

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

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The world has shifted.



**Covid-19 is
stirring waves of
emotions!**



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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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**Where do these behaviours come
from?**

How can we change them?

**Are our children going to have mental
health problems or be traumatized
because of Covid 19?**

What can we do to help?

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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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TOPICS

1. RESISTANCE
2. EMOTIONS AND BEHAVIOUR
3. ROLE OF PLAY IN EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING
4. HELPING EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION
5. IMPORTANCE OF TEARS

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RESISTANCE

the CounterWill instinct

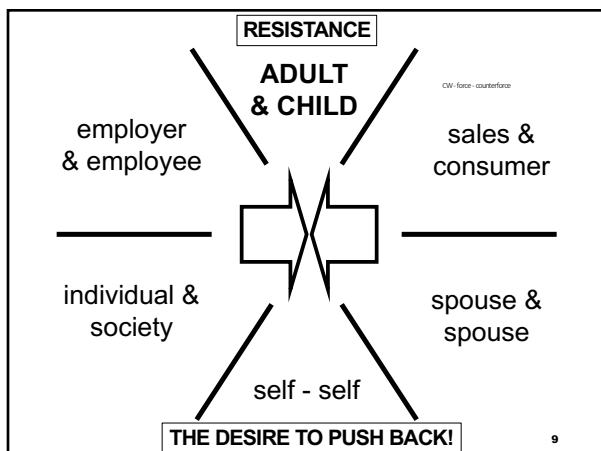
... is a pushing back against the will of others

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

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ATTACHMENT & COUNTERWILL

WHY DOES A CHILD OPPOSE AN ADULT TO WHOM HE/SHE IS ATTACHED?

1. When the directive is given it could be that the child is attached to someone or something else:
 - other students
 - an activity / game
 - parent (and their point of view)

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ATTACHMENT & COUNTERWILL

WHY DOES A CHILD OPPOSE AN ADULT TO WHOM HE/SHE IS ATTACHED?

1. When the directive is given the child is attached to someone or something else.
2. Counterwill has been "held at bay" earlier and re-emerges when the child is in a safe place.

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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 – but 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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The DRAMA of the CHILD STUCK IN COUNTERWILL

a tragedy in three acts

ACT I

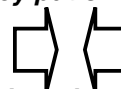
When kids get stuck, adults start pushing.

ACT II

When kids feel pushed, they put on the brakes.

ACT III

When kids get stuck in their resistance, adults tend to get stuck in their persistence.



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MAINTAINING the LEAD IN THE FACE OF COUNTERWILL

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

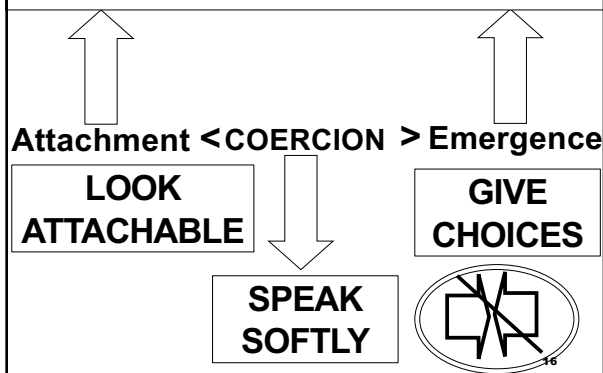
“I have decided that you may...”

“Let’s all”

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A THREE-PRONGED APPROACH TO HANDLING COUNTERWILL



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HANDLING RESISTANCE

Our ROLE as the adult

teacher
Educator
Principal
COACH
Technician
Attendant
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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Are our children going to have mental health problems or be traumatized because of Covid 19?

Not necessarily – 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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LIMBIC SYSTEM - EMOTIONAL BRAIN

EMOTION moves us in ways that serve our **SURVIVAL**

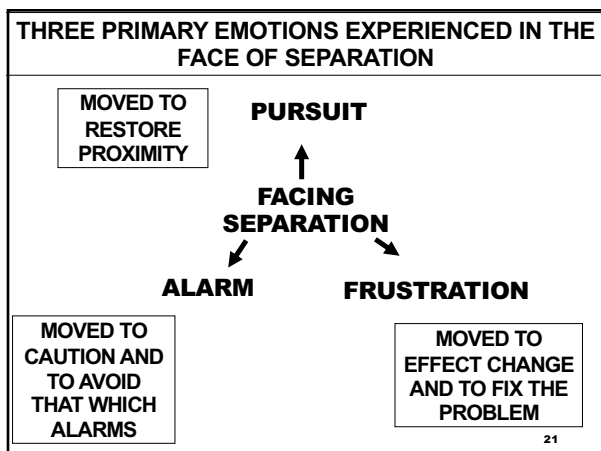
Pre-frontal cortex

AMYGDALA
"smoke detector"

HYPOTHALAMUS
All systems "GO"

HIPPOCAMPUS
Memory

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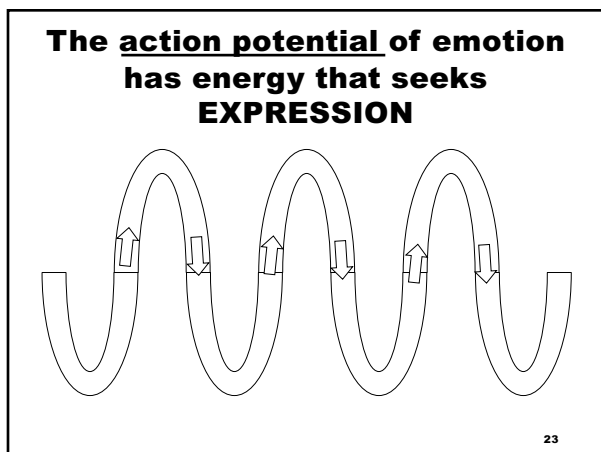
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SYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM the system of ACTIVATION

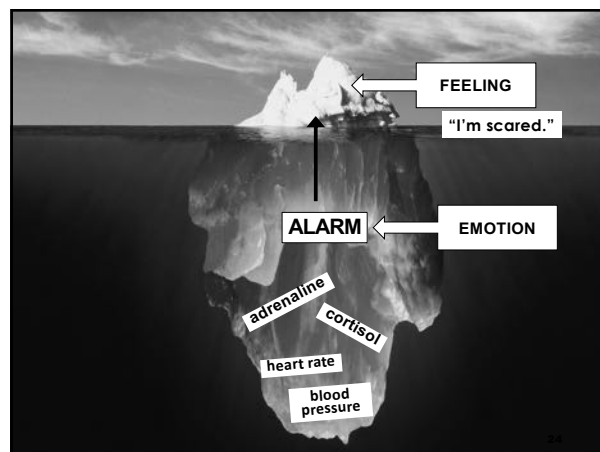
- **Cortisol** – increase blood sugar – suppress immune system
- **Adrenaline** – increases heart and respiratory rate
- **Norepinephrine** – responsible for vigilant concentration
- **Growth Hormone** – increases glucose

- Constricts blood vessels
- Suspends "rest & digest"
- Sharp Increase in Breathing & Heart Rate
- Blood diverts to Muscles

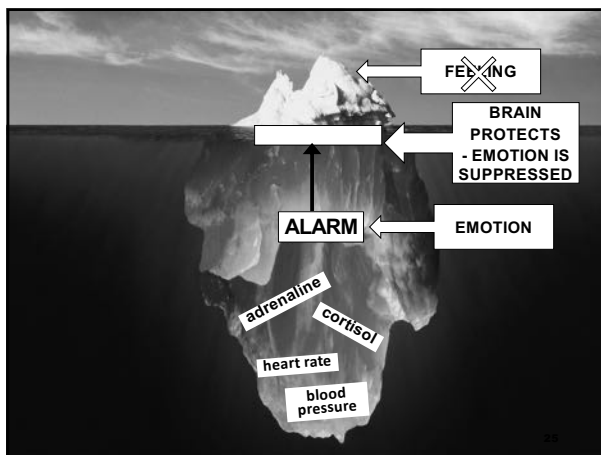
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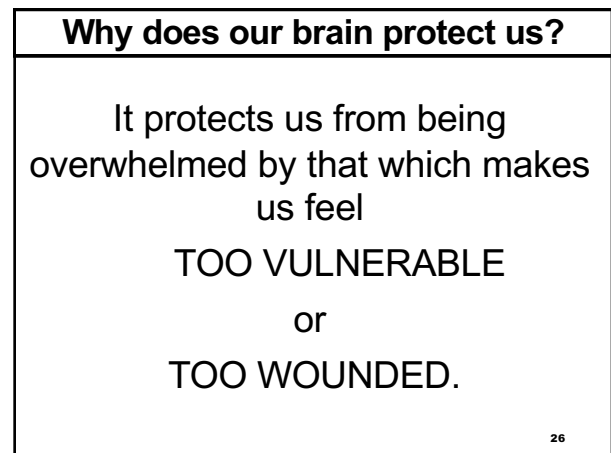
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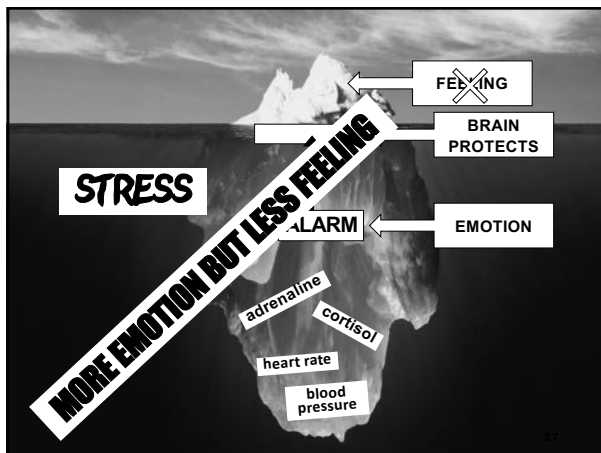
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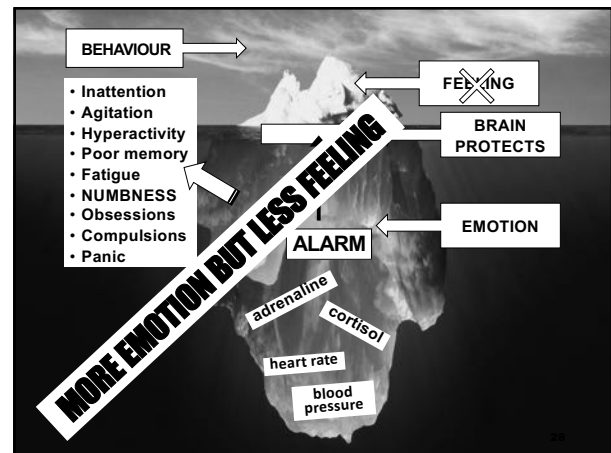
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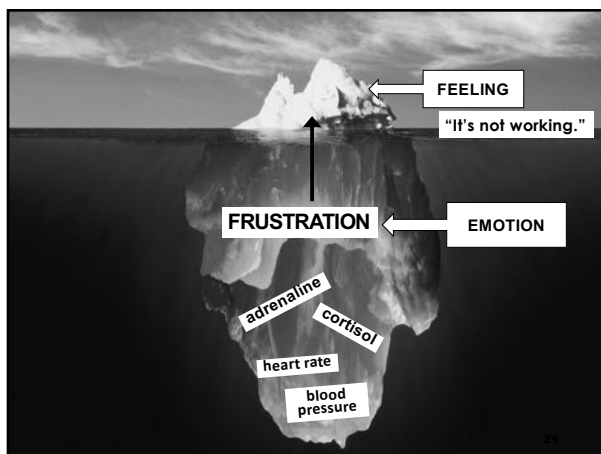
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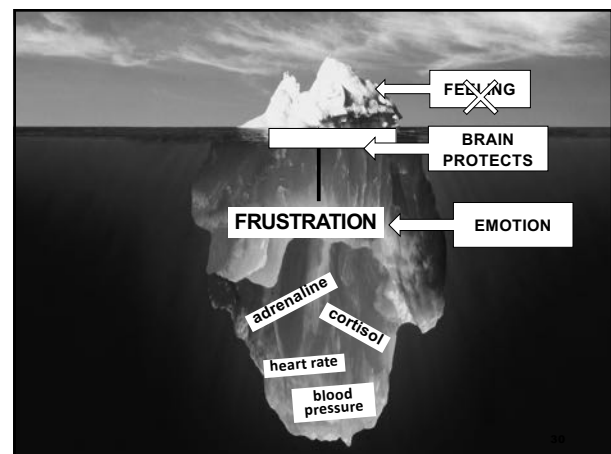
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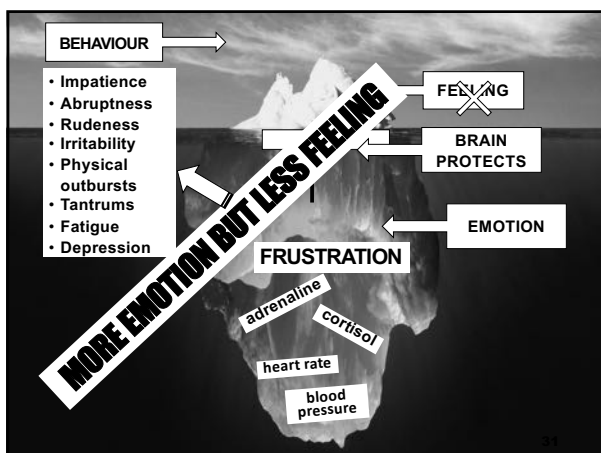
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Emotions need to be expressed BUT...



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:

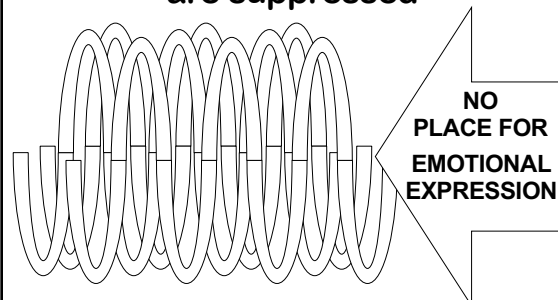
- Stop ... yelling, crying, whining
- Calm down
- Don't be silly, there is nothing to be afraid of
- WHY...
 - are you crying?
 - are you so angry?
- BE...
 - happy – think good thoughts
 - good

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

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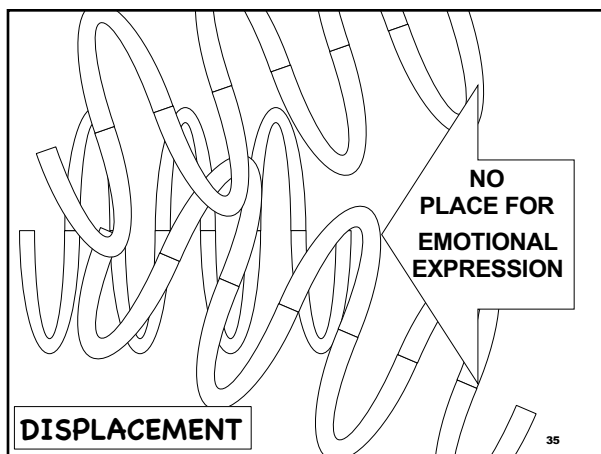
what happens when emotions are suppressed



DEPRESSION

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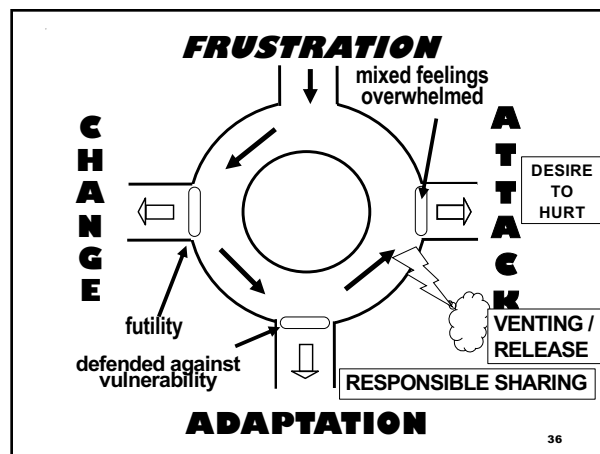
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DISPLACEMENT

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The Challenge

**when dealing with problems
rooted in emotion**

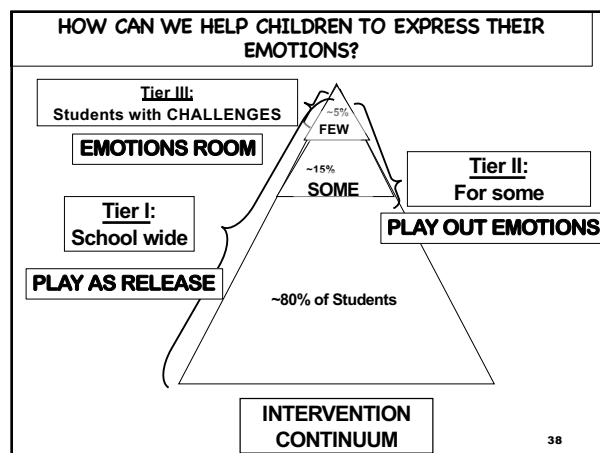
EXPRESSION WITHOUT REPERCUSSION

As a caring ADULT how can we
HELP EMOTION FIND EXPRESSION?

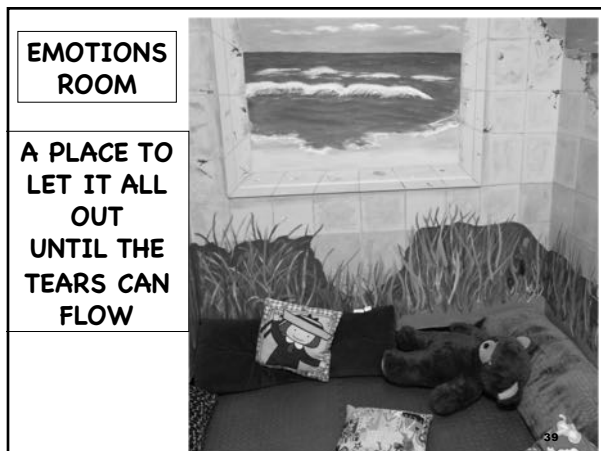
"I SEE YOU HAVE AN EMOTION IN YOU THAT
NEEDS HELP GETTING OUT.
HERE, LET ME HELP YOU FIND A WAY TO GET IT
OUT THAT WON'T CAUSE YOU MORE PROBLEMS."

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EMOTIONS ROOM SUPPLIES: Different kinds of expression

- Throwing:
 - a) Stuffed animals/puppets
 - b) Soft balls
 - c) Velcro balls
 - d) Magic mitt
- Kicking/stomping:
 - a) Gym mats
 - b) Bubble wrap
- Hitting:
 - a) Pillows
 - b) Pool noodles
 - c) Balloons
 - d) Punching bag
 - e) Exercise ball
- Other:
 - a) White Board for scribbling
 - b) Paper/thick cardboard for ripping

TO HELP THE TEARS TO FLOW

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PLAY and EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

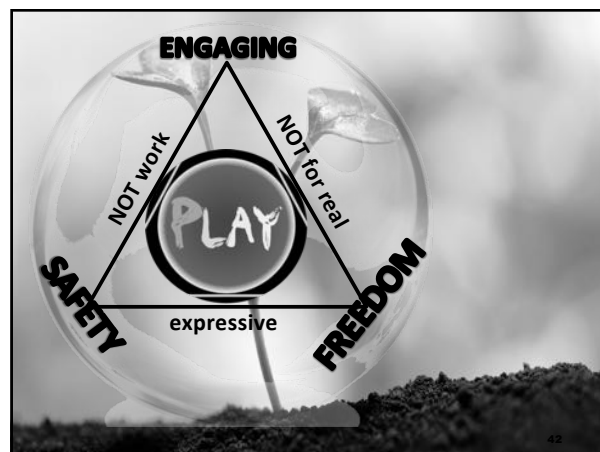
When children are “stirred up” emotionally, their PLAY can reflect themes they are struggling with.

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.
- free unstructured play, spontaneous pickup games, and self-initiated dramatic play, are replaced by digital devices

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.

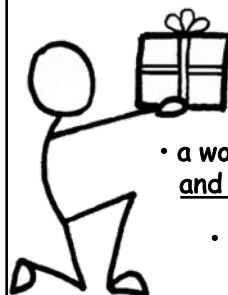
As of 2016, 1 in 6 children ages 2 to 8 years of age had a diagnosed mental, behavioral or developmental disorder.

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

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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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WHAT CAN BE DONE?

CONSCIOUSLY go about setting up and offering EMOTIONAL PLAYGROUNDS

- IN SCHOOL
- OUTSIDE
- AT HOME (if you're a parent)

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Emotional Playgrounds

- 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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EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION WITHOUT WORDS

Drawing



Painting



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Taking frustration into play

Playing out the impulses to make things work



- *constructing and crafts*
- *building – Lego, blocks, mazes etc.*
- *making things perfect - puzzles*
- *organizing & orchestrating*

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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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GROUP RELEASE ACTIVITIES

Providing a venue for emotional expression
as a preventive measure- particularly in Covid times

Set the Stage:

- Activities can run smoothly and students are more inclined to follow your lead if you:
- **Collect them before beginning** the activity
- Name the cues that will announce the **beginning and end**, as this will help them transition in and out more smoothly
- Join in, build **a culture of enjoyment!** This will encourage them to join in and follow your lead more readily



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FRUSTRATION MONSTER

- Remember 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!



Hannah Beach

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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!



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BE THE CONDUCTOR/YOU ARE THE MUSIC



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SQUEEZE AWAY

- 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



Hannah Beach

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PROVIDE PLAY MATERIALS

- **Craft materials – to be used for creations**
 - Toilet paper rolls, yarn, popsicle sticks, pipe cleaners, beads, elastics, etc.
 - Items from nature – sticks, leaves, pebbles
- **Large pieces of paper, sketchbooks and crayons**
- **Play Doh** (make your own with students)
- **Materials to make and create instruments** (drums, rain sticks, tambourines, maracas)

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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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PLAY WITH THEM

- **Singing and music**
 - ❖ Happy, Sad, Mad, Excited
- **Dancing**
 - ❖ Slow, Fast, Happy, Sad, Mad, Excited
- **Miming and Dress-up**
 - ❖ Being scary – being scared
 - ❖ Being a monster – super hero
- **Drawing**
 - ❖ All kinds - lots of emotion
- **Play fighting**
- **Building and Imagining**
- **Jumping and destroying**



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Outdoor Play



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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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PLAYING OUT EMOTIONS

Did you know
PLAY HELPS FEARS?
AmeliaTollers.com



Covid-19

Cultivating **COURAGE** through play:


- dress-up, masks
- risk-taking play
- super-hero play
- taming the monster play

- it reduces the levels of alarm and
- it increases the sense of strength.

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Stories as a playground for emotion



- reading stories,
- writing stories,
- telling stories,
- hearing stories,
- watching stories (movies),
- creating stories,
- acting out stories

- stories provide multiple ways of activating, accessing and expressing emotions that are one-step removed from real life
- stories allow us to touch upon dynamics and topics that could be overwhelming in real life, as well as to take a break from real life

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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.

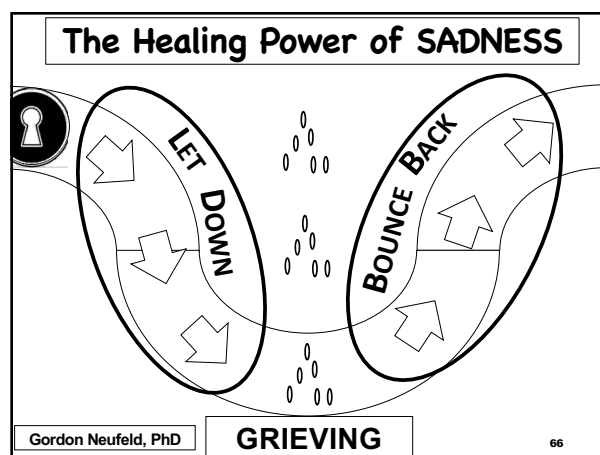
TRANSFORMATION



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**

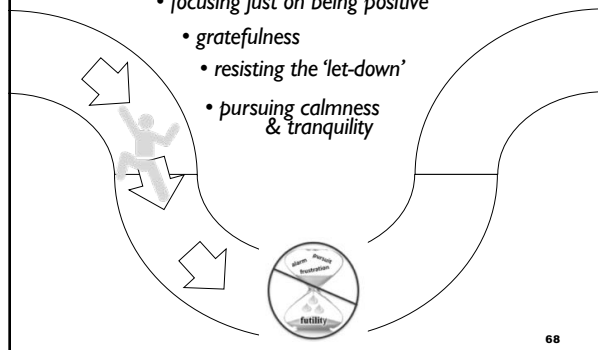
If we allow ourselves to pass through sadness, it results in RESILIENCE

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THE PROBLEM WITH “RIGHT” THINKING ALL THE TIME

- focusing just on being positive
- gratefulness
- resisting the ‘let-down’
- pursuing calmness & tranquility



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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**

- Frustration**: “That didn’t work for you.” “That was not what you had in mind.”
- Alarm**: “That was scary.” “You weren’t sure what was going to happen”.
- 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)

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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CHILDREN GROW WHEN EMOTIONS FLOW!



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**UNDERSTANDING THE
EMOTIONAL WORLD
OF OUR CHILDREN IN COVID TIMES**

You are not alone.



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RESOURCE GUIDE	GUIDE DE RESSOURCES
<p style="text-align: center; font-size: small;">UNDERSTANDING THE EMOTIONAL WORLD OF OUR CHILDREN IN COVID TIMES: HOW IT AFFECTS THEIR BEHAVIOUR AND WHAT WE CAN DO TO HELP THEM</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: x-small;">Eva de Gosztanyi, Psychologist Martine Demers, Behaviour Consultant Catherine Korah, Behaviour Consultant</p> <div style="text-align: center; font-size: x-small;">  Centre of Excellence for Behaviour Management <small>www.cebm.ca edegosztanyi@rsb.qc.ca</small> </div>	<p style="text-align: center; font-size: small;">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</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: x-small;">Eva de Gosztanyi, Psychologue Martine Demers, Consultante Catherine Korah, Consultante</p> <div style="text-align: center; font-size: x-small;">  Centre d'excellence en gestion du comportement <small>www.cebm.ca edegosztanyi@rsb.qc.ca</small> </div>

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

This fall we will start a new school year that will indeed be new – one never seen before. This presentation will provide a framework and some guiding principles for how best to take the lead with students to encourage them to follow all of the new in-school procedures meant to keep us all safe. Many school teams have already implemented a variety of creative practices to help students to willingly follow what is being asked of them. This presentation will provide insight as to why some interventions are more helpful than others in avoiding student resistance and why some interventions are likely to keep working throughout the year. Strategies and activities will be presented that have been tried and implemented during the Spring launch-back into 'school during Covid times'. Come join us and be inspired!


ELEMENTARY AND EARLY SECONDARY

AUGUST 25 9-11 AM
AUGUST 26 1-3 PM www.cebm.ca/news-events
AUGUST 27 9-11 AM

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For more information visit
www.cebm.ca



THE CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT (CEBM)

Welcome to our site! As a support to the 10 English School Boards of Quebec, the CEBM aims to enable boards and their staff to find developmentally friendly and trauma informed interventions that are effective in helping students who are struggling with behavioural challenges in the school setting.

News & Updates - August events **Featured Resource**

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