

S.O.S. Stressed Out Students and What to Do About It

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ORANGE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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Student Mental Health Matters



Why Care about Student Mental Health?

Schools are where children spend most of each day. While schools are primarily concerned with education, mental health is essential to learning as well as to social and emotional development. Because of this important interplay between emotional health and school success, schools must be partners in the mental health care of our

children. (President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health, 2003, p. 58.)

Mental Health is the successful performance of mental function, resulting in productive activities, fulfilling relationships with other people, and the ability to adapt to change and to cope with adversity. (US. Dept. of Health & Human Services, 2001)

Why Is Student Mental Health Important?

Students with good mental health are more successful in learning. Good mental health also helps students at strengthen students' social, emotional and decision-making skills positively affect their academic achievement (test scores and grades). (Fleming, et al., 2005)

- Just as physical health impacts learning and performance, so does mental health. When students are stressed, anxious, distracted or depressed it is difficult to pay attention, concentrate, and focus on their school work.



Orange County Student Mental Health Initiative

Join us in promoting students' healthy minds. Their success may depend on it.

How Do I Help a Student

I'm Worried About?

Use an avatar-based interactive training to learn what to say and how to link students to help.

Take the no-cost one-hour online training for middle school or high school educators.

at-risk
Online Training for
Middle and High School Educators

How do I help a student I'm worried about?

Access this free one-hour training at:
<http://kognito.com/california>

- Learn to recognize signs of psychological distress and connect students to support services
- Practice speaking with student avatars

Spread the Word:

More Training Resources

OCDE Professional Development Trainings

Learn more about prevention and early identification of student mental health issues that are barriers to learning and social emotional

www.ocde.us/HealthyMinds

Please provide us your important feedback.

Click on the link in the chat box to take you to the
4-minute survey

OR

Find the survey link in your webinar reminder
email. Thank you for your time.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/X32CB3X>

Viewing on a tablet ? Copy and paste the link.



Trainings Available

The Well-Balanced Professional:
Resilient and Relaxed

Integrating Resilience and Stress Management
into the School Day

Developing Children's Self-Management Skills



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Focus

What are young people saying about their stress?

What is stress and how does it impact a youth's mind and body?

How does stress impact learning & behavior?

So what can we do about it?

Key Understandings

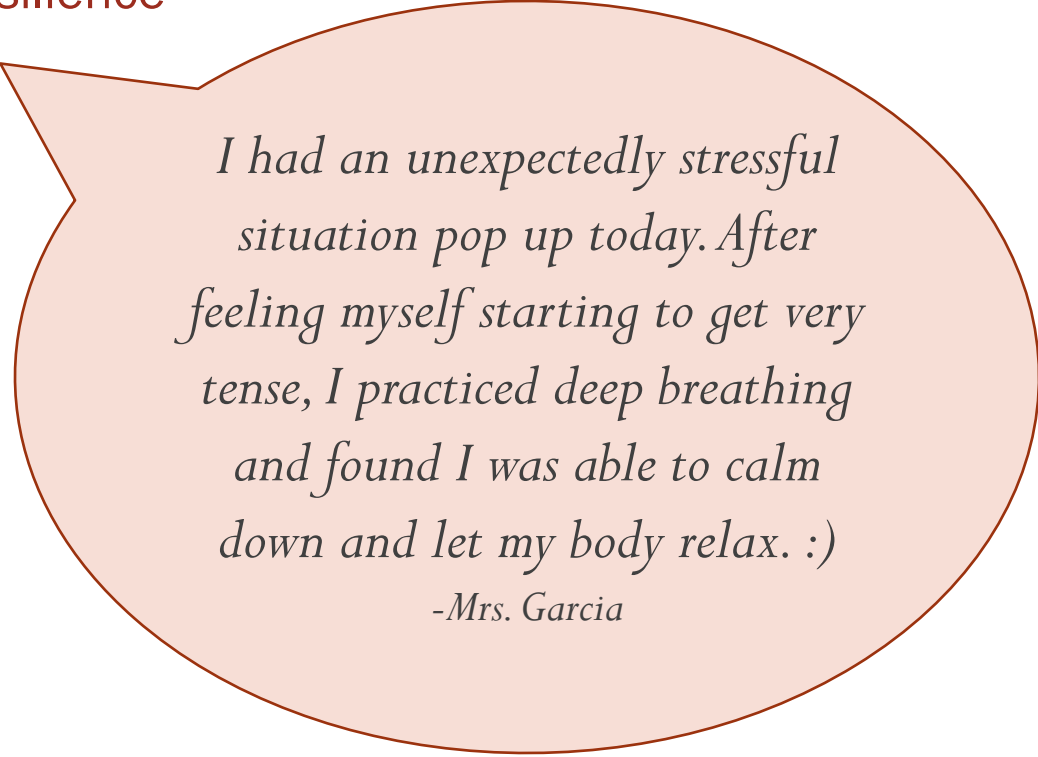
- Youth experience stress.
- Temporary stress is good for you — it promotes health and resiliency.
- Stress can be managed with healthy coping strategies.
- Chronic or acute stress can impact learning, mental & physical health, and brain development.
- Adults can model and teach healthy stress-coping strategies.
- We can help by creating nonthreatening environments & help youth normalize their stress response.



Resilient Mindful Learner Pilot Project

K-8 Teachers learn to integrate stress management, self-management, and mindful attention strategies for students within their classroom day.

We start with building teacher resilience & stress reduction practices.



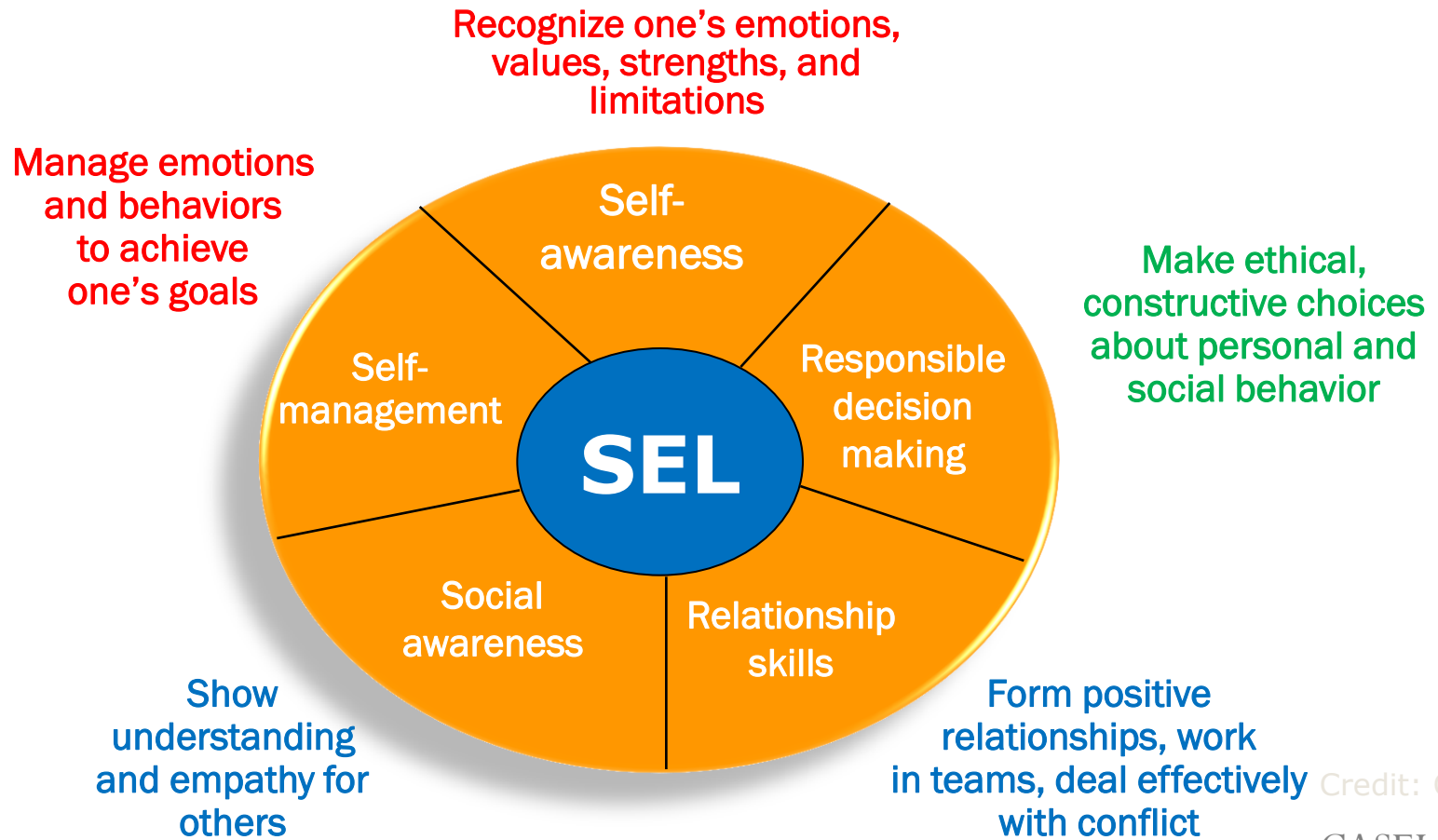
I had an unexpectedly stressful situation pop up today. After feeling myself starting to get very tense, I practiced deep breathing and found I was able to calm down and let my body relax. :)

-Mrs. Garcia

Want more info on the project?
Go to: www.ocde.us/healthyminds

What is Social and Emotional Learning?

SEL is a process of acquiring knowledge and skills related to five core competencies:



Although we
receive formal
training in writing
and math, learning
how to manage
stress is left entirely
to chance.

-Epstein, 2012



**Universal Prevention &
Selective and Indicated Intervention**

School-related stress is the most prevalent, untreated cause of academic failure in our schools. It may afflict 6-10 million children a year.

Barker 1987





Distress is linked to more than 50% of all absences and the cause in 17%.

Johnston-Brooks, et al. 1998



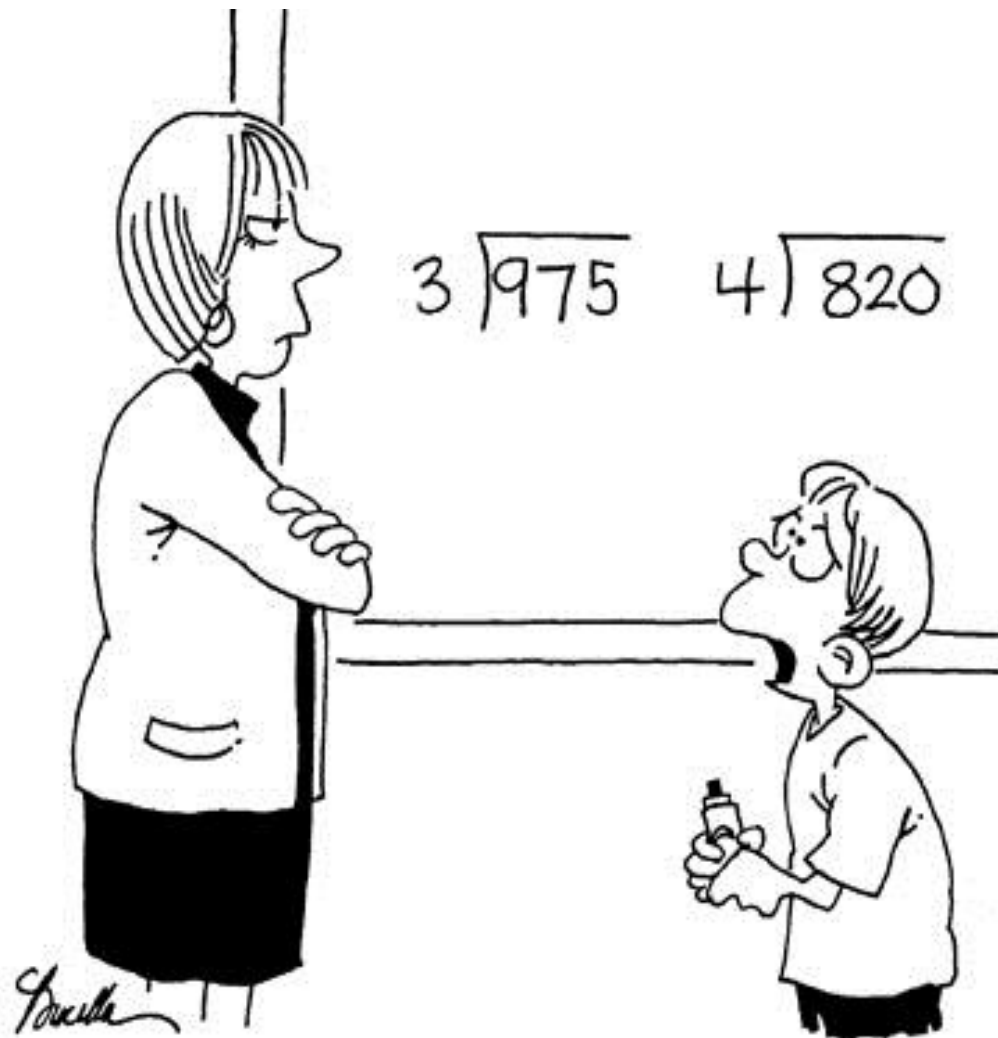
Stress may be silently sabotaging success in school. Its effects are especially potent for children in poverty.

Clancy Blair, New York University and NIH, 2012, p.64.

School-Related Stressors



- Bus rides
- Hallways, locker hassles
- Bullying and harassment
- Time or performance deadlines
- Teachers who embarrass or badger
- Fear of punishment
- Language difficulties
- Hyper competition
- Testing



"IS THERE SOME PLACE I CAN SIGN UP FOR
A 'DO NOT CALL ON ME' LIST?"

Focus

What are young people saying about their stress?

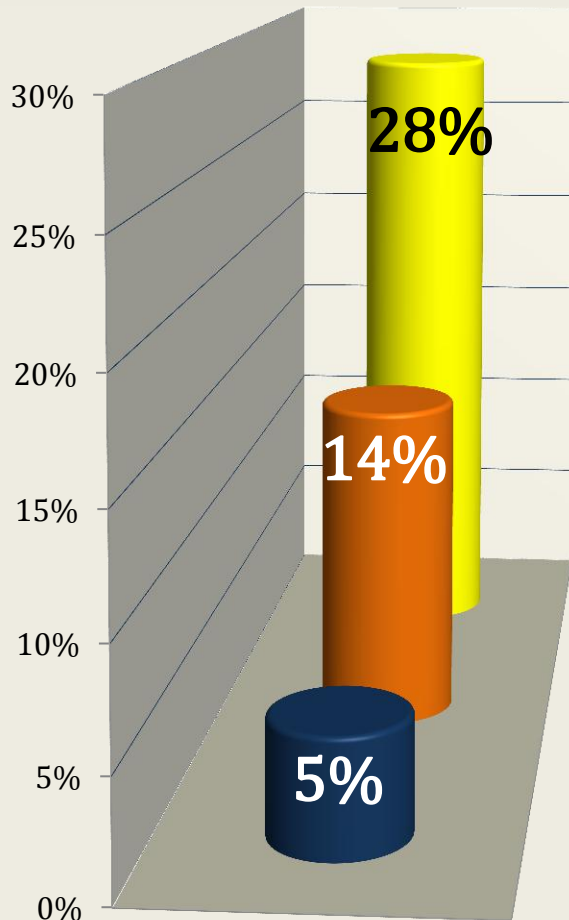
What is stress and how does it impact a youth's mind and body?

How does stress impact learning & behavior?

So what can we do about it?

Rating Extreme Stress

(Stress rated 8, 9, or 10 on a 10-point scale)



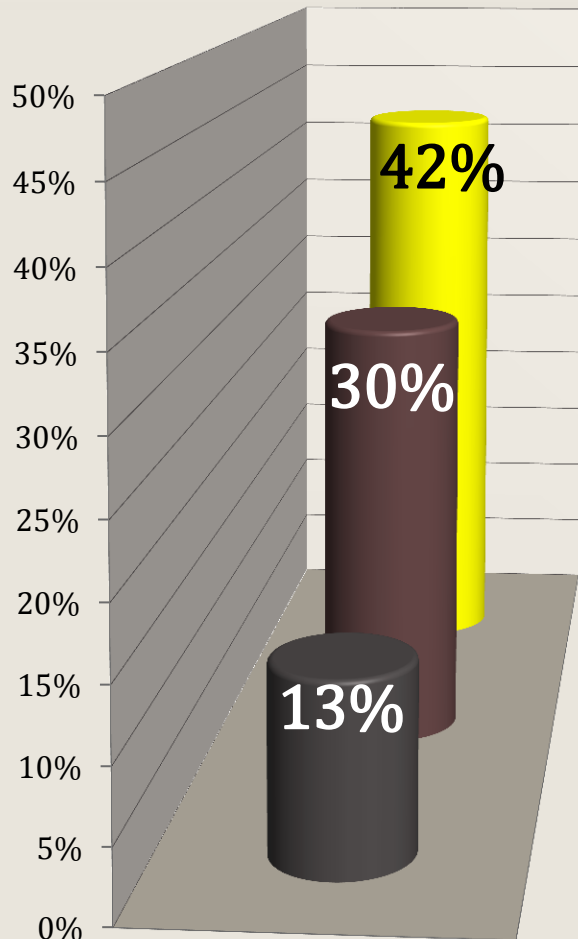
■ Adult perception of youth

■ Tween perception 8-12 years old

■ Teen perception 13-17 years old

Adults n=1,568 Youth n=1,206
APA, 2009

Physical Symptoms Associated with Stress

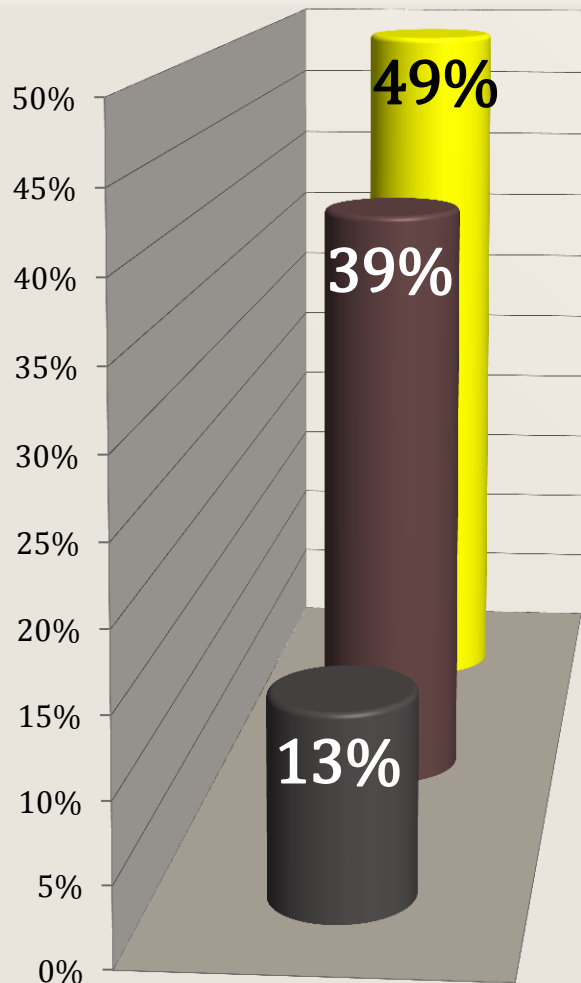


- Adult perception of youth
- Tween perspective 8-12 years old
- Teen perspective 13-17 years old

Adults n=1,568 Youth n=1,206

APA, 2009

Sleep Issues Associated with Stress



- Adult perception of youth
- Tween perspective 8-12 years old
- Teen perspective 13-17 years old

Adults n=1,568 Youth n=1,206

APA, 2009

Teens Talk about Their Stress

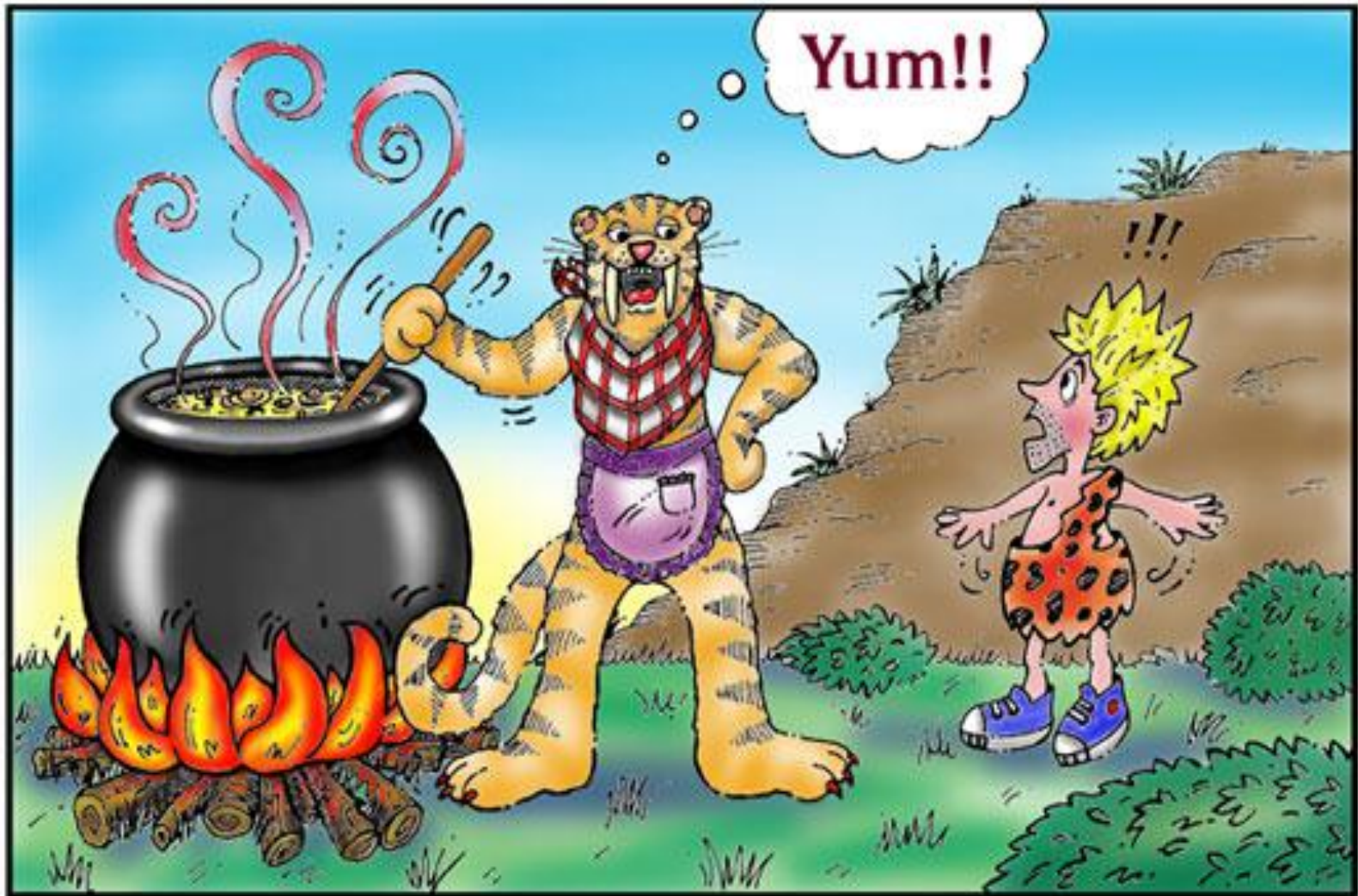
Focus

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**Stress has always been with us.
It can keep us safe and alert to danger.**

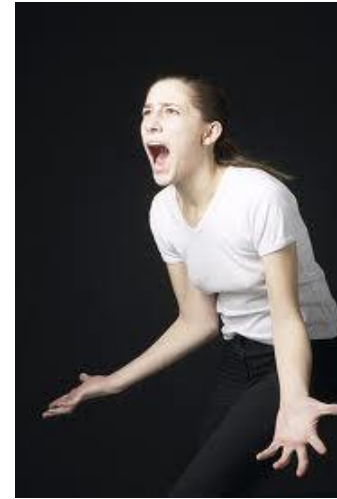
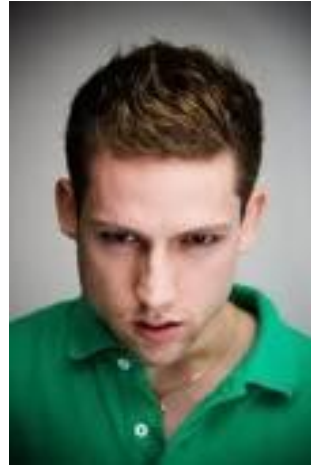
FIGHT

—or—

FLIGHT

FREEZE

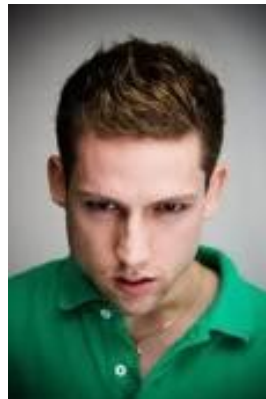




Is a mind and body reaction when we **perceive** a challenge or a tough situation or person.
We may feel that we have no control.



Stress Is Between Our Ears



Stress is something we create through our reaction to what happens. It's how we handle stress that makes the difference.

The Sympathetic and Parasympathetic Divisions of the Nervous System

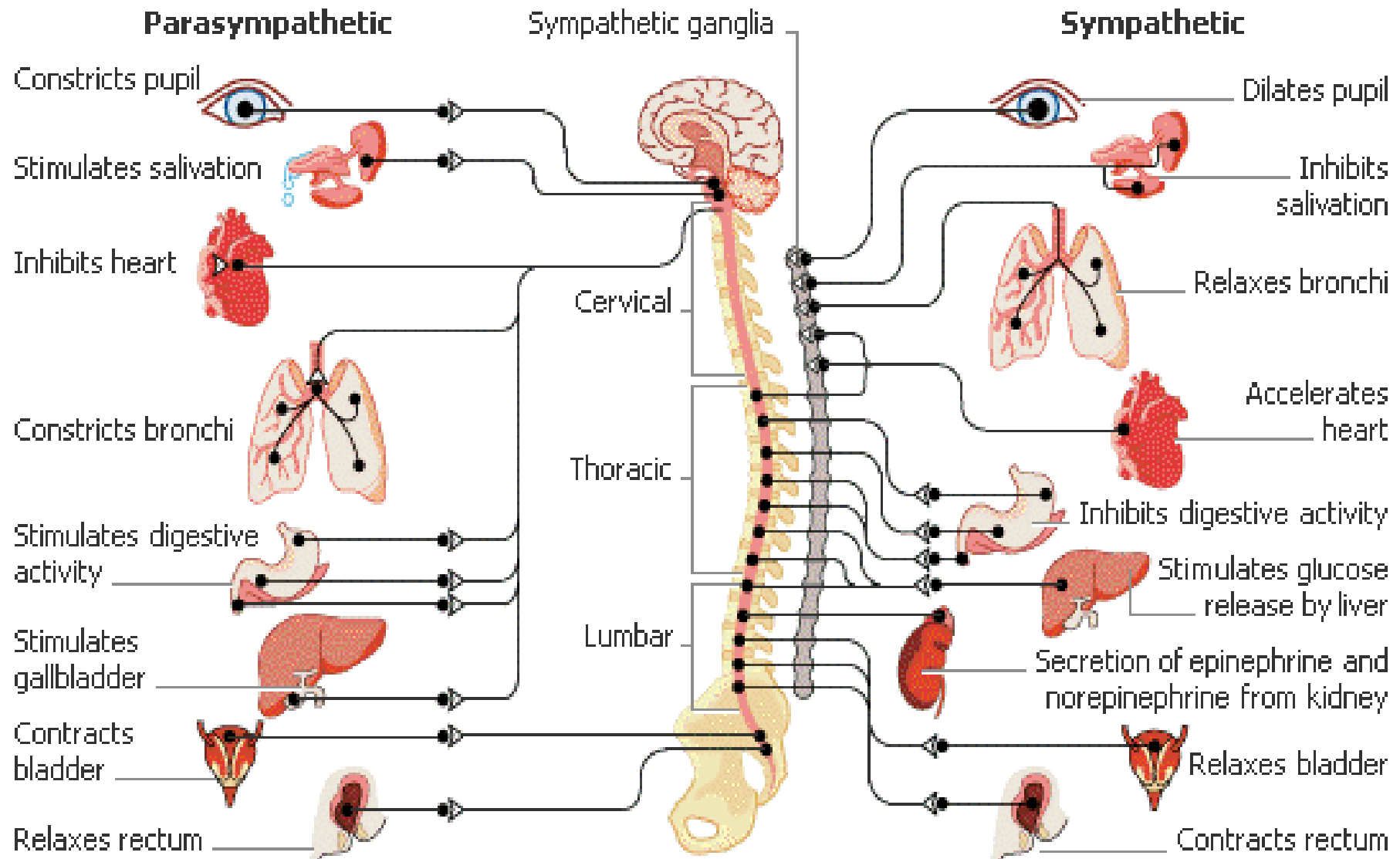
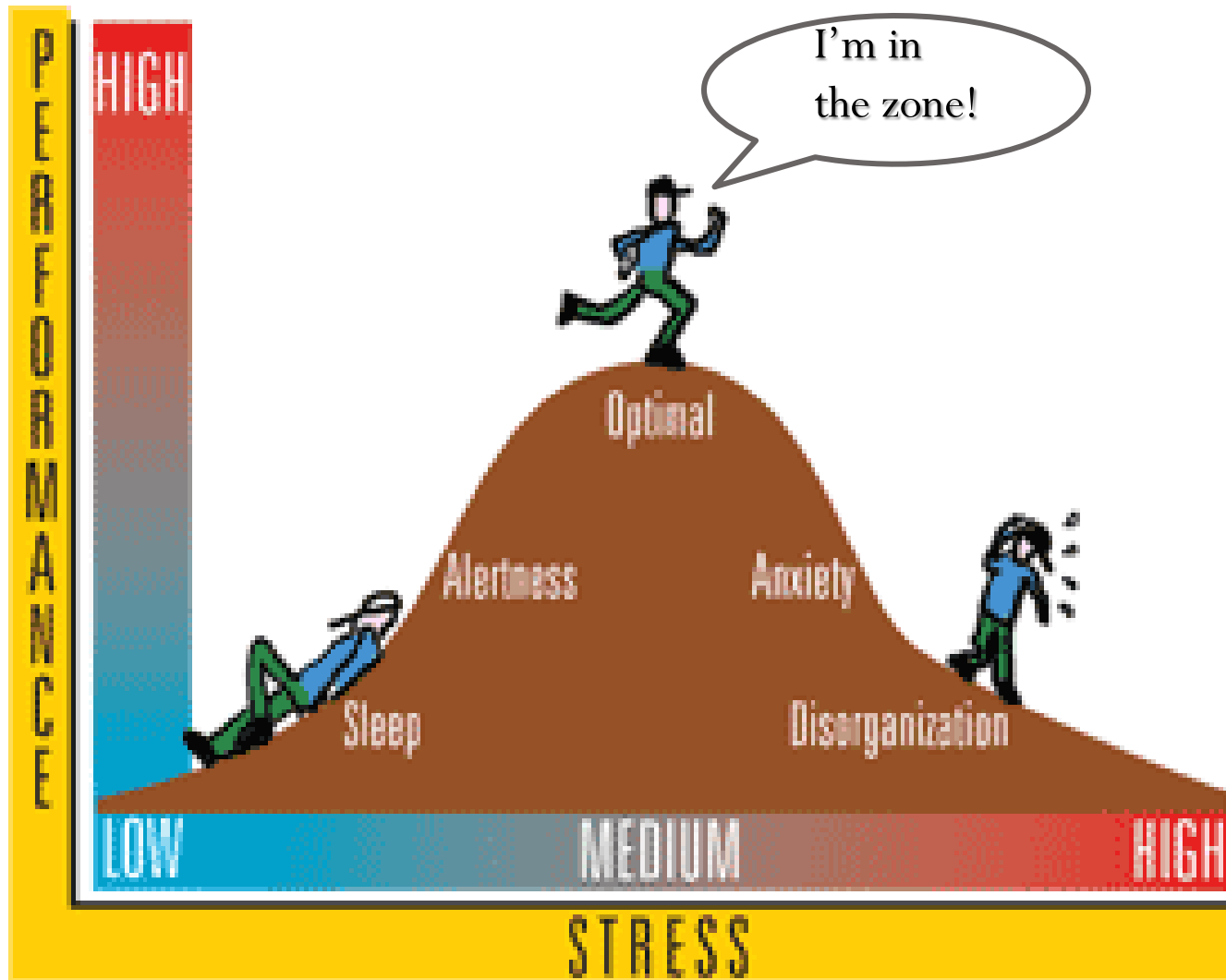


Figure Eight of
— The Stress Response —



A certain amount of stress is a normal part of life.

Stress Performance Connection

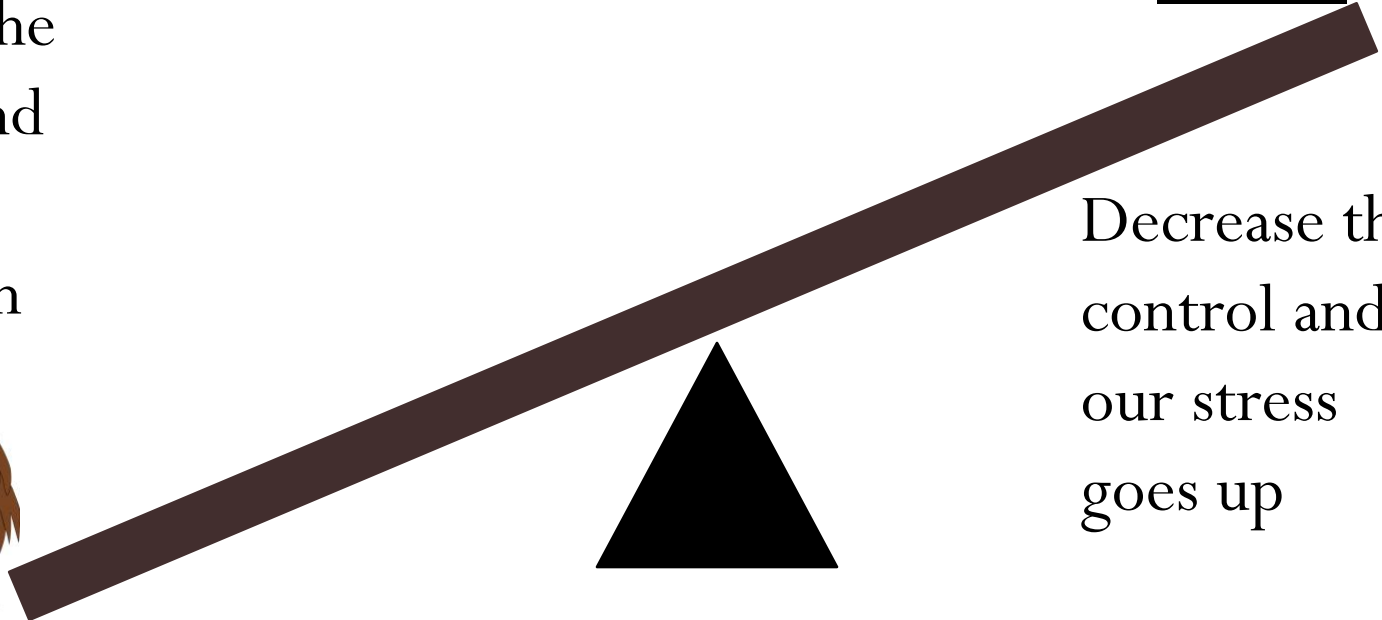


The Stress We Experience Is our Reaction to a Perceived Loss of Control Over an Adverse Situation

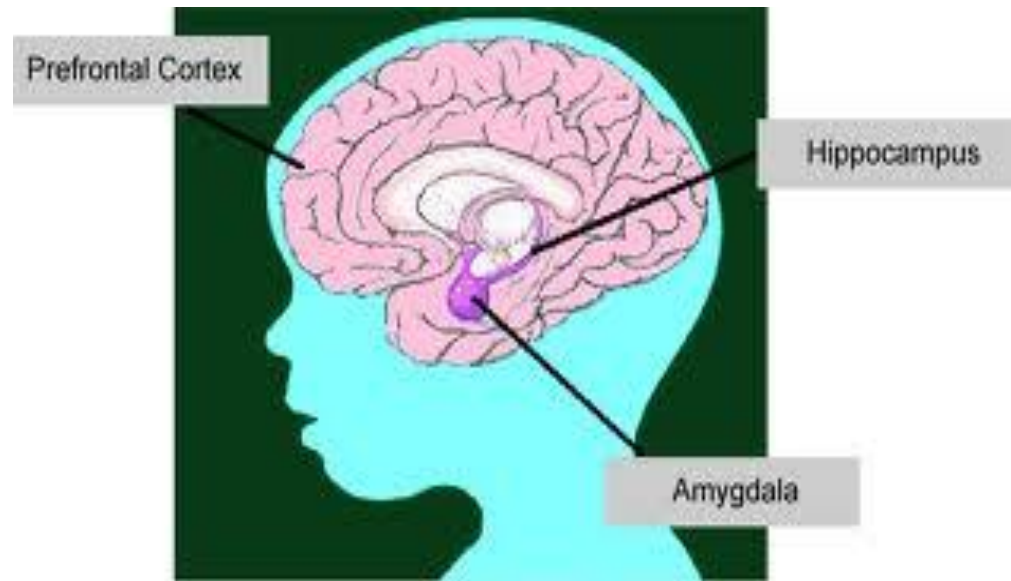
Increase the
control and
our stress
goes down



Decrease the
control and
our stress
goes up



What's the Brain Got to Do with It?

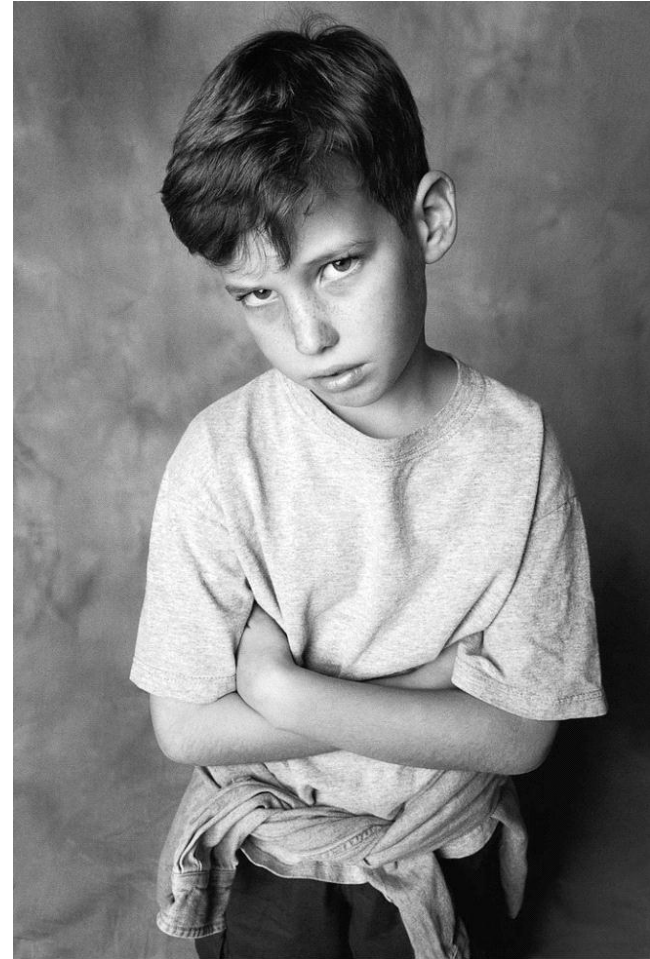


Amygdala

- Alarm of the brain or watchdog of the brain
- Responds to perceived threats & processes fear & anger
- Can “hijack” the brain and prefrontal cortex or executive function doesn't function
- Act before we think-impulsivity

Children Are Vulnerable To Stress

- Family disruption: divorce, called to war, moving
- Parents mental health
- Socioeconomic distress
- Temperamental vulnerability
- Abuse
- Neglect of child's needs
- Overscheduled, hectic routines (*the hurried child*)
- Parties, pets, new siblings



Types of Stress

- Positive
- Tolerable
- Toxic

Toxic Stress and the Brain



- Impair brain circuit connections
- In extreme, results in smaller brain
- Low stress threshold results in becoming overly reactive to adverse experiences throughout life
- High levels of cortisol (stress hormone)
 - ✓ Can suppress immune system
 - ✓ Damage hippocampus (learning & memory)
 - ✓ Cognitive deficits can continue into adulthood

Children & Teens React To Stress in Different Ways

- Illness
- Withdrawn
- Nervous
- Show anger
- Demand attention
- Isolate themselves
- Easily agitated
- Irritable
- Lethargic
- Lazy
- Aggressive

Some children handle stressors better than others.
We often call these children **resilient**.

A red hexagon with a dark red border, centered on a light blue background. Inside the hexagon, the text "Watch for changes in habits or behavior" is written in a white, serif font, arranged in four lines.

Watch for
changes in
habits or
behavior

**Often
symptoms of
unmanaged
stress are
mistaken as
inappropriate
behavior.**



Physical Stress Warning Signs

Headaches

Stomachaches

Sleep disturbances

Low back pain

Fatigue

Tiredness

Cold hands and feet

Neck and shoulder pain

Indigestion

Insomnia

Dizziness

Menstrual distress

Nausea

Loss of appetite or overeating

Heart palpitations

Restlessness

Asthma attacks

Frequent colds and flu

Frequent low grade Infections

Behavioral, Cognitive and Emotional Signs of Stress

Memory problems

Inability to concentrate

Poor judgment

Seeing only the negative

Anxious or racing thoughts

Constant worrying

Overuse of alcohol

Criticizing others

Compulsive gum chewing

Easily upset

Boredom-apathy

Moodiness

Irritability or short temper

Agitation, inability to relax

Feeling overwhelmed

Loneliness

Depression, general unhappiness

Feeling powerless

Thoughts of running away

Emptiness, doubt

Lack of creativity

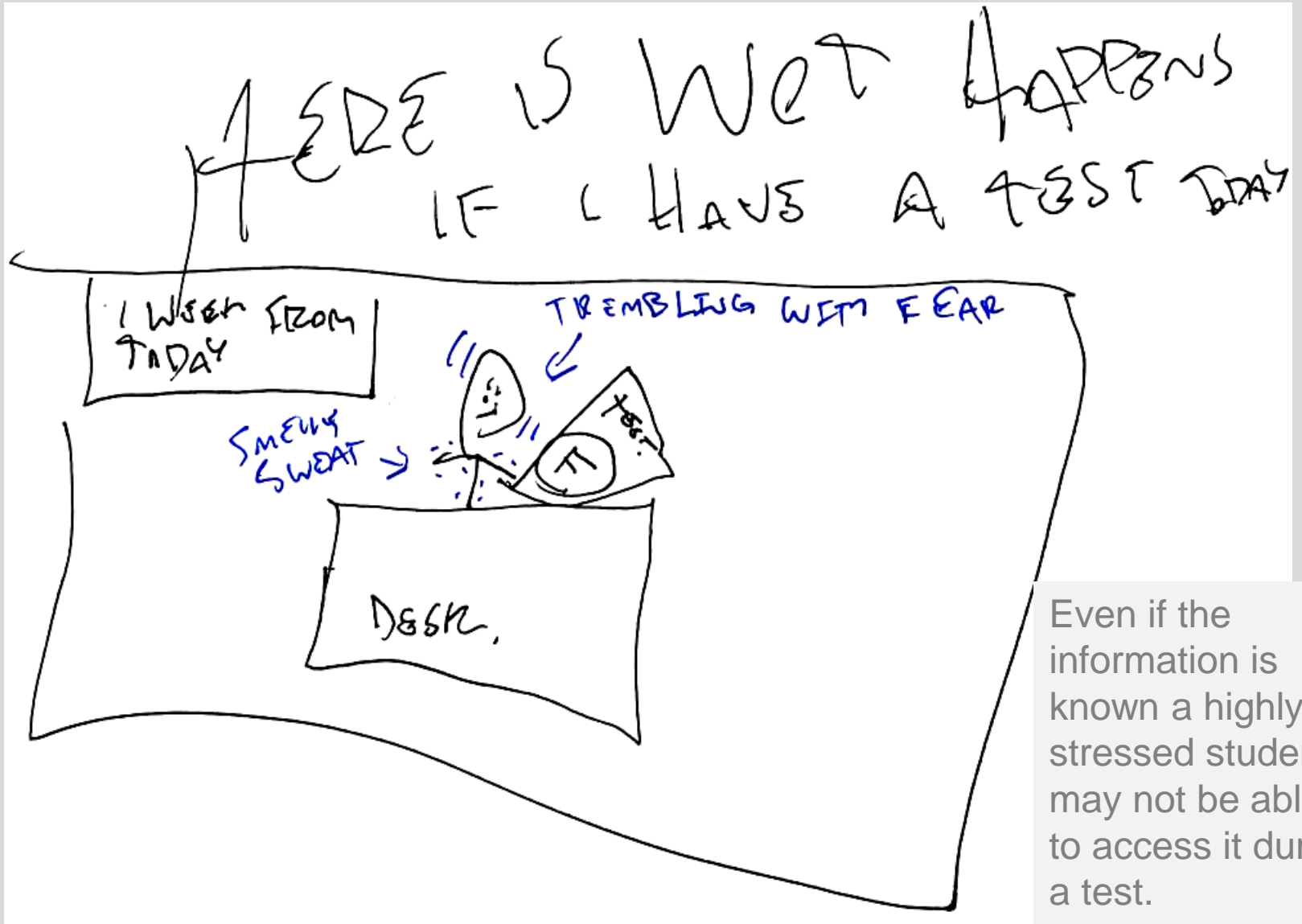
Lack of sense of humor



Additional Possible Indicators of Teen Stress

- Significantly avoiding parents
- Abandoning long-time friendships for a new set of peers
- Expressing excessive hostility toward family members

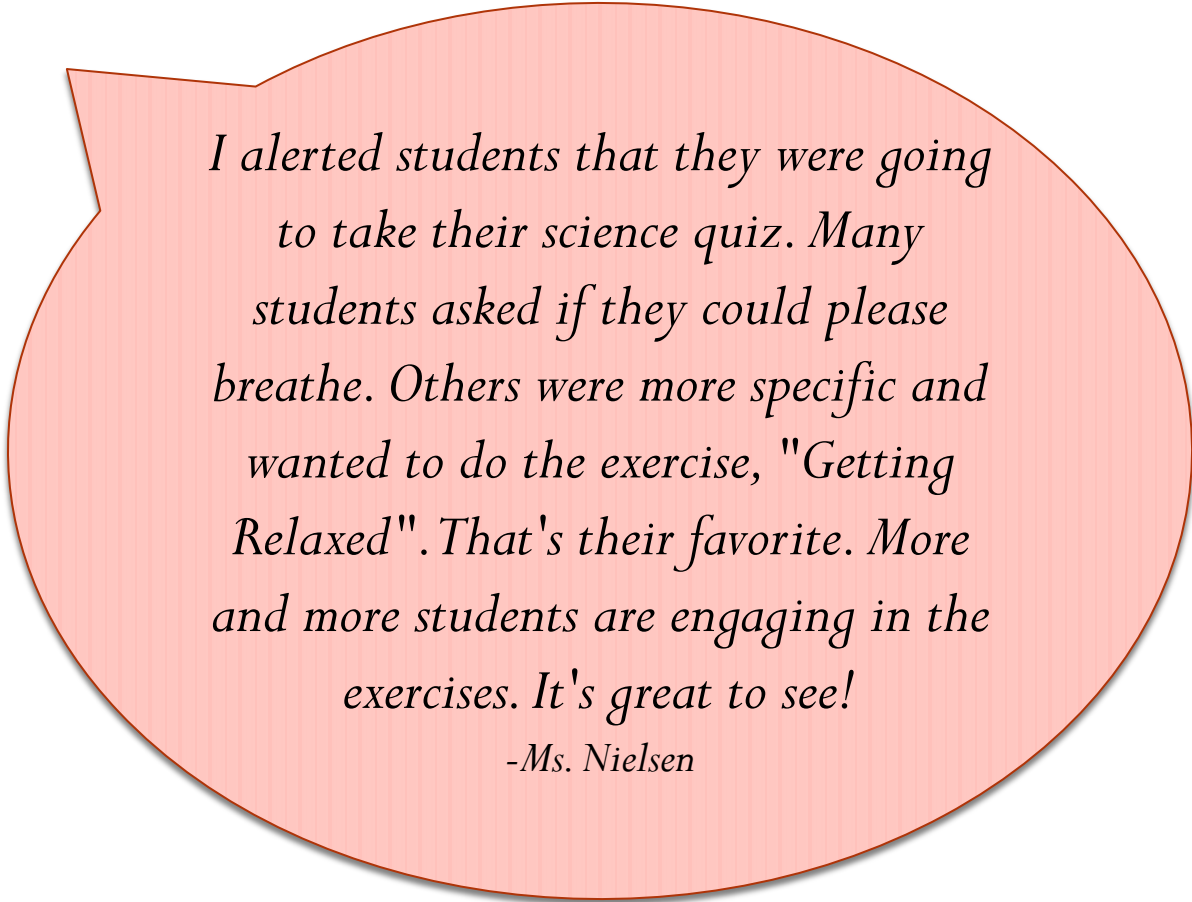
Debilitating Effects of Test Anxiety



Even if the information is known a highly-stressed student may not be able to access it during a test.

Resilient Mindful Learner Pilot Project

K-8 Teachers learn to integrate stress management, self-management, and mindful attention strategies for students within their classroom day.



I alerted students that they were going to take their science quiz. Many students asked if they could please breathe. Others were more specific and wanted to do the exercise, "Getting Relaxed". That's their favorite. More and more students are engaging in the exercises. It's great to see!

-Ms. Nielsen

Want more info on the project?
Go to: www.ocde.us/healthyminds

Asking Kids How They Cope



52% play or do something active

44% listen to music

42% watch TV or play video game

30% talk to friend

29% try not to think about it

28% try to work things out

26% eat something

25% hurt themselves

23% lose their temper

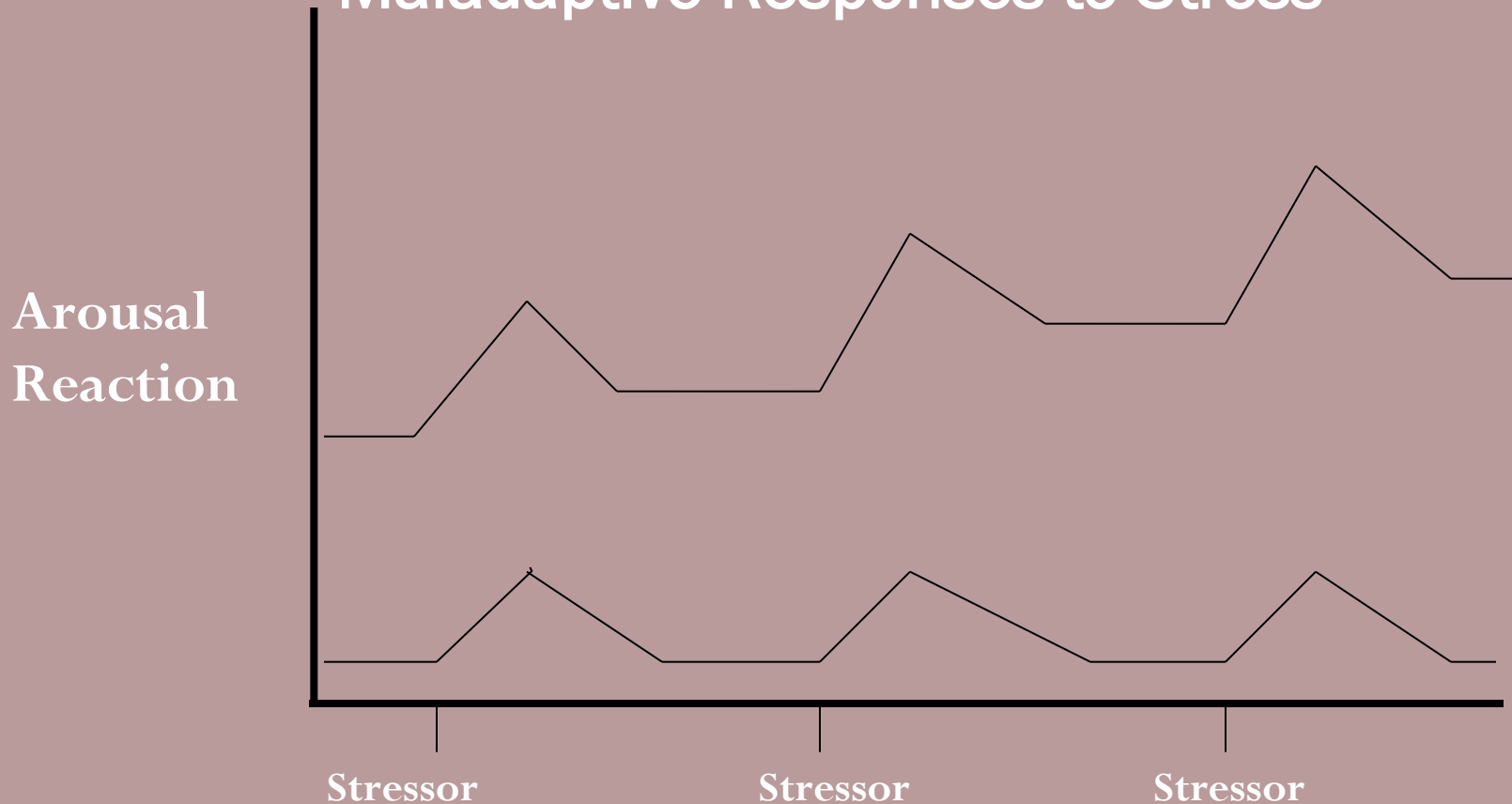
22% talk to a parent

11% cry

And for Teens.....

- Smoking
- Alcohol
- Other drugs
- Sleep
- Family Connections

Comparing Normal and Maladaptive Responses to Stress



In the normal person, arousal reactions return to normal after the stressor is dealt with. In maladaptive responses to stress, the arousal reaction continues even after the stressor has been dealt with. In other words, the set point or baseline of arousal reactions is steadily moved upward.

Unhealthy Coping Can Result in a Range of Problems



- Poor academic performance
- Conduct problems
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Suicide
- Eating disorders
- Violence

(Kovacs, 1997; Matheny et al., 1993)



Handling stress effectively can reduce risk of a mental health disorder.

Educators Guide to Children's Mental Health
Minnesota Assn. for Children's Mental Health

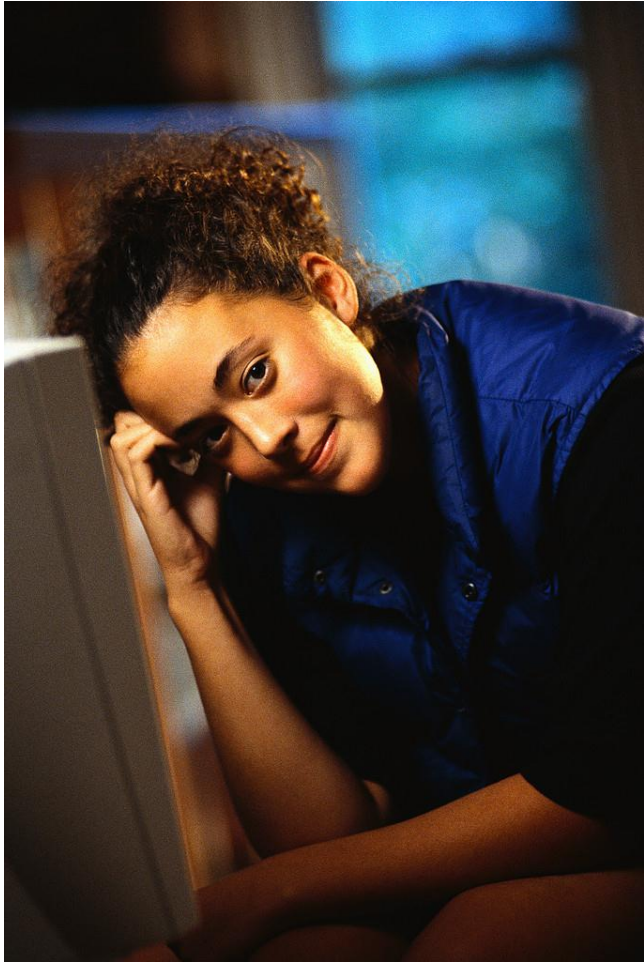
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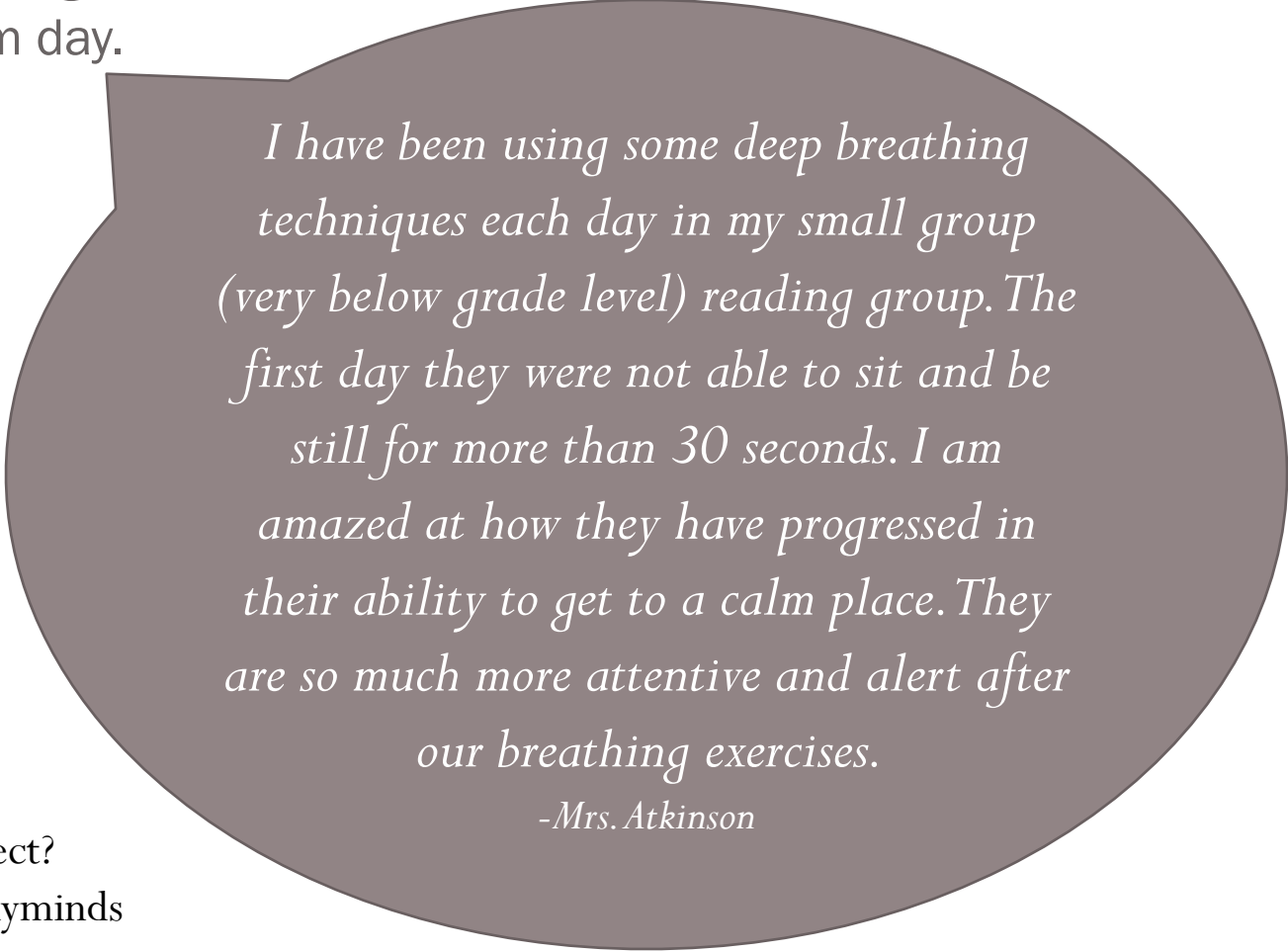


What is the optimal
mind-body state for
learning?

Relaxed Alertness

Resilient Mindful Learner Pilot Project

K-8 Teachers learn to integrate stress management, self-management, and mindful attention strategies for students within their classroom day.



I have been using some deep breathing techniques each day in my small group (very below grade level) reading group. The first day they were not able to sit and be still for more than 30 seconds. I am amazed at how they have progressed in their ability to get to a calm place. They are so much more attentive and alert after our breathing exercises.

-Mrs. Atkinson

Want more info on the project?

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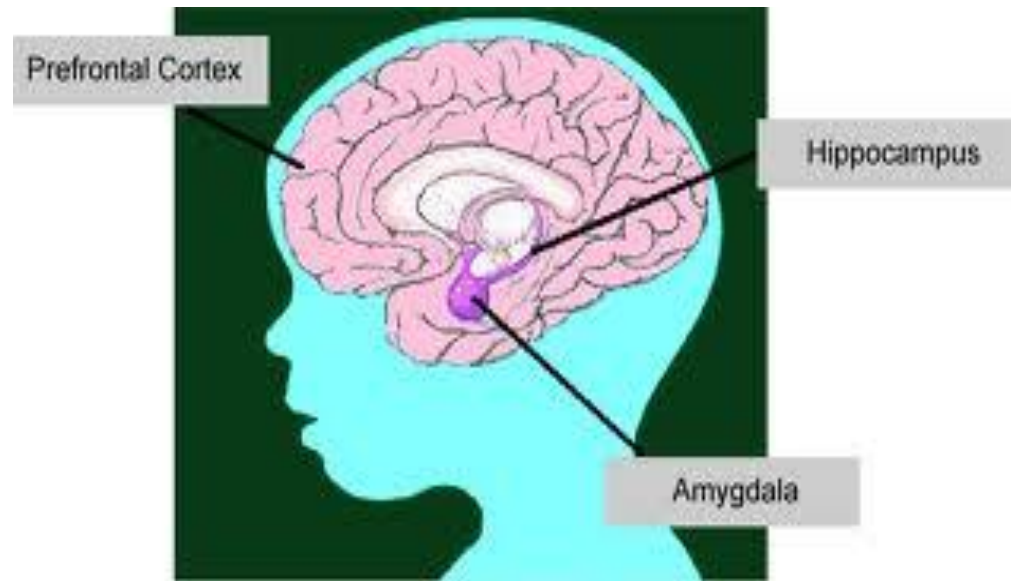
What's the optimal environment for learning?

- High challenge
- Low threat
- Felt safety
- Positive relationships

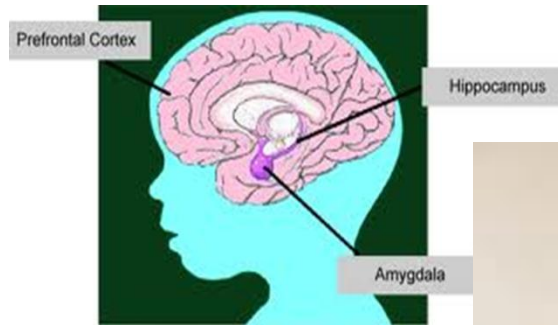
Stress, Learning and the Brain

Hippocampus

- Most receptive to stress
- Critical for new learning, forming explicit memories of facts, details and important life events.
- Stress and memory are highly correlated.



Stress, Learning and the Brain



Prefrontal Cortex (PFC) the Executive Function:

- **Decision making**
- Emotional control (calming, focus)
- **Paying attention**
- Short-term memory
- **Long-term memory**
- Think before we act

PFC functioning is suboptimal in children and teenagers in response to stress

Chronic Stress

Impairs working memory

- Kids forget directions
- Can't juggle content in their head
- Struggle to process simple problems

Impairs social skills

- Teachers and kids are more rude and less forgiving
- Loss of self control
- Misread others

Impairs habit changes

- Staff & kids repeat same old behaviors

Impairs decision making

Focus

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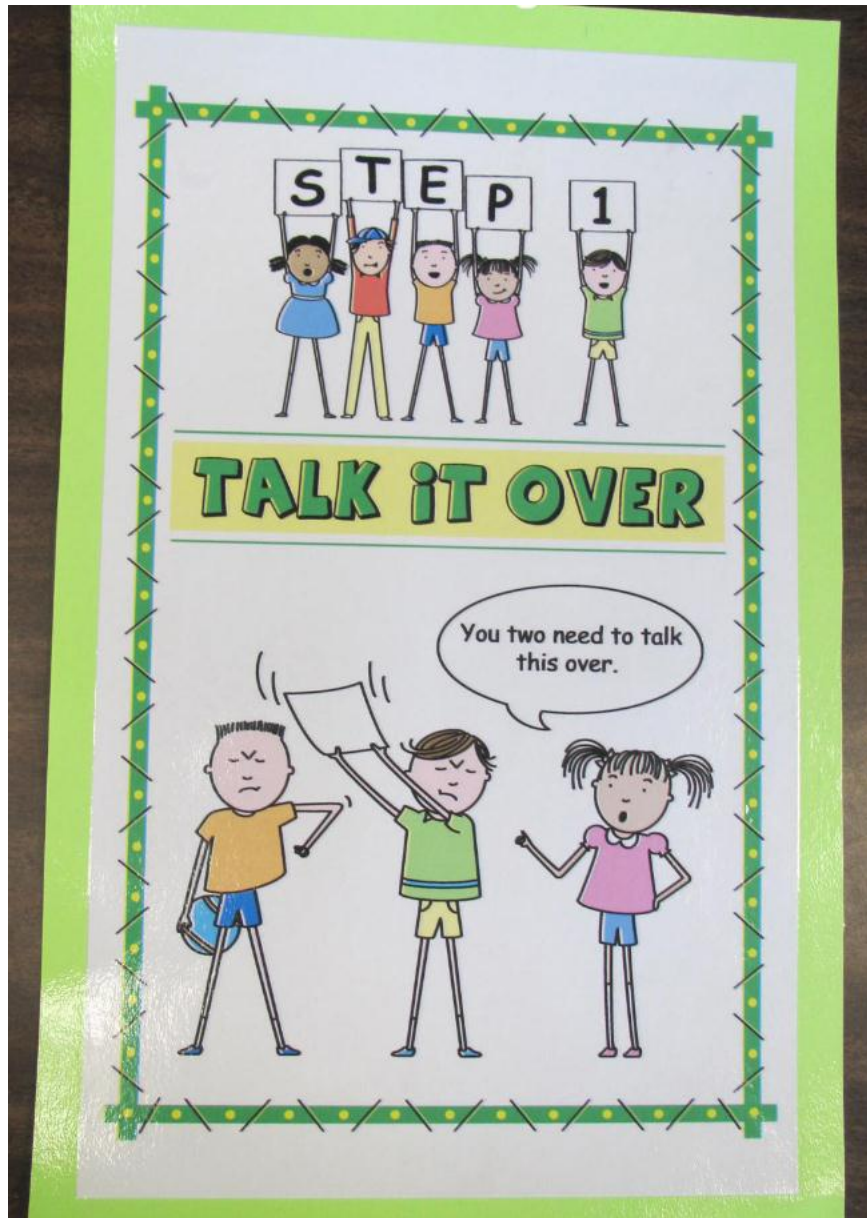
Teaching kids
how to deal
with stressors
will help
them succeed.





Physical Activity

Consistently related to higher levels of self-esteem
and lower levels of anxiety and stress



Talk through problems

Practice relaxation & self-calming skills

The Relaxation Response

A state of focused awareness with
an attitude of interest.

The mind's chatter is reduced and
becomes clearer and calmer.



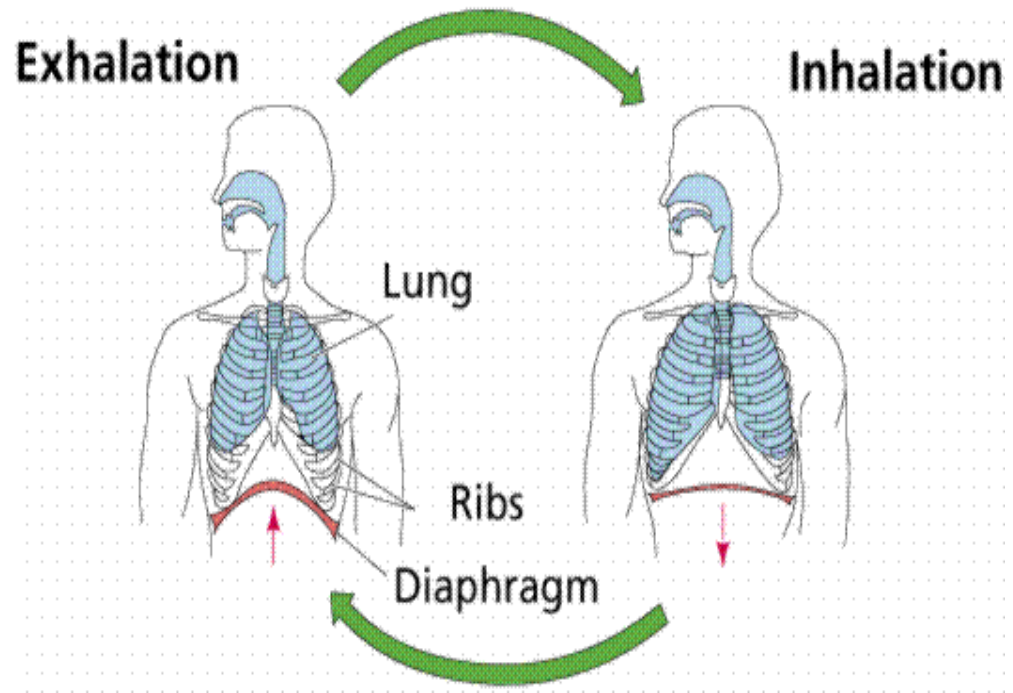
Relaxation Affects Your Mind and Body



- ✓ Less fear and anxiety
- ✓ **Reduces muscle tension**
- ✓ Quiets the mind
- ✓ **Improves sleep**
- ✓ Improves focus & concentration
- ✓ **Improved immune function**
- ✓ Helps with creative problem-solving
- ✓ **Reduces fatigue**
- ✓ Decreases depression
- ✓ Lessens impulsivity
- ✓ **Increases cooperation and work habits**

Stressful or Relaxing Breath?

- How you breathe can affect stress levels
- Shallow chest breathing linked to stress
- Deep diaphragmatic breathing linked to relaxation
- Focusing on breath can trigger relaxation and release body toxins



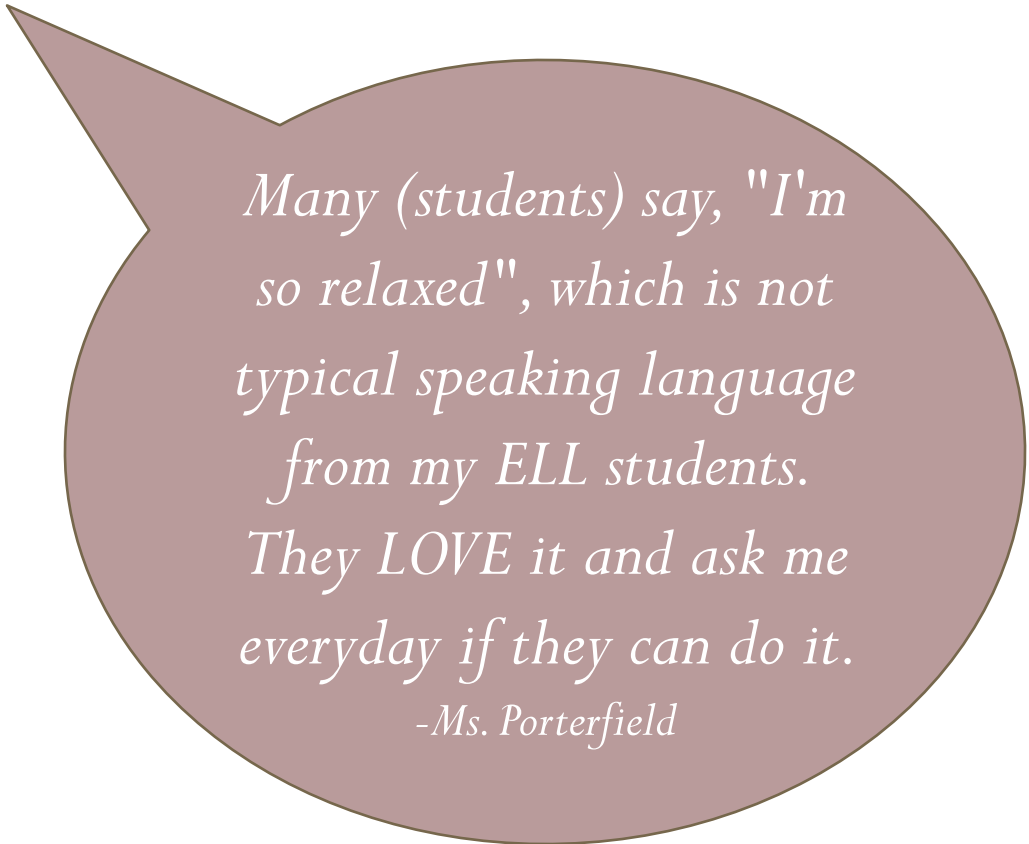
breathing

Unconscious

Conscious

Resilient Mindful Learner Pilot Project

K-8 Teachers learn to integrate stress management, self-management, and mindful attention strategies for students within their classroom day.



Many (students) say, "I'm so relaxed", which is not typical speaking language from my ELL students. They LOVE it and ask me everyday if they can do it.

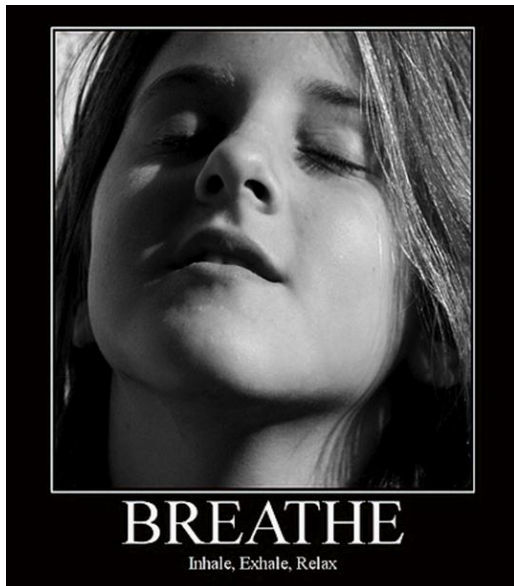
-Ms. Porterfield

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Teach Deep Abdominal Breathing

- One of the most effective ways to stay in control
- Teach and practice repeatedly when calm
- Sitting with back straight and pressed into a chair for support
- Inhale slowly count to 5 -pause count to 2 -exhale count to 5 then repeat
- Place hand on belly. Notice abdomen expand and contract.



Other Ways to Help Students Cope with Stress

- ❑ Teach that mistakes OK
- ❑ Clear rules and consequences
- ❑ Teach how to handle difficult situations
- ❑ Tell stories of effective coping
- ❑ Be a role model dealing with stress

Laugh



Stress Busters

Breathe

**Exercise or
Play sports**



Read a
good book



Take a walk

**Listen to
calming
music**



**Yawn and
Stretch**



Sit quietly

**Talk with
a friend**



**Make
music**

Draw



**Picture
yourself in
a beautiful
place**



*Relax in a
comfortable
spot*



**Play
with
your
pet**




**What makes me stressed?
What can I control?**



**How do I feel when I am stressed?
How do I think when I am stressed?**



What can I do when I feel stressed?



Emotions
are
contagious

School staff and parents may support to reduce stress in their lives.





I can not, and should not, be cured of
my stress, but merely taught to enjoy it.

Hans Selye, 1950

Interested in learning more?

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Click on the link in the chat box to take you to the
4-minute survey

OR

Find the survey link in your webinar reminder
email. Thank you for your time.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/X32CB3X>

Viewing on a tablet ? Copy and paste the link.

