



Simple Steps to Take Daily to Reduce Stress, Build Resilience and Prevent Long Term Harm from Toxic Stress  
Julie Nicholson and Julie Kurtz

---

---

---

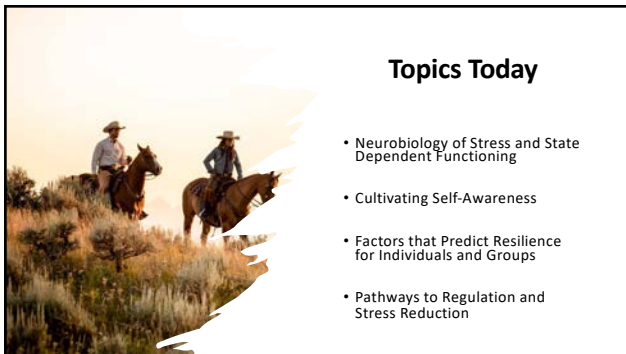
---

---

---

---

---



### Topics Today

- Neurobiology of Stress and State Dependent Functioning
- Cultivating Self-Awareness
- Factors that Predict Resilience for Individuals and Groups
- Pathways to Regulation and Stress Reduction

---

---

---

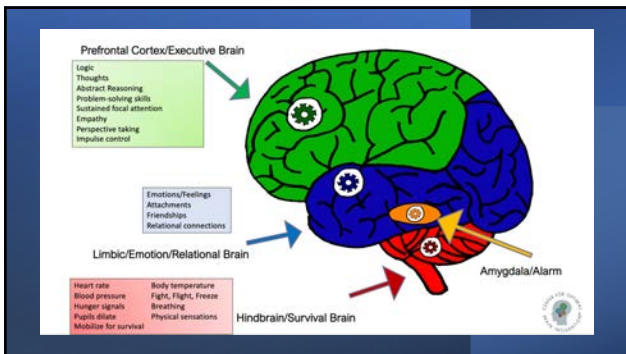
---

---

---

---

---



---

---

---

---

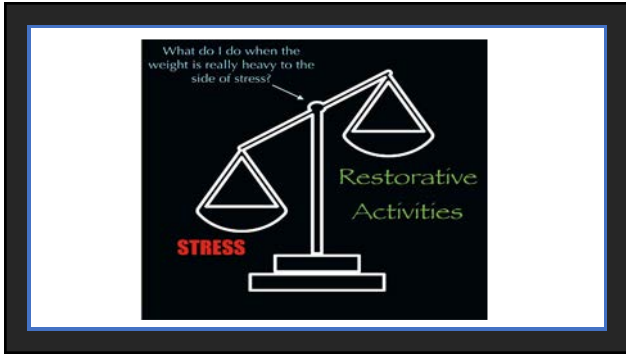
---

---

---

---

Developed in collaboration with the Center for Optimal Brain Integration and Julie Nicholson, Ph.D. ©2022. No further reproduction is permitted without express permission of the copyright holder. Send inquiries to [optimalbrainintegration@gmail.com](mailto:optimalbrainintegration@gmail.com).



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



---

---

---

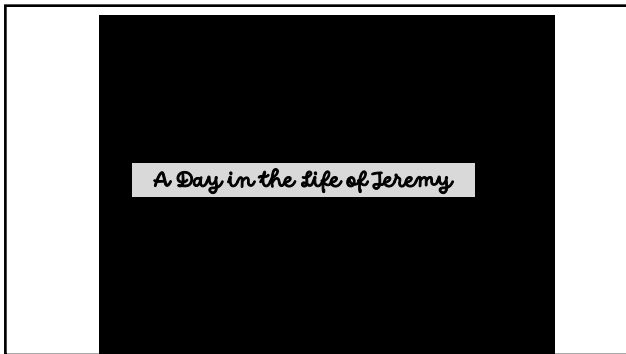
---

---

---

---

---



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Developed in collaboration with the Center for Optimal Brain Integration and Julie Nicholson, Ph.D. ©2022. No further reproduction is permitted without express permission of the copyright holder. Send inquiries to [optimalbrainintegration@gmail.com](mailto:optimalbrainintegration@gmail.com).



## Stress and the Body

Sometimes we don't realize how stressed we are. When we're caught up in day-to-day activities, it is easy to gloss over possible stressors. At the end of each day, simply noting your stress level can make you more aware of your feelings and lead to reduced anxiety.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Identifying Sensations in My Body



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Teacher Connie



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



Kyla's Zones of Self-Awareness		
GREEN	ORANGE	RED
<p>→</p> <p>SIGNS YOU ARE IN THE ZONE OF OPTIMAL REGULATION (MAKE A LIST)</p> <p><b>Physical/Body Sensory:</b> Relaxed shoulders Regular breathing</p> <p><b>Feelings/Emotions:</b> Calm Happy</p> <p><b>Thoughts:</b> I am doing my best Others are doing their best</p> <p><b>Behavior:</b> Patient Kind to self and others Easy going</p>	<p>→</p> <p>EARLY WARNING SIGNS (MAKE A LIST)</p> <p><b>Physical/Body Sensory:</b> Tension in face Clenching of jaw</p> <p><b>Feelings/Emotions:</b> Worried Anxious</p> <p><b>Thoughts:</b> Not sure</p> <p><b>Behavior:</b> Shut down Unfocused Escape from others</p>	<p>→</p> <p>SIGNS YOU ARE IN FIGHT, FLIGHT OR FREEZE (MAKE A LIST)</p> <p><b>Physical/Body Sensory:</b> Headache Stomach pain Eyes darting</p> <p><b>Feelings/Emotions:</b> Panic Terror</p> <p><b>Thoughts:</b> I hate everyone I hate myself I hate my job and life</p> <p><b>Behavior:</b> Yelling Criticizing others Self-critical</p>

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

GREEN	ORANGE	RED
<p>→</p> <p>SIGNS YOU ARE IN THE ZONE OF OPTIMAL REGULATION (MAKE A LIST)</p> <p><b>Physical/Body Sensory:</b></p> <p><b>Feelings/Emotions:</b></p> <p><b>Thoughts:</b></p> <p><b>Behavior:</b></p>	<p>→</p> <p>EARLY WARNING SIGNS (MAKE A LIST)</p> <p><b>Physical/Body Sensory:</b></p> <p><b>Feelings/Emotions:</b></p> <p><b>Thoughts:</b></p> <p><b>Behavior:</b></p>	<p>→</p> <p>SIGNS YOU ARE IN FIGHT, FLIGHT OR FREEZE (MAKE A LIST)</p> <p><b>Physical/Body Sensory:</b></p> <p><b>Feelings/Emotions:</b></p> <p><b>Thoughts:</b></p> <p><b>Behavior:</b></p>

---

---

---

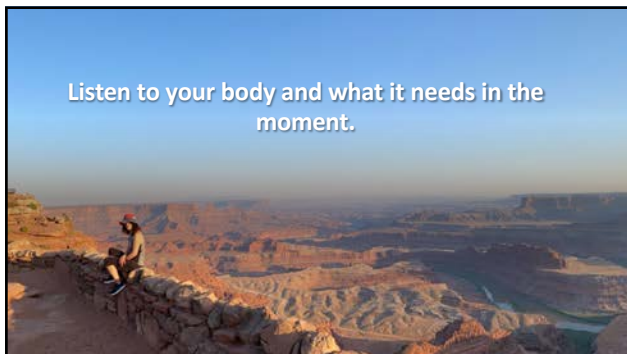
---

---

---

---

---




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Developed in collaboration with the Center for Optimal Brain Integration and Julie Nicholson, Ph.D. ©2022. No further reproduction is permitted without express permission of the copyright holder. Send inquiries to [optimalbrainintegration@gmail.com](mailto:optimalbrainintegration@gmail.com).



**Understanding State Dependent Functioning:  
Maintaining Regulation in Trauma-Responsive Environments**



Our internal state is  
always changing along  
an arousal continuum  
Bruce Perry

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Our internal state is always changing along an arousal  
continuum (Perry, 2020a)...



---

---

---

---

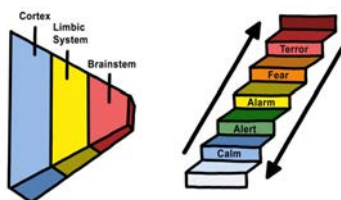
---

---

---

---

**Arousal Staircase**



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Developed in collaboration with the Center for Optimal Brain Integration and Julie Nicholson, Ph.D. ©2022. No further reproduction is permitted without express permission of the copyright holder. Send inquiries to [optimalbrainintegration@gmail.com](mailto:optimalbrainintegration@gmail.com).




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**What is the most effective and powerful pathway to regulation?**

Relational Regulation used with one or more of the following forms of regulation:

- Top Down Regulation
- Bottom Up Regulation
- Dissociative (Disconnection) Regulation

Relational Regulation	
+	
Top Down Regulation	
Bottom Up Regulation	
Intentional Disconnection	

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**The Foundation: Relational Regulation**

Relational regulation is the most powerful way to buffer stress.

When we are in the presence of others we care for, love and respect, we can tolerate more stress and adversity and we are also more likely to have opportunities to build resilience and heal from the impact of adversity and trauma.

And the reverse is also true.

---

---

---

---

---


---

---

---

Developed in collaboration with the Center for Optimal Brain Integration and Julie Nicholson, Ph.D. ©2022. No further reproduction is permitted without express permission of the copyright holder. Send inquiries to [optimalbrainintegration@gmail.com](mailto:optimalbrainintegration@gmail.com).





Your stress response has a built-in mechanism for stress resilience, and that mechanism is human connection.

Kelly McGonigal, TED Talk, 'How to Make Stress Your Friend' (2014)

---

---

---


---

---

---

---

---



### Reflection

What relational strategies do you use to ground yourself in times of uncertainty or stress or to keep you regulated?

- People
- Ancestors
- Animals
- Images of an historical figure or loved one
- A Higher Power

---

---

---


---

---

---

---

---

**Bottom-Up Approaches: "Using patterned repetitive somatosensory activities to regulate and calm."**

- Rocking back and forth (in a rocking chair or just in place)
- Walking or running
- Swimming, riding a bike
- Jumping (e.g., in place or on a trampoline)
- Petting a dog or other pets/animals
- Listening to music, dancing/singing/chanting
- Humming
- Coloring, using fidget toys
- Deep breathing exercises
- Stretching, Yoga, Tai Chi or Qi Gong
- Being in nature
- Engaging one of the 5 senses (smell, touch, sound, taste, feel) to bring you into your body and the present moment (i.e., drinking warm tea, mindfully eating)
- Drumming and rhythmic use of musical instruments
- Mindfulness activities
- Cleaning, picking weeds

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Developed in collaboration with the Center for Optimal Brain Integration and Julie Nicholson, Ph.D. ©2022. No further reproduction is permitted without express permission of the copyright holder. Send inquiries to [optimalbrainintegration@gmail.com](mailto:optimalbrainintegration@gmail.com).



Teacher Emily knows this parent meeting might be filled with intense emotions. So, she sets up, in the middle of the table, **coloring paper**, markers and pens and a bin of fidget objects (rubrics cube, fun fidget toys). She puts a tea kettle out with warm **water, tea and snacks**. She is aware that when we can fidget, color or draw, and have a nice pot of warm tea and crackers, that this may regulate the stress system. She also has gentle **calming music** playing in the background.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



BREATH IS THE REMOTE CONTROL FOR REGULATION



---

---

---

---


---

---

---

---


**Biomechanics of the Breath**



Your **INBREATH** stimulates the sympathetic nervous systems which acts as the "**accelerator**". It activates the energy within your body.

Your **OUTBREATH** stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system which acts as the "**brakes**". It slows the energy responses within your body.

**The Body Keeps the Score**  
Bessel Van Der Kolk



---

---

---

---

---


---

---

---

Developed in collaboration with the Center for Optimal Brain Integration and Julie Nicholson, Ph.D. ©2022. No further reproduction is permitted without express permission of the copyright holder. Send inquiries to [optimalbrainintegration@gmail.com](mailto:optimalbrainintegration@gmail.com).





**The Shakeout**

---

---

---

---


---

---

---

---

Teacher Aracely knows that she is driving to work Monday morning having had a very stressful weekend personally. She feels dysregulated, unrefreshed and her thoughts are, "I don't want to go to work today." She feels a slight headache and low energy in her body. When she drives to work, **she hums all the way to the center** the song "Ave Maria".



The Ave Maria reminds her of her grandmother and how that song used to comfort her in times of stress when Abuelita would sing it (relational regulation). By humming it all the way to work, when she arrived, she felt an overarching sense of calm inside her body and a thought, "you got this."

**Bottom-Up Regulation**

Have you used a bottom-up approach to regulate yourself and/or co-regulate a family? Which one? What happened as a result?

---

---

---


---

---

---

---

---



**Top-Down Approaches: "Using your cortex (thoughts) to regulate and calm"**

Thinking of grounders that can help you calm your activated stress (people, places, objects, activities associated with safety, belonging and calm)

Mapping out different solutions to a problem or looking at all sides of a situation

Repeating self-talk, mantras, a prayer or an inspirational saying ("I got this!" or "This too shall pass")

Counseling or Professional Support/Talking about how you feel (counseling, coach, trusted confidante, mentor)

Journaling

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



### Intentional Disengagement Approaches

Daydreaming or mind-wandering, star-gazing

Disengaging/tuning out for brief moments during a meeting (e.g., to think about how what you are hearing relates to you/your life)



Guided imagery

Prayer or meditation

To 'lose oneself' in reading, theater, watching TV, doing art, baking, taking a shower or bath, baking or picking weeds/gardening

Children do this by playing and so can adults

Intentionally disengaging from people or situations that are stressful



---

---

---


---

---

---

---

---



Teacher Grace drives home after a long and stressful day working with children in her classroom. Right before she left, another teacher called her out and lectured her about not following a procedure correctly. As she started home, she felt very on-edge and irritated. Her mind was racing with thoughts such as, "I am such a bad teacher. I don't even know why I am doing this work." During her 40-minute drive home, she listened to a book on tape, and **she lost herself in the story**. Her racing thoughts temporarily dissipated.

By the time she reached her home she felt calmer and more regulated. Reading her novel gave Grace's brain a break from her racing thoughts and allowed some time for her to disengage from her stress. Listening to her novel was a strategy she used to "shut off" her racing mind (intentional disengagement). She arrived home to her older children having cooked dinner, set the table and she heard the laughter and felt the warmth in her home (relational regulation).

---

---

---

---


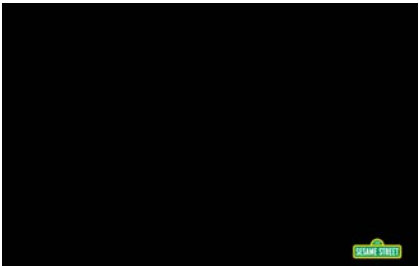
---

---

---

---

Name the Pathways of Regulation Alan Uses with Big Bird



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



### How Many Grounding Strategies Did you Find?

- Attunement (relational regulation)
- Voice tone (relational regulation)
- Nonverbal body cues that are mirroring calm (relational regulation)
- Identify and express feelings (top-down)
- Imagining a safe place (*nest*) (top-down)
- Imagine a safe person (*granny bird*) (top-down)
- Imagine a safe object (*radar, bird seed cookies or the blanket*) (top-down)
- Breathing (bottom-up)
- Engage the 5 senses (*hearing the birds and breeze, feeling the sun, seeing the nature, smelling the cookies*) (bottom-up)

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Raffle

- [www.optimalbrainintegration.com](http://www.optimalbrainintegration.com)
- Go to [Contact Us](#) page
- Fill out and in comments say WY Keynote
- You will be entered
- Raffle July 29<sup>th</sup> by 8 am CST

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Developed in collaboration with the Center for Optimal Brain Integration and Julie Nicholson, Ph.D. ©2022. No further reproduction is permitted without express permission of the copyright holder. Send inquiries to [optimalbrainintegration@gmail.com](mailto:optimalbrainintegration@gmail.com).



## Join Our COBI Community



- **Website:** [www.optimalbrainintegration.com](http://www.optimalbrainintegration.com)
- **Facebook:** Center for Optimal Brain Integration
- **Instagram:** Center4OptimalBrainIntegration
- **Email:** [optimalbrainintegration@gmail.com](mailto:optimalbrainintegration@gmail.com)
- **YouTube:** Center for Optimal Brain Integration

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

<p><b>TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICES FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS</b> Relationship Based Approaches That Support Healing and Build Resilience in Young Children JULIE NICHOLSON, LARSA PEREZ and JULIE KURTZ</p>	<p><b>CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE SELF-CARE PRACTICES FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS</b> JULIE NICHOLSON, PARRI SHARR BROOKER, JULIE KURTZ, DOMINICA MORGUEZ and ISABAND KREYER</p>	<p><b>Coming soon...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trauma-informed practices for early childhood educators: Relationship-based approaches that support healing and build resilience in young children. <b>2<sup>nd</sup> Edition</b></li> <li>• Supporting young children to cope, build resilience and heal from trauma through play: A practical guide for early childhood educators.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Early Childhood Trauma-Responsive and Healing Engaged Books</b></p>	<p><b>TRAUMA-RESPONSIVE FAMILY ENGAGEMENT IN EARLY CHILDHOOD</b> Practices for Equity and Resilience JULIE NICHOLSON and JULIE KURTZ</p>	

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

*"Your mind can change your molecules"*  
Dr. Daniel Siegel

**With Gratitude**  
Julie Nicholson and Julie Kurtz

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Developed in collaboration with the Center for Optimal Brain Integration and Julie Nicholson, Ph.D. ©2022. No further reproduction is permitted without express permission of the copyright holder. Send inquiries to [optimalbrainintegration@gmail.com](mailto:optimalbrainintegration@gmail.com).