

Parenting a Defiant Child Won't? Or Can't?

Sarah C. Wayland, Ph.D.



Today we will cover:




- The shift from feeling calm to feeling threatened and back to calm.
- Bottom-up vs. top-down behaviors.
- How to help.

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Responding to Threats

3

3 Important Brain Systems

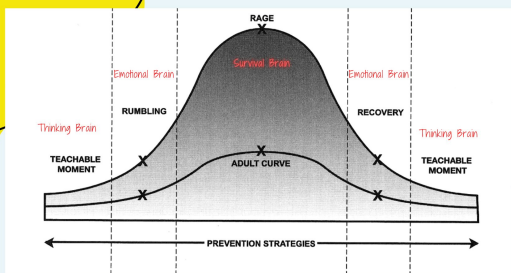
SURVIVAL BRAIN	EMOTIONAL BRAIN	THINKING BRAIN
Brain stem & cerebellum	Limbic system	Neocortex
Fight, flight, or freeze	Emotions, memories, habits	Language, imagination, abstract thinking, consciousness
Autopilot	Instinctually-based decisions	Reasoning, rational thought
		

*The Triune Brain in Evolution, Paul MacLean, 1960

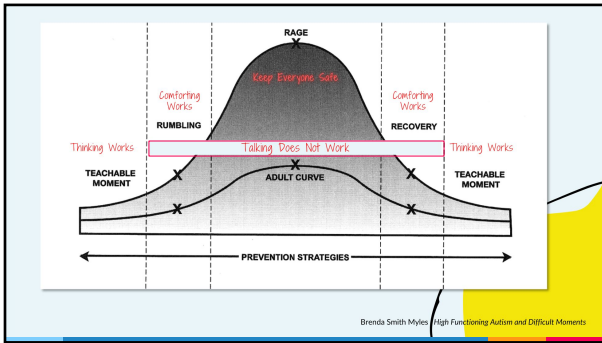
Dr. Dan Siegel's Hand Model of the Brain

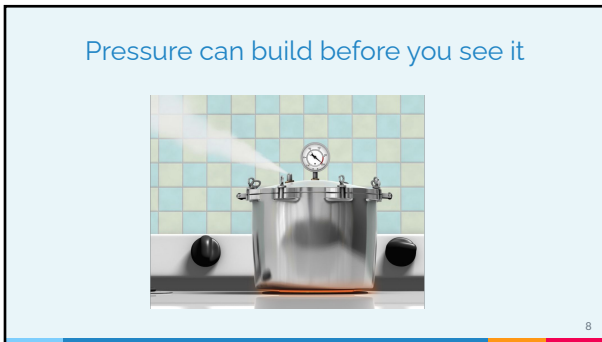


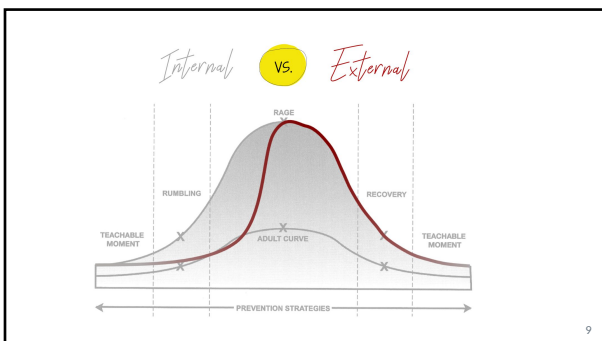
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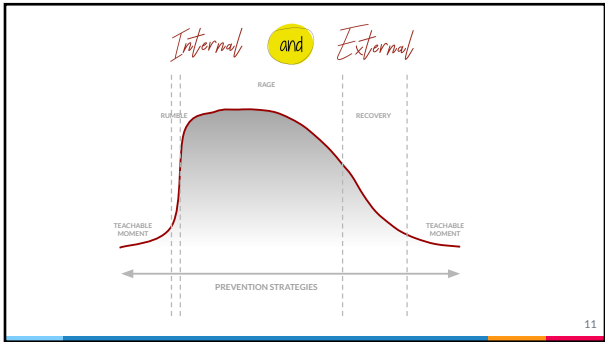
Brenda Smith Myles, High Functioning Autism and Difficult Moments



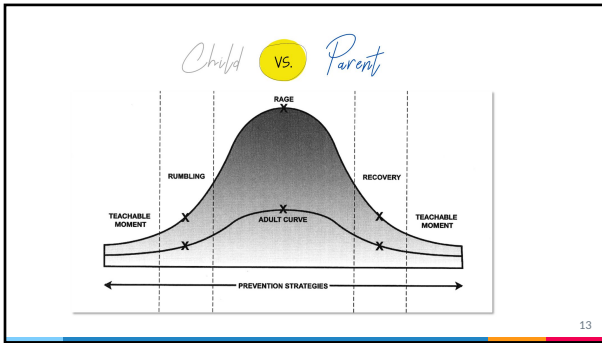


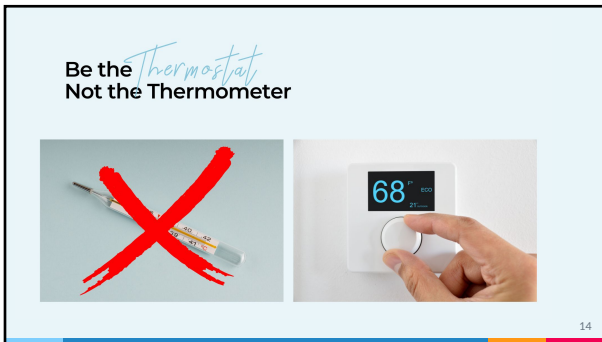


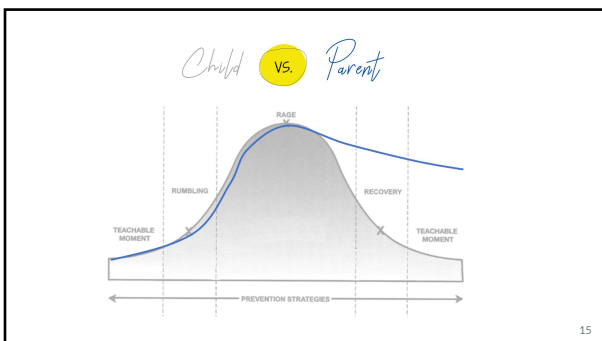












Bottom-Up vs. Top Down

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Top-Down vs. Bottom-Up Behavior



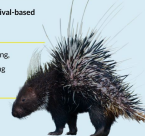
Top-Down Thinking VS. Bottom-Up Thinking

TOP-DOWN

- thoughtful, slow, rational
- Deliberate and intentional
- Respond to behavior modification strategies
- Thinking brain

BOTTOM-UP

- reactive/automatic
- Instinctual, unintentional, survival-based stress responses
- Respond to understanding, compassion, and helping individual feel safe
- Emotional brain






Can't vs. *Won't*
Skill vs. *Will*

Stop trying to change behavior and start looking to change behavior triggers.

"Challenging behavior is just a signal, the fever, the means by which the kid is communicating that he or she is having difficulty meeting an expectation."

Ross Greene, Ph.D.
RAISING HUMAN BEINGS



KIDS
DO WELL *IF* THEY CAN
-parents too!-

How to Help

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"Your child isn't giving you a hard time. Your child is having a hard time."
Penny's Parenting Mantra

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CO-Regulation or CO-Escalation

CO-REGULATION

calm parent

modeling appropriate responses

offering calm for child to attune to

move together

use rhythm

CO-ESCALATION

reactive parent

modeling what you DON'T want your child to do

adding fuel to escalate the intensity



How to help your child feel
SAFE!

Social Engagement

- Face them — do not look away
- Make sure your body and face communicate acceptance and caring
- Speak quietly and melodically
- Move using gentle fluid gestures
- "You did not do anything wrong — your body responded as it is wired to."

Change the Environment


- Soft music with ranging vocal melodies
- Dampen low frequency sounds



Stephen Porges, Polyvagal Theory

How to help your
child feel calm and
safe in the moment.

- Empathetic and responsive
- Engaging facial expressions
- Soothing tone-of-voice
- Inviting and slow-paced gestures
- When child is in FREEZE, exaggerated prosody can bypass difficulty hearing



Behaviors Don't Happen In *Isolation*

Antecedent

Behavior

Consequence

Example

ASKED TO WRITE → AVOIDANCE → GET OUT OF WRITING

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Creating *Calm*

01

02

03

04

05

REALITY CHECK

QUIT TAKING IT PERSONALLY

FACILITATION

COLLABORATION

THE CONTROL

Once you accept that behavior is not willful, nor stupid or lazy, you have built your foundation for calm.

Leave your own emotions about your child's behavior out of it.

You are teaching lagging skills and naturally improving a similar future situation.

Work with your child, even when they are challenging you.

You can maintain ultimate control of a situation without yelling, slamming, and threatening.

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We are all
beautifully complex
and
marvelously imperfect

WE'RE DONE!

QUESTIONS?

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Parenting Coach
Certified Relationship Development Intervention (RDI) Consultant

behavior revolution

Guiding Exceptional Parents

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