

Fostering Resilience Through Essential Skill Building



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Joelle van Lent, Psy.D.
Licensed Psychologist- doctorate
joellevanlent@gmail.com

Promoting Culture Change

The fundamental role of culture as it functions in the everyday lives of individuals, regardless of nationality, ethnic background, geographical location or ancestry, is to help us to interpret the world around us and adapt to our environments.

Self-Healing Communities. Porter, Martin, & Anda. June 2016

Resilience is “the capacity for adapting successfully and functioning competently, despite experiencing chronic stress or adversity following exposure to prolonged or severe trauma.”

Deep Brain Learning. Larry Brendtro and Martin Mitchell.

What happens when we are stressed?

- We are less inclined to share resources.
- We are internally focused & less aware of others.
- We become rigid & more judgmental.

Empathy

- Perspective Taking
- Affect Congruence
- Social Motivation
- Response without judgment



(Morelli, Rameson, & Lieberman, Social Cognition Affect Neuroscience, 2014)

Stress in Childhood

Stress is a natural & inevitable part of childhood, but the **TYPE** of stress can make a difference in the impact on a child's brain & body.

“ **STRESS** is a mental, physical or biochemical response to a perceived threat or demand ”

Positive Stress

Mild stress in the context of good attachment

Tolerable Stress

Serious, temporary stress, buffered by supportive relationships

Toxic Stress

Prolonged activation of stress response system without protection



Temporary, mild elevation in stress hormones & brief increase in heart rate



More severe, continuing cardiovascular and hormonal response

Prolonged activation of stress response system & disrupted development of brain and immune system



No buffering  support necessary

Presence of  buffering caring adult

No adult  buffers

Increased **RESILIENCE** and confidence
Development of coping skills



Adaption and recovery with some possibility for physical/emotional damage



Lifelong consequences:
- Heart disease
- Alcoholism
- Memory & learning difficulties
- Anxiety/depression
- Cancer



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Positive Stress

Mild

These experiences increase your resilience as they are opportunities to build coping skills.

Examples- trying out for a sports team, trying out for a play, a job interview, a minor injury, taking a test, giving a speech, going to college, starting a new job.

Whether you succeed (get the job) or fail (get fired from the job) you will grow and become stronger for the experience as you learn, cope, and seek support.

<http://www.pcaiowa.org/resources/research>



Tolerable Stress

Moderate

These are more severe and cause temporary challenges to daily functioning.

Examples- a house fire, the death of a loved one or pet, a relationship ending, parents divorcing.

If you have strong social support (family, friends, teachers, coaches) and healthy coping skills, then there will not be long term damage. You can actually become more resilient if you gain support and cope well as you will learn things about yourself, your supports, and your world that will help you in future challenges.

<http://www.pcaiowa.org/resources/research>



Toxic Stress

Severe

Ongoing and chronic stress of a level that overwhelms your support and ability to cope.
Examples- a family member that is violent, a family member that has a substance addiction,
homelessness, poverty, food insecurity.

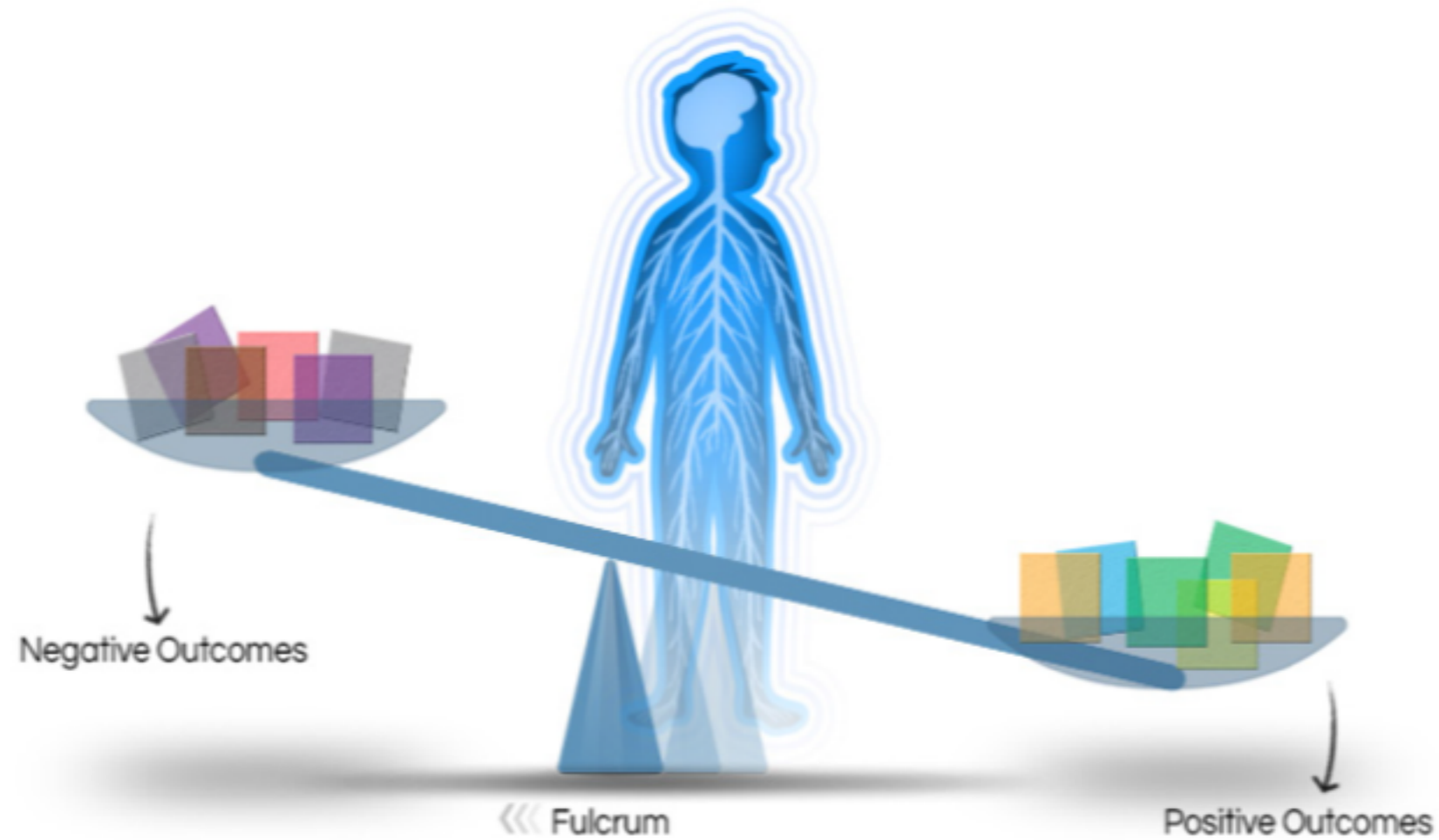
Individuals facing toxic stress are “forever impacted but not necessarily forever damaged.”
While there is impact on 100% of individuals, with the same resilience coping skills and support
that are developed through positive and tolerable stress, the experiences can be integrated in a
way that is adaptive and people can be remarkably strong and successful in life.

<http://www.pcaiowa.org/resources/research>

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- The Neurobiology of Stress at www.pcaiowa.org/resources/research
- Promoting Resilience at www.pcaiowa.org



Over time, the cumulative impact of positive life experiences and coping skills can shift the fulcrum's position, making it easier to achieve positive outcomes.

(National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2015)

Protective Factors

At least one stable, caring, and supportive relationship.

Supportive context & cultural traditions.

Achieving a sense of mastery over one's life circumstances.

Essential Skills:

- Social Support
- Emotional regulation
- Social Competency
- Executive Functioning

(National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2015)

Young children who have been exposed to adversity or violence do not invariably develop stress-related disorders or grow up to be violent adults.

Those who thrive despite adversity are:

- Persistent
- Goal-Orientated/ Motivated
- Adaptable
- Optimistic
- Willing to approach novel situations
- Have high self-esteem
- Intelligent
- Socially competent

(Cloitre, Morin, & Linares, NYU Child Study Center 2012)

The protective factors & essential skills of resilience are developed in this order.

- **Social Support**
- Emotional Regulation
- Social Competency
- Executive Functioning Skills



The protective factors & essential skills of resilience are developed in this order.
A school community that fosters resilience could consider a universal approach to highlight the main task of development for each age group.

- Social Support

- The foundation is set in infancy and early childhood.
- A sense of belonging in school is essential and discipline practices can either deteriorate or strengthen a sense of connection to community.

- Emotional Regulation (grades K-2)

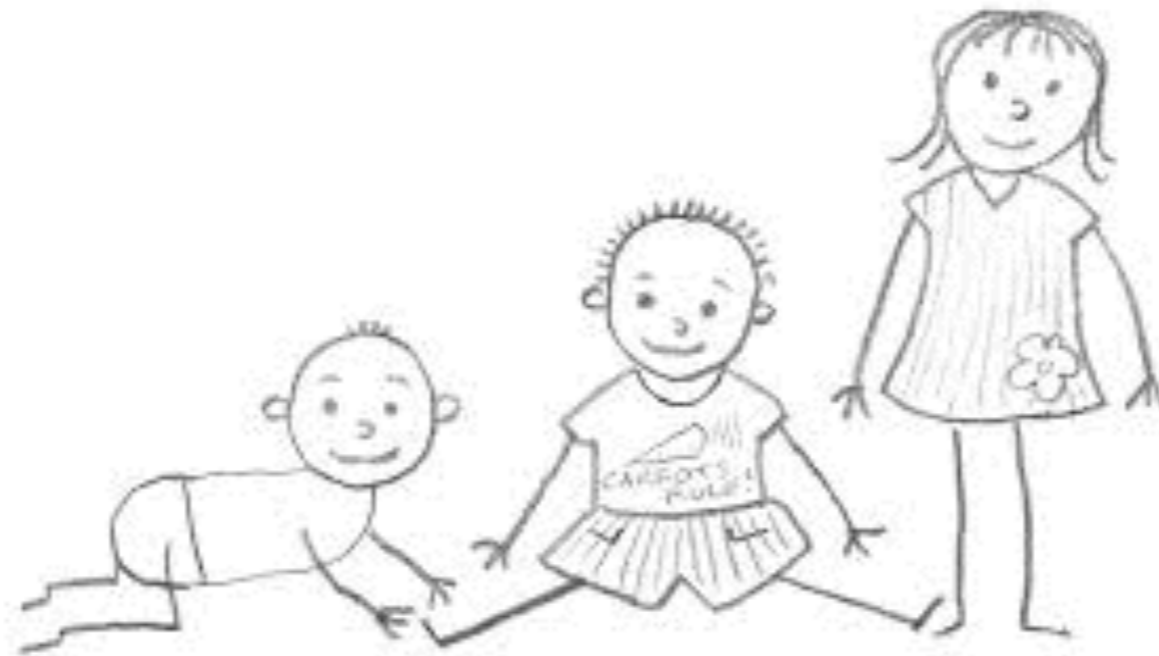
- Social Competency (grades 3-5)

- Executive Functioning Skills (grades 6-12)



Developmentally Informed Approaches

Define lagging skills & coordinate efforts



<https://www.responsiveclassroom.org/product/yardsticks-children-in-the-classroom-ages-4-14/>

A school community can foster social support through

- Efforts to establish school connectedness & a sense of belonging.
- Intentional efforts to promote relational health- attunement.
- Wise disciplinary practices.



School Connectedness is the belief by students that adults and peers in the school care about their learning as well as about them as individuals.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. School Connectedness: Strategies for Increasing Protective Factors Among Youth. Atlanta, GA. U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services; 2009.

Research demonstrated a strong relationship between school connectedness and

- Protection against a range of adverse behaviors:
 - Decreased substance abuse
 - Early sexual initiation
 - Violence
 - Risk of unintentional injury (i.e. drinking and driving, not wearing a seat belt)
 - Emotional distress
 - Disordered eating
 - Suicidal ideation and attempts
- Educational outcomes:
 - School attendance
 - Staying in school longer
 - Higher grades and classroom test scores

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. School Connectedness: Strategies for Increasing Protective Factors Among Youth. Atlanta, GA. U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services; 2009.

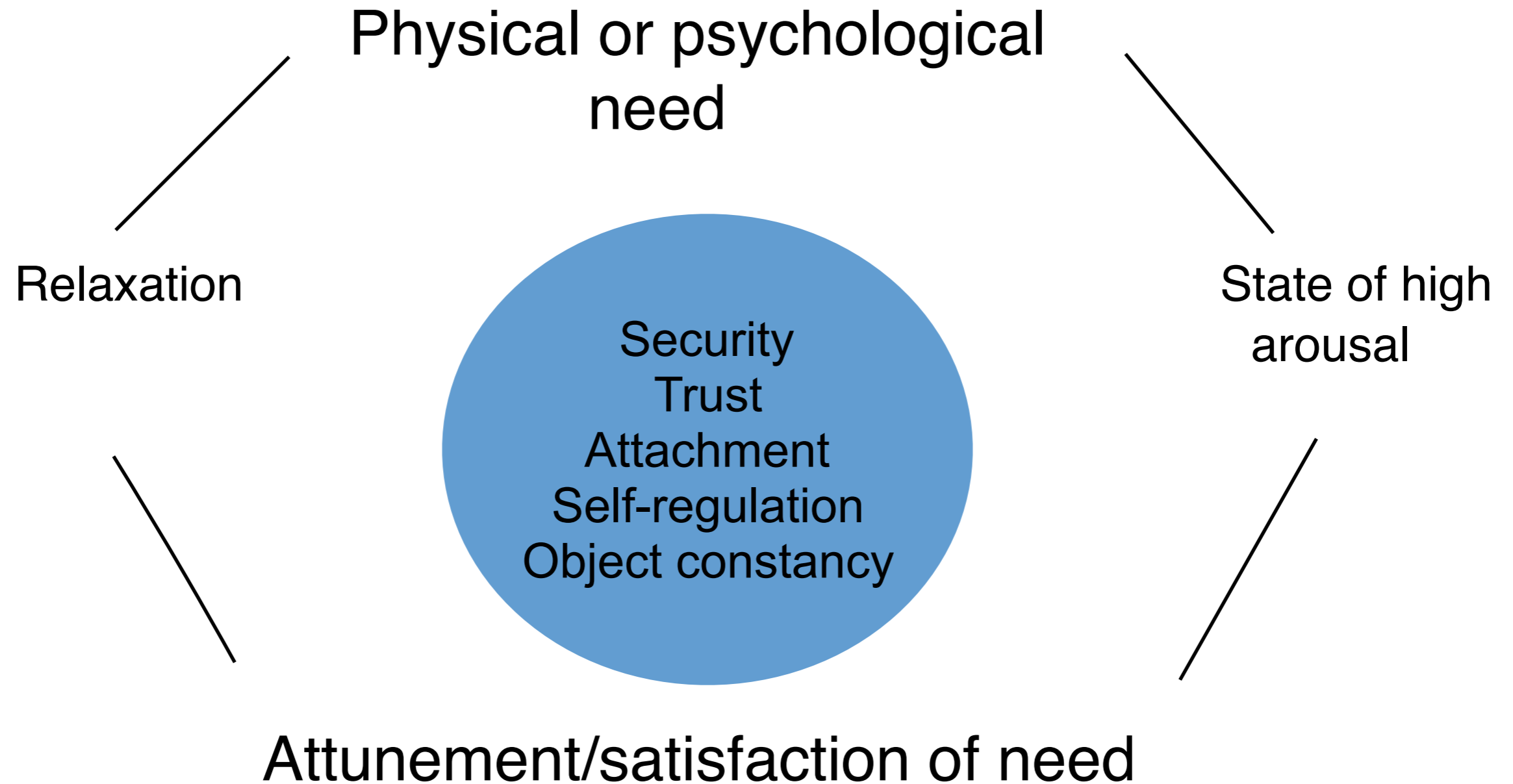
School Connectedness

Factors that increase school connectedness:

Adult Support
Belonging to a Positive Peer Group
Commitment to Education
School Environment

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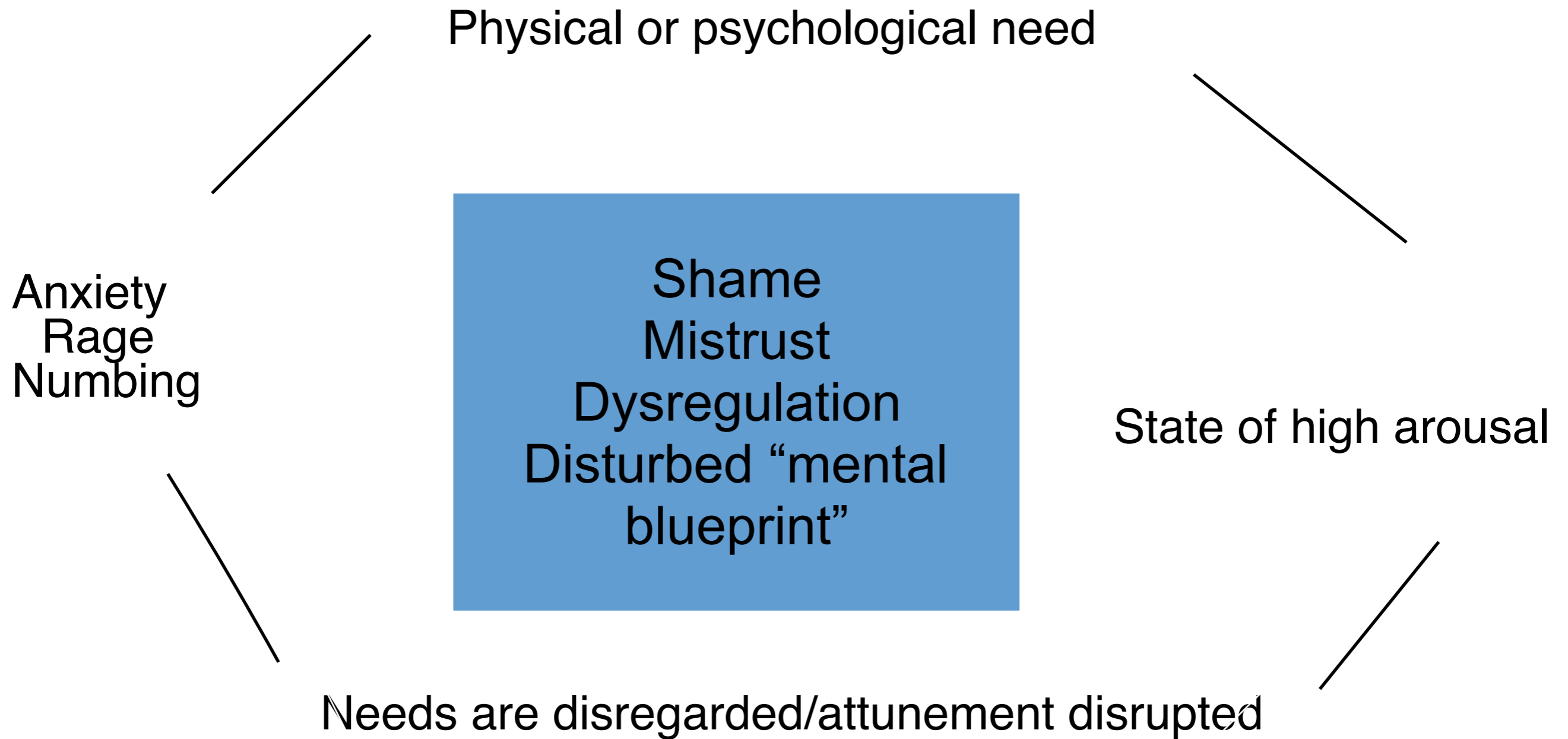
The Healthy Attachment Sequence



(Beverly James)

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Unhealthy Attachment



(Beverly James)

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Relational Health

Attunement & Intimacy

Attunement

- Reading and responding to the cues of another.
- Reading the non-verbal, social-emotional “language” of another.

Recommended Resources

Books

Denton, Paula. The Power of our Words: Teacher Language that Helps Children Learn.

Greene, Ross W., and J. Stuart. Ablon. Treating Explosive Kids: The Collaborative Problem-Solving Approach.

Kuypers, Leah M., and Michelle Garcia. Winner. The Zones of Regulation: A Curriculum Designed to Foster Self-regulation and Emotional Control.

Siegel, Daniel J., and Tina Payne. Bryson. The Whole-brain Child: 12 Revolutionary Strategies to Nurture Your Child's Developing Mind.

Souers, Kristin. Fostering Resilient Learners. Strategies for Creating a Trauma-Sensitive Classroom.

The MindUp Curriculum. Brain-focused strategies for learning- and living.

Willis, Judy, M.D. Research-Based Strategies to Ignite Student Learning.

Websites

Center on the Developing Child- Harvard University- www.developingchild.harvard.edu

Books that heal kids. <http://booksthathealkids.blogspot.com/>

ARC Model: <http://arcframework.org/>

Children's Books

Ackerly, Sarah. Your Fantastic Elastic Brain.

Brukner, Lauren. The Kids' Guide to Staying Awesome and In control.