

## Understanding and Working with Children and Youth in Emotional Times

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[www.cebm.ca](http://www.cebm.ca)

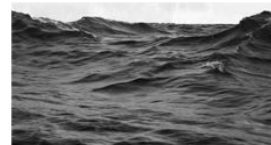
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The world has shifted.



Covid-19 is causing waves of emotion!



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"This is not the vision of the school we hold in our hearts."

Valerie Caya, VP St. Johns Elementary School, RSB



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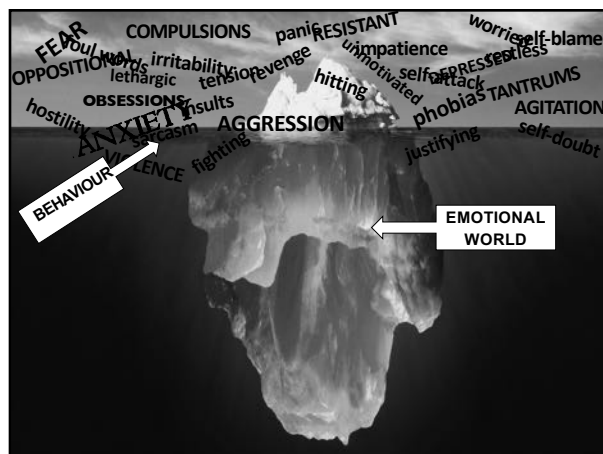
Helping you to SEE in a world that has changed dramatically.



The way you SEE will help you to know what to do, even in uncertain times.

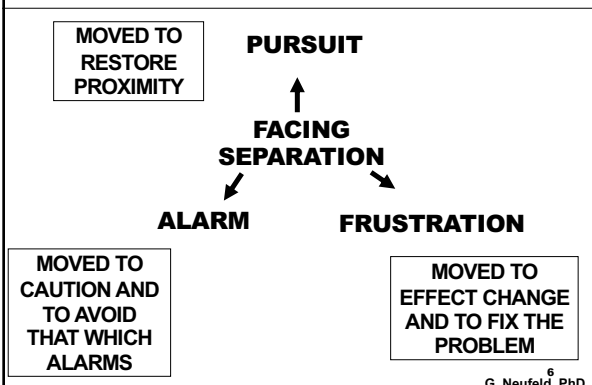
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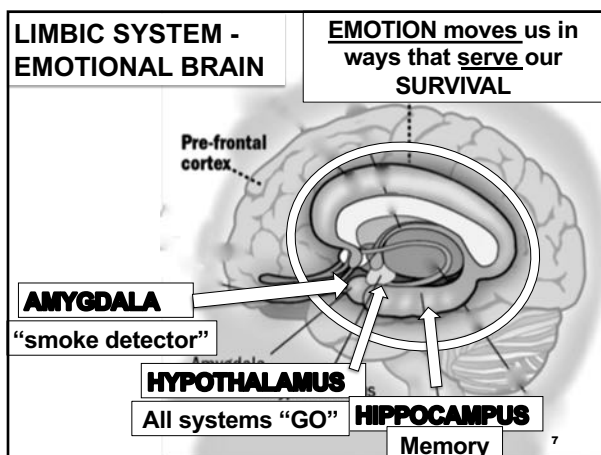
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### THREE PRIMARY EMOTIONS EXPERIENCED IN THE FACE OF SEPARATION

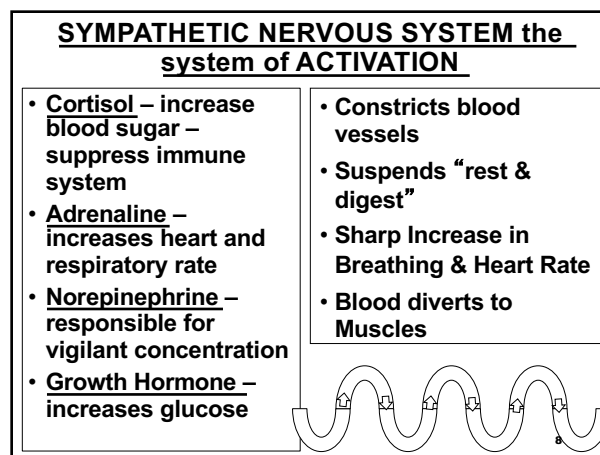


G. Neufeld, PhD.

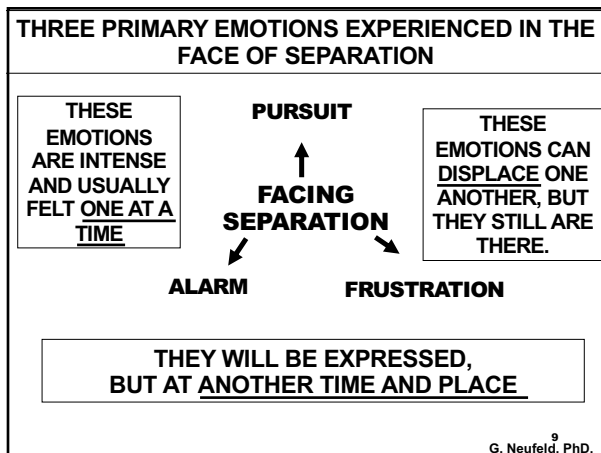
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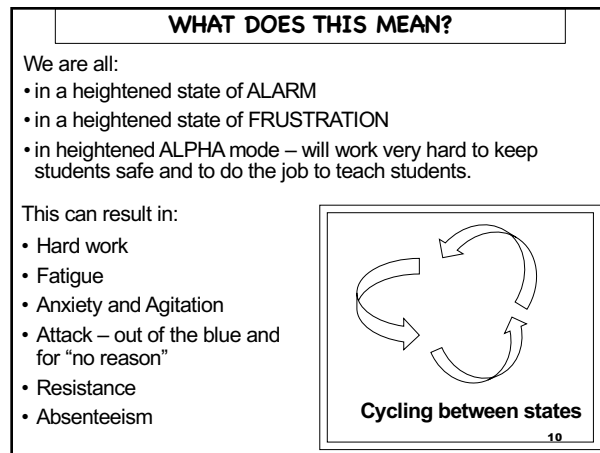
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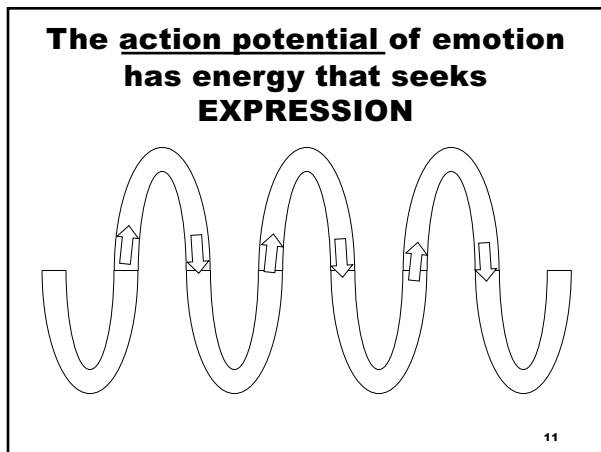
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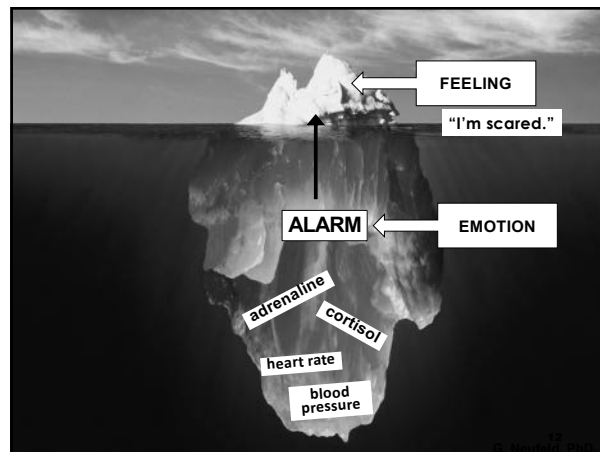
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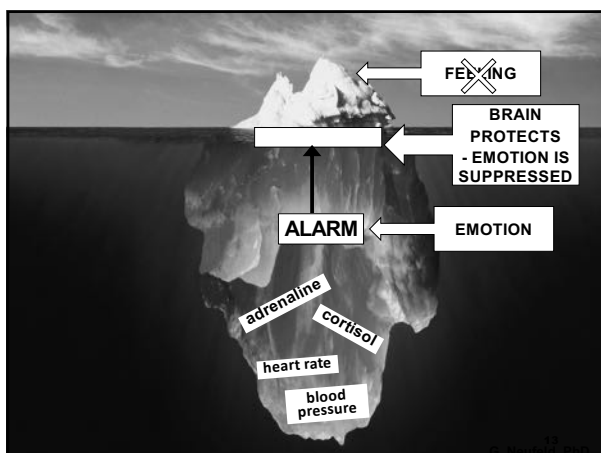
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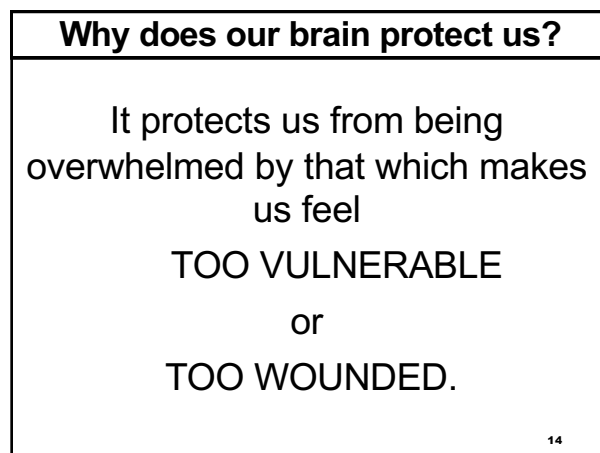
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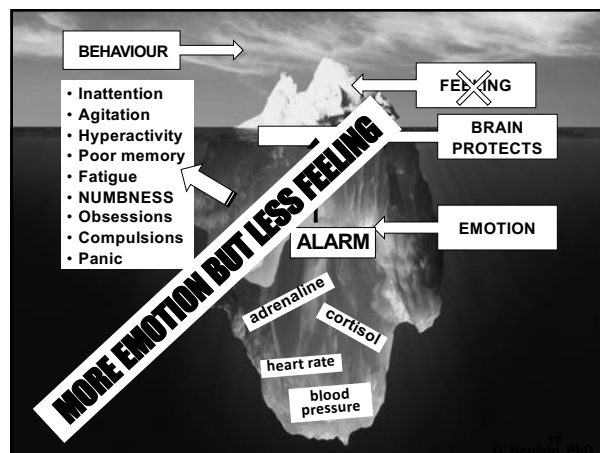
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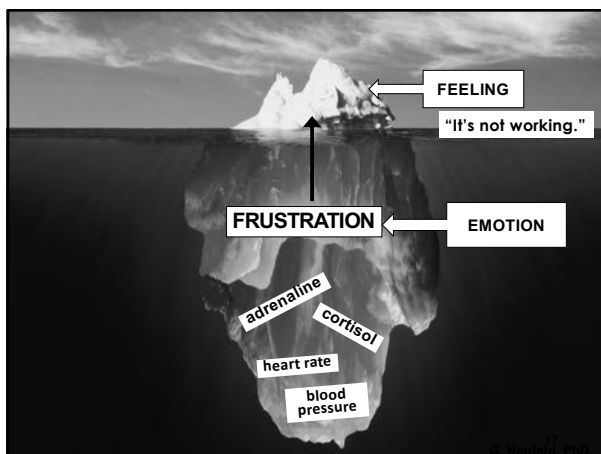
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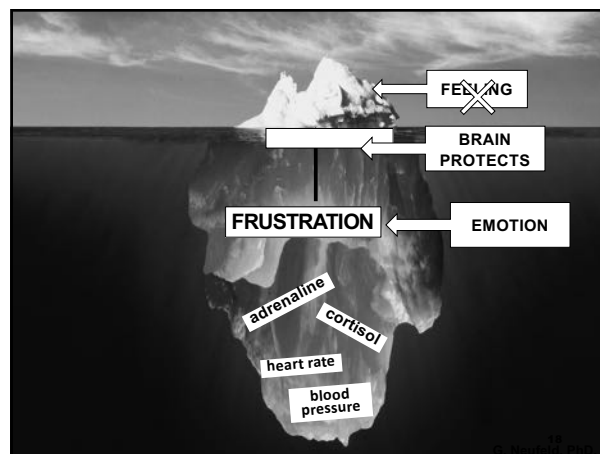
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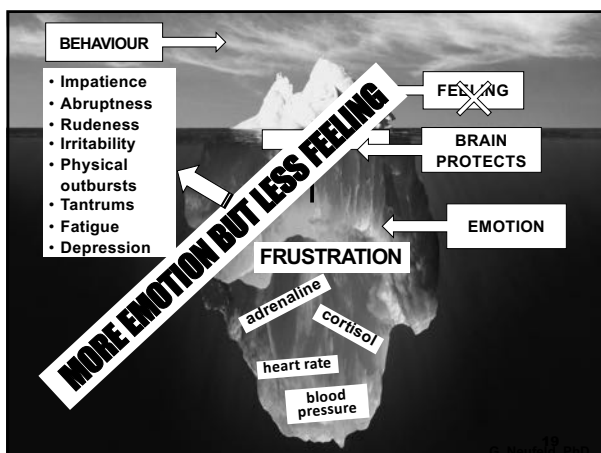
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Are our children and youth going to have emotional problems or be traumatized because of Covid 19?

**NOT NECESSARILY**

But can we really help them at school?

**YES**

IF we understand how **EMOTIONS** work.

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## EMOTIONS

need to be **EXPRESSED** to preserve healthy functioning and well-being

Emotions are supposed to rise up and flow through our children.

Their existence is not a problem, although the way they are expressed may be the cause of problems.

Emotions need to flow, for children to grow.

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Emotions need to be expressed BUT...



1. **Expression** is often MESSY & NOISY, CHAOTIC & UNACCEPTABLE, ALIENATING & WOUNDING



2. It can **threaten** a child's RELATIONSHIPS.

3. So, the **brain** can suppress or depress emotion to protect its attachments especially if emotional expression is considered to be "unacceptable".



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## HOW DO WE INADVERTENTLY PUT JUDGEMENT ON EMOTION and SUPPRESS IT?

When we say to the child:

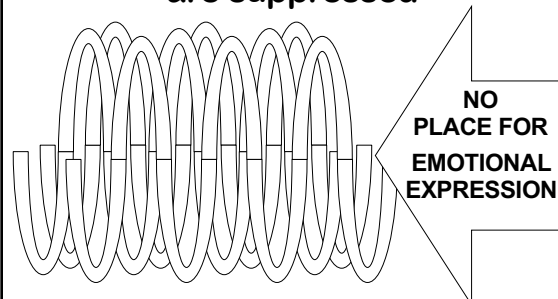
- Stop ... yelling, crying, whining
- Calm down
- Don't be silly, there is nothing to be afraid of
- WHY...
  - are you crying?
  - are you so angry?
- BE...
  - happy – think good thoughts
  - good

**THIS CAN CAUSE EMOTIONS TO BE SUPPRESSED BECAUSE THEIR EXPRESSION COULD CAUSE SEPARATION**

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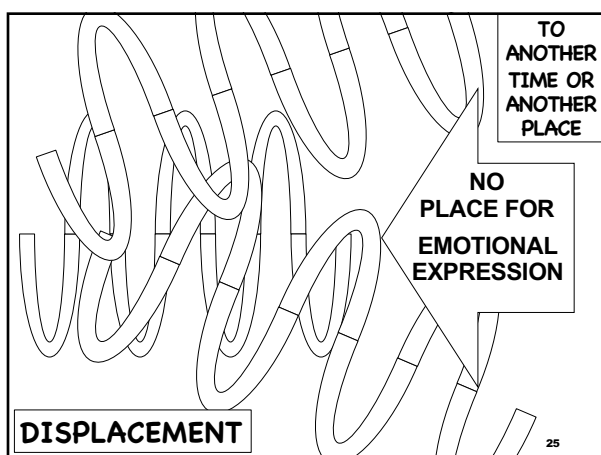
what happens when emotions are suppressed



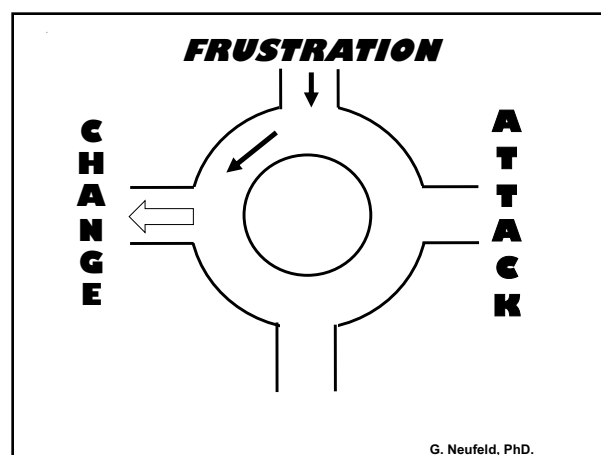
**DEPRESSION**

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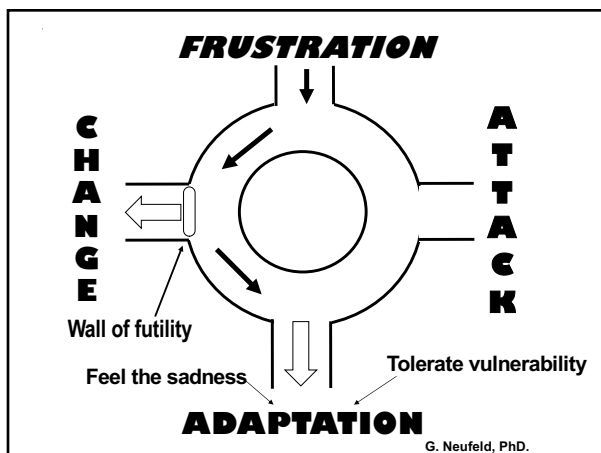
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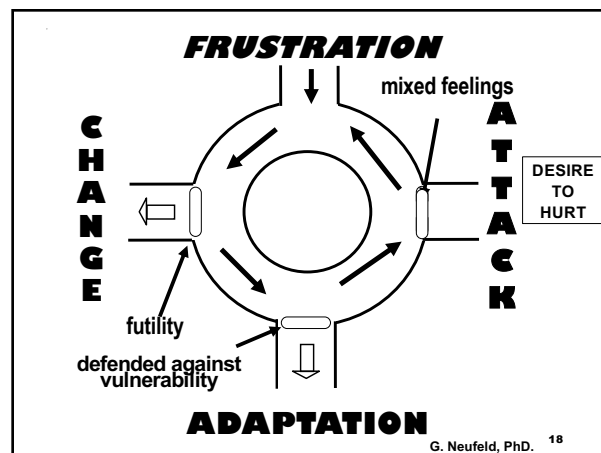
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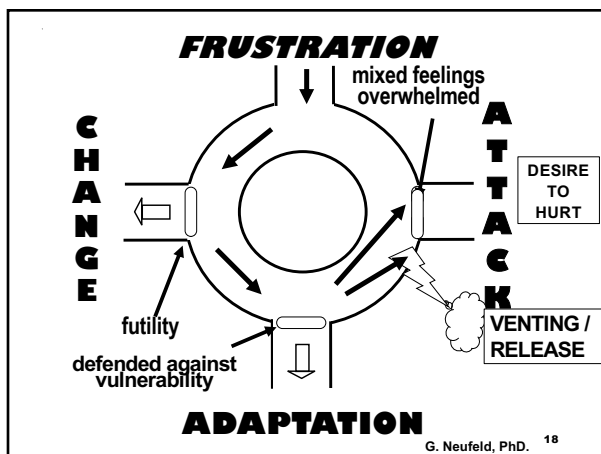
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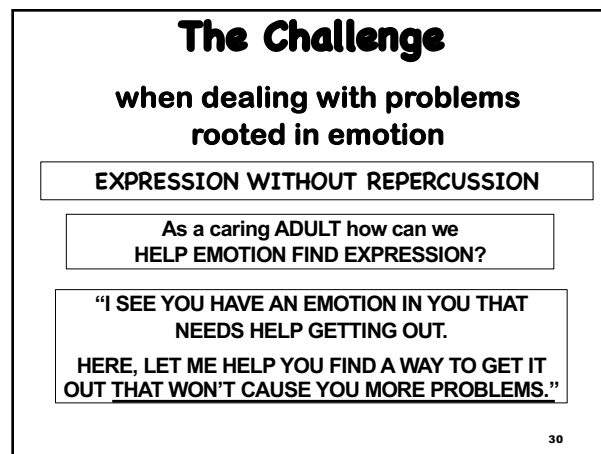
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### WHAT CAN BE DONE?

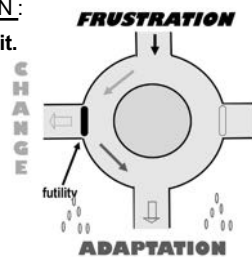
Come alongside the FRUSTRATION:

- This is not how we used to do it.
- This is not what we want to be doing.
- This isn't working the way you want it to.

Come alongside the ALARM:

- This is worrisome.
- This feels unsafe.

Help move towards sadness



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### PLAY and EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

When children are “stirred up” emotionally, their **PLAY** can reflect themes they are struggling with.

**PLAY** is how they naturally make sense of all the emotions they are experiencing.

In **PLAY**, pictures are drawn, structures are made, and games are engaged in to **ALLOW EMOTIONS TO COME OUT** in a way that feels “safer”.

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### Losing the Space to Play

David Elkind in the *Power of Play*

- over the past two decades, children have lost twelve hours of free time a week, including eight hours of unstructured play and outdoor activities.

Stuart Brown on the *Status of Play* (Encyclopedia of Play Science)

- outdoor play has decreased by 71% in one generation in both the US and the UK.

**ESCALATING DIAGNOSES OF CHILDHOOD DEPRESSION AND ADHD HAS PARALLELED THE LOSS OF PLAY**

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### Emotional **PLAY**grounds

- laughter and humour
- drawing and painting
- drama and theatre
- dance and movement
- singing and music
- irony and wordplay
- stories and writing
- teasing and silliness

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### What Play Offers Emotion



- a work-free space for growth and development to take place
- protection for feelings
  - expression of emotion without repercussion



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### PLAYING OUT EMOTIONS

Play is like a release valve – it allows the emotions to move through.

#### ALARM at play

- ❖ corona virus tag
- ❖ playing with monsters
- ❖ being the monster
- ❖ scary stories (one step removed)
- ❖ pretending to be scared
- ❖ playing “disaster”
- ❖ playing hospital/being sick



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## PLAYING OUT EMOTIONS

Play is a place to process their internal world

### FACING SEPARATION in play

- ❖ playing dead
- ❖ playing the orphan
- ❖ hide and seek games
- ❖ fairy tales where children are lost or face separation



*"It is through play that children get to imagine how they will survive in the face of adversity."* Hannah Beach

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## Taking FRUSTRATION into play

Playing out the impulses to make things work



- *making things perfect - puzzles*

**Puzzle table – in a pizza box**

- *constructing and crafts*

- *building – robots, Lego, blocks*

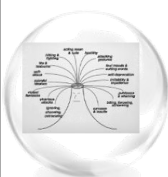
- *organizing & orchestrating*

*When students can't make their world work, let's give them a chance to make other things "work".*

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## Taking FRUSTRATION into play

Playing out the impulses to ATTACK or DESTROY



- *destroying and demolishing*
- *hitting and throwing*
  - *kicking & screaming*
- *war games, attacking games*
- *play fighting*

- reduces levels of frustration
- decreases aggression and violence in real life

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## IDEAS FOR PLAYFUL RELEASE

- Write out Frustrations and make into paper balls or paper planes to throw
- Dance party
- Table top "expressive art" (banner paper on a table with crayons)
- Mural for expression
- Bubble-wrap stomping
- Egg carton crushing
- Spray-bottle painting on paper or snow
- Pool-noodle sword fighting
- Drumming party

**BE CREATIVE!**

**EMOTIONAL RELEASE THROUGH PLAY WITH YOUR STUDENT CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

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## EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION WITHOUT WORDS

### Drawing



### Painting



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## DRUMMING

- Have everyone sit in a circle and hold their drums.
- You are in the centre of the circle and are the "conductor" of the drumming experience
- You set the tempo and speed for the drumming. Slowly, quickly, .....very very quickly! Alternate speeds and modify the tempo up and down while your students follow you.
- Every once in a while, you can even freeze your hands so that the students know to stop drumming . . . and then start waving your hands suddenly and quickly!

Hannah Beach



HALF POOL NOODLES

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### FRUSTRATION MONSTER

Hannah Beach

- Think of a time when you felt really frustrated
- Imagine that your frustration was a monster
- Draw the monster...is it big? Is it bright? What color(s) is it?
- This is not meant to be a nice & neat drawing – leave room for lots of expression!



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### SQUEEZE AWAY

Hannah Beach

- Free style water-color painting
- Banner paper
- **Spray bottle** for each student
- Paint & water
- Can be done to music
- Can be done in the winter on snow



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### PLAY WITH THEM

Playing with children increases attachment - eyes, smiles, nods, bring a child into our orbit.

The mutual joy and shared communication and attunement that adults and children can experience during play regulate the body's stress response.

➤ **PLAY TIME SHOULD NOT BE EARNED**– it should be scheduled and protected.

The more the child is **IN TROUBLE**,  
THE **MORE** HE/SHE NEEDS  
PLAY TIME.



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### Outdoor Play



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### Stories as a playground for emotion

**Especially if tears are needed**

- It is easier to cry for someone else in a story or a movie.
- Hence the importance of reading and watching sad movies to help the tears to flow.
- **BUT** must be safe from judgement.
- When we cry we **DON'T HAVE TO KNOW WHY WE ARE CRYING**.
- When the tears come – rejoice and see them as a sign of **EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING**.



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### ADAPTATION

The **EMOTIONAL PROCESS** whereby we are changed by that which we cannot change

**TRANSFORMATION**



The journey of adaptation is a journey of **SADNESS and TEARS**

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**COPING IS NOT ADAPTATION**

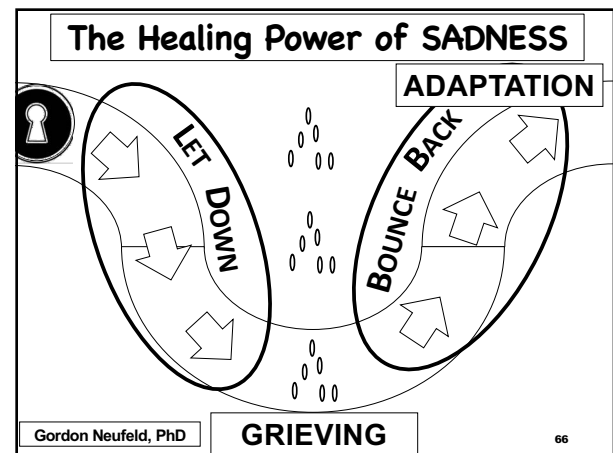
**Coping** is about **MANAGING** in the situation (Powering through)

**Adaptation** is an **EMOTIONAL JOURNEY**

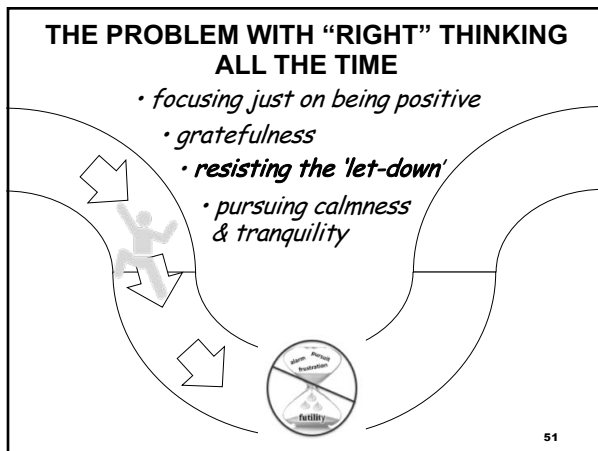
If we allow ourselves to pass through **SADNESS**, it results in **RESILIENCE**

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Adaptation requires  
a soft heart and  
a safe place to cry

a soft heart = able to tolerate feelings of vulnerability

a safe place to cry = someone who will keep you safe while you are vulnerable

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**HELPING THE TEARS TO FLOW**

1. Start by talking about and **reflecting back** the Emotion
  - i. **Frustration**: “That didn’t work for you.” “That was not what you had in mind.”
  - ii. **Alarm**: “That was scary.” “You weren’t sure what was going to happen”.
  - iii. **Seeking**: “You really wanted them to like you.”
2. MATCH THE EMOTION.
3. THEN: Move subtly towards SADNESS by allowing a tinge of sadness in your voice.
4. USE SILENCE

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**HELPING THE TEARS TO FLOW**

5. When a student starts to cry:
  - **DON’T ASK WHY**
  - **DON’T MINIMIZE** (the reason is always valid even if their explanation seems trivial)
6. When the tears start: SIT QUIETLY with compassion
  - Resist the Alpha instincts to make things better or to problem solve
  - Give **lots of space** to SADNESS and TEARS.
7. Problem-solve well after the tears

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**RESISTANCE**

***the CounterWill* instinct**

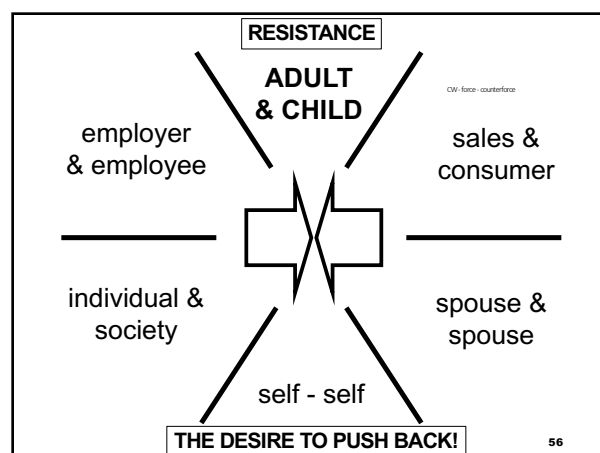
... is a pushing back against the will of others

or a defensive reaction to perceived control and coercion

COUNTERWILL is NOT a learned response, but an EMOTIONAL REACTION based in INSTINCT

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**ATTACHMENT & COUNTERWILL**

When Attachment is strong, Counterwill diminishes

When attachment instincts are engaged, we are naturally moved to please those to whom we are attached. We will be willing to do many things for the other.

**COLLECT BEFORE YOU DIRECT**

**space, eyes, nod, smile**

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**COUNTERWILL IN PANDEMIC TIMES**

- COUNTERWILL can be "kept at bay" by Alarm
  - Children will comply to keep safe
- BUT COUNTERWILL will manifest itself when safety is not the issue – AND even when safety is the issue because:
 

**WHEN THERE ARE TOO MANY "HAVE TO'S"**  
**THERE WILL BE PUSH BACK SOMEWHERE!**

  - Children may
    - ❖ not want to do work
    - ❖ refuse to do work
    - ❖ not follow directions as expected
    - ❖ do the OPPOSITE
    - ❖ seem **unmotivated** and lethargic

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**MAINTAINING the LEAD IN THE FACE OF COUNTERWILL**

**STAY IN CHARGE EVEN IF YOU CAN'T BE IN CONTROL**

"I have decided that you may..."

"Let's all ...."

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**HANDLING RESISTANCE**

**Our ROLE as the adult**

**TEACHER**

Attendant

Principal

COACH

Technician

counsellor

.... *being patient*

**Adjusting our VIEW**

- Taking things LESS PERSONALLY
- Recognizing the INSTINCT involved
- Aiming to "do no harm"

**Adjusting our STANCE**

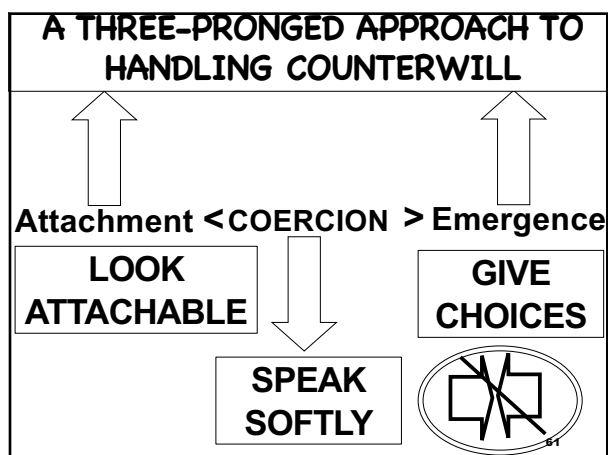
- Normalizing by conveying that some pushback is part of the process

**Making ROOM for**

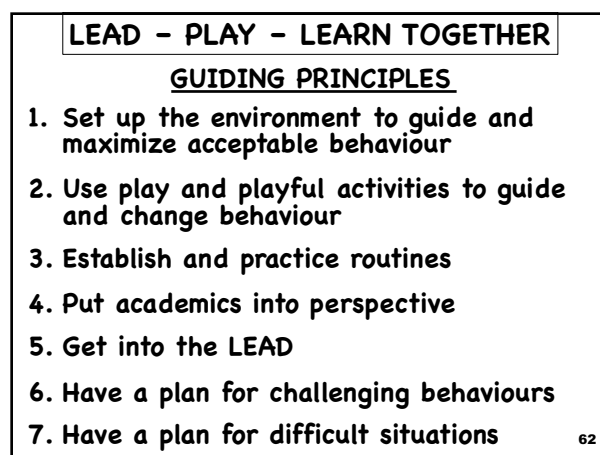
- The child to display own "will"- placing child in charge when possible

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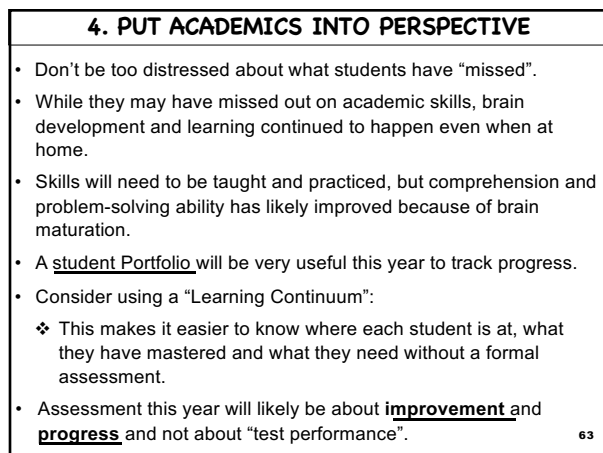
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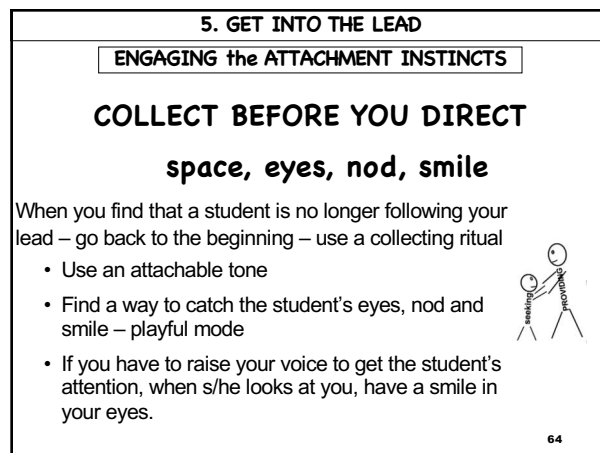
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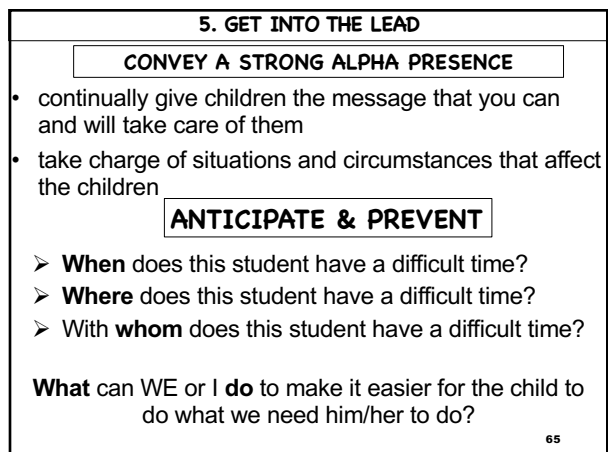
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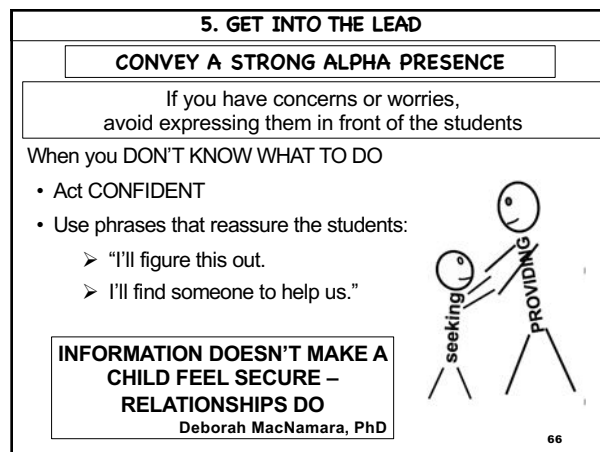
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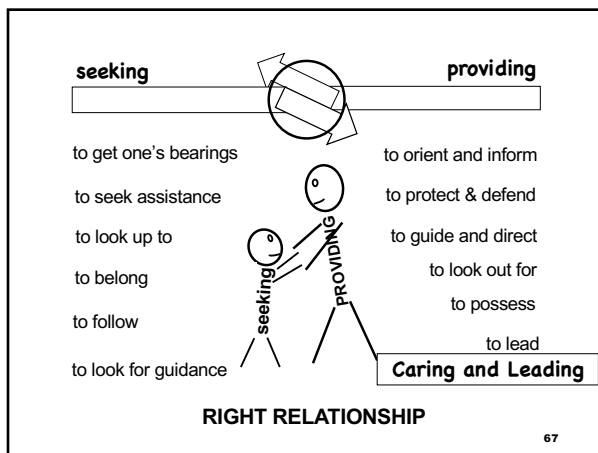
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## WHAT ABOUT ME?

Burnout - Emily and Amelia Nagoski (2019)

### Ways to complete the cycle of emotion

- **Physical activity**
- **Breathing**
- **Positive Social Interaction**
- **Laughter**
- **Affection – 20 second hug**
- **Having a Cry**
- **Creative Expression**

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## WHAT ABOUT ME?

- Identify your own **support system**, your “village”
  - at school
  - at home
- Give yourself permission to **vent**
- Find your own sadness and **tears** (watch sad movies– TV shows)
- Nurture your **passions** – have some “PLAY TIME”

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<https://www.cebm.ca/coronavirus-for-schools>

### RESOURCE GUIDE

UNDERSTANDING THE EMOTIONAL WORLD OF OUR CHILDREN IN COVID TIMES: HOW IT AFFECTS THEIR BEHAVIOUR AND WHAT WE CAN DO TO HELP THEM

Eva de Gosztanyi, Psychologist  
Martine Demers, Behaviour Consultant  
Catherine Korah, Behaviour Consultant

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### GUIDE DE RESSOURCES

COMPRENDRE LE MONDE ÉMOTIONNEL DE NOS ENFANTS EN PÉRIODE DE COVID: COMMENT CELA AFFECTE LEUR COMPORTEMENT ET CE QUE NOUS POUVONS FAIRE POUR LES AIDER

Eva de Gosztanyi, Psychologue  
Martine Demers, Consultante  
Catherine Korah, Consultante

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### RESOURCE GUIDE

LEAD - PLAY - LEARN TOGETHER: SUPPORTING STUDENTS AND TEACHERS RETURNING TO SCHOOL IN A TIME OF PANDEMIC

Eva de Gosztanyi, Psychologist  
Martine Demers, Behaviour Consultant  
Catherine Korah, Behaviour Consultant

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### GUIDE DE RESSOURCES

DIRIGER - JOUER - APPRENDRE ENSEMBLE: Accompagner les élèves et les enseignants pour le retour à l'école en temps de pandémie

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## The Challenge

when dealing with a world full of **FRUSTRATION** and **ALARM**

### HOW CAN WE HELP EMOTION FIND EXPRESSION THAT WON'T CAUSE MORE PROBLEMS?

**VENTING /RELEASE**

**Creating space for sadness and tears.**

**ENGAGING**

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