

The Empowerment Approach

Supporting people to be at their 'Brain Best' for learning & play



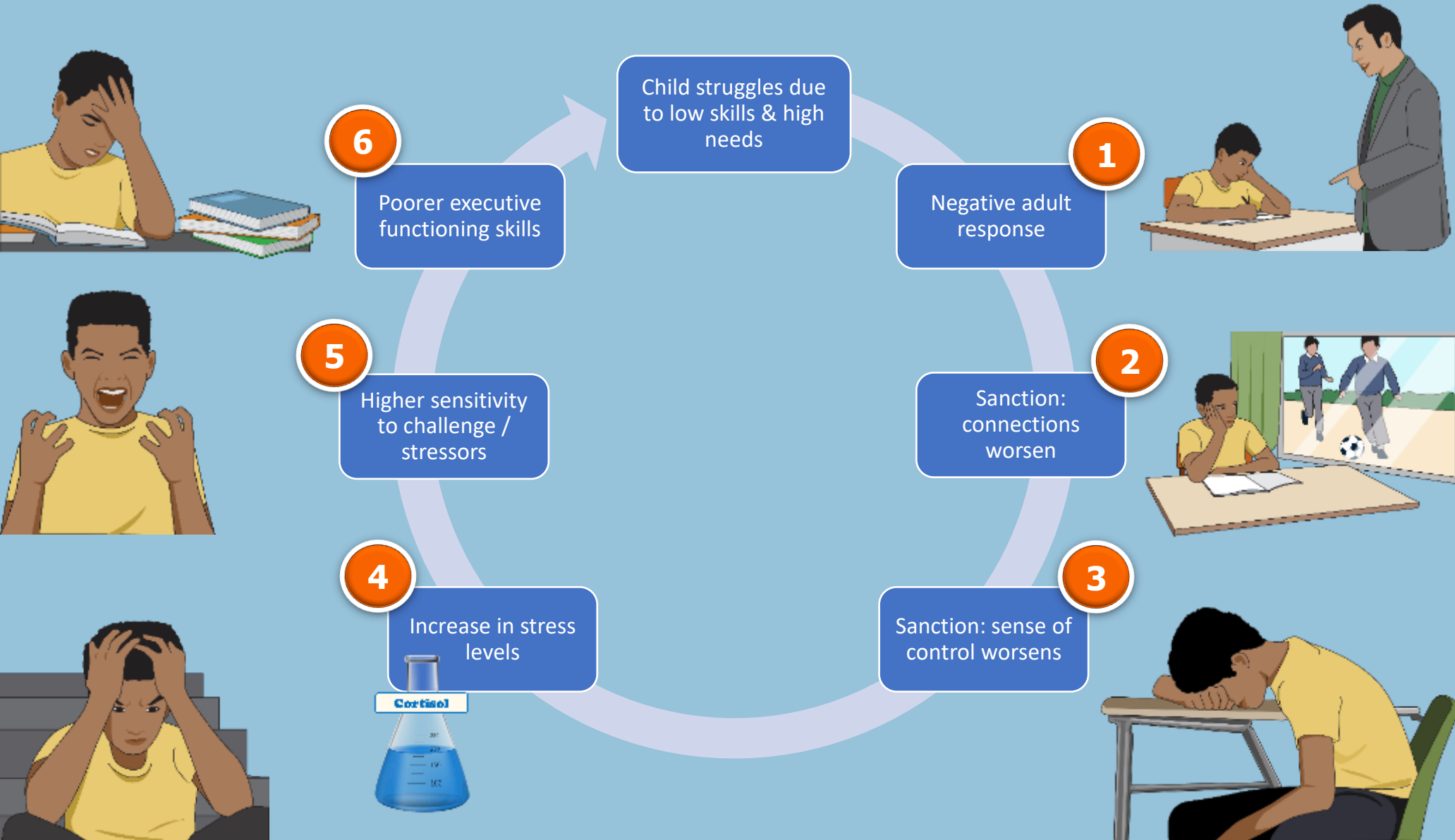
The Empowerment[®]
APPROACH

**What is the Empowerment
Approach?**

**Why are both schools
developing this approach?**



In traditional approaches, children can become trapped in 'The Punishment Cycle'



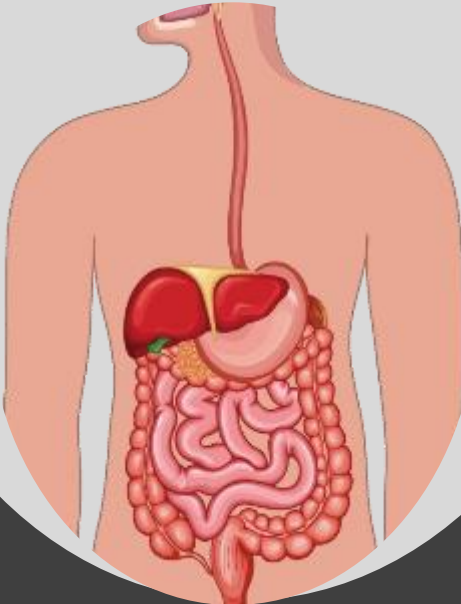
**What happens when children
aren't coping?**

When stress chemicals are released, our clever brain turns some energy-greedy parts of our body **DOWN** to save energy:

1

Our digestive system is turned down

(Which is why we may not feel like eating when stressed, or we may overeat).



2

Our immune system is turned down

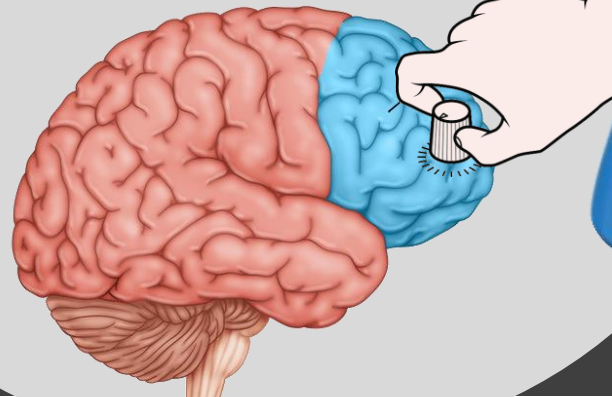
(Which is why stressed people are more vulnerable to illness).



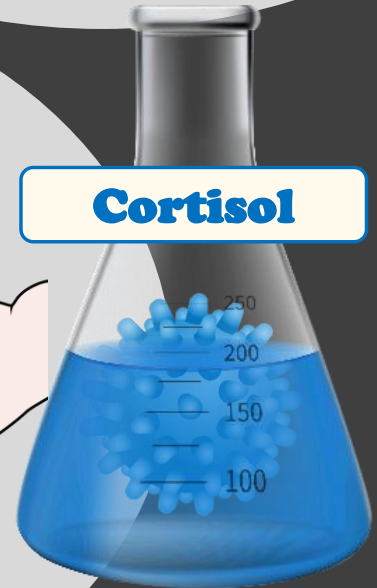
3

Our pre-frontal cortex is turned down

(Which is why it is harder to remember things, stay calm, be flexible, manage impulses etc. when stress is high).



Cortisol

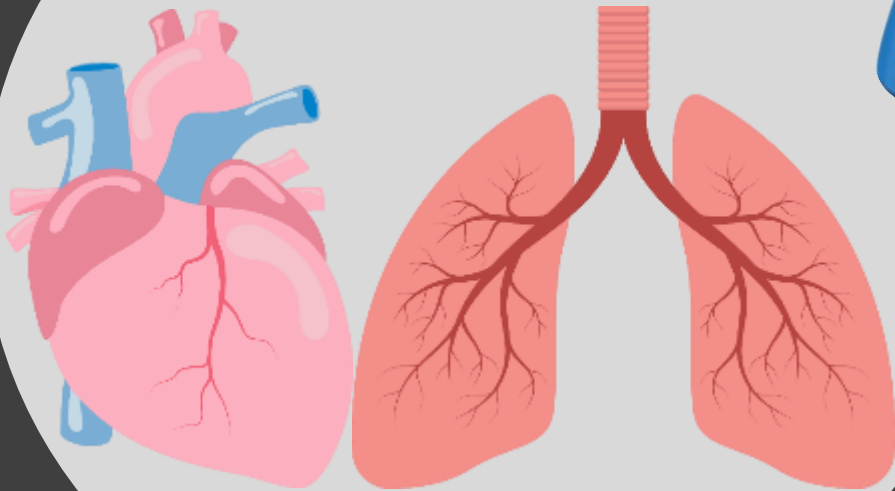


When stress chemicals are released, our clever brain also turns some parts of our body **UP** to help us survive:

1

More oxygen is sent to our lungs and heart

(This is to give energy for fight or flight).



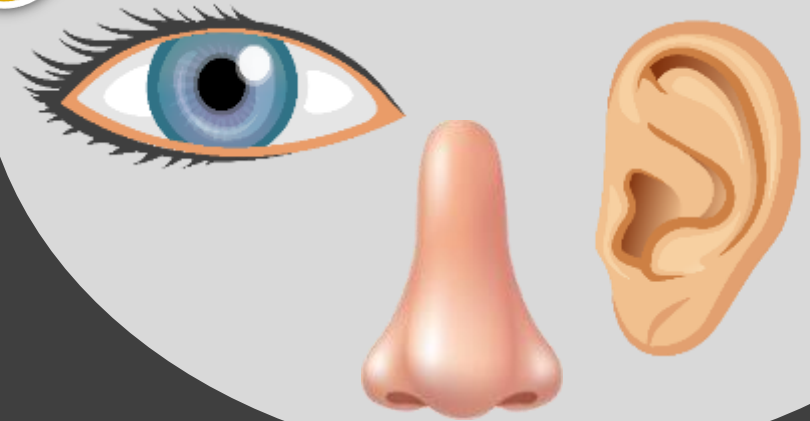
Cortisol



2

Our senses become hyper alert

(This is to help us be aware of other dangers and keep us safe).



3

Blood is pumped towards our organs / away from our limbs

(This increases our heart rate so we can fight or flight easily. It also means we lose less blood if our limbs are attacked).



What's your Prickle Habit?

1. Do you throw?



2. Do you freeze or hide?



3. Do you run?



4. Do you avoid & soothe for the moment?



5. Do you replace with unhelpful DOSE?



6. Do you mask?



Good for me



Good for you



Good for everyone



What is our new approach?

Let's be Curious Not Furious about children's struggles



Was it too noisy?

Was s/he hungry or tired?

Were there too many instructions to remember?

Did s/he feel s/he couldn't do it?

Did s/he need more noticing than we could give?

Did he feel out of control within the situation?

What skills are missing?

What are the unmet needs?

What scaffolds could help?

When people feel better, they do better



The Empowerment Approach teaches everyone:



About the brain and how it works in a way that everyone can understand (not just adults).



To know their needs and find helpful ways to fill them.
To be able to let others know their needs in positive ways.
To find out the needs of others and help them to feel good too.



To discover their strengths and areas their brain finds harder.
To build the skills and work out the scaffolds needed to learn and play at their best - even when their needs aren't met.



How to prepare to be at their best for learning and play in ways that are:
'Good for me, good for you, good for everyone'.



The best way to react and help someone to get back on track when things go wrong.



How to follow-up and problem-solve so a person can manage better next time and make good ongoing progress.

Why teach children about Brain Best Needs?

1. It helps children become more conscious of their own needs

This is the first step in helping them gain conscious control of how they learn and play.

2. It gives children a better chance to prepare to be at their best

(Prep4Best) It means children are better able to let people know and plan what they need (so they can be at their Brain Best) ahead of time – ‘pre-mortem, not post-mortem’.

3. It gives children a language to explain when things are not ok for them

It means children have a better chance of explaining what is not right for them early on, rather than the threat response system taking over. It means they are more likely to ‘catch the prickle’ before it is too late.

4. When things have gone wrong, it helps us to work out the why

By better understanding why things have gone wrong, we can help children plan ways to manage better next time.

5. It means children can understand the needs of other people better

This improves social cognition and helps develop the skill of empathy.

Building the Foundations (daily ways to support children)

-5

Build Relationships



-4

Understand the Brain



-3

Shift Mindset



-2

Get Brain Fit



-1

Agree Expectations



-0

Prep4Best



**We will be insistent, persistent,
consistent, with a bucketful of
kindness**

“Good for me, good for you, good for everyone”

The focus should be to find ways you can feel
safe, content and able to be at your best
AND everyone around you can too.



Comfortable



Connected



Count



Capable



Control



I feel uncomfortable



I feel disconnected



I feel I do not count or belong



I feel incapable







I feel a lack of control



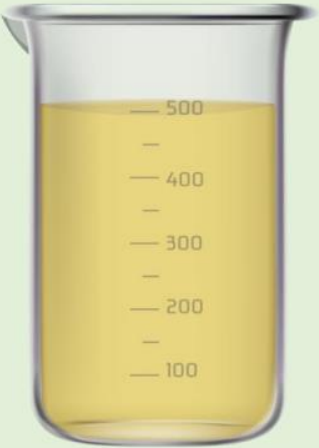
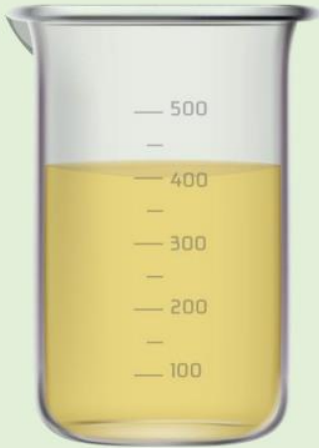

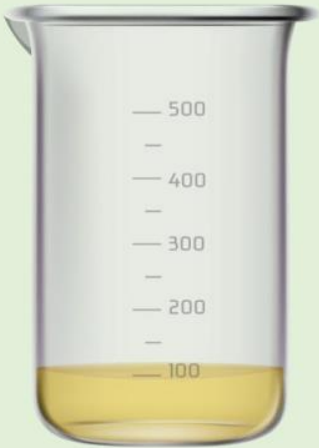

Summarising our 5C Needs

Comfortable	Connected	Count	Capable	Control
I have sufficient sleep to feel energized for the day.	I feel people like and care about me.	I feel I count around here.	I feel I can do what I'm being asked to do and am given supports and help for things I find hard.	I have autonomy and can make decisions without feeling I have to check in about the small stuff.
I eat regularly and well.	I feel connected to others. I feel people respect and value me.	I don't feel the underdog in any way. I feel I am as important as other people.	I have lots of opportunity for showing my strengths. It helps me to feel capable.	I am trusted to make decisions.
I hydrate throughout the day.	I feel a sense of connection to adults, my peers and to the school / family as a whole.	I am given responsibilities and feel trusted.	I feel I am doing well and making progress. I get feedback which is honest and based on real evidence - so I know it's true. I am helped to track my progress.	I know what it expected of me. 'What makes great' is brought alive so I'm clear about what to aim for.
I am free of pain.	I feel I belong and people accept and like me for who I am.	I feel my voice is as important as other people's.	I don't feel I'm 'doing work' for adults – I feel it's for me to learn, grow and improve.	This 'What makes great' being brought alive also means I can compare my own practice to what I'm aiming for. This means I can evaluate my own practice easily and seek support for areas in which I need to improve. I'm in control of my own progress.
I exercise and feel physically healthy.	I feel a sense of belonging at home, with my group of friends, in clubs and at school. I don't feel an outsider.	I feel listened to – my opinion and ideas count.	The use of coaching helps me to feel supported on an ongoing basis for things I find harder – I'm not just punished for it.	Communication is good so I know what is coming up and what to expect.
The temperature, light and sound levels are ok for me around here.	I feel people are on my side – even when I don't manage as well as others or make mistakes.	I feel informed about important changes that will affect me.	I have opportunities for working with my peers, so I don't feel isolated.	I have certainty about what is expected of me and what to expect each day.
My body has enough movement to feel ok.	I know adults will support me – no matter what.	I feel an important part of the family, clubs I atten and school. When I don't, adults help me plan ways to improve this.		
I feel physically comfortable.				

Help children to recognise the size of their 5C Needs

Huge need	Big need	Average need	Smaller need	Tiny need
				

Help children to recognise whether their needs are met well

Full	Nearly full	Half full	Nearly empty	Empty
				

**How can we be at our ‘brain
best’?**



Key Messages: Brain Best



When our 5C Needs are met well it actually changes our body inside. Feel Good Chemicals are released into our body. These help us to feel great.

1

2

There are over 100 different Feel Good Chemicals so we summarise them with 'DOSE' (Dopamine, Oxytocin, Serotonin and Endorphins).

When we get our Daily DOSE day-after-day, it shifts our balance towards resilience – it is easier to manage the stressors that come our way.

3

4

We can get our DOSE in helpful or unhelpful ways.

We should not leave our DOSE to chance – we can plan ahead and find helpful ways to get our DOSE.

5

When needs are met well:

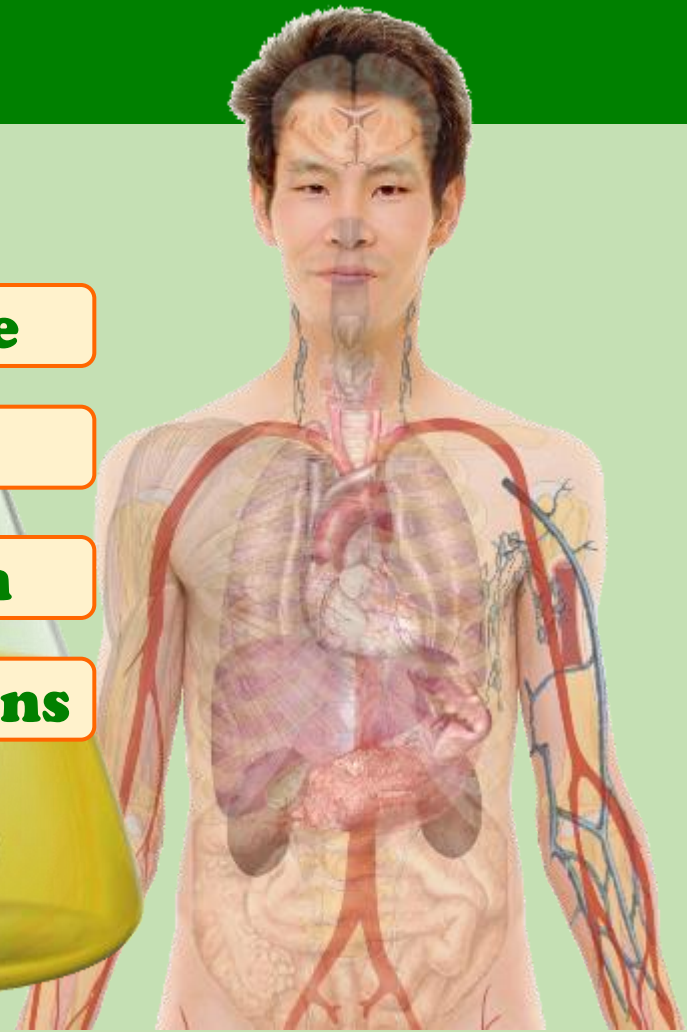


Dopamine

Oxytocin

Serotonin

Endorphins



It's all about the brain ...

When our needs are met well, special chemicals are released into our bloodstream. We feel great! We call these 'Feel Good Chemicals'.

So, the good feeling we get when our needs are met well is actually something physically happening in our brain and body.



D

I feel capable &
in control



The motivator.
Flows when we succeed
AND keeps us coming
back for more.
It's the feeling 'Yes! I did
it!' or 'I got it!'

O

I feel
connected



The trust drug.
Flows with a smile, hug or
massage - when we feel
loved, supported &
connected to others.
It's the calming drug.

S

I feel I count
and matter



The happy hormone.
Flows when we feel
important and of value –
when we feel we matter,
are needed and count.

E

I feel great in
my body!



The pain reliever.
Flows when we exercise
hard or laugh
uncontrollably.
Meditation works too.
'The runner's high'.

We can get our **DOSE** in helpful or unhelpful ways

	Helpful	Unhelpful
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Starting a new interest / club Knowing what you want to get good at Planning a goal (make it specific) e.g. to be able to get to a certain grade in karate or do a specific number of keepie-uppies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trying to win in a way that isn't great for others Taking other people's stuff Forcing others to do what you want Doing things that are unsafe or risky but give a sense of power, control and success
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finding ways to make new connections e.g. joining a sports, music or interest club Inviting someone you like to do something you enjoy Keeping in touch with old friends Volunteering in the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Being in a 'gang' that gets involved in things that aren't good for others Joining in with teasing or bullying against someone else Mucking around with friends in a way that isn't good for others e.g. joking around in class
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Entering a competition Auditioning for a part Asking for a special job within the home / school/club Helping at a club for younger children Volunteering in the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trying to win against someone in a way which makes them feel bad Boasting about being better than others Putting others down Leading and influencing others to do antisocial acts Anything which helps a person feel like the top dog
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joining a sports or dance club Aerobic activities e.g. a vigorous run Joining a drumming group or band Watching some comedy Getting involved in outdoor adventurous activities e.g. indoor rock climbing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Doing things that are fun but unsafe or risky e.g. trespassing to take part in unsupervised parkour Exercising so much it causes damage to the body Self-harm Getting involved in activities which are exciting but illegal or antisocial

**What happens when we're in
'danger brain'?**

Growth Zones

Danger Panic Toxic Zone



It is normal for our brain to want to retreat to its Comfort Zone and do what is easy and familiar.

This helps the brain feel safe and comfortable.

To increase resilience, we need to work at improving the skills of moving out of the Comfort Zone and tolerating Growth and Tolerable Stress.



Key Messages: Brain Stress



When our 5C Needs are NOT met well, stress chemicals are released into our body and our **threat response is activated**.



2 These stress chemicals create key changes, designed to get us ready for survival. Some things are **turned up** and some things are **turned down**.

Things that are turned down: our immune system, digestive system and Executive Function Skills. This is because they are all 'energy greedy' and the threat response wants to save energy for fight/flight.



4 Things that are turned up: our breathing, heart rate and senses. This is so we can get away quickly.

These changes are perfect for times we are in real danger. That is why we call this the '**Danger Brain**'.



**How can we respond if a child
is in 'danger brain'?**

The Ten Point Response Plan

Responding in the Moment



Follow-Up for Progress (Coaching Conversations & Repair)



Coaching for Change



Responding when things go wrong: Calm, Connect, Support

Calm

1



Get calm

Focus on staying calm and kind. Model the regulation skills you want them to learn. It takes great skill and lots of practice. Prep4Best will make it easier for you.

Connect

2



Connect to Calm

Get into their mind and show you understand how things are for them. Help them to feel supported and cared for. You don't have to agree with their actions!

Support

3



Help them get back on track

Think paramedic. Think team.
What could help them get back on track now?
Offer options or divert quickly if too deregulated to think.

Responding needs the cool calm of the paramedic

Skill

What this looks like



I can stay calm, modelling skills I want them to build:

I can stay calm, even when the young person is saying and doing things which are hurtful, worrying or even dangerous.

I work out my own triggers so I can stay calm, no matter what.

I 'Prep4Best' – planning and practising ways to stay calm.



I can 'Connect to Calm' to help them regulate:

I say things which help the young person feel understood and supported.

The things I say and do help them to feel I'm there for them and understand what they are experiencing.

I use 'team' language.



I can offer support to help them get back on track:

I can offer something that might help, even when the young person is being anti-social.

I stay calm and kind.

I give the child choice wherever possible, so they feel a sense of control over the situation.

I stay focused on the fact that this is the 'Paramedic' stage. Later will be the time to address any concerns.

Coaching Conversations



Support Stage 2: Coaching Conversation



1

Introduce



Keep brains calm

Wait until everyone is calm.
Introduce the issue in a matter-of-fact way so the child doesn't become defensive.
"I noticed ... What was going on for you?"

2

Listen



Listen to understand

Ask 'clean' questions, then wait. Repeat back their words. Ask more clean questions to probe. Try to get to the core of the issue so **they** understand.

3

Share



Challenge, do not blame

Let them know your concerns using a kind, matter-of-fact tone. "The thing is for me is ..."
Use the Speak Up 4 Better tool - it keeps the 'you' blamer out of it.

4

Problem solve



'Good for me, good for you, good for everyone'

Ask how it can be solved so everyone's needs are met. Wait – don't fill silence with your own ideas – push the child to think **really** hard.



Insistence, persistence, consistence, with a bucketful of kindness



High Expectations

- Consistent follow-up
- Protective measures when needed (for the child & those around them)
- Clear sequence of coaching
- Active prioritising (rather than 'ignoring' the low level)
- Focus on the building of missing skills
- Clear Pathways to Independence

High Support

- Curiosity, connection and listening
- Addressing of unmet needs
- Coaching rather than managing
- Designing solutions together
- Finding scaffolds together
- Developing strategies together
- Prep4Best

Thank you