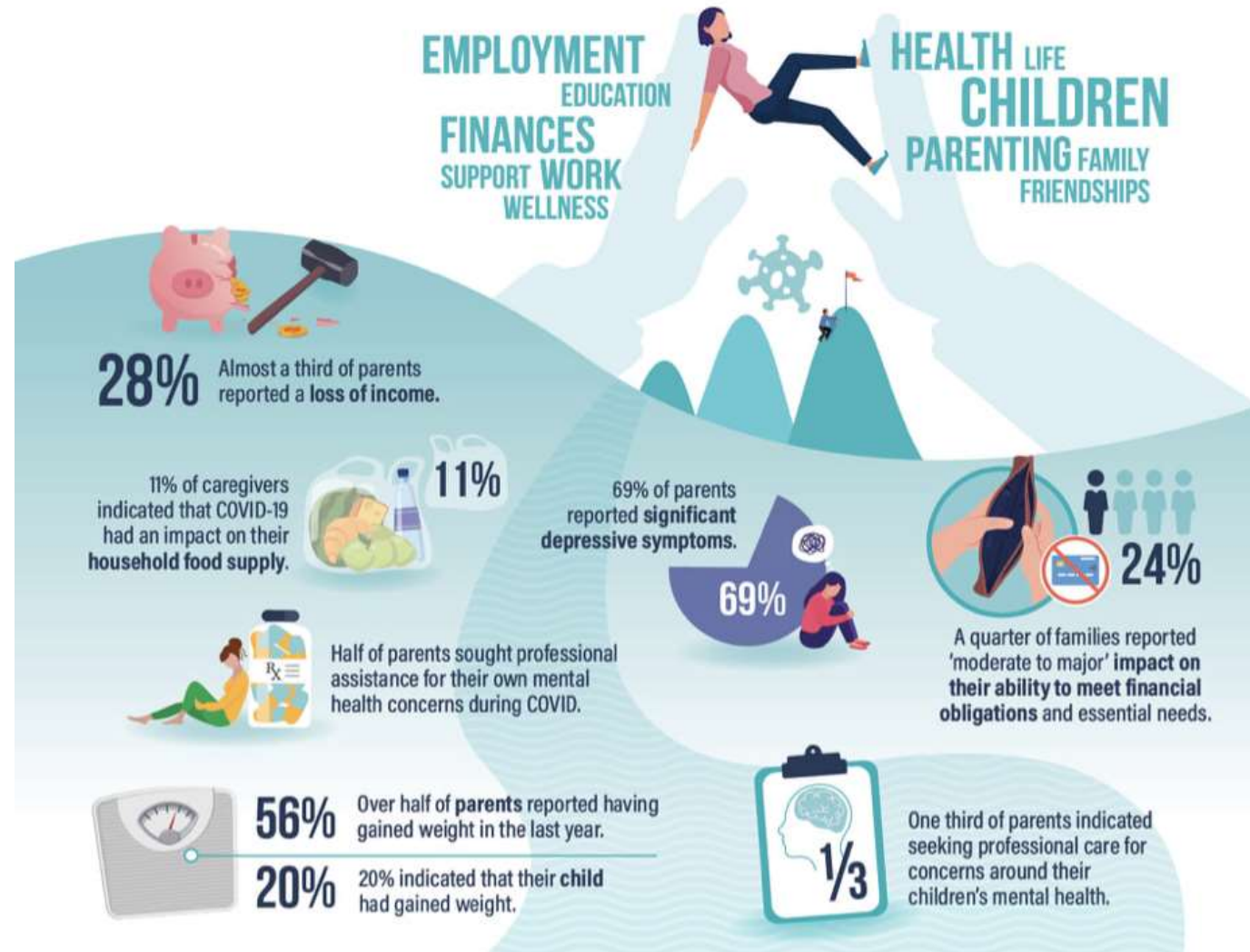
Nov 02, 2021 • November 2, 2021 • 3 minute read • [14 Comments](#)



Results of a second Ontario Parent Survey from McMaster University and Offord Centre for Child Studies show startling levels of mental health distress among parents — particularly symptoms of depression and anxiety. PHOTO BY ISTOCK /GETTY IMAGES

Parents are shredded by the pandemic.

## Findings and Results from the Third Wave



Parents reported moderate to high levels of concern about the impact of COVID-19 on...



Managing their children's remote learning



Managing screen time at home



Learning and education



Managing their own time



Maintaining household routines, organization and meals



Balancing work while looking after children

Additional concerns included...



- 44% Managing their children's anxiety and stress
- 43% Amount of physical activity
- 32% Managing their child's behavior
- 27% Concerns around their children's sleep



36% of caregivers indicated that COVID-19 had 'a lot' to 'a great deal' of a **negative impact on their child's mental and emotional health.**



**Top three** events or changes to daily life that has been **most negative for children:**

**74%** not seeing their friends

**49%** not going to school in person

**45%** having to stay home

# Why do we care about brain?



Time Magazine Dr J Stieben

## Neuroplasticity



**BUT**

**Your brain is not just  
produced by your genes**

**Your brain is sculpted by  
a lifetime of  
experiences .**

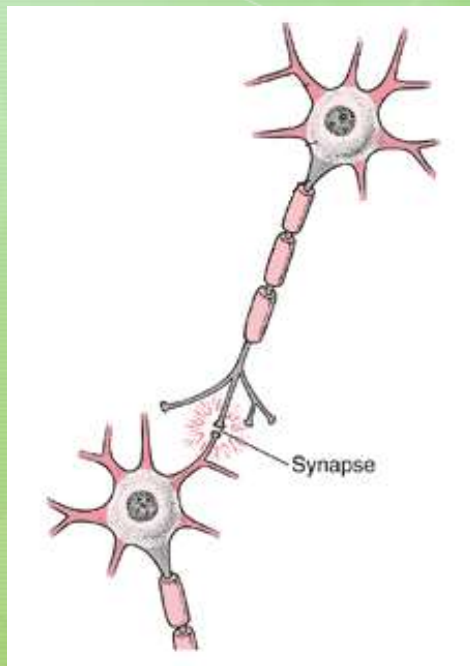
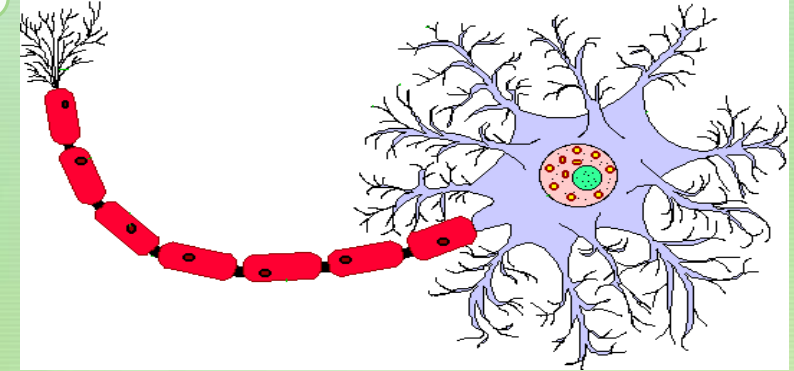
All of the areas  
of the brain

...like sound,  
communication,  
problem-  
solving...

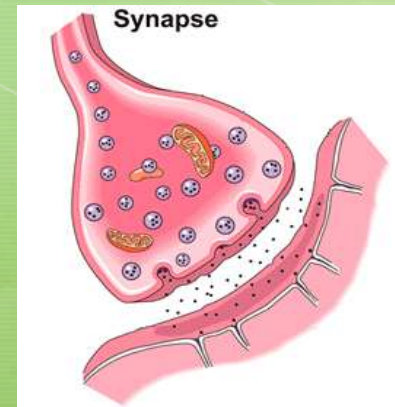
are made of  
cells called

They transmit  
information all  
around the  
brain.

## NEURONS

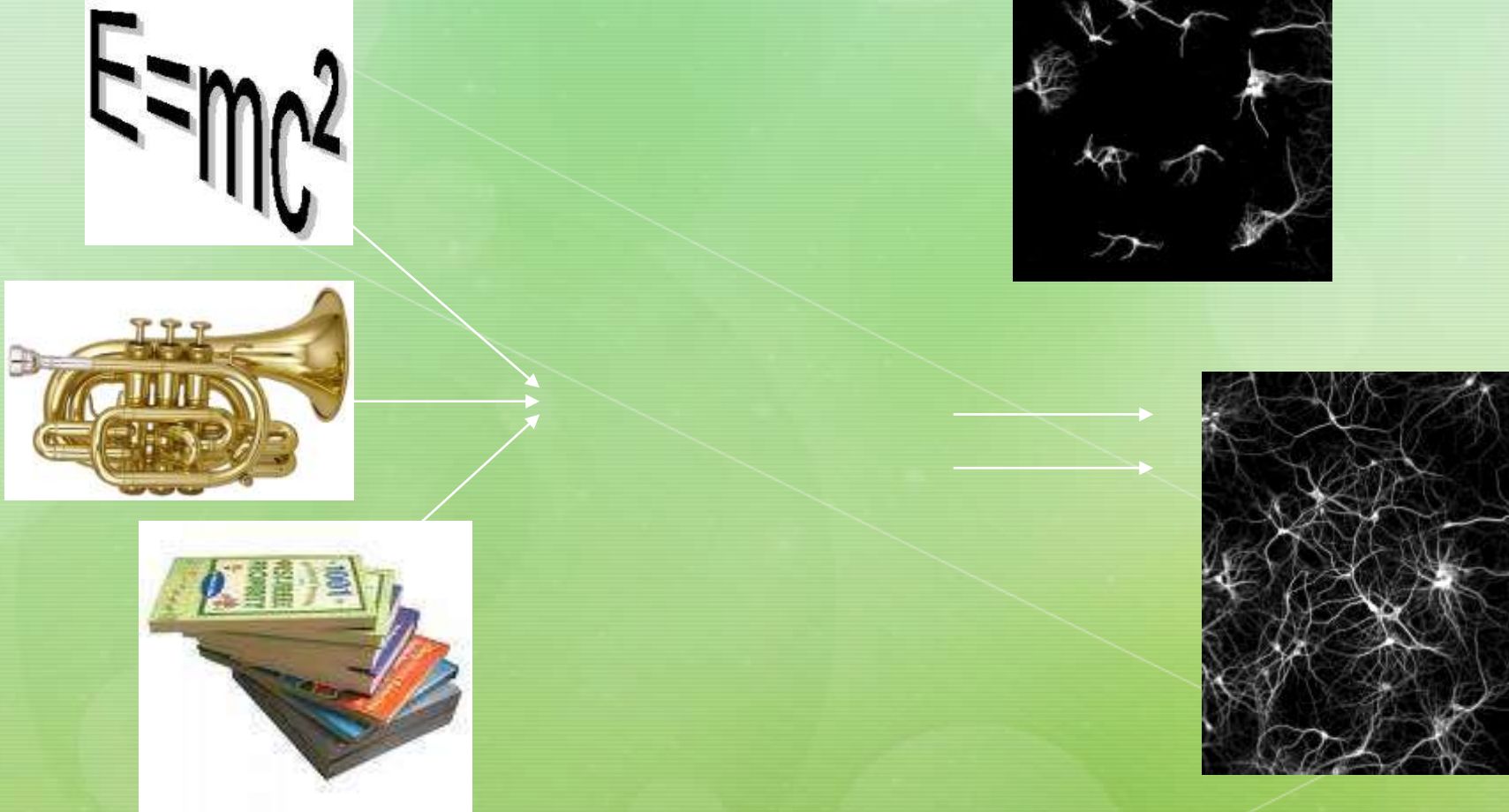
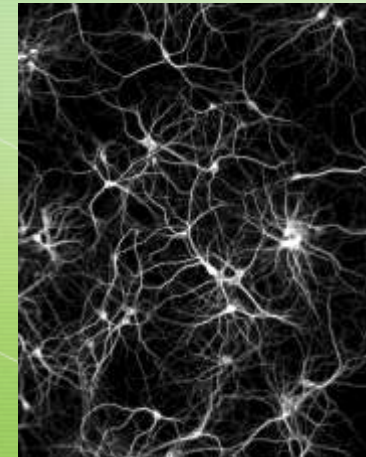
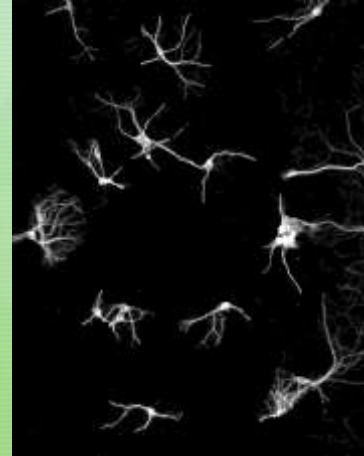
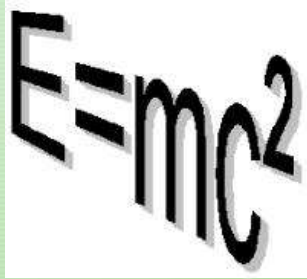


Neurons pass information  
through  
**CONNECTIONS** with  
other neurons at  
**SYNAPSES**

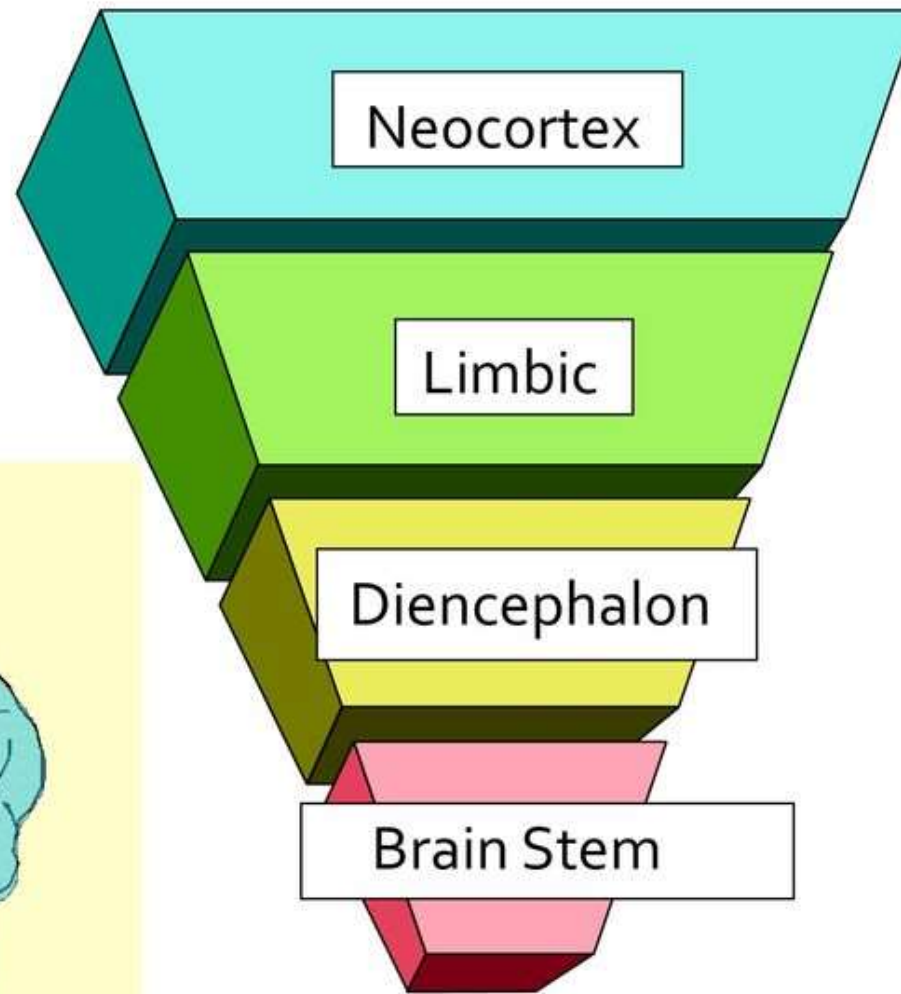
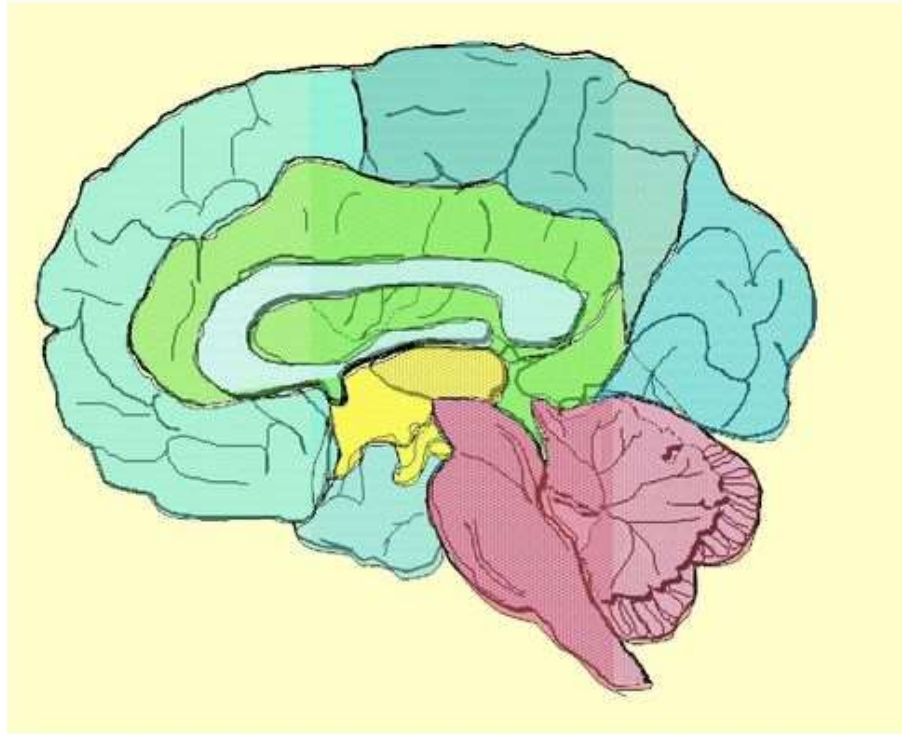


Learning helps our neurons GROW.

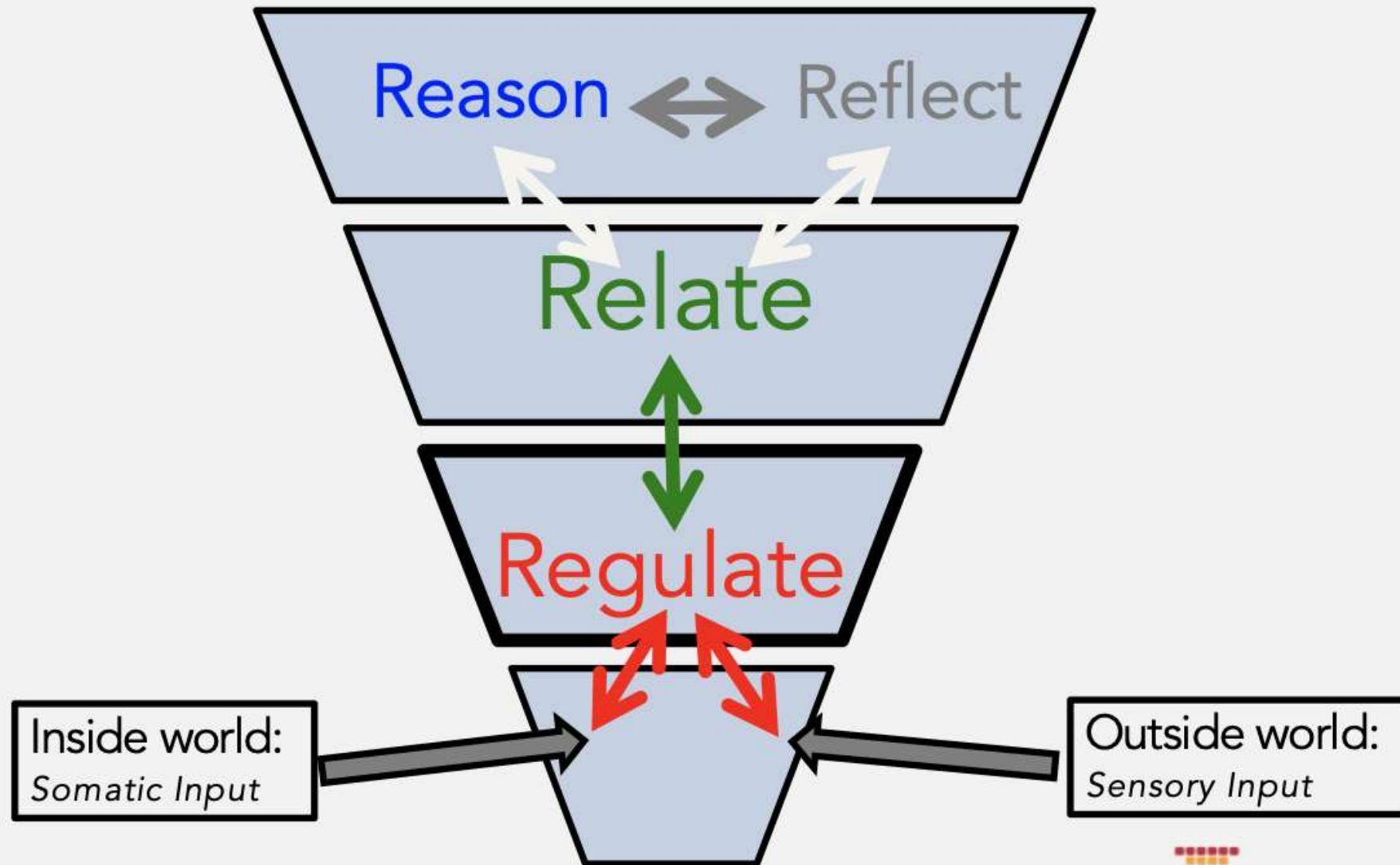
The more we learn, the more connections they make.



The brain is hierarchical  
from bottom to top and  
from simple to complex



# Sequential Engagement & Processing



## Brain is social Organ

- The Brain is a social organ-wired to connect-the modern human brains primary environment is our matrix of social relationships
- So Lets rethink education from a social and relational perspective



“The most powerful buffer in times of stress and distress is our social connectedness; so let's all remember to stay physically distant but emotionally close.

Reach out and connect; even a short text or smiling face on Zoom can help. Regulate, Relate, Reason.”

- @BDPerry (3/17/20)

[www.neurosequential.com/covid-19-resources](http://www.neurosequential.com/covid-19-resources)



On a day I was exceptionally concerned about my efficacy as an educator while wearing a mask a 3 year old said  
*"I love you because you are so special. Love makes joy come out your eyes and I can feel it in my heart." ...*

■ We can still build relationships while wearing a mask!

- ECE from Simcoe County



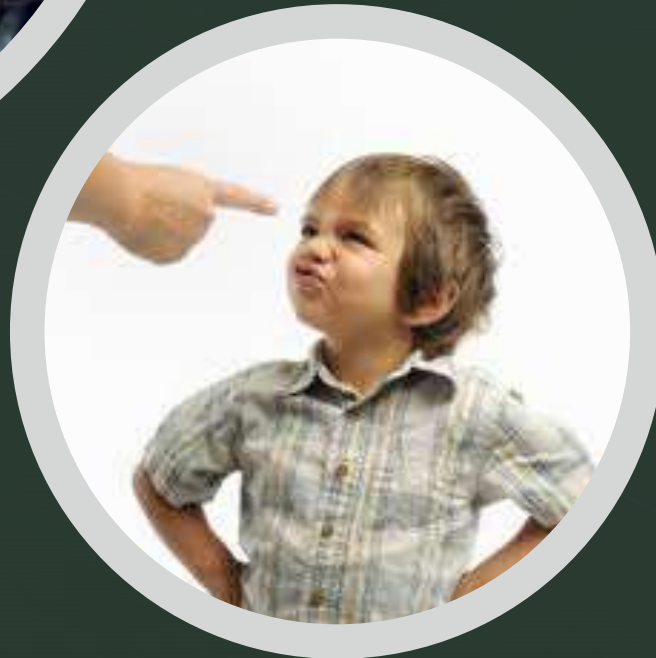


# Connecting

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How do we spend our time with children?

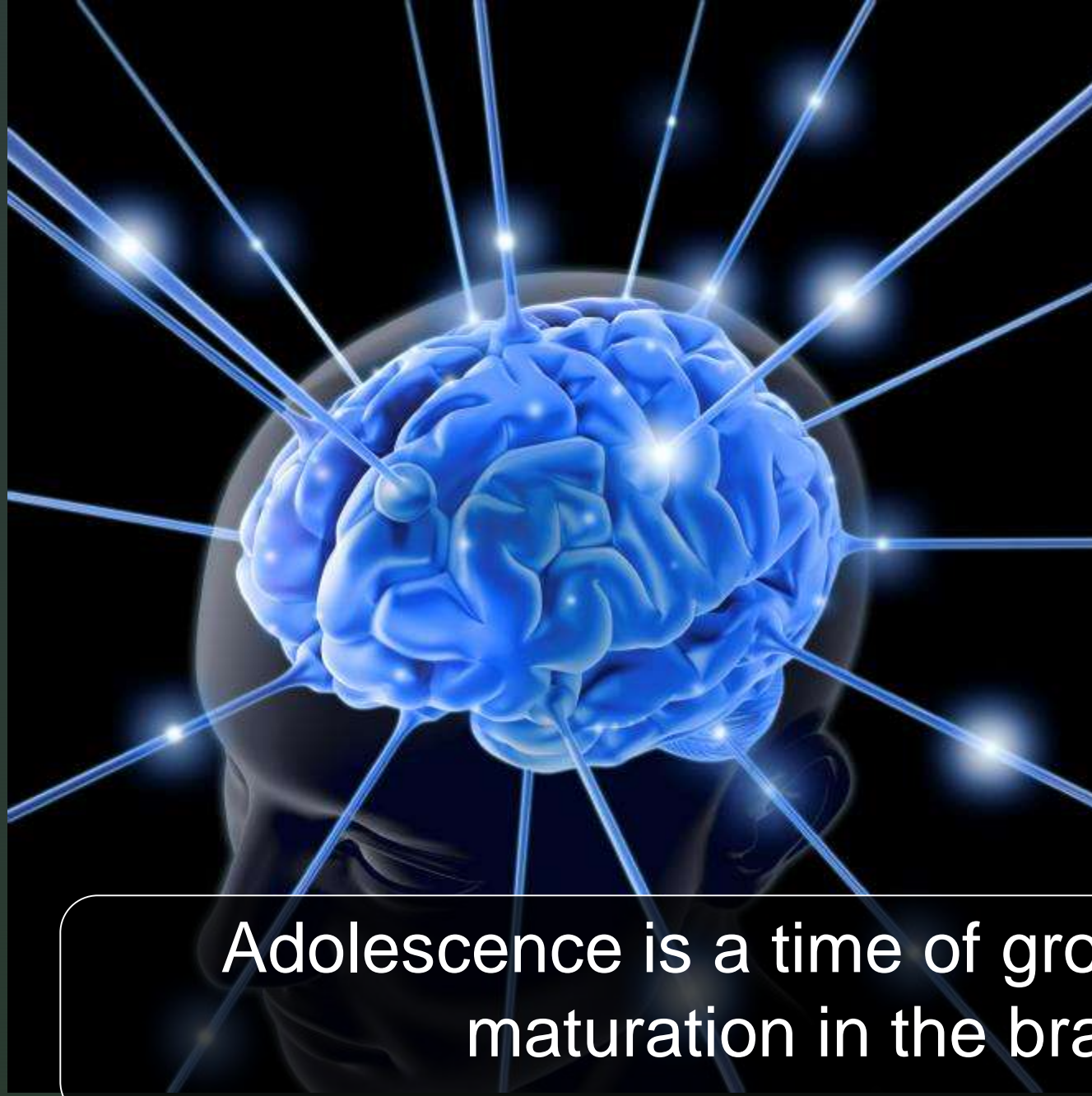
# Directing and Correcting



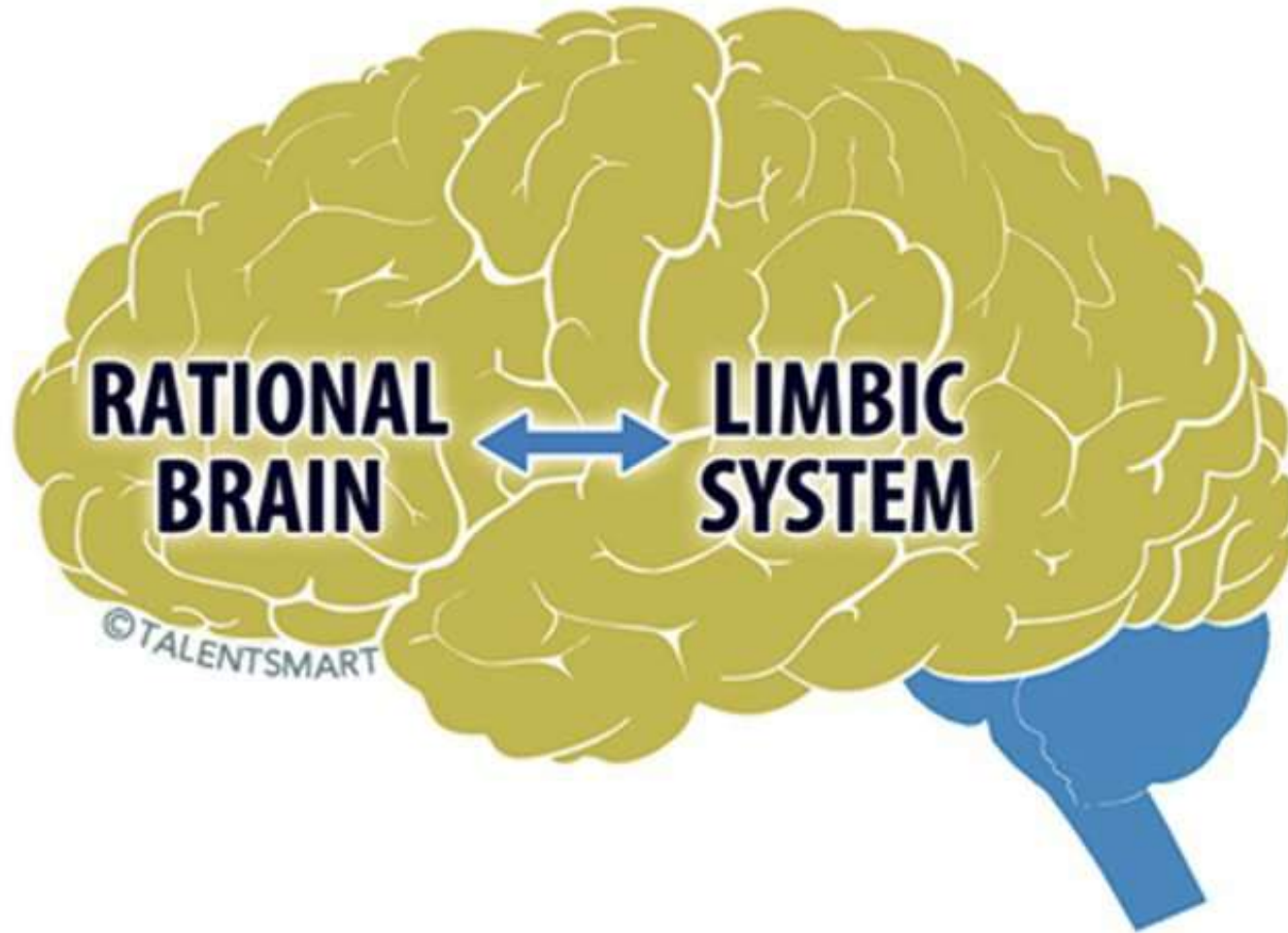


Filling the  
emotional piggy  
bank...





Adolescence is a time of growth and maturation in the brain.



Uncertainty makes your brain yield control to the limbic system. You must engage your rational "brain" to keep yourself on track.

▶  
The Brain on  
Stress



# Defining Adversity: Not all stress is equal

## Positive Stress

Normal, typical childhood experiences

Childcare drop off; playground injuries; losing a game

No buffering necessary

Temporary, mild elevation in stress hormones; brief increases in heart rate

Increased resiliency and confidence; development of coping skills

## Tolerable Stress

More complicated, scary and challenging

Natural tragedy; death of loved one; financial strain

Caring adult buffers stress

More continuing cardiovascular and stress hormone response

Adaptation and recovery likely, but potential for longer lasting negative outcomes

## Toxic Stress

Severe, long-lasting, uncontrollable, and /or frequent stress

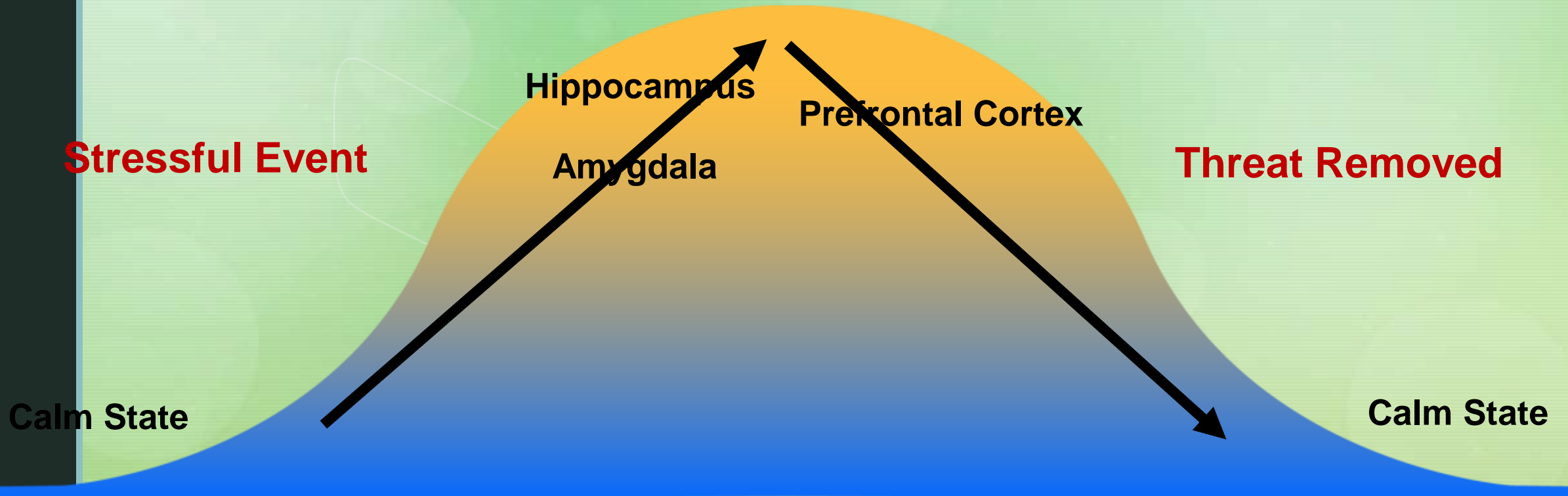
Physical, sexual, emotional abuse, exposure to violence, severe economic hardship

No adult buffers stress

Prolonged activation of stress response system

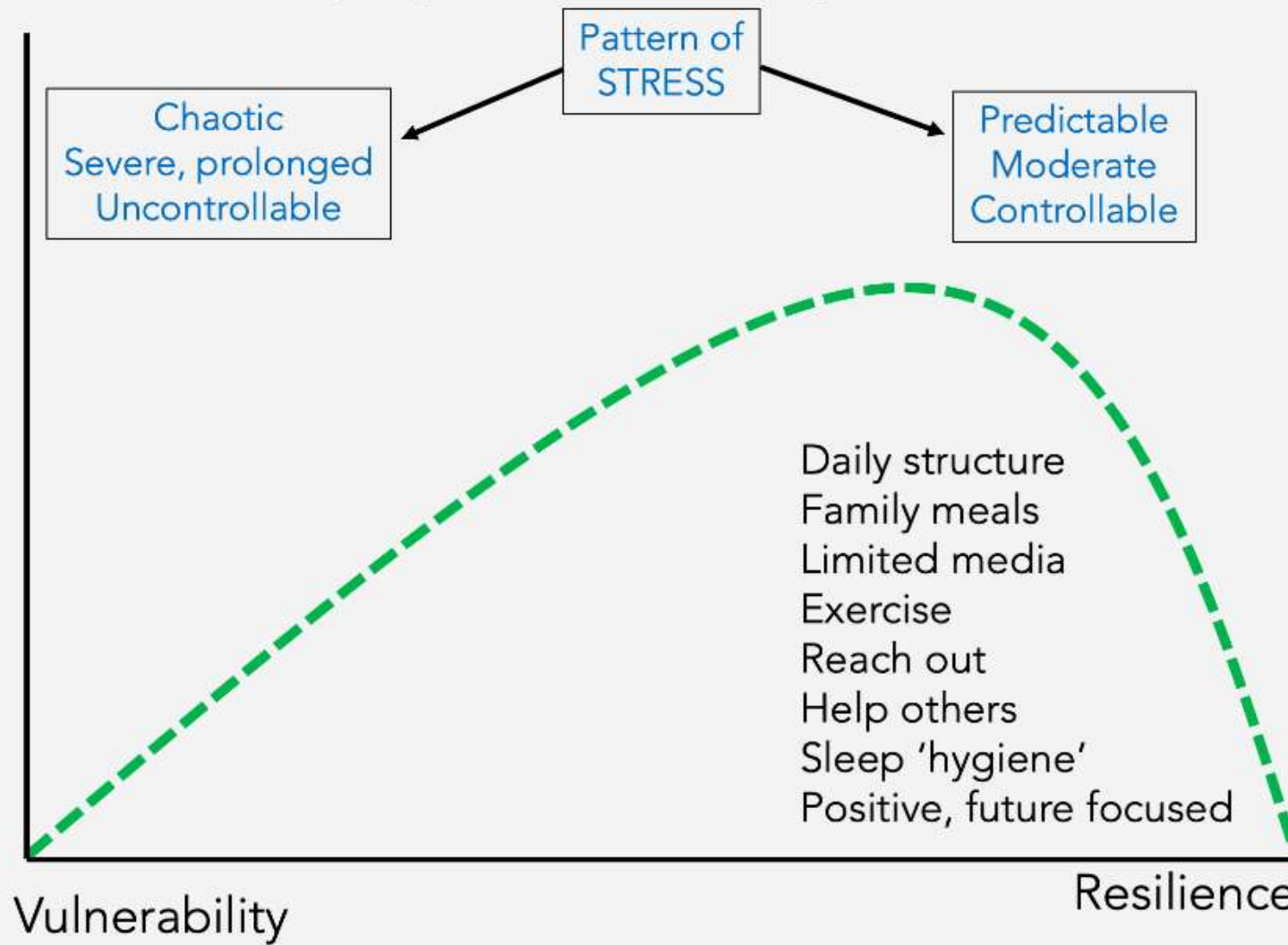
Possible lifelong changes in health, learning and behaviour

# Fight or Flight Response



**Ideal Stress Response Cycle**

# Managing Stress: Shifting Your Pattern



# For our own well-being: wellbeingandcoping.net



# Compassionate Coaching Questions that Support Reflection and Growth

- What do you need right now?
- What is most important?
- What are you hoping for?
- What's going well?
- What helped you the most today?

## Mind Set Matters

- ▼ What we **THINK**,
- ▼ Affects how we **FEEL**,
- ▼ Determines how we **ACT**.

## State matters too...

- ▼ How we **FEEL**,
- ▼ Affects how we **THINK**,
- ▼ Determines how we **ACT**.



Put on  
your  
own  
mask  
first



# Lend Them Your Calm

# School Mental Health Ontario

Calm Place – where do you feel the most relaxed?

Tense and relax

Just breathe

Gratitude moment

Just Notice 5 see,  
4 hear, 3 feel/touch,  
2 smell, 1 taste

Just listen

Let it go  
(radical acceptance)

Four finger affirmation  
“I am loved today”  
“I believe in me”

“Breath, listen, smile,  
love”  
“I can handle this”



## Protective Factors for Children

- Supportive adult-child relationships
- A sense of self-efficacy and perceived control
- Adaptive skills and self-regulatory capacities
- Sources of faith, hope and cultural traditions



## Resilient Adults Understand:

- Life can be hard. Suffering is a part of life.
- Choose carefully where you direct your attention. Notice the good.
- Ask yourself: is what I'm doing helping me or harming me?



Lucy Hone, 2019

What will the  
Children  
Remember?



# Laughter



**Thank you!**

Thank you!

Thank you!



Gratitude  
can change  
everything.