

# **Support of Somatosensoric Regulation at Schools**

**9:30-10:30**

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**Society  
for All**



# Society for All

Founded in 2011

45 members of core team

300 cooperating regional partners

International cooperation –  
Norway, USA, Slovakia, Poland,  
Hungary, Netherlands, Portugal,  
Litva

**Quality education for all**

**Promoting mental health  
and wellbeing**

**Early identification and  
interdisciplinary support of  
children at risk**

# Advocacy and other activities supporting system changes

- Cooperation with **faculties of education** on implementation of competence framework (behavior management)
- Cooperation on **elementary education curriculum revision** (SEL)
- **System support of wellbeing in education** (Partnership for Education 2030+)
- **Cooperation with Ministries** of Education, Health, Labour and Social Services, Interior (legislation, strategies)
- Cooperation with **regional authorities**
- **Localisation of evidence informed frameworks and programs**
- **Training** of trainers
- **Long-term support** of schools (whole-school approaches implementation - PBIS & Wellbeing support)
- **Public awareness** enhancement (media, conferences, articles...)



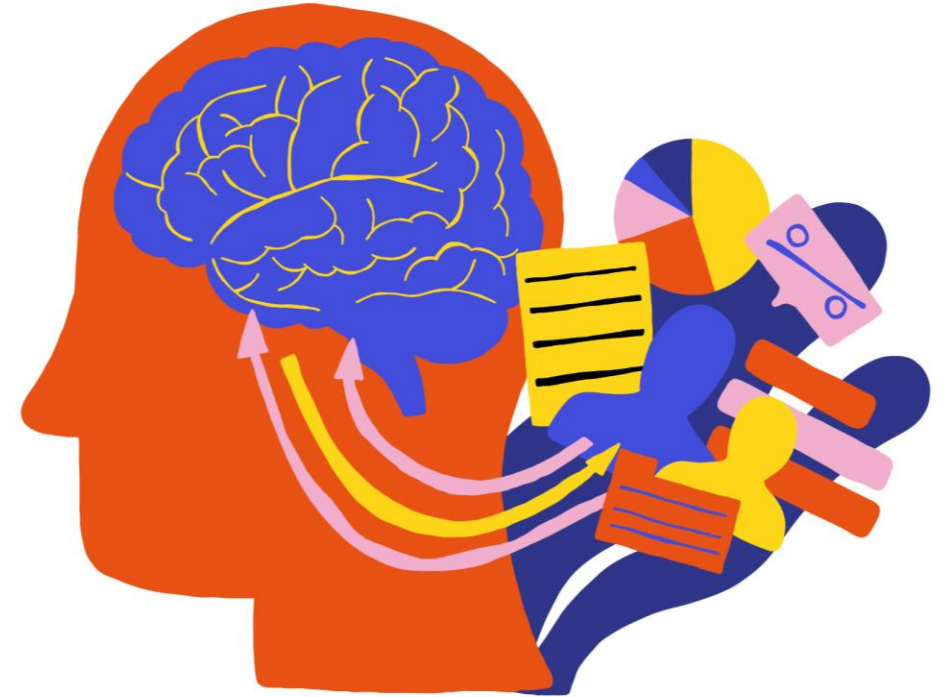
# **SOFA activities supporting change in support of vulnerable children**

- **KID Card for identification of vulnerable children**
- **Case management at schools supporting children with emerging problems**
- **Coordination of multisectoral platforms of local stakeholders in support of vulnerable children** (local procedures and agreements)
- **Trauma-informed education and care trainings**
- **Participation on preparation of new legislation on social protection and services**
- **Parental skills training program**



# Frameworks and programs

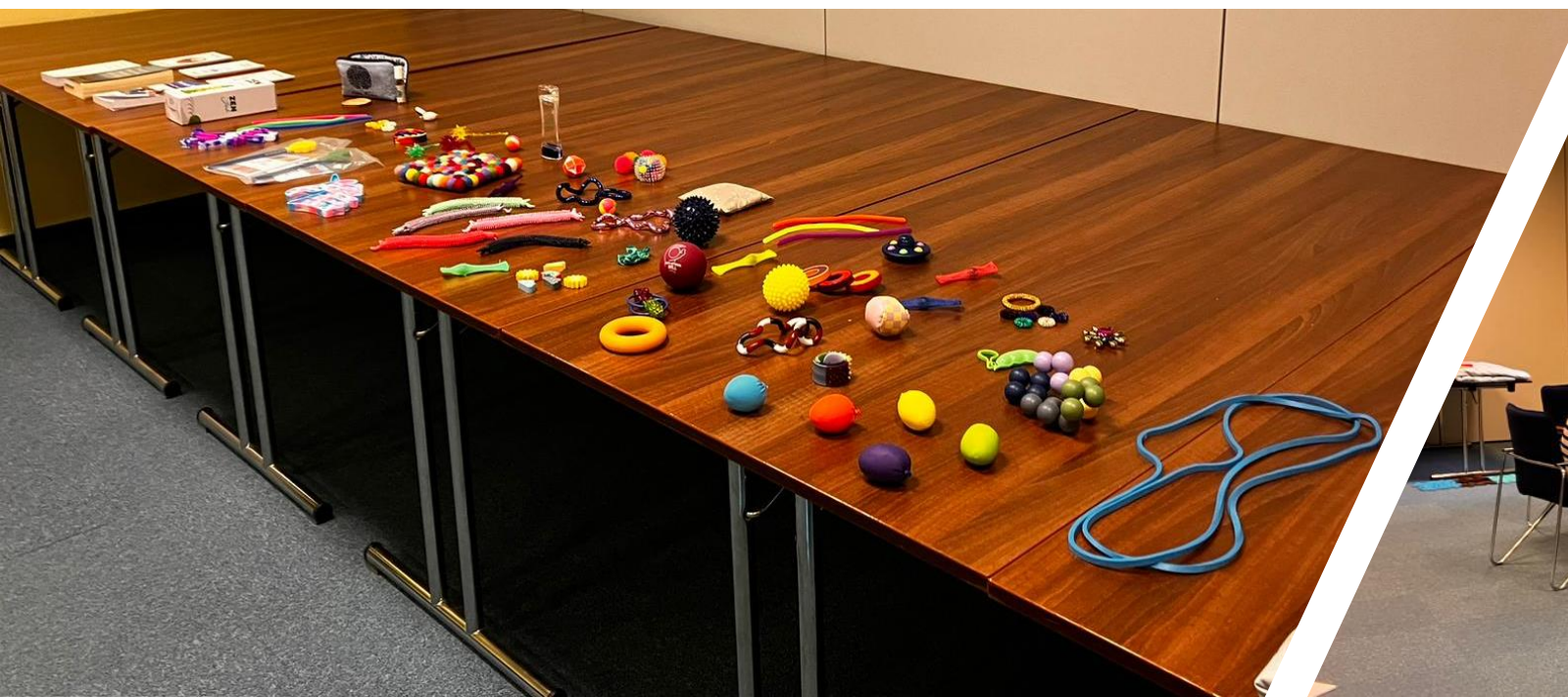
- **Trauma Informed Approach**
  - STRONG, Strong Resilient Youth  
<https://www.strongresilientyouth.org/>
- **Neurosequential Model in Education**
- **Positive Behavior Intervention and Support**
- **Social Emotional Learning**
  - Resilience Rights and Respectful Relationships

















# Patterns of stress



# Stressor and stress reaction

**stressor** = a stimulus that disbalances our organism

**stress reaction** = **defensive mechanism** aiming to keep balance, prevent injury or death

## Stress reactions

- **Fight**
- **Flight**



**Activating reactions:**  
increased heart rate,  
breathing, and blood flow  
focused attention, rapid  
reactions

- **Freeze**



**Deactivating (dissociative) reactions:** decreased heart rate and breathing, muscle weakness, unresponsiveness



## State dependent functioning – hyperactivation and dissociation

Internal state	Calm	Alert	Alarm	Fear	Terror
Hyperarousal Continuum	Calm	Alert	Resistance	Defiance	Aggression
Dissociative Continuum	Calm	Avoidance	Compliance	Dissociation	Fainting
Sense of Time	The Future	Days/hours	Hours/minutes	Minutes/seconds	Absence of time perception
Regulating Brain Regions	Neocortex and cortex	Cortex / limbic system	Limbic system / cerebellum	Cerebellum / brain stem	Brain stem / autonomous nervous system
Cognitive Style	Abstract/ Reflecting	Concrete	Emotional	Reactional	Reflective

## State-dependent functioning – student's behaviour:

Status	Calm	Alert	Alarm	Fear	Terror
Behaviour	Filip sits at his desk, working quietly and intently. He is humorous and shows empathy and willingness to help his classmates.	Filip is working on an assignment. When he starts disturbing his classmates and the teacher admonishes him, he stops. He is easy to communicate with.	Filip often leaves his workplace and tends to walk around the classroom. When cautioned by the teacher, he gets angry easily. It is more difficult to make contact with him.	Filip behaves in such a way that other classmates are afraid of him – his non-verbal communication is hostile, and he verbally insults his classmates. Sometimes he runs out of classroom.	Philip swears at the teacher and pushes his desk at her.

(Johannessen and Bakken, 2020)



# (Self)regulation

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## State of CALM and ALERT

We have full access to the cognitive and executive functions of the cerebral cortex:



we can use

**TOP-DOWN REGULATION  
(REASON)**

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**We engage in an inner dialogue in which we calm/encourage ourselves.**



# (Self)regulation

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## State of **ALARM** and **FEAR**

Our access to the cerebral cortex is limited, the limbic system takes over the controlling role:



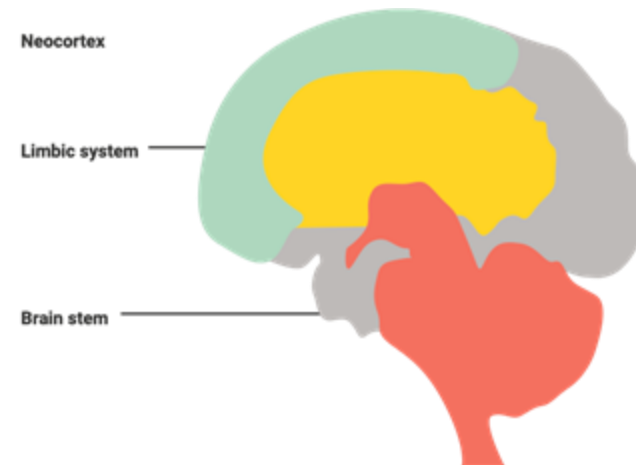
we can use

**RELATIONAL REGULATION  
(RELATE)**

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Regulation by reason may not be functional, it helps us to REGULATE BY RELATIONSHIP.

**Being in contact with a person we trust and feel safe with helps us to regulate.**



Regulation by  
relationship



# (Self)regulation

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**State of FEAR and TERROR**

Our actions are controlled by the brain stem:



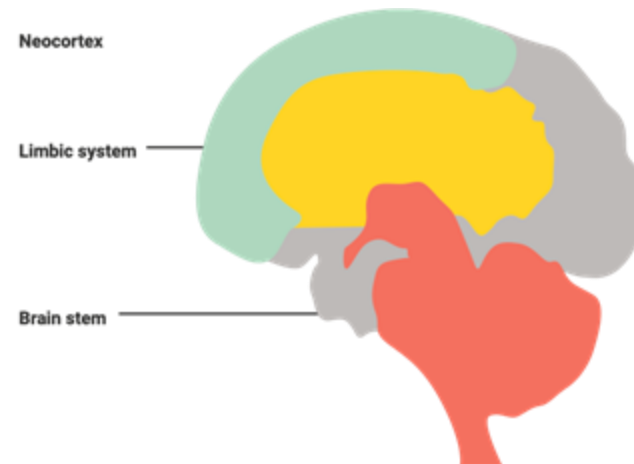
we use

**SOMATOSENSORY REGULATION  
(REGULATE)**

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**To regulate, we use our senses and movement.**

**SO  
FA**



**Somatosensory  
regulation**

# Somatosensory regulation as prevention

## Recommendation (B. D. Perry)

- relational    - relevant
- repetetive    - rewarding
- rythmic        - respectful

- regular doses of sensorimotor stimulation extend the time when children can engage in active learning
- regularity provides a sense of safety and predictability



# Tips for use at school

- relaxation exercises
- shorter activating movement (legs, arms, etc.)
- breathing exercises
- sensorimotor aids

**"Brain breaks"** = a short break during the lesson, when children are motivated to engage in sensorimotor activities.

The goal is to give the brain a short break to help regulate the stress response system. It helps transfer the newly learned information to long-term memory.

# Somatosensory aids



# Rrelaxation corner



## Relaxation corner rules



- 1.** Set a timer for 5 mins.



- 2.** Take several deep breaths and/or use the tools in the relaxation corner.



- 3.** Once you feel better again, return to class.  
If help is still needed, contact

.....



## Stimulating activities

Activities can be used with children who are passive, sleepy, unmotivated, numb or absent-minded.

### Tips for activating exercises and games:

#### Step to the side

Everyone stands next to their chair. Children must make one step in any direction every time teacher says "step". The teacher can change number of steps (e. g. "two/three steps"). Children can get close to other children in this activity as nobody knows where others will go.

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#### One, Two, Three, Three – Aghh!

Children stand and close their eyes. Any child can begin this brain break by calling out "one". Another child must then call out "two" and so on in numerical order until all children have called out a number. If two children called out the same number at the same time, the count resets and the game begins all over again.

## Calming activities

Activities suitable for children who are **restless, have difficulty staying still and focus on schoolwork** (e.g. swinging on a chair, tapping their feet, chatting with classmates, playing with pen or walking around the classroom).

### Tips for calming exercises and games:

#### Mirrors

Children form pairs and face each other. One child starts to make very slow and gentle movements. The other child tries to mirror the same movements at the same speed.

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#### I lead you

Children make pairs and they place palm to palm in front of them. One child starts to slowly move with whole arms. The other lets him/her lead and follows the movements. Child following movements can then close their eyes.

**TIP:** Children can start with touching fingertips only. Children who avoid physical contact can mirror the movements without touching.

## Stimulating activities

### Jumping beans

Children stand in a circle or a group and jump up and down. Teacher gives instructions how to jump – e. g. as happy beans, tiny beans, really big beans, tired beans, etc. Teacher may ask children to think of the instruction.

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### 1, 2, 3

Children form pairs and each pair has a person "A" and a person "B". Person A starts by saying "One!", B says, "Two!", A says, "Three!", person B then has to say "One!" and the pair keeps alternating. When the pairs get into the rhythm, teacher changes "One" to the hand clap. Then "Two" to the finger snap/jump or other movement.

## Calming activities

### Back-to-Back Breathing

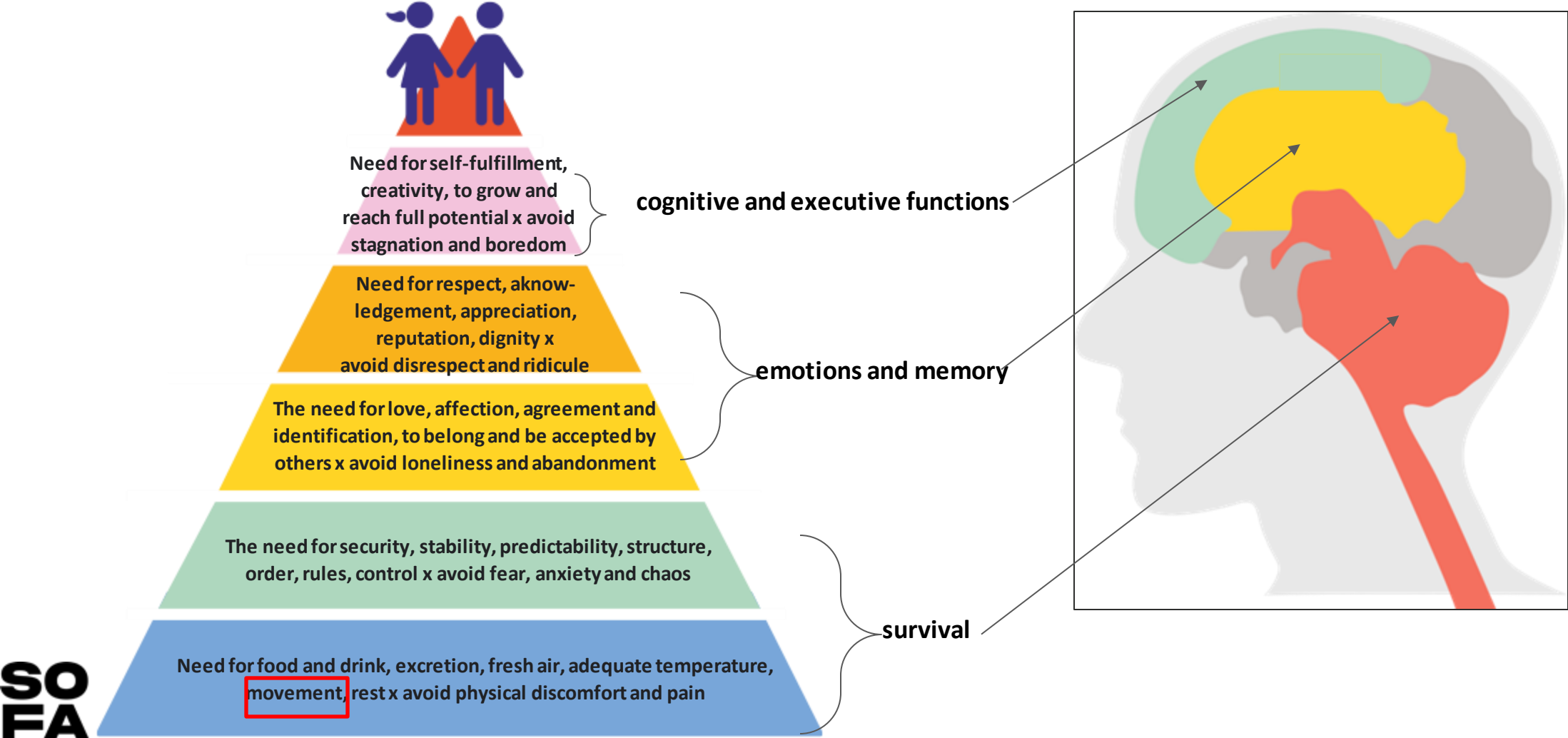
Children partner and sit back-to-back on the floor. Teacher asks them to breathe slowly and gently and to bring their awareness to the movement of their partner's back while breathing. Prompts them to notice the sensation of their partner's lungs expanding and contracting. Children can focus on whether their partner's breaths are slow or fast, deep or shallow.

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### Back Drawing

Children partner, one sits behind the other facing their partner's back. Teacher encourages children to gently draw different shapes/letters/simple pictures on their partner's back. Children try to recognize what it is. Teacher encourages them to concentrate on the shape being drawn on their back, bringing their awareness to this sensation. Later on, children change their roles.

# Brain and Elementary Human Needs at School



Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow)



# Supportive school environment

- focused on addressing **elementary needs** of children and adults
- provides **protective factors** that contribute to processing of traumatic experiences
- contributes to the **well-being** of all members of the faculty

# Infographics

## Stress and its effects

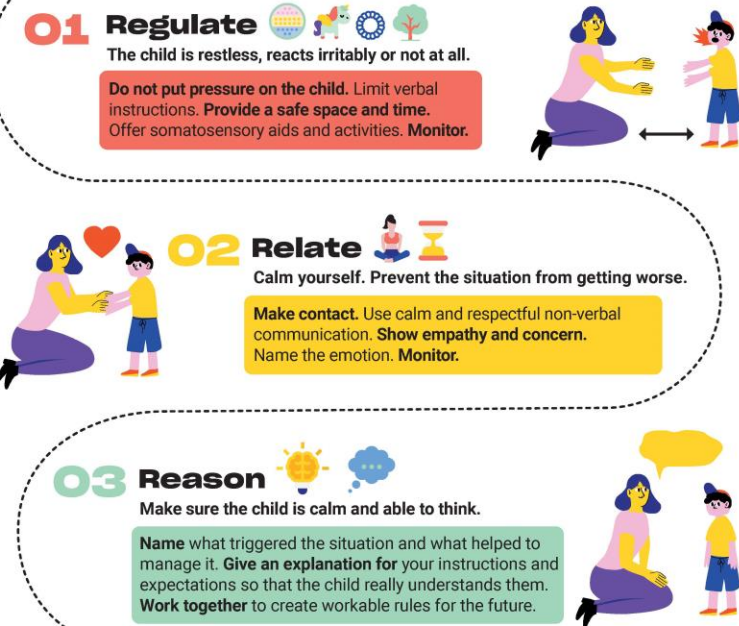
When is stress useful, and when can it harm us?



## Three steps to managing challenging behaviour

A child who **learns healthy regulation** from his parents develops the ability to stop impulsive behaviour in time, and in most cases can **calm down**.

» A child who does not have this support will have difficulty managing their behaviour and emotions and needs help. It is important to be able to provide this support.



# How do I feel?

## Levels of stress response activation

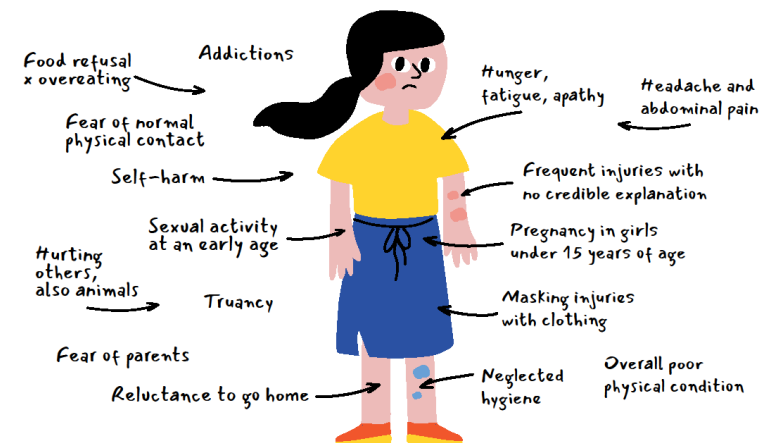


# Safety plan



# How to identify a child at risk?

## Changes in behaviour Physical signs



## What to do?

### The child is in acute danger.

- ✓ Make sure the child is safe.
- ✓ Contact the Police.
- ✓ Contact the Agency for Social and Legal Protection of Children.

### If it is not an acute threat to the child:

- offer your support,
- if the child wants it, talk to the child in a calm environment,
- provide the child with contact details for the Child Safety Line,
- consult with the school counsellor about the child's situation,
- consult further action with an organisation helping children,
- organise a case meeting.