



“INCREASE THE HAPPINESS FACTOR”

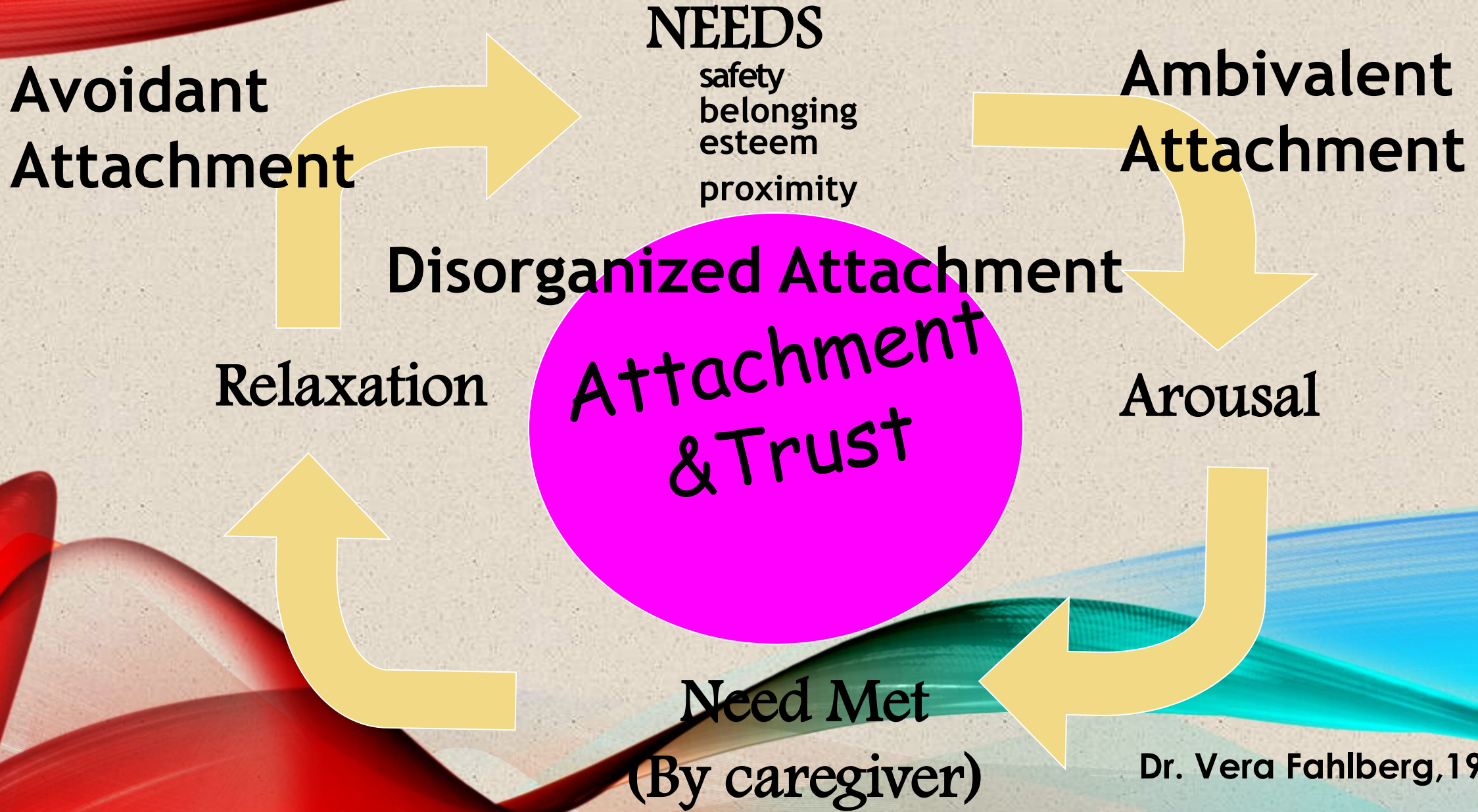
Supporting Stressed-out Kids

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SOCIAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL AND BIOLOGICAL UNDERPINNINGS

- We are social creatures : Attachment Needs
- Changing our Mind: from stressed-out to happy
- Body Brain Connection

AROUSAL/RELAXATION CYCLE



SAFETY

- PHYSICALLY SAFE FROM HARM
- PSYCHOLOGICAL/SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL
- ABSENCE OF TOXIC SHAME
- RELIABILITY



BELONGING

- DO YOU NOTICE ME?
- DO I HAVE COMMONALITIES WITH THIS GROUP?
- WOULD I BE MISSED IF ABSENT?



ESTEEM

- WHAT AM I WORTH TO YOU?
- AM I VALUED?
- DO YOU DELIGHT IN ME?



PROXIMITY

- CLOSENESS TO OTHERS NEEDED
- MUTUAL GAZE
- TOUCH PRODUCES OXYTOCIN
- PRESENCE – MOM AND DAD AT ALL MY BALLGAMES





EXPERIENTIAL

- MUTUAL GAZE FOR 60 SEC WITH STRANGER



EXPERIENTIAL

- PRIMARY ATTACHMENT EXPERIENCE:
CAR ACCIDENT

THE PROBLEM: MORE STRESS, LESS HAPPINESS



TOP 12 THINGS THAT CULTIVATE HAPPINESS

1. Gratitude activities

- Think of someone to express deep gratitude to and write them a one page letter. Present them with a laminated copy. Read it to them slowly with eye contact.
- Keep a gratitude journal.
- Discuss blessings with partner or family regularly.

2. Cultivate optimism

- Pessimism: interpreting bad events as permanent, pervasive, and personal.
- Optimism: occasional, impersonal, specific.
- Victor Frankl: *"When we are no longer able to change a situation - we are challenged to change ourselves."*

3. Avoid over thinking and social comparison (rumination)

- use self-distraction with positive activities
- set aside time to think and write about it later
- discuss it with a friend
- clear out triggers (Therapy)
- put it in perspective

4. Practicing acts of Kindness

- self-chosen activities (pace yourself and don't overdo)

5. Nurturing Relationships

- five hours a week together and talking
- five minutes a day expressing gratitude for specific behaviors
- 5/1 ratio of positive to negative comments

6. Coping strategies

- Social support
- Absorb yourself in activities that change the brain state
- Find meaning in suffering through writing and talking

7. Forgiveness

- REACH: Recall, Empathize, Altruism by gift of forgiveness, Commit to let go, Hold on to forgiveness.

8. Flow

- Achieved when a task is challenging, requires skill and concentration, gives immediate feedback, and sense of control and is deeply effortless. Sense of time vanishes

9. Savoring

- Pleasures need to be spread out over time and varied.
- They need to be shared with someone
- and looked forward to!
- We need to record with mental or real photographs and or souvenirs
- and we need to reminisce

10. Goals

- Those who succeed make adequate preparation by setting clear and specific goals,
- and they go public with their intent.
- They control their environment by reducing triggers/increasing reminders
- They track progress with a reward system
- and build a support system to help with them.

11. Practicing religion and spirituality

- Do something that improves your relationship to God/the Universe
- Practice open mindedness
- Practice mindfulness through quiet and meditation
- Allow yourself to believe in things not easily explained
- Fast – not necessarily from food

12. Take care of your body

- Have an appropriate fitness and nutrition program
- Sleep enough
- Laughter

EXPERIENTIAL

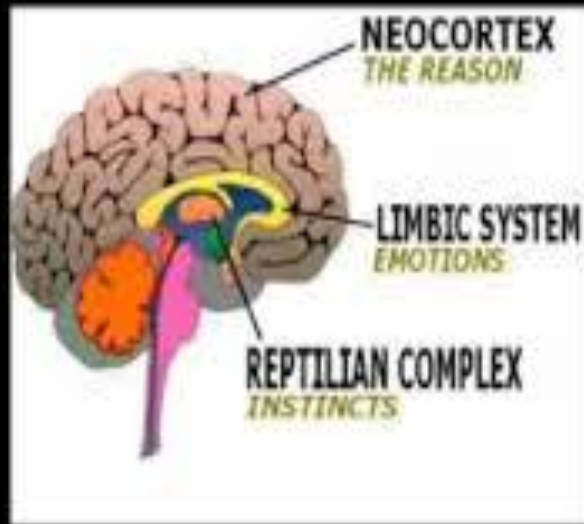
THREE GRATITUDES: STATE SHIFT



PENN RESILIENCY PROGRAM FOR SCHOOLS

1. Help students' ability to handle day to day stressors common to adolescents
2. Help students to think more realistically and flexibly
3. Teaches assertiveness, brainstorming, decision making, relaxation, and other coping skills.
4. Three good things exercise (we just did it!)
5. Helps students find out their signature strengths and how to apply them. (Go on to <https://www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu> and take the strengths survey yourself!)

THE TRIUNE BRAIN



POLY-VAGAL THEORY

State of Hyperarousal

- Sympathetic system activated: Acceleration of autonomic nervous system response—increased heart rate and blood pressure, increased blood flow to large muscles, etc.
- Fight/flight response activated: State of hypervigilance, anxiety, perception of challenge or danger
- Thinking is either rigid or chaotic
- Prefrontal cortex not activated—processing through limbic/brainstem/survival mechanisms of the brain
- No new learning can take place

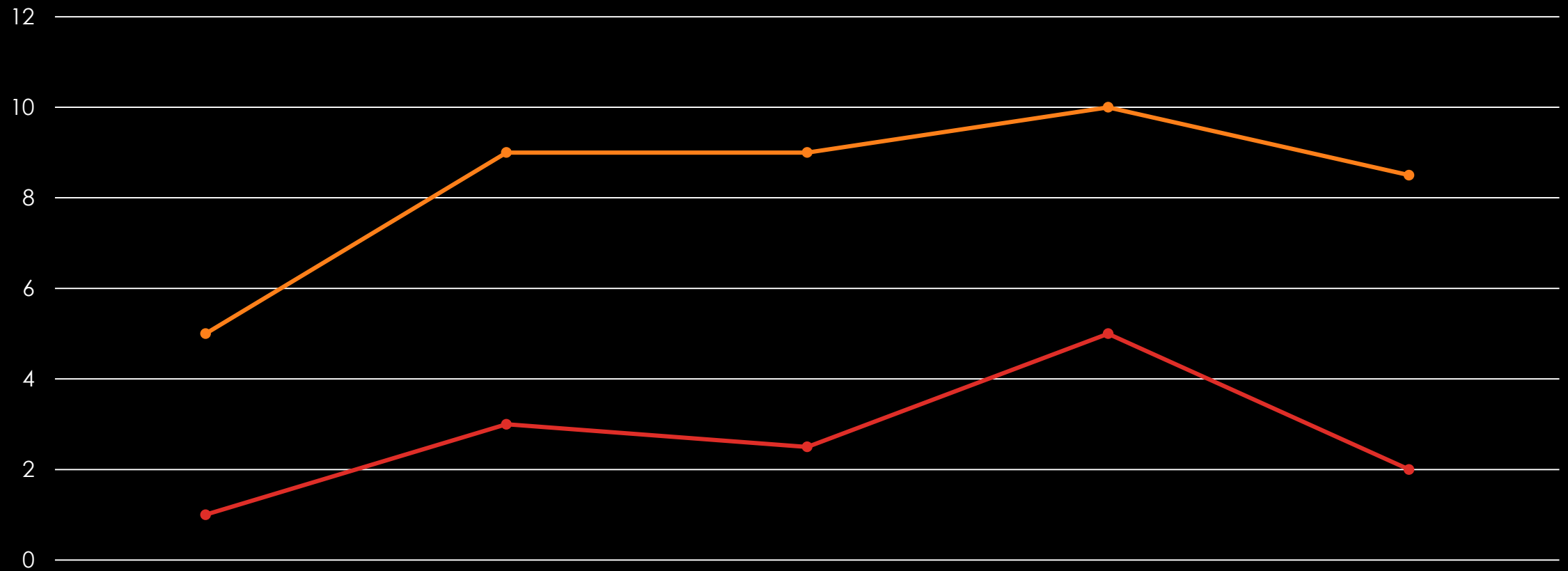
Optimal Zone of Arousal—Window of Tolerance

- Ventral vagal nerve/parasympathetic system stimulated: Deceleration of autonomic nervous system response—body regulated, fear modulated, greater access to intuition and insight
- Social engagement system activated (connectedness with others, “mindsight”, etc.)
- Self-soothing/emotion regulation system activated
- Full activation of prefrontal cortex
- State of mind is calm, alert, relaxed, aware, mindful, flexible, accepting, energetic, coherent, empathetic
- Experience full range of emotions (joy, grief, anger, etc.) with a sense of control and awareness of options
- New learning can take place

State of Hypoarousal

- Dorsal vagal nerve/parasympathetic system activated: Extreme deceleration of autonomic nervous system response—decreased heart rate and blood pressure, dissociation of awareness, etc.
- Depression
- Isolation/withdrawal, stop/shut-down response
- No new learning can take place

SHIFTING THE STRESS BASELINE



EXPERIENTIAL: GET IN YOUR BODY

- Balloon Play
- Be a Volcano
- Making Spit Wads Useful 😊
- Run/Jump/Slide
- Brain Gym
- Belly Breathe
- Laughing Together Creates Connection



CONTACT FOR A COPY

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