

THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM

*A Field Guide to the Neurobiology and Practice
of the Adult Posture in the Classroom*

UNDERSTANDING RELATIONAL PRESENCE

This workbook serves as an interactive companion guide for educators.

Through self-reflection, case analyses, and experiential exercises,
you will explore the foundational pillars of the Adult Posture continuum.

Learn to move intentionally from control-based management to
relationship-driven co-regulation, cultivating emotional safety
and promoting academic and developmental availability.

Participant Interactive Companion Guide

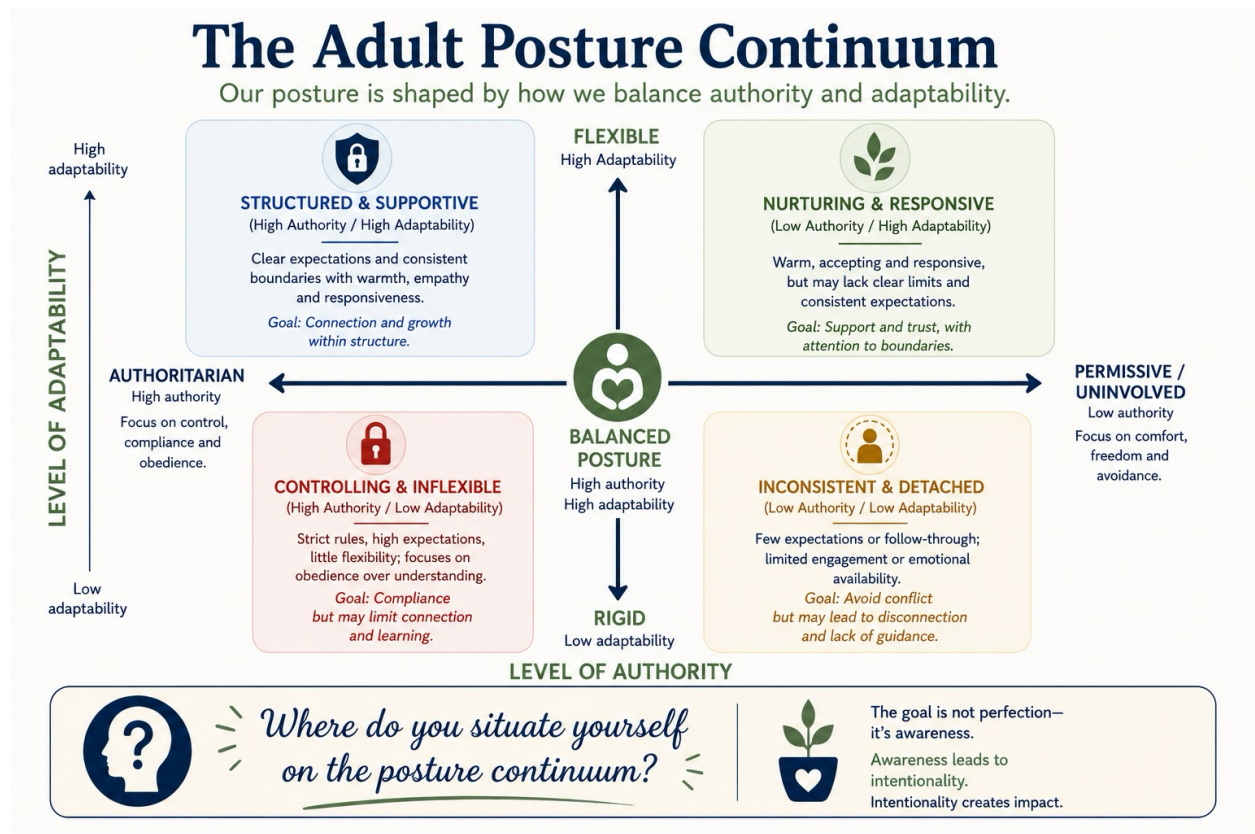
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PART 1: SELF-ASSESSMENT & POSTURE CONTINUUM

Adult posture refers to the emotional climate that we create in the classroom. It shapes children's sense of belonging, safety, and capacity to learn. Our journey begins with an assessment of where our natural responses lie on the posture continuum.

◆ ■ REFLECTION: YOUR DEFAULT RESPONSES UNDER STRESS

- Which posture quadrant do I naturally default toward under stress?
- What tends to pull me away from my balanced posture?
- Which characteristics come naturally, and which require intentional effort?



Reflection on my default responses:

Personal Posture Audit

Rate yourself honestly from 1 (minimal integration) to 5 (strong, consistent integration) across these key traits of adult posture:

Characteristics	1 (Low)	2	3 (Mid)	4	5 (High)
Calm Authority	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
Curiosity	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
Emotional Availability	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
Warmth	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
Flexibility	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
Intentionality	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
Reflectiveness	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]

■ ■ INDIVIDUAL EXERCISE: AUDIT TAKEAWAYS & COMMITMENT

Identify one clear strength and one area for growth from your Personal Posture Audit above.

My primary strength and my primary area for growth are:

The current factors (e.g. individual students, class group, colleagues, school climate, personal circumstances, etc.) that may be affecting my posture are...

One of my own classroom behaviours which I will intentionally change beginning this week is...

PART 2: CONTROL VERSUS CONNECTION

We often try to control student behaviour directly before seeking to understand the underlying emotional need. Moving towards connection requires us to shift our lens from compliance to curiosity.

■ ■ INDIVIDUAL EXERCISE: REFRAMING CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR

Think of a recent challenging student behavior. Deconstruct it through a curiosity lens:

Curiosity Reframing Lens	Your Notes & Analysis
Visible Student Behaviour (What did you see/hear?) <i>[Describe the raw physical indicators...]</i>	
Possible Unmet Needs (What might they be communicating?) <i>[Physiological, relational, safety, or sensory needs...]</i>	
My Initial Response (What did you do or feel tempted to do?) <i>[Triggers, frustration, impulse to control...]</i>	
Alternative Curious Response (What could you say with a relational posture?) <i>[Validating emotions, open-ended question, slowing down...]</i>	

▲ ■ GROUP DISCUSSION: CASE STUDY: 'WHAT HAPPENED?'

Review the classroom scenario assigned to your group and discuss the questions below.

- What assumptions are we making about this student's intentions?
- What unmet emotional, sensory, or physiological needs could exist?
- How would approaching this with a 'curiosity mindset' change our intervention?

Group Notes / Key Takeaways:

PART 3: PERSPECTIVES, ATTUNEMENT & BELONGING

How Students Experience Adults

Children are highly sensitive barometers of adult emotional states. They constantly read our micro-behaviors to determine whether we are safe and reliable leaders or if they need to protect themselves.

■ ■ INDIVIDUAL EXERCISE: SELF-OBSERVATION MATRIX

Imagine watching yourself teach (or reflect on video footage). Record objective observations of what students perceive:

Expression Domain	Your Self-Observation Notes
My Voice (Tone, pitch, speed, volume) [Notes: <i>Pitch spikes, rapid pace, warm resonance...]</i>	
My Pace (Hurried, slow, calm, urgent) [Notes: <i>Rushing, pausing, breathing space, urgent...]</i>	
My Facial Expressions (Neutral, warm, tense, frowning) [Notes: <i>Tight jaw, micro-smiles, flat, reassuring...]</i>	
My Physical Presence (Proximity, distance, stance) [Notes: <i>Towering, leaning, crouching, open chest...]</i>	
CORE REFLECTION: Would I feel emotionally safe learning from me? [Reflect deeply here...]	

Attunement versus Technique

Attunement is about emotional presence, not just saying the right words. It requires us to check our own internal alignment before engaging.

■ ■ INDIVIDUAL EXERCISE: A TALE OF TWO CONVERSATIONS

Reflect on two recent conversations to understand how internal attunement shifts results:

A conversation with a student that went well (What was your emotional state?):

A conversation that escalated or went poorly (What was different about YOU?):

◆ ■ REFLECTION: SIX FOUNDATIONAL PILLARS GRID

Assess your current relationship with the six foundational pillars of adult posture. For each pillar, identify how it currently manifests in your practice and list proactive action steps to build upon it:

Pillar & Key Themes	Self-Reflection (How this manifests)	Growth Goals & Action Steps
Warmth (Unconditional care, relational welcoming)		
Curiosity (Reframing compliance into inquiry)		
Calm Authority (Steady, safe, predictable limits)		
Emotional Availability (Mindful presence, active listening)		
Intentionality (Mindful execution, deliberate tone)		
Reflectiveness (Self-correction, recognizing bias)		

PART 4: RELATIONSHIPS, TRUST & CO-REGULATION

Relationship Mapping

In order to build a secure base for our students, it is important that we understand our relational reach. Use this matrix to sort the students in your current group. Write 2–3 initials in each category to map your classroom connections:

Students I Know Well (Natural connections, shared interests) <i>[Record initials here]</i>	Students I Mostly Manage (Interaction driven by task compliance/behaviour)
Students I Rarely Connect With (Quiet, disengaged, or low contact)	Students Who May Feel Unseen (Who avoid being noticed, highly compliant or withdrawn)

■ ■ INDIVIDUAL EXERCISE: STRENGTHENING CONNECTIONS

Look at the students you listed in 'Rarely Connect With' or 'May Feel Unseen'.

Choose ONE student to intentionally build a secure relationship with this month.

What is your concrete plan?

My 30-day Relationship Blueprint Plan:

The Physiology of Co-Regulation

We cannot co-regulate a student unless we are regulated ourselves. Co-regulation starts with self-awareness of our own physiological triggers and our warning signs of activation.

■ ■ INDIVIDUAL EXERCISE: MY REGULATION ROADMAP

Outline your physiological profile below so you can catch your activation early:

My Personal Classroom Triggers (e.g., screaming, backtalk, eye-rolling):

My Warning Signs (e.g., shallow breath, racing heart, clenching jaw):

My In-the-Moment Regulation Strategies (e.g., deep breath, pausing, physical step back):

PART 5: NEUROSCIENCE OF SAFETY & TIERS OF SUPPORT

When students experience emotional security, the advanced cortical networks responsible for reasoning, executive control, problem-solving, and critical thinking become accessible. However, when threats, overwhelming stress or isolation are present, the nervous system prioritizes survival above all else, inducing either defensive hyper-arousal or disengaged hypo-arousal.

◆ ■ REFLECTION: GROUNDED IN NEUROBIOLOGY

- When students feel threatened or disconnected, their brains shift to survival mode. How does knowing that brain architecture changes under stress affect my behavioral expectations?
- Which traditional classroom practices or responses should I stop using because they induce threat or shame?

My Neurobiology Reflection & Assessment:

Multi-Tiered Adult Posture

Our adult posture operates dynamically across tiers of support, shifting to accommodate students' emotional needs. Proactive environments at Tier 1 are critical stabilizing structures for students who require highly targeted support at Tier 3.

◆ ■ REFLECTION: TIERS 1-2-3 REFLECTION

Tier 1 (Universal): Which Tier 1 practices (e.g., explicit boundaries, structures, routines, adapted scheduling) already exist in my classroom? Which would have the biggest impact if strengthened?

Tier 2 (Targeted): *How can I tell if a student needs Tier 2 targeted support? How should I adjust my role and posture (e.g., adopt a neutral physical stance, display non-threatening expressions and use a calming tone) to meet this student's heightened emotional needs?*

Tier 3 (Individualized): *Some students require highly individualized, intensive support that is tailored to their unique nervous system needs. Reflect on a student who may require this level of support. Which individualized accommodations, co-regulation strategies, or collaborative supports have been most effective? How can you intentionally maintain a calm, consistent and emotionally available posture while implementing these supports?*

▲ ■ GROUP DISCUSSION / ACTIVITY: DEBATE: CO-REGULATION IS NOT PERMISSIVENESS

Discuss how to strike a balance between providing warmth and setting clear boundaries in a school setting.

- Can educators be deeply compassionate and relationally supportive while maintaining firm and clear boundaries?
- What does 'warm, structured limit-setting' sound and look like in practice?

Group Notes / Key Takeaways:

PART 6: THE BIOLOGY OF CALM & DE-ESCALATION

Neural Resonance

Our nervous systems are connected. Through mirror neurons and co-regulation, the steady presence of a calm adult can directly soothe a dysregulated child. We must actively cultivate 'anchors' to ground our nervous systems.



INSPIRATIONAL ANCHORS TO SOURCE

- **Somatic / Breathing Techniques:** 4-7-8 deep breathing, prolonged double-length exhalations, active sighing.
- **Physical Grounding Cues:** Feeling feet flat on the floor, posture alignment, feeling the weight of the chair, holding a smooth focal object.
- **Cognitive Mantras:** 'This is not an emergency', 'I am the thermostat', 'They are having a hard time, not giving me a hard time'.
- **Environmental Cues:** Stepping back to provide space, focusing eyes on a designated calming color/symbol in the room.

■ ■ INDIVIDUAL EXERCISE: MY PERSONAL REGULATION ANCHORS

Using the inspirational categories above, list five practical anchors that you will intentionally use during high-stress classroom moments:

Anchor 1:	
Anchor 2:	
Anchor 3:	
Anchor 4:	
Anchor 5:	

You Cannot Reason with an Overwhelmed Brain

When a child is actively dysregulated, their rational brain is offline. Cognitive or behavioral instruction is useless at this stage - safety and co-regulation must come first.

■ ■ INDIVIDUAL EXERCISE: ESCALATION REVIEW

Reflect on a recent classroom incident in which a student became dysregulated:

What did the student actually need (Safety, space, reassurance, boundaries?):

What I actually did (Did I react, demand compliance, try to argue?):

What I could do differently next time (How can I co-regulate first?):

▲ ■ GROUP DISCUSSION: SORTING THE RESPONSES

Categorize common educator responses during dysregulation vs. recovery:

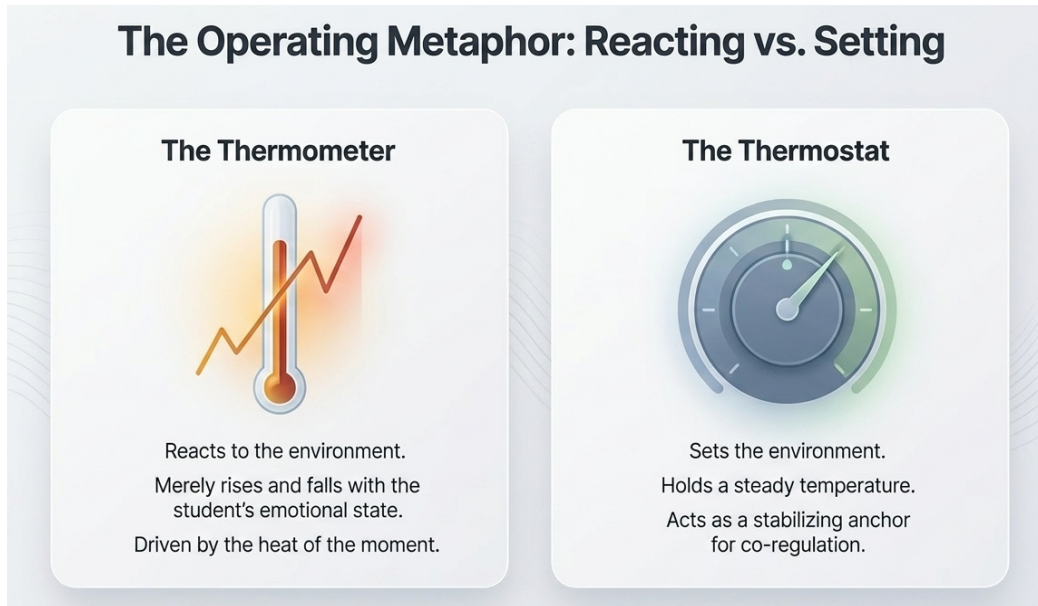
- Which responses are helpful and soothing DURING a state of active dysregulation?
- Which responses should be reserved for AFTER the student has returned to a calm state?
- Why does timing completely change the effectiveness of our interventions?

Group Notes / Key Takeaways:

PART 7: TIER 3 INDIVIDUALIZED POSTURE & CO-REGULATION

Thermometer vs Thermostat

A thermometer reflects the room's temperature (it reacts to the student's emotional state). A thermostat sets the temperature (brings a calming presence to defuse stress).



■ ■ INDIVIDUAL EXERCISE: BEING THE THERMOSTAT

Describe a situation where a student's emotional temperature was high, but you successfully remained the thermostat.

Brief Description (What happened, and how did you keep your posture intact?):

My Thermostat Experience:

The Power of Consistency

We cannot teach what we do not model. Reflect on whether you consistently model the social-emotional behaviors that you expect from your students:

I Teach Students To...	Do I Consistently Model It? (Examples / Notes) <i>[Identify practical modeling behaviors or observations]</i>
Patience	
Kindness	
Problem-solving	
Respect	
Repair	

Anatomy of a Regulated Presence

Evaluate your personal co-regulatory presence in the primary somatic and cognitive domains. Aim for neutrality, safety, and a grounded demeanor:

Domains	Description / Focus	Self-Rating (1-5)
Mind	Staying mentally anchored, checking default assumptions	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Body	Relaxed posture, open supportive stance, safe personal space	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Breath	Slow, deep, conscious diaphragmatic respiration patterns	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Face	Neutral, gentle, reassuring non-threatening micro-expressions	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Voice	Low volume, stable pacing, warm, relational resonance	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

PART 8: SYSTEMIC SUPPORT & YOUR 30-DAY ACTION PLAN

Adult Capacity & Systemic Support

The educator’s posture relies heavily on systemic bandwidth. Map out your emotional reserves and stress levels to develop a sustainable wellness profile:

Capacity Metrics	Self-Reflection Prompts	Levels (Low / Mid / High)
Energy	Current physical vitality and alertness	☐ L ☐ M ☐ H
Stress	Overall strain and pressure felt daily	☐ L ☐ M ☐ H
Support	Availability of trusted peers/systems	☐ L ☐ M ☐ H
Workload	Task density and time constraints	☐ L ☐ M ☐ H
Emotional Reserves	Patience and co-regulation bandwidth	☐ L ☐ M ☐ H

Your 30-Day Relational Action Plan

Summarize what you have learnt from today's session and create an action plan for the upcoming month. Focus on small, high-impact changes.

■ ■ INDIVIDUAL EXERCISE: 30-DAY ALIGNMENT COMMITMENTS

Commit to concrete, small, and high-impact daily practices to strengthen your relational posture:

My One Mindset Shift (How I view student behaviour):

My One Posture/Behaviour Change (My tone, facial expressions, or response):

One Key Student Relationship to Actively Strengthen:

One Classroom Routine to Modify to Support Emotional Safety:

How I Will Know I Am Making Progress (What changes will I see?):

▲ ■ GROUP DISCUSSION / ACTIVITY: COMMITMENT CIRCLE

Go around your small group. Each participant completes and shares the following sentence:
'One thing I will intentionally do differently in my classroom beginning tomorrow is...'

Identify an accountability partner. Swap contact information and schedule a 15-minute touchpoint in 2 weeks.

Group Notes / Key Takeaways: