

Mindful Parenting 101:
Tools for Cultivating Well-Being &
Riding Emotional Waves with Calm

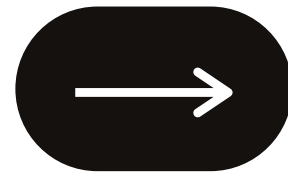
RACHEL HENES CONSULTING, LLC

Hi! I'm Rachel Henes. A little bit about me:



- My pronouns are she/her
- Working with school communities for over 20 years with a focus on how cultural norms impact individual wellbeing
- Social worker, trainer, and parent coach
- Mom to two children - Noah (11) & Nathaniel (7)
- Co-lead of a peer support network for parents / caregivers of neurodivergent & disabled children

Plan for our time together



- 1 Discuss and examine common parenting stress responses
- 2 Identify sources of stress for parents of neurodivergent kids
- 3 Learn Mindful Parenting practices to lower stress and increase calm

Invitations & Acknowledgements

- Breathe. Slow down. Practice curiosity.
- Participation is welcome! Ask questions as they arise. We will also have a Q&A at the end.
- Acknowledge that ableism (and all other ism's!) is in the room and our work together is to not about fixing or blaming, but unlearning.
- We are all in this together - AND we are navigating different lived realities and experiences.

**Taking a moment to
check in with yourself...**

Getting to Know Your Stress Responses

It's 8:15. Your child has to be at school at 8:30.

They are taking their time and playing on their screen.

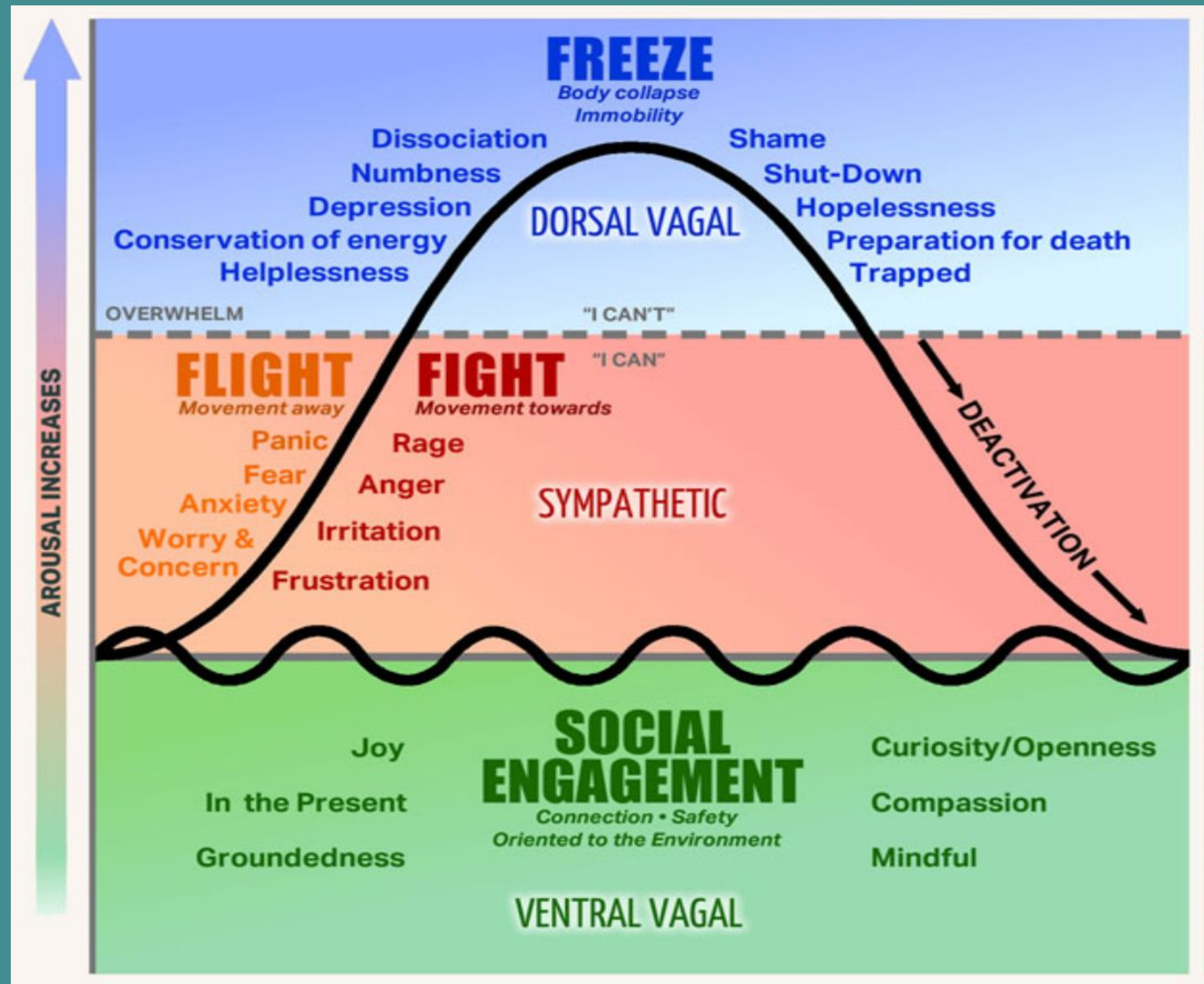
"Come on now, hurry up or we'll be late" you say, several times, but they do not budge.

You walk over to them, urging them to come, but they throw their ipad on the floor and start screaming.

When you imagine this situation, what comes up in your...

- Body
- Emotions
- Thoughts
- Impulse to Act

We are hardwired to respond quickly and automatically when we are stressed



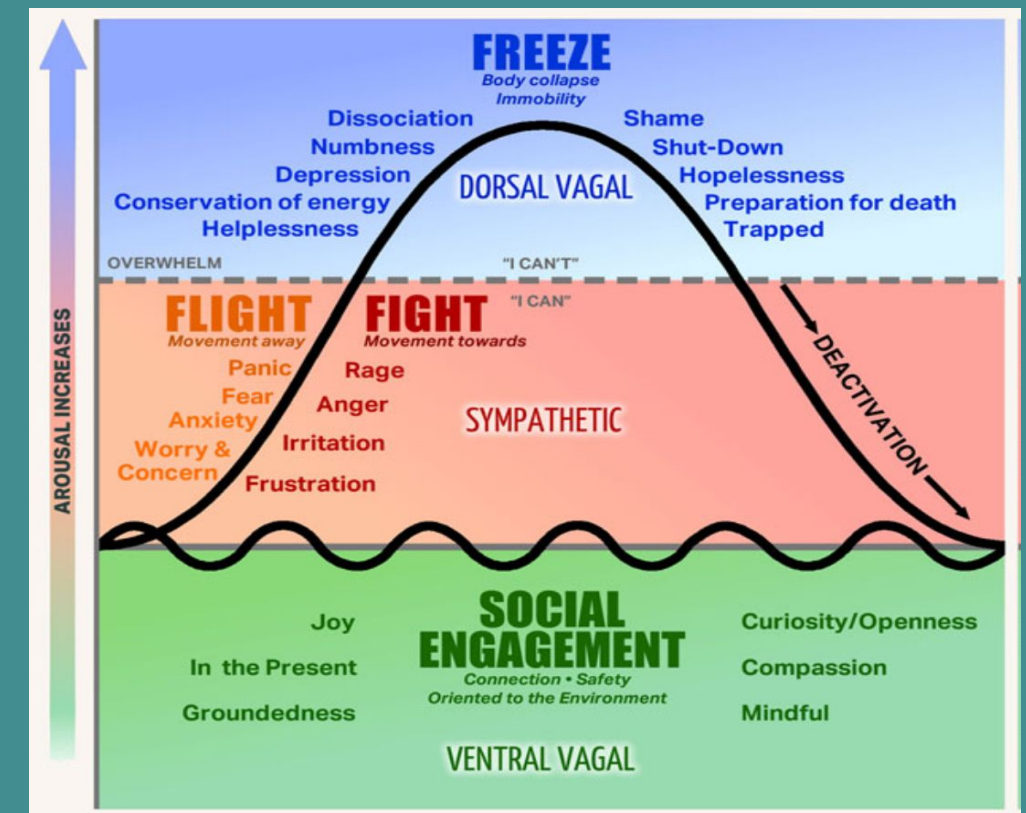
What contributes to these reactions?

A stylized illustration of a hand with five fingers, wearing several colorful bracelets (green, yellow, red, blue). The hand is positioned above a stack of books with various colored covers (green, orange, blue, yellow). The background is a light teal color with a faint, repeating pattern of the same hand and book stack.

- **Lack of support & resources:** Raising kids is exhausting and we were never meant to do it in isolation
- **Achievement focused culture:** Our nervous systems are on overdrive with all the societal expectations and pressure
- **Societal expectations for parenting:** Rigid ideas of what is “normal” regarding milestones, behavior, learning type, etc.

Parents of kids with disabilities are also navigating:

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- Social judgements & stigma
- Conversations, meetings, and reports that view disability as a deficit
- Cost and time of setting up medical care, therapies, IEP's, 504's, accommodations
- Burnout & isolation



Medical Model	Social Model
Disability is seen as a problem within a child (their brain, body, or behavior).	Disability is seen as a result of society's failure to be inclusive.
The goal is to "fix" the child so they can act "normal."	The goal is to expand the environment to support the child.
Focus is to teach "compliance" skills to meet external expectations	Focus is building self-advocacy, self-regulation, and autonomy
Asks: "What can we do to make this child comply with expectations and appear more "normal"?"	Asks, "What can we change in the environment, expectations, and support system to help the child thrive?"

What is neurodiversity?

- Neurodiversity is the idea that brain differences, like autism, ADHD, and dyslexia, are natural parts of being human — not problems that need to be "fixed" or "cured."
- This concept grew out of the disability rights movement as a challenge of the longstanding view that differences are disorders.
- Instead of focusing on changing the person, the neurodiversity movement encourages us to **create environments** that are more inclusive and supportive of everyone's unique needs.

Mindful Check-In

How does this connect with Mindful Parenting?

Mindful Parenting is a stress reduction tool

Key Mindful Parenting principles:

- Awareness of your thoughts, emotions, and stress responses
- Cultivating nonjudgmental acceptance for yourself and your child
- Responding intentionally rather than reacting

What are some ways that you already bring mindfulness into your parenting?

- Noticing when you feel triggered or stressed
- Calming yourself before responding
- Tuning in to your child's body language, sounds, or behavior to understand what they may be trying to communicate
- Practicing self-compassion when you feel "less than" or overwhelmed
- Celebrating your child's individuality and supporting them in their way of being

Let's Practice!

Deficit-Based to Strengths-Based Thinking

Choose a thought or emotion from the stress response worksheet

- **Reflect:** Where did this idea come from? What expectations or stories are underneath this idea?
- **Pause:** Breathe and bring compassion to yourself
- **Ask:** What might a more intentional response look like and sound like? Write it down!

Language shifts

Instead of: “She can’t stop moving”

Try: *“Movement helps her focus and regulate her energy. Everyone learns and listens differently!”*

Instead of: “He’s got behavior issues.”

Try: *“His behavior is a sign that he is overwhelmed and needs support”*

Instead of: “He doesn’t make friends like other kids.”

Try: *“He builds friendships differently—he loves connecting over shared interests.”*

Mindfulness Practices to Reduce Stress

- Incorporate moments of deep breathing, grounding or gratitude into your daily life
- Focus on your child's strengths and unique abilities rather than just challenges
- Focus on what behavior is communicating
- Narrate your self-regulation process to your child: "I'm feeling stressed, so I'm going to take three deep breaths to help me stay calm."
- **Set aside time for self-care so you can recharge**

Key Takeaways

- Parenting, especially in our current society, is stressful.
- Fight/flight/freeze reactions are automatic and evolutionary
- Difference is not a deficit, it is a naturally occurring part of what it means to be human.
- You are not alone. There are incredible advocates, tools, parents and communities doing this work all over the map. Find your people!

Speaking of....Care Lab Collective is coming soon!

Thank you!

Please complete this brief survey:

<https://bit.ly/npsepagmp>

Stay in touch:

- Email: rachel@rachelhenes.com
- Learn about more services at rachelhenes.com
- Learn more about **Care Lab Collective** at www.carelabcollective.com

