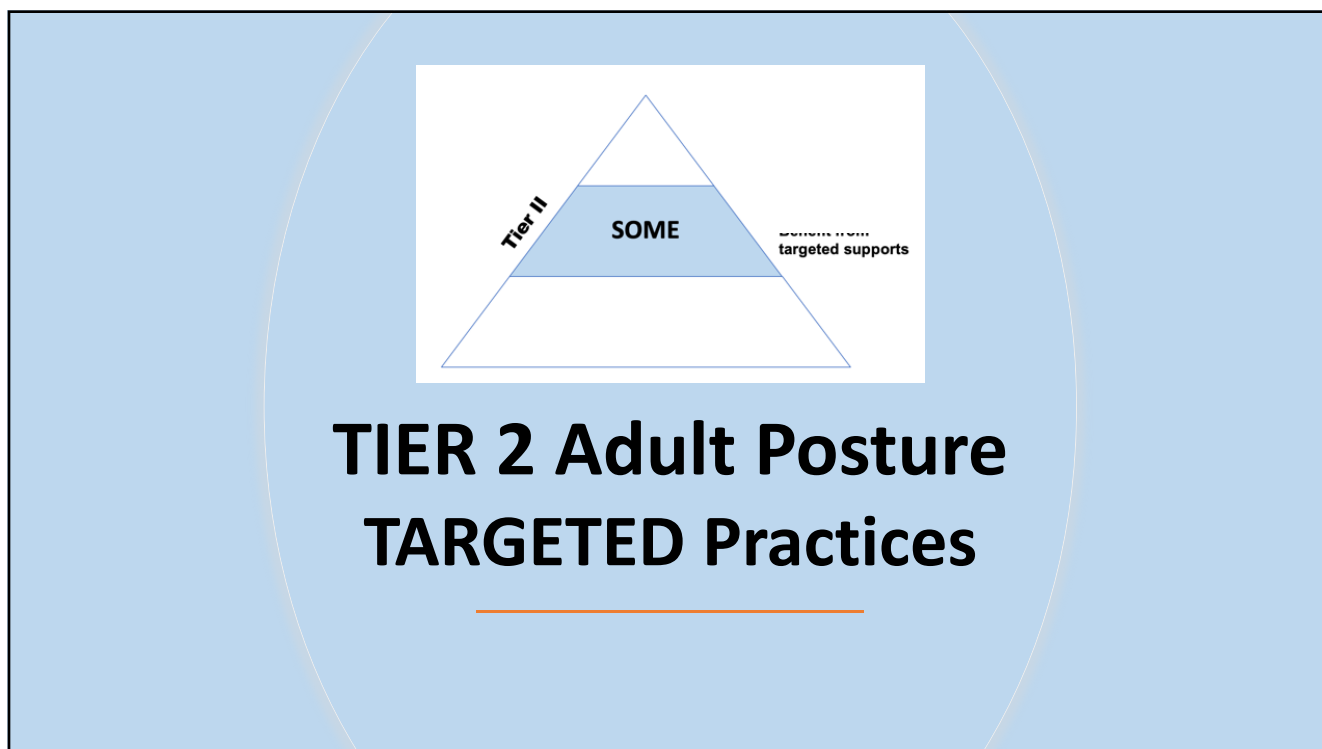




1

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). 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). 3 Being careful with applying pressure towards a task accomplishment, which could be triggering the student. 4 Being calm and grounded before responding to an upset student, and not taking their behaviour personally. 5 Being mindful about displaying neutral/gentle facial expressions, a non-threatening stance, a stable voice volume, tone, speech rate, or talking too much.	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. 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. 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. 9 'Bridging' by making the relationship (not the behaviour) the bottom line and restoring the connection following any fallout. 10 Reassuring the student that you are there for them and they can always come to you for help.
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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

2

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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3

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.



4

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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5

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:

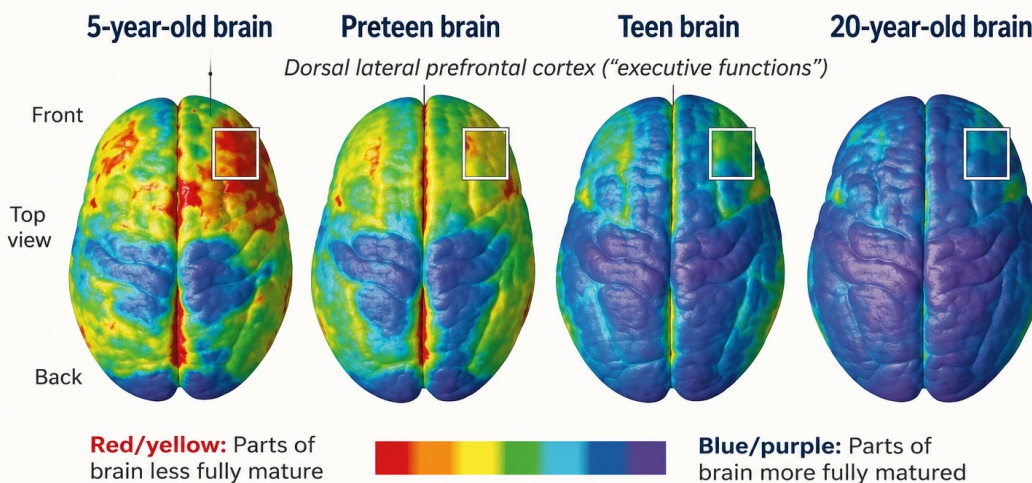
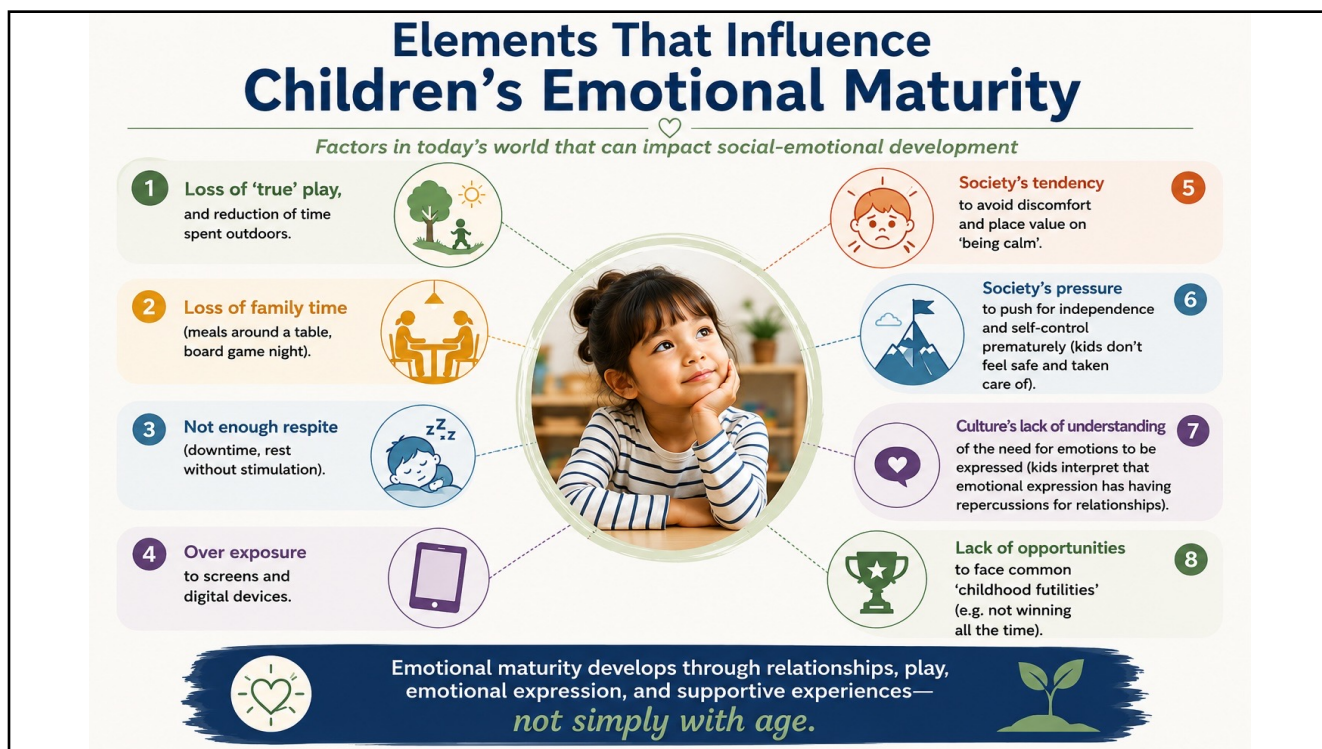
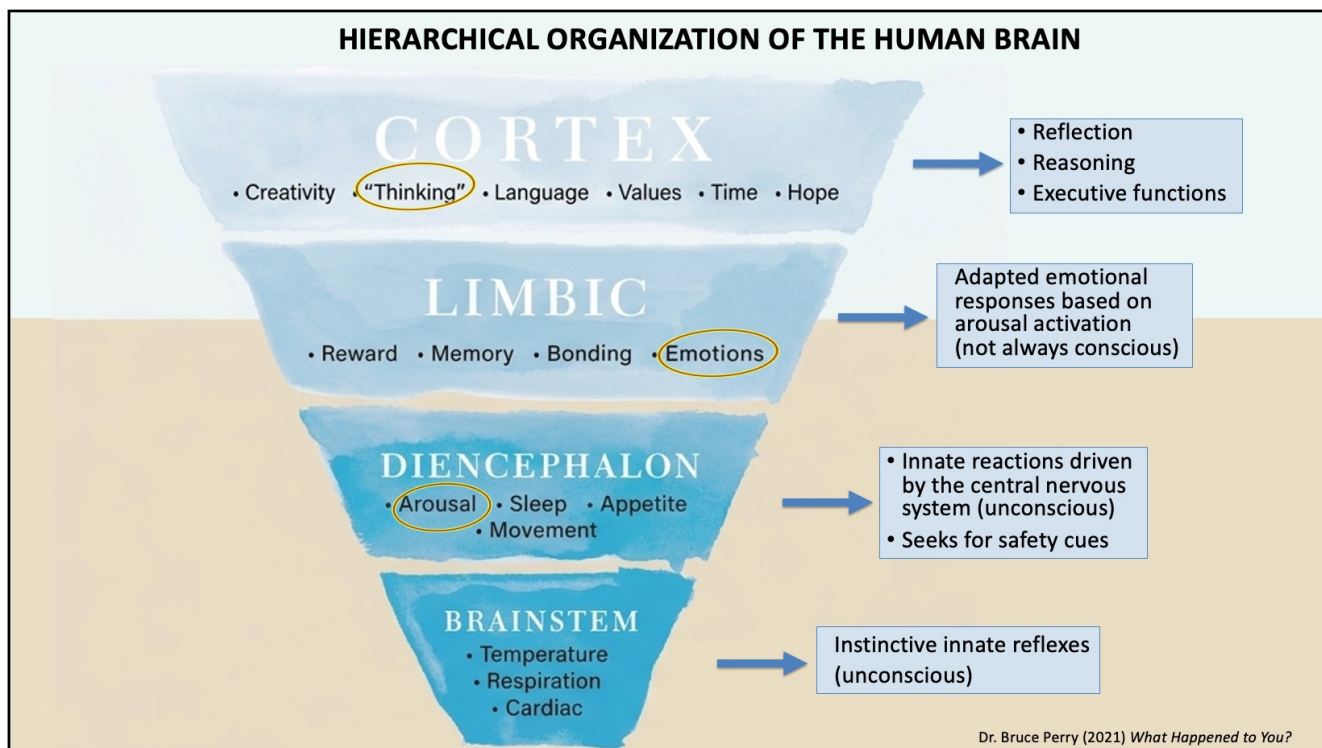


Image from the National Institute of Mental Health; Paul Thompson, Ph.D., UCLA Laboratory of Neuro Imaging

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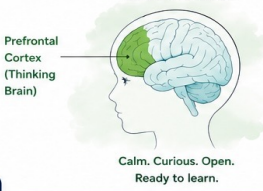
The Brain Learns Best *in a State of Safety*

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**.

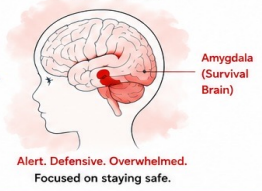
**SAFE & CONNECTED
LEARNING MODE**



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.



9

Educator's Field Guide

You Cannot Reason with an Overwhelmed Brain

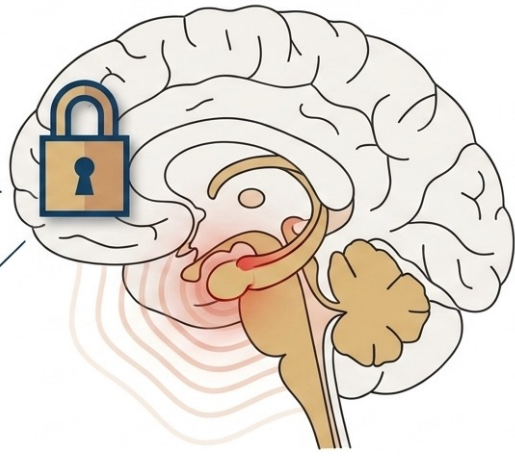
The Biological Reality

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

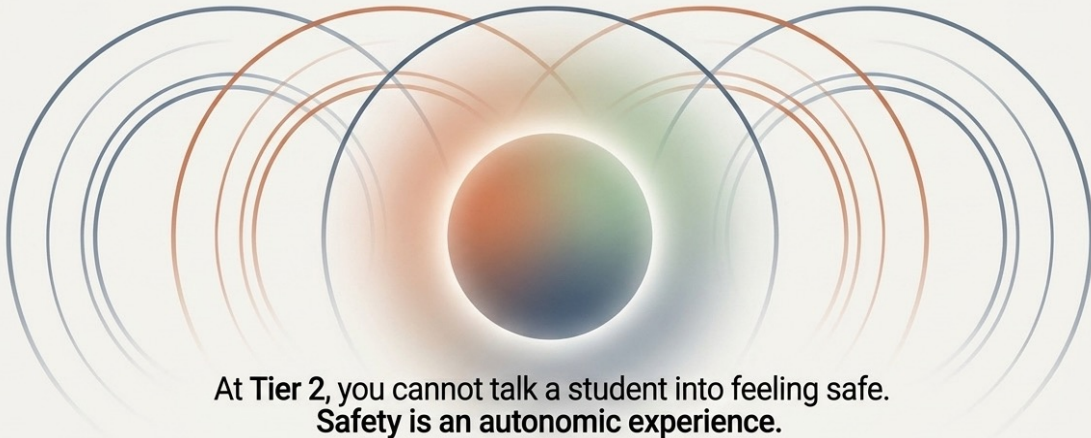
Because the reasoning centers are offline, lectures, consequences, and logical reasoning process as mere noise to the child's nervous system.



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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.

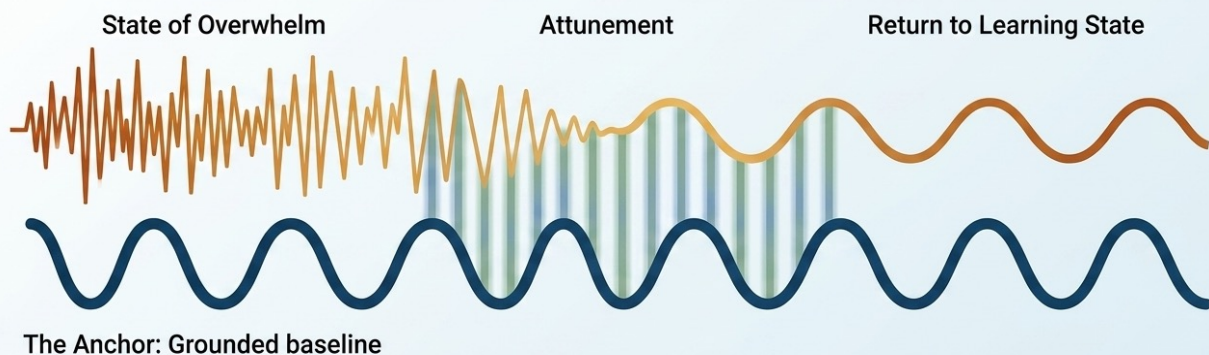
Your **predictability**, your strategic timing, and your unwavering **physical calm** are not merely the prerequisites for an intervention.

They are the intervention itself.

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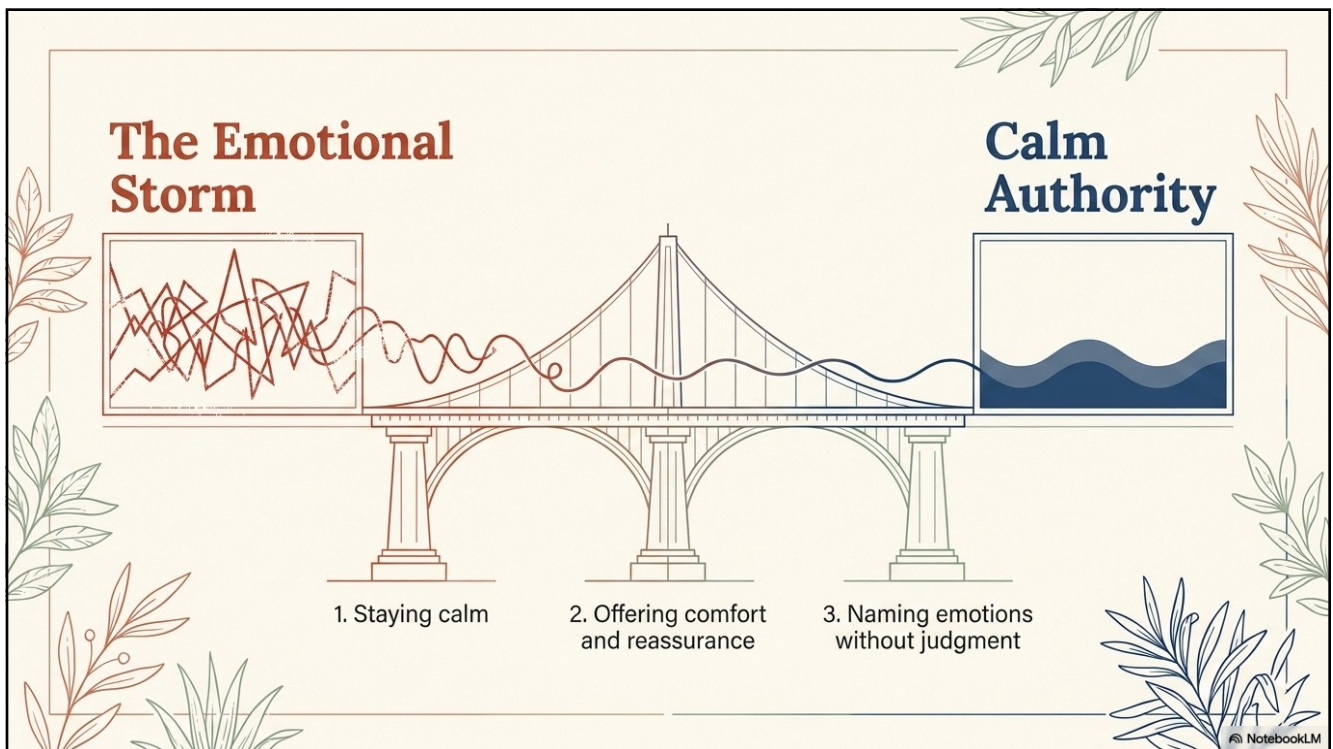
Neural Resonance: The Biology of Calm



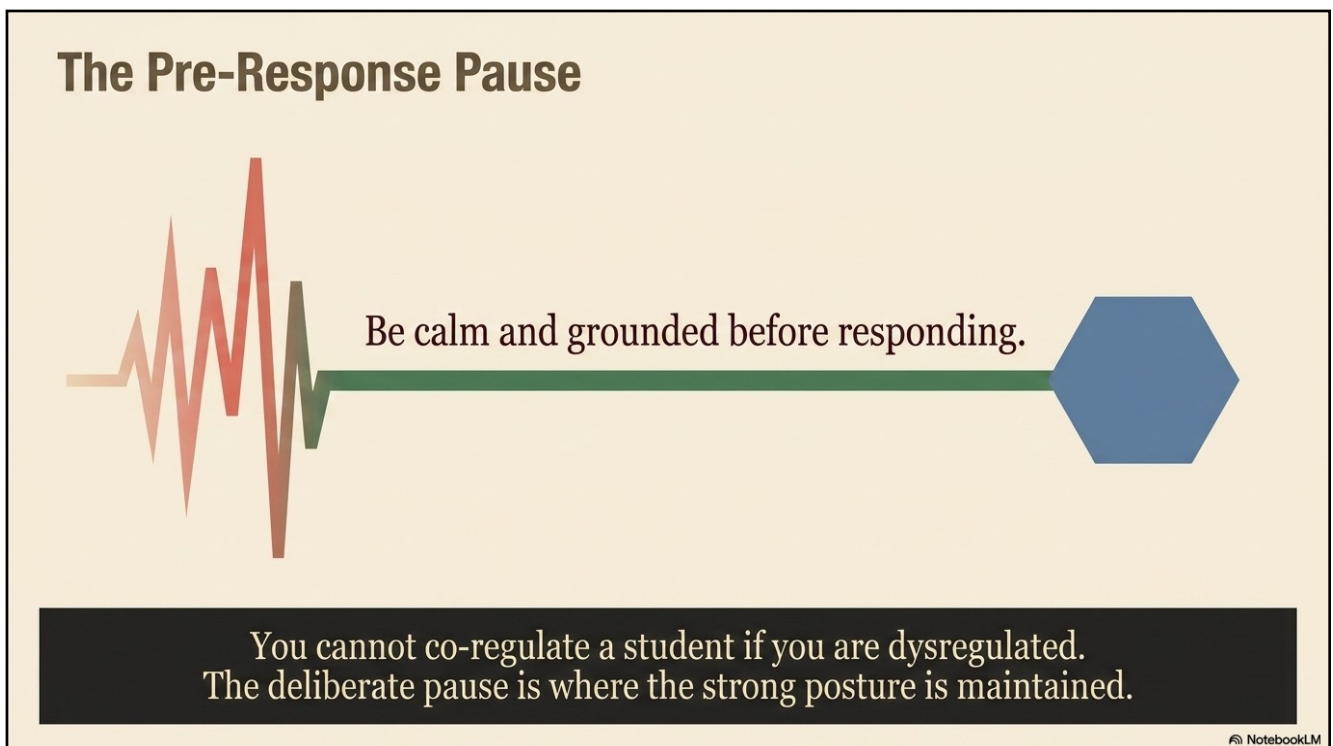
Calm meets Calm. The adult's grounded nervous system absorbs and neutralizes the child's dysregulation.

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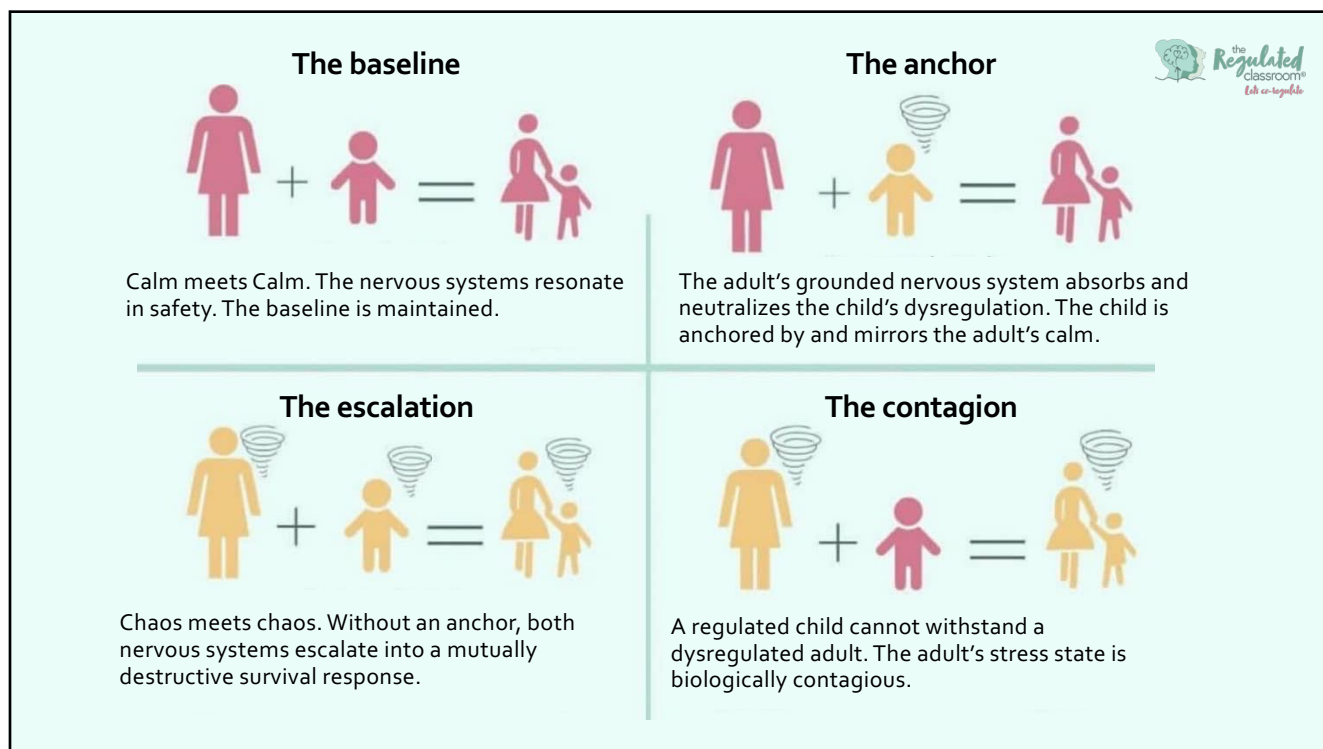
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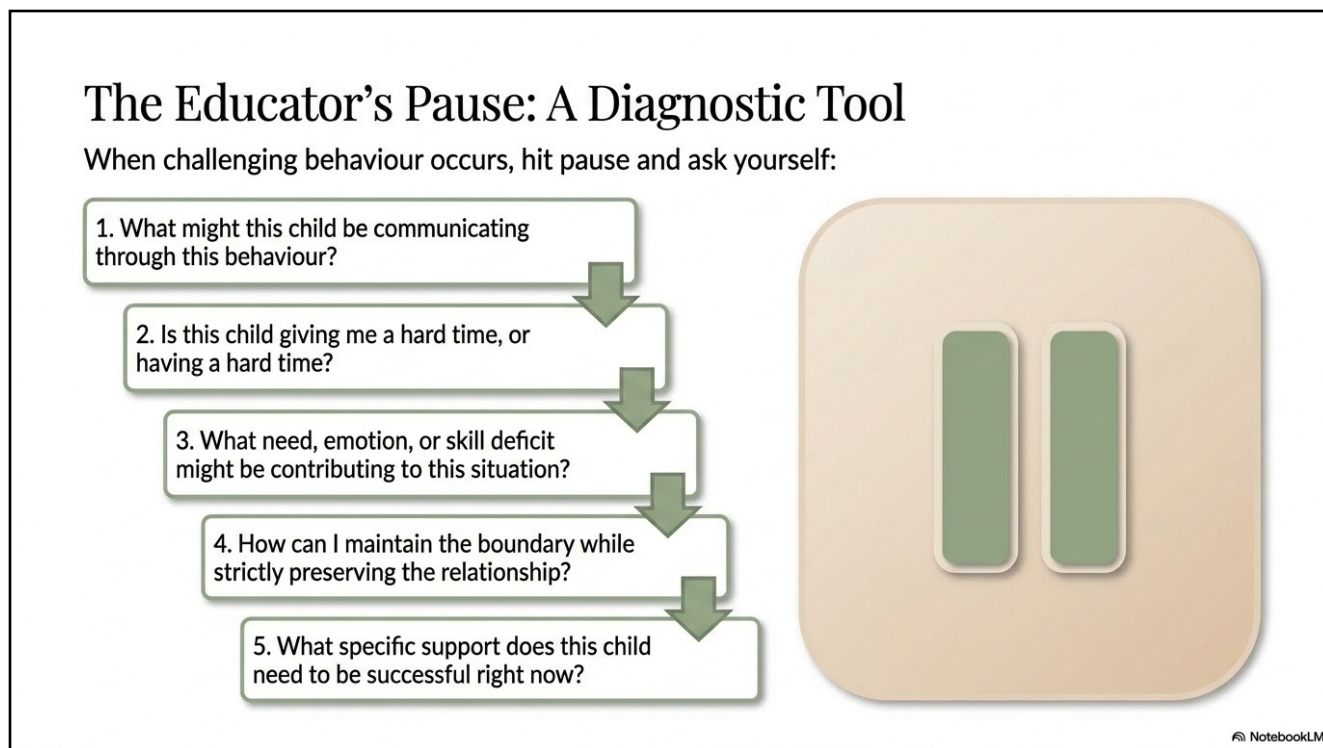
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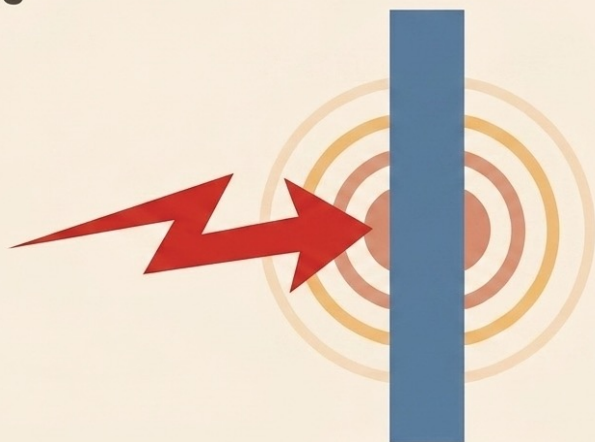
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The Grounded Pushback Response

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

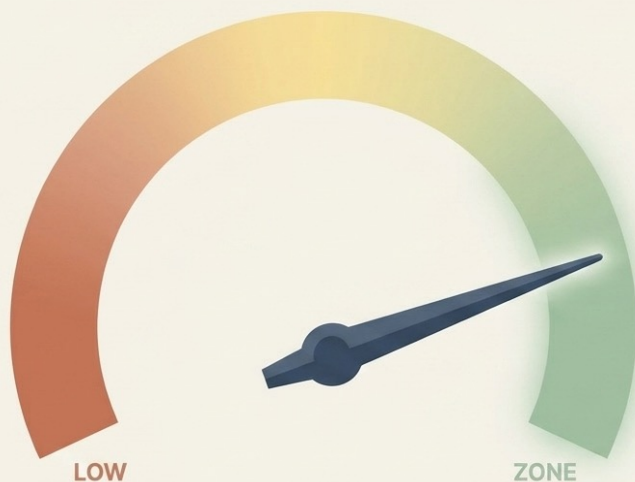
	Inconsistent Modeling	Consistent Modeling
The Scenario	Teaching kindness while speaking harshly. Promoting emotional regulation while reacting impulsively.	Embodying the exact social and emotional skills being taught.
The Child's Experience	Cognitive Dissonance and Confusion.	Authentic, meaningful learning 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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18

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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19

Student Preventive Action Plan



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

TEMPLATE DOCUMENT

Student name:

DOB:

Homeroom Teacher:

School/Board:

Grade Level:

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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