

# NAVIGATING ANXIETY IN YOUTH: A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

*Therapists: Emma Bulman & Lisa Smith*

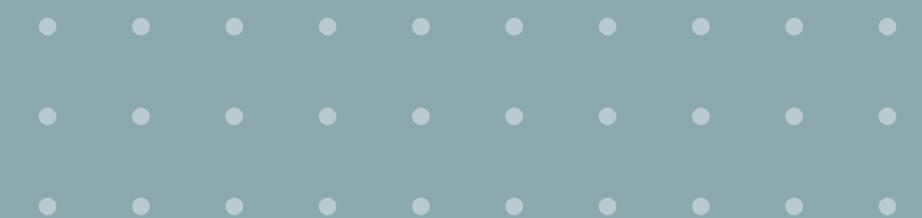




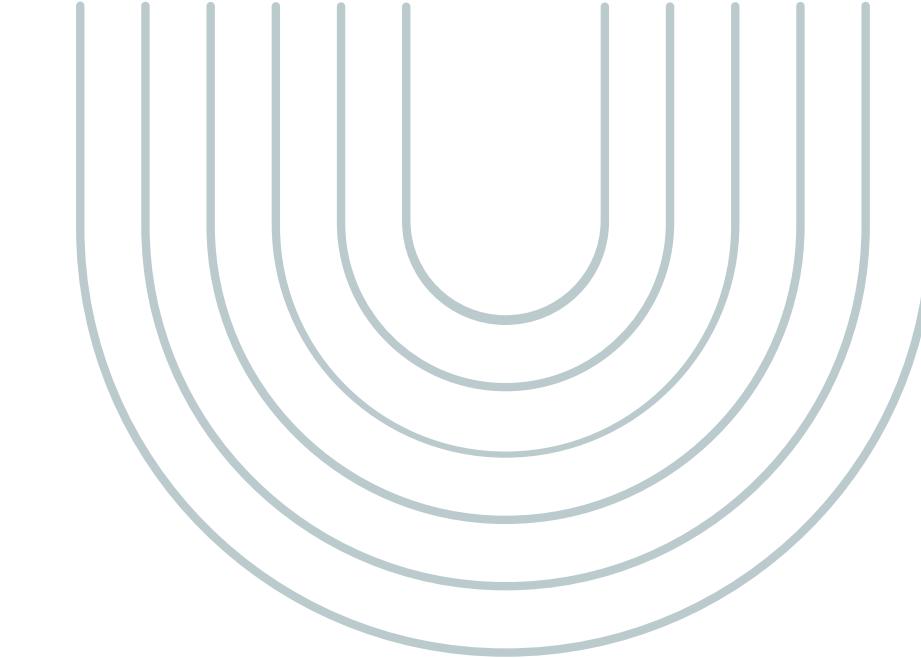
# INTRODUCTIONS

Emma Bulman - Therapist at Emma Bulman Counselling

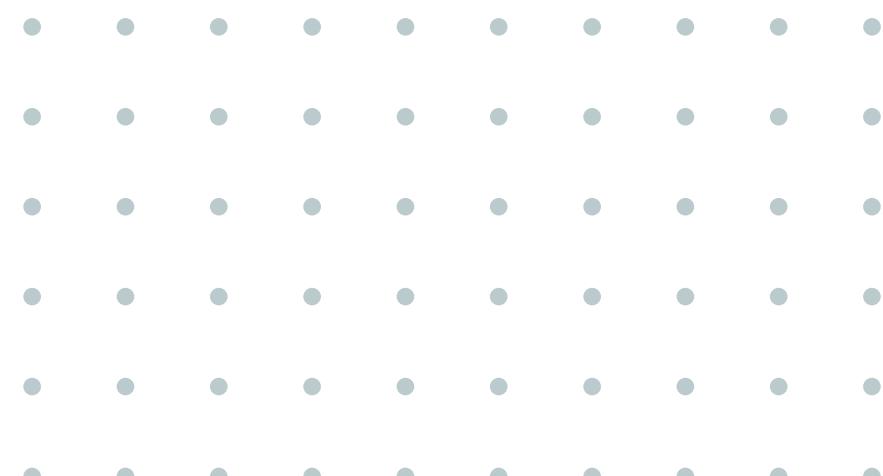
Lisa Smith - Therapist at Exhale Psychology group

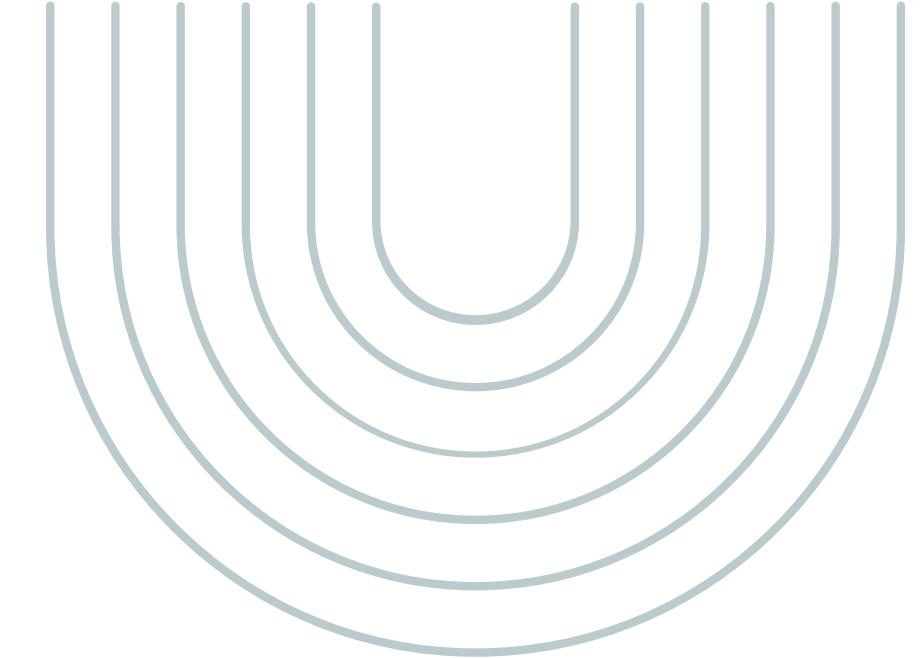


# WHAT IS ANXIETY?



Anxiety is what we feel when we are worried or tense – particularly about an event/threat in the future. Anxiety is a natural human response when we feel that we are under threat. It can be experienced through our thoughts, feelings and physical sensations.

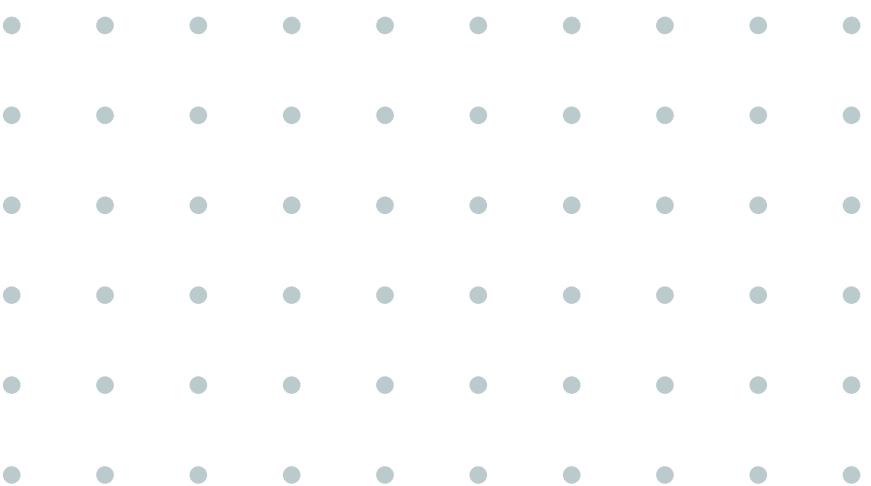


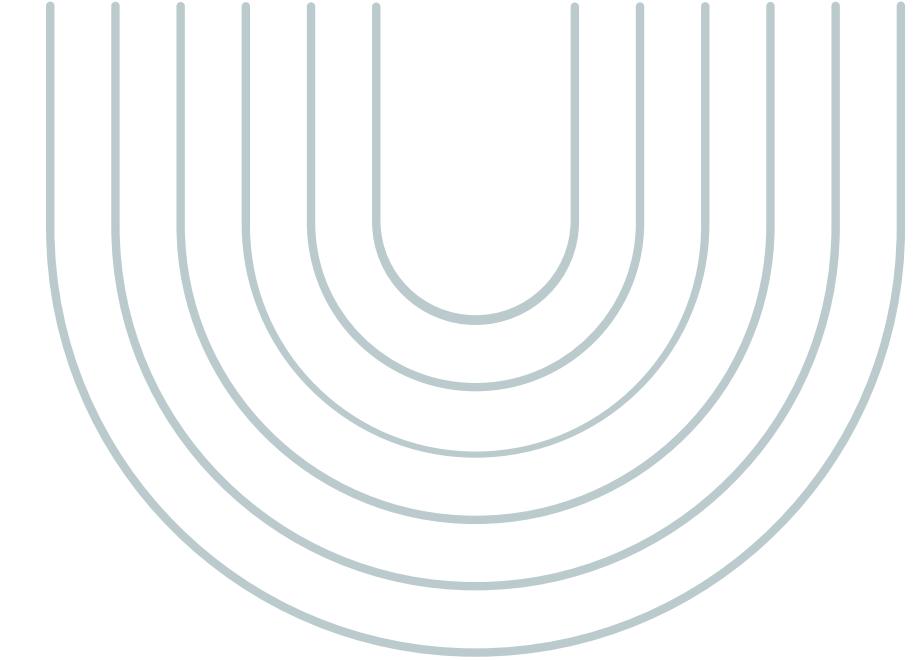


## Anxiety serves a purpose

Anxiety is normal, expected and adaptive. It's what helps you notice danger and keeps you safe until a threat passes

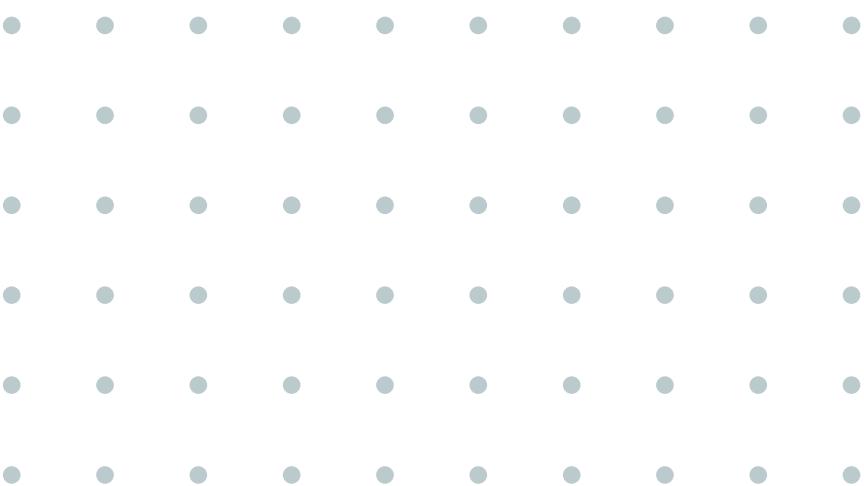
Some anxiety is necessary, even helpful. It's what motivates people to take action, or work hard to meet a goal





## When is it a problem?

It becomes a problem when the level of anxiety is great enough to interfere with a child's everyday activities (school avoidance, new activities, separation)

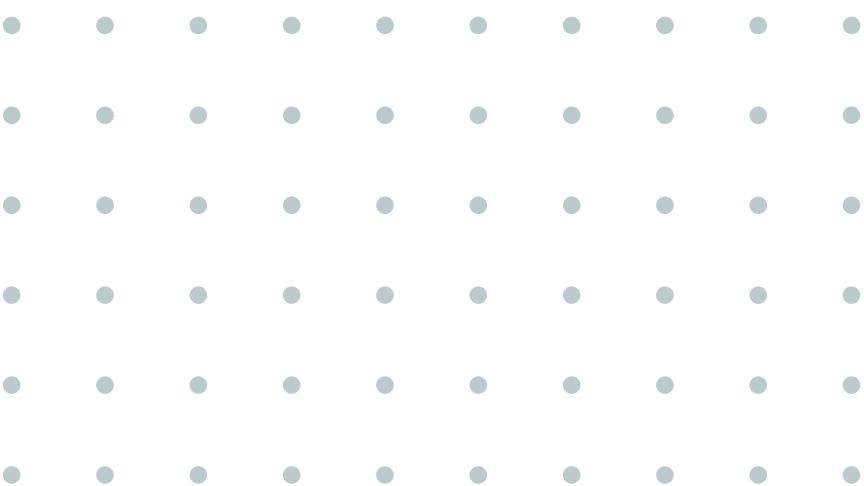




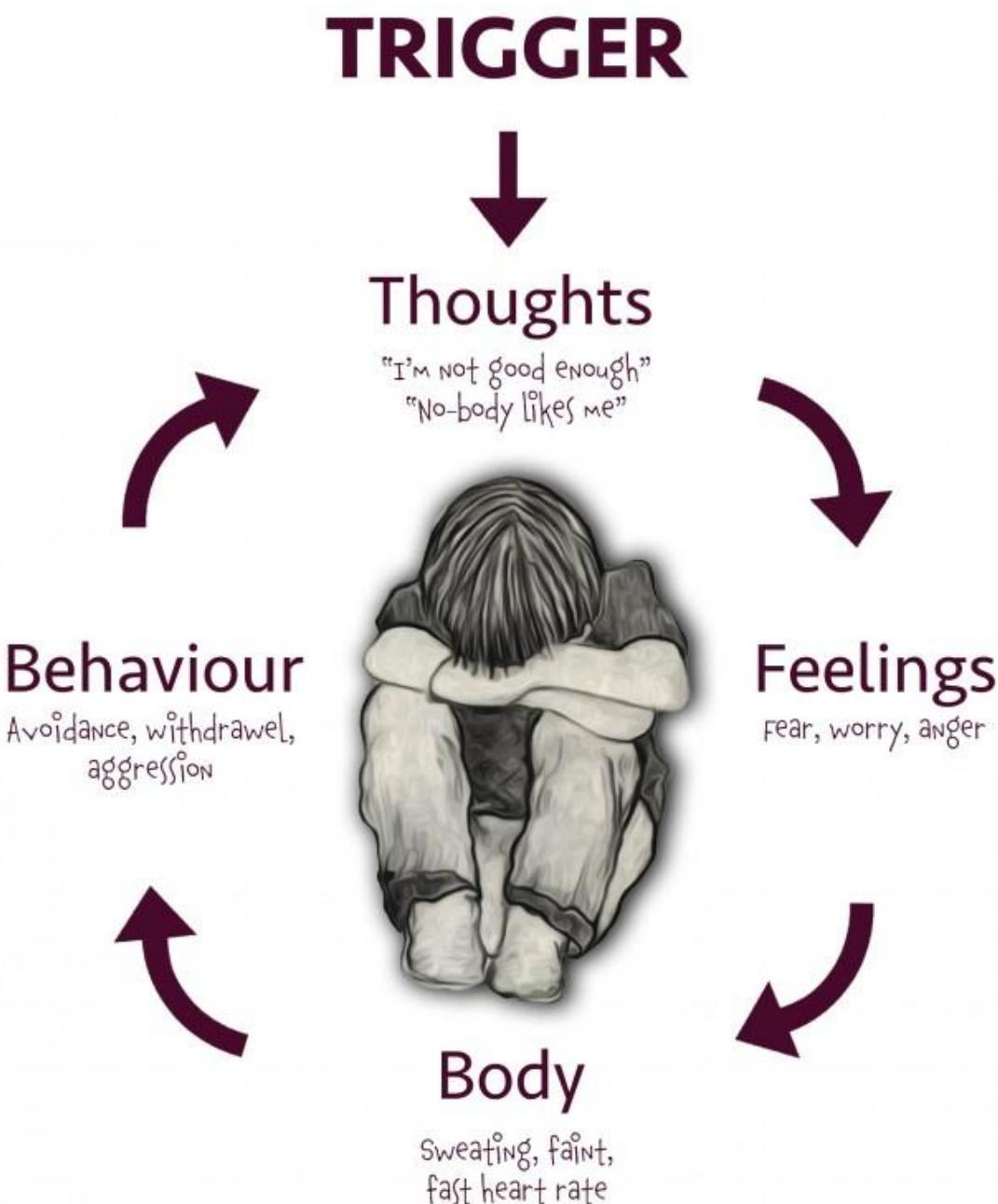
# What causes anxiety?

Anxiety has multiple complex origins including:

- Genetics
- Brain Chemistry
- Life Situations
- Learned Behaviours



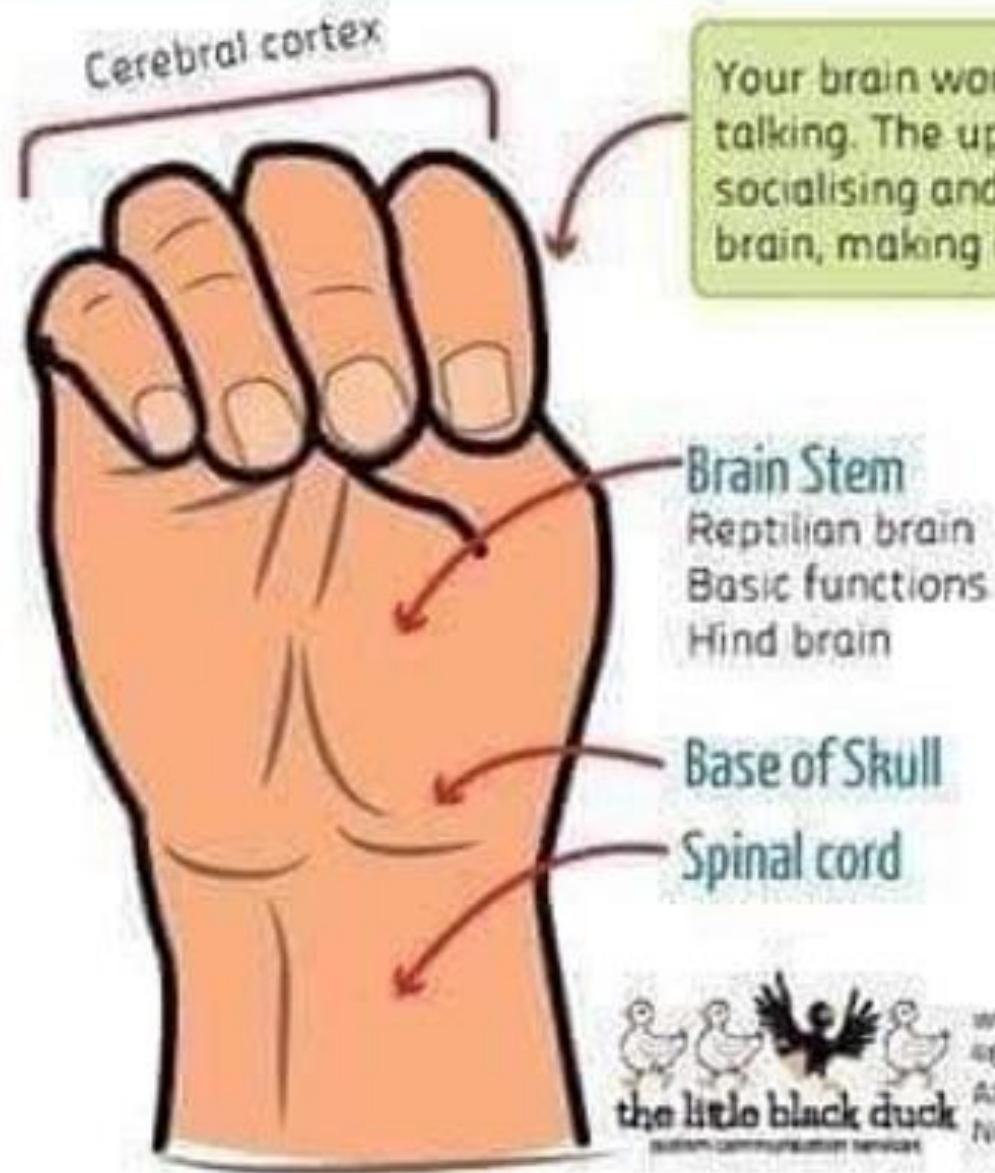
## The Anxiety Cycle



# The Hand Model of the Brain

## What happens when we “flip our lid”

When our brain is working efficiently both the upper and mid brain are communicating effectively. Information comes in and is processed logically. Sometimes too much information is coming in for the Upper brain to process and it disconnects. We “flip our lid” and can no longer access the functions provided by the upper brain

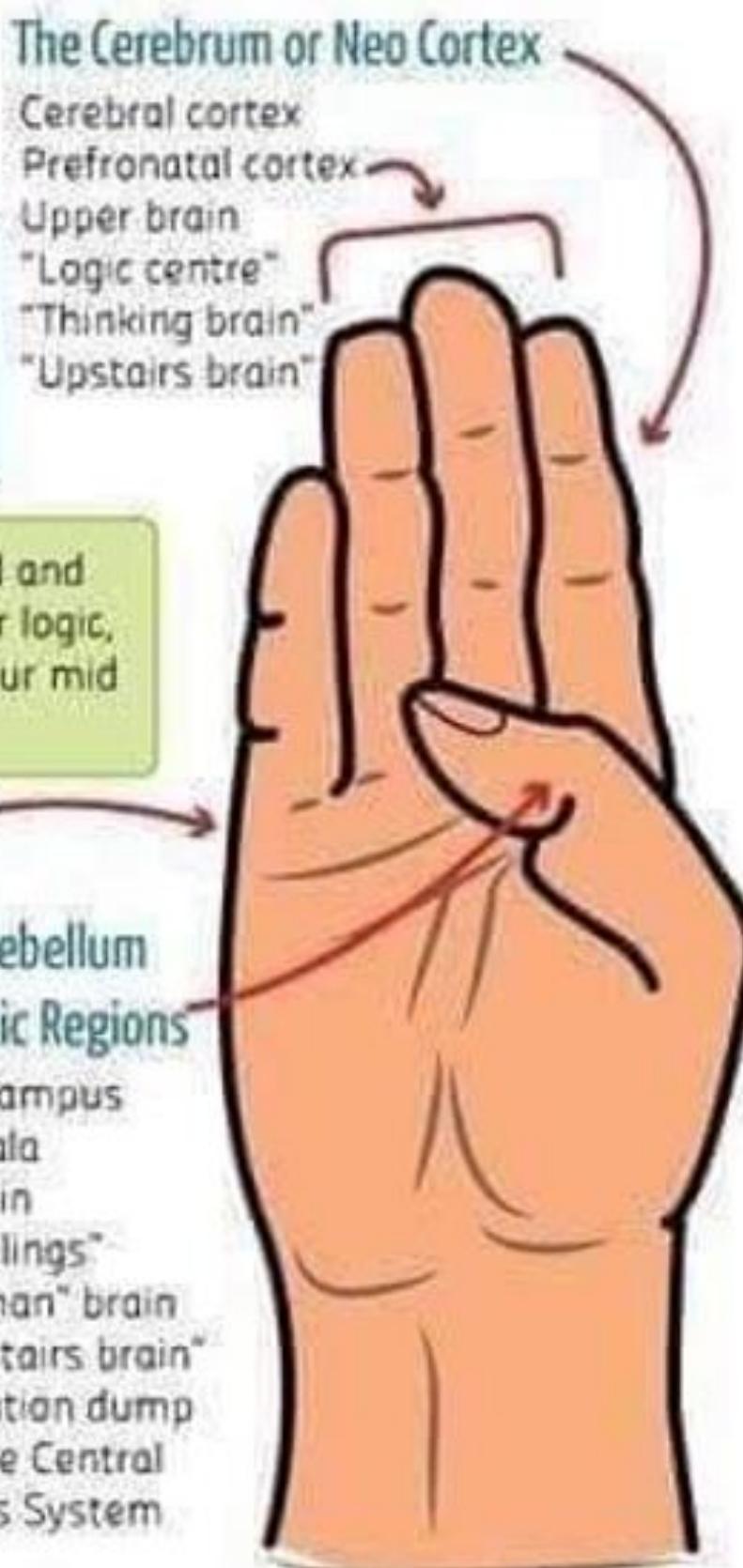


Your brain working in harmony. All parts are connected and talking. The upper part of the brain can be accessed for logic, socialising and reasoning. Our upper brain is hugging our mid brain, making it feel safe

Upper and lower parts of the brain are no longer connected and talking. Logic no longer influence emotions. You've “flipped your lid”



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# THE BRAIN

# ANXIETY MISUNDERSTOOD

*Anxiety can look like:*

*Anger*

*Difficulty with focus*

*Negativity*

*Avoidance*

*Over planning*

*Difficulty sleeping*

*Defiance*

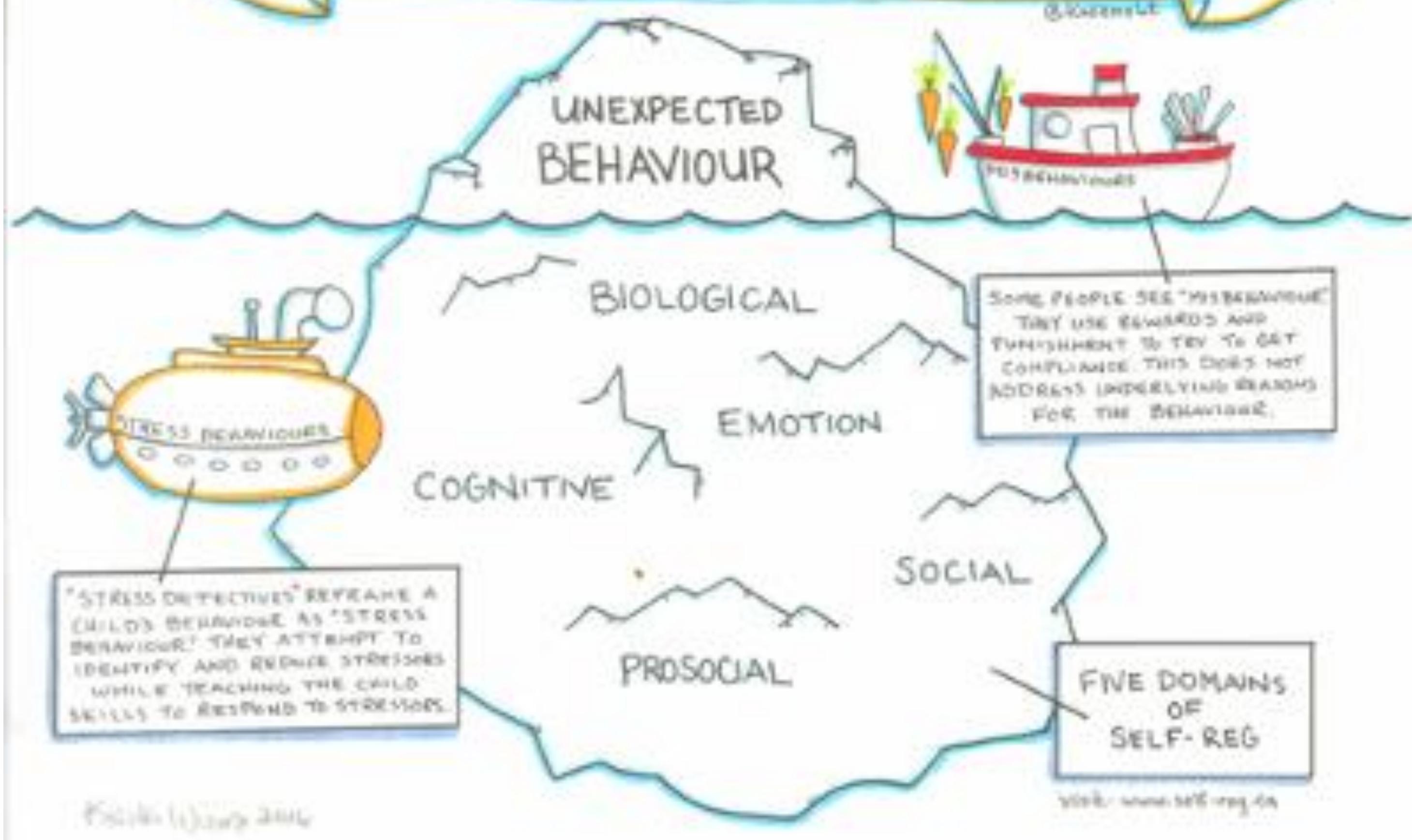




# What else affects anxiety?

- Sleep
- Eating
- Screen time
- Connection

# BEHAVIOUR IS COMMUNICATION



# 5 Domains: Stressors

**Biological**

Noises, crowds, visual overstimulation, not enough exercise, lack of sleep, sugar, junk food

**Emotion**

Difficulty coping with strong emotions, both positive (over-excited) & negative (anger, fear)

**Cognitive**

Difficulty processing certain kinds of information

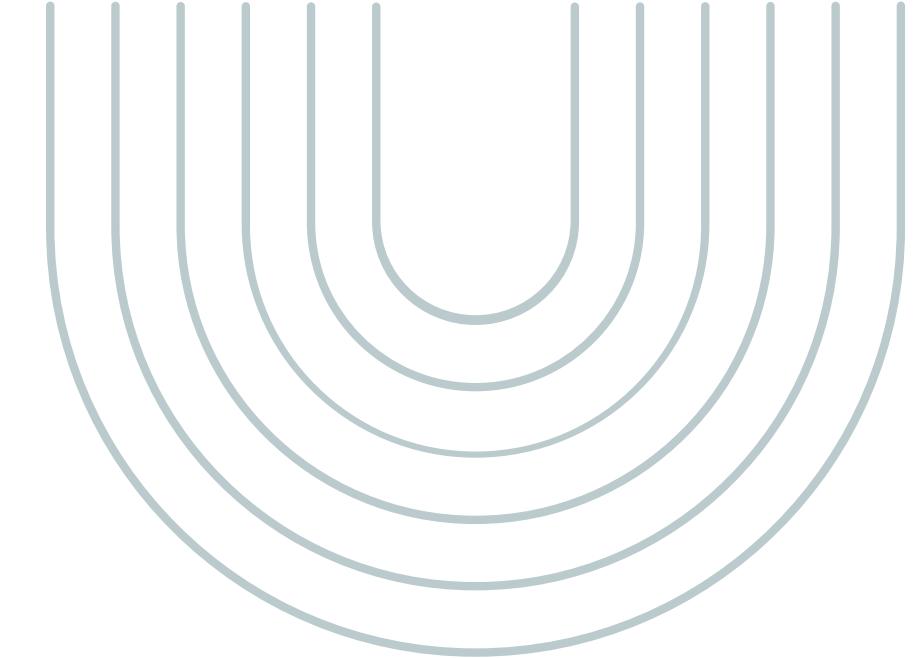
**Social**

Difficulty picking up on social cues, or understanding effect of behaviour on others

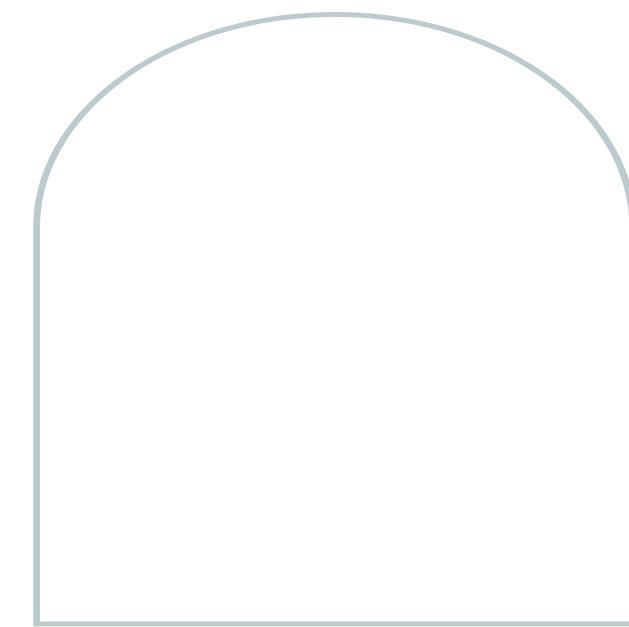
**Prosocial**

Difficulty coping with other people's stress; sense of injustice

# Emotion coaching (Gottman)

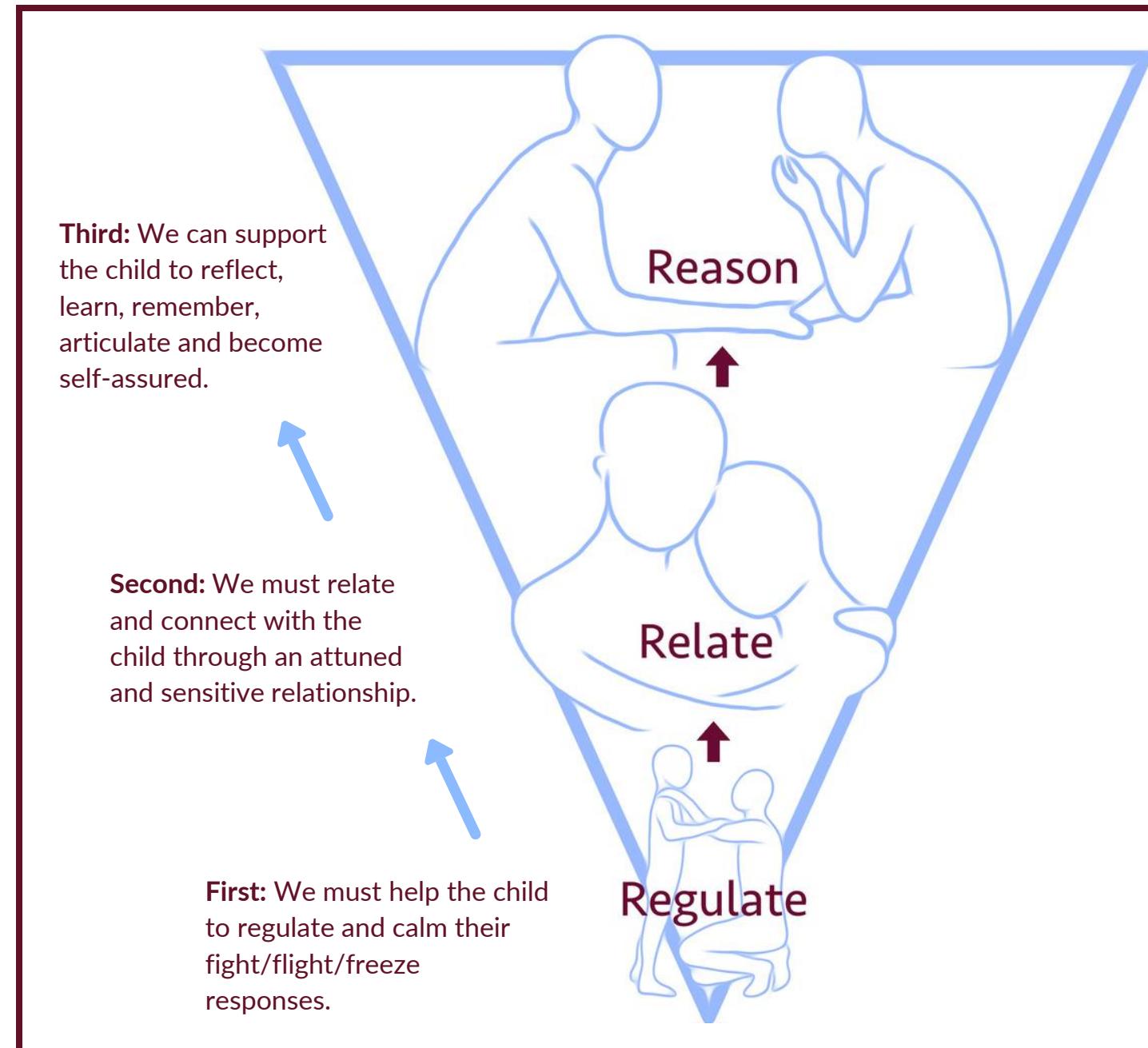


1. Be aware of child's emotions
2. See the expression of emotion as opportunity for connection
3. Listen with empathy & validate the feelings
4. Label the emotions
5. Make a plan if needed or set limit



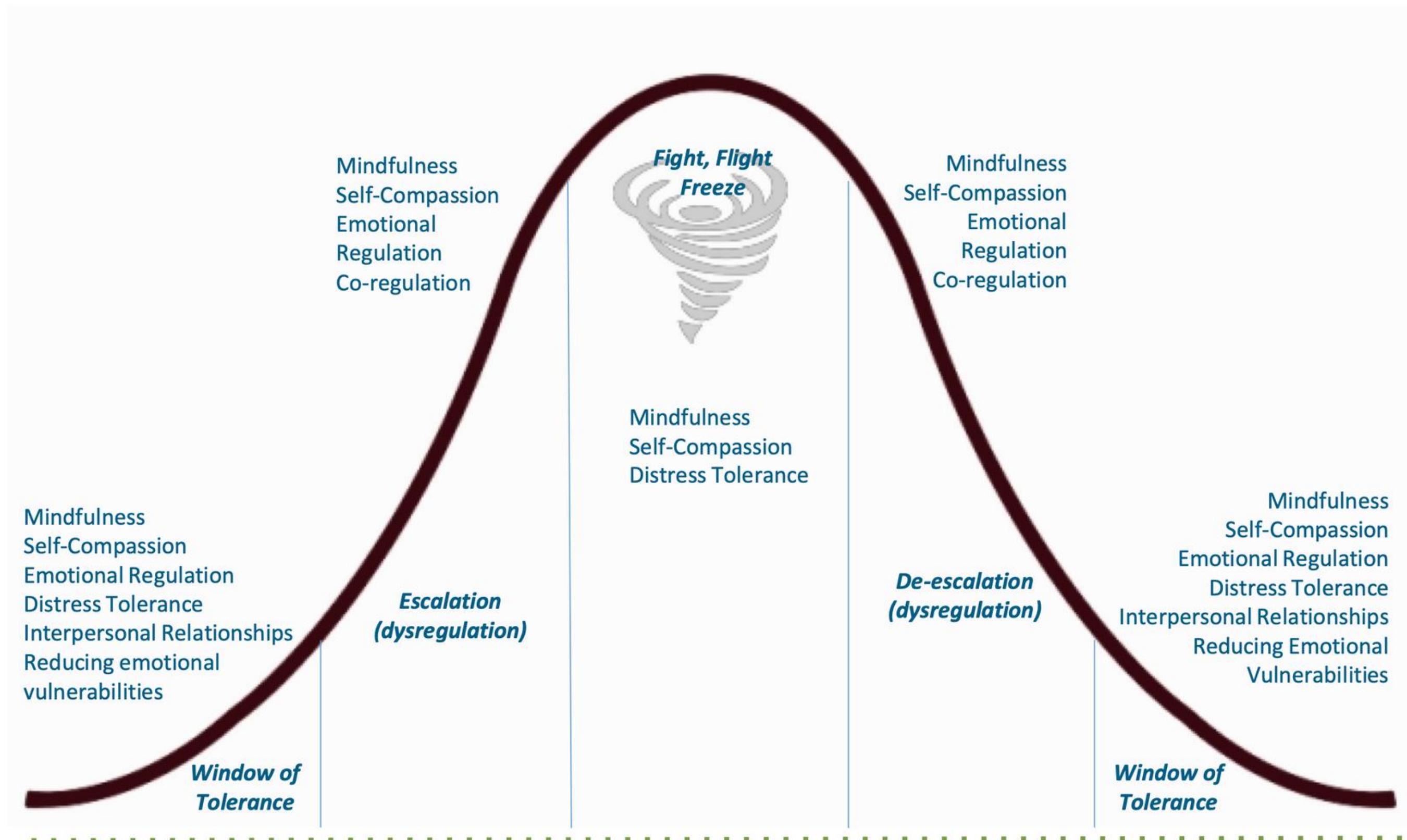
## The Three R's: Reaching The Learning Brain

Dr Bruce Perry, a pioneering neuroscientist in the field of trauma, has shown us that to help a vulnerable child to learn, think and reflect, we need to intervene in a simple sequence.



Heading straight for the 'reasoning' part of the brain with an expectation of learning, will not work so well if the child is dysregulated and disconnected from others.

# Surf the Wave





**HALT**

**Hungry**

**Angry**

**Lonely**

**Tired**

# In the moment strategies

54321

5 Things you see

4 Things you touch

3 Things you hear

2 Things you smell

1 Thing you taste

(or something you love about yourself)

- Cold water – splash on face, drink, run hands under cold water, shower
- Sour candy or gum
- Assess where anxiety is at from 1-10
- Body scan - how do you feel anxiety in your body right now? Head to toe

## Strategies cont...

C.A.L.M.

Categories beginning with each letter -

i.e. countries/places, candies, colours, items of clothing, food, etc

EX: FOOD: Cauliflower, Asparagus, Lemons, Mangoes



- Flower-candle breathing – smell the flower & blow out the candle
- Belly breathing – blow up the belly like a balloon & exhale very slowly
- Box breathing – in for 4, hold for 4, out for 4 hold for 4

\* If your child/teen will not do these strategies in the moment....don't panic....you just do them & model it (it will calm you down & you can share your calm with them

# Structure & boundaries

Kids need to know you are the pilot of the plane, so they don't have to fly it & manage alone ....this means:

Structure, consistency & boundaries

AND

Love, connection & kindness



# Common Anxious Parenting Patterns.... that make sense but don't work!

- Accommodation
- Rescuing
- Reassuring
- Allowing bad behavior
- Pushing too hard and getting angry



WHEN LITTLE PEOPLE ARE  
OVERWHELMED BY BIG  
EMOTIONS, IT'S OUR JOB  
TO SHARE OUR CALM. NOT  
JOIN THEIR CHAOS.

~ L. R. KNOST

## Parents role

- Practice being able to tolerate the distress of our children
- Your job is not to solve the problem for them - often they just need our calm & loving presence
- Don't take away every difficult emotion/situation for them as this teaches them they cannot get through it
- Just empathize with "this is really tough hey? These feelings are really big inside. I am here with you" sometimes is what is needed.

# Grounding for parents



- Anxiety is contagious & we know as kids anxiety increases so does parents - so check in with yourself regularly
- How is your alarm system? What are you feeling in your body? What is your child's anxiety triggering in you? Are they bringing up things from your own childhood? (spoiler alert - they usually are!)
- Do whatever you need to fill your own bucket - self care for you helps your child as then you can show up with more patience & calm to share. Who is your support system? If you don't have one, find one in friends or family or partners or own therapy

# Takeaways

- It's all about RELATIONSHIP – you can never go wrong with relationship & connection
- Self regulation then co-regulation
- Expect anxiety to show up

# Resources

## Books

- Self-Reg By Dr Stuart Shanker
- The Whole-Brain Child By Dr. Dan Siegel
- Untangled by Lisa Damour
- Connected Parenting By Jennifer Kolari
- Raising Good Humans By Dr Aliza Pressman
- The Anxious Generation By Jonathan Haidt

## Podcasts

- FlusterClux – Lynn Lyons
- Ask Lisa – Lisa Damour

## Websites

- Anxietycanada.com
- Acceleratedresolutiontherapy.com

## Instagram

- Raising Good humans
- Dr Vanessa Lapointe