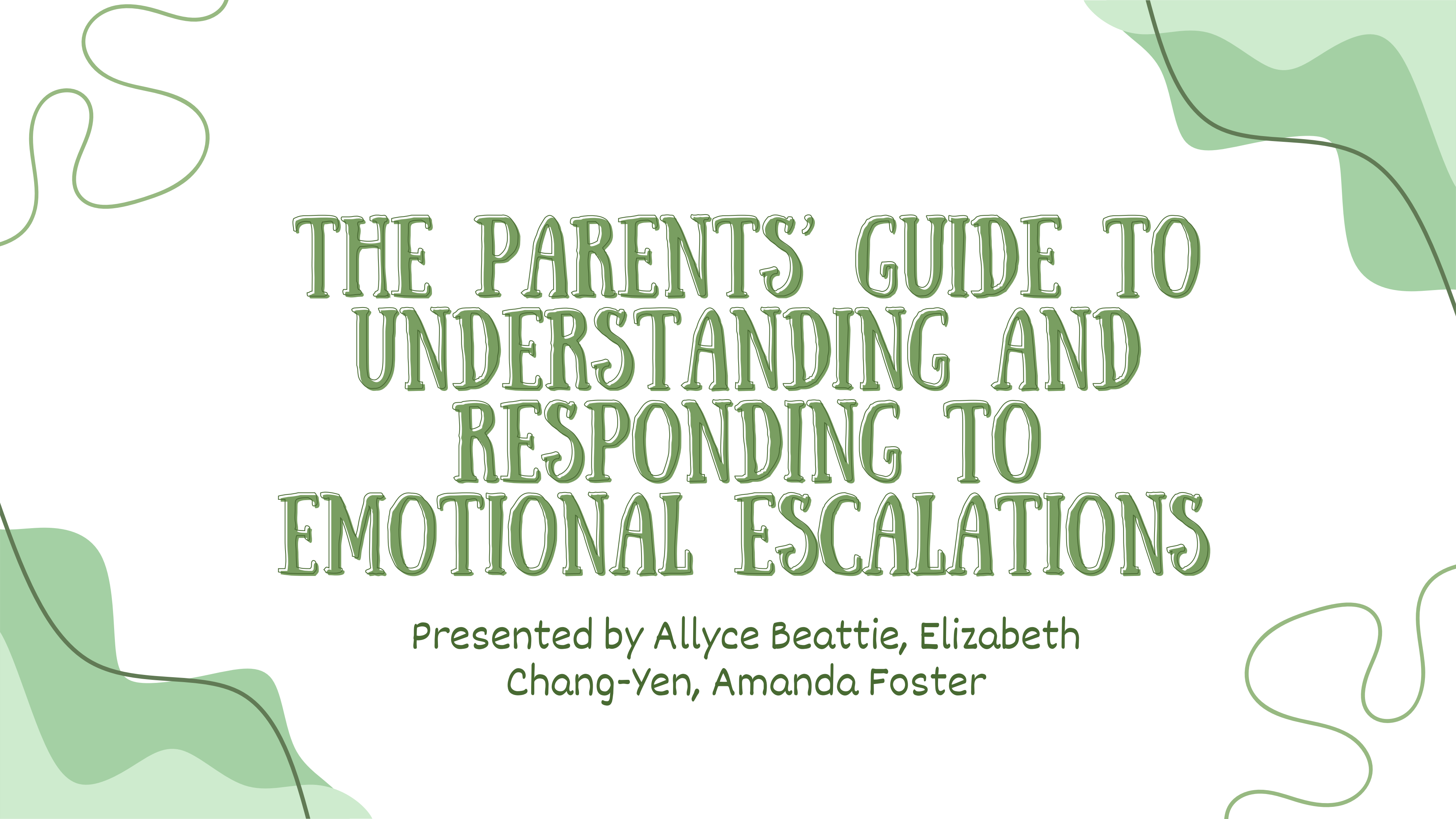


The background features decorative green wavy lines in the corners. The top-left corner has a thin green line forming a loop. The top-right corner has a solid green shape with a wavy edge. The bottom-left corner has a solid green shape with a wavy edge. The bottom-right corner has a thin green line forming a loop.

THE PARENTS' GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING AND RESPONDING TO EMOTIONAL ESCALATIONS

Presented by Allyce Beattie, Elizabeth
Chang-Yen, Amanda Foster

INTRODUCTIONS

- Allyce Beattie, District Behavior Coach
- Elizabeth Chang-Yen, Middle School Counselor
- Amanda Foster, Elementary School Psychologist

INCLUSIVE WELCOME



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- How to spot early warning signs when your child is upset.
- What to do (and what not to do) when your child escalates.
- How to keep everyone safe in tough moments.
- How to reconnect with your child after a meltdown.

CRISIS DEVELOPMENT MODEL

The CPI Crisis Development Model is a framework that helps us understand the stages a person might go through when they are upset and how we should respond in each stage to best support the other person in regaining control.

LEVEL OF ESCALATION	ADULT RESPONSE
ANXIETY	SUPPORTIVE
DEFENSIVE	DIRECTIVE
RISK-TAKING BEHAVIOR	SAFETY INTERVENTIONS
TENSION REDUCTION	THERAPEUTIC RAPPORT

ANXIETY

A noticeable shift in behavior that communicates something isn't right

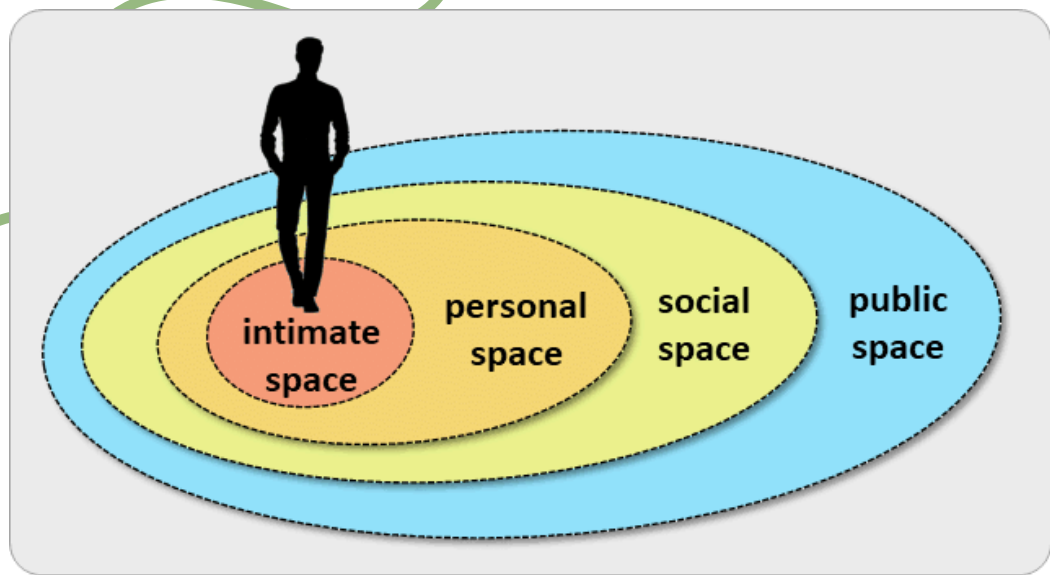
Child behavior (anxiety):

- Fidgeting
- Whining
- Pacing
- Withdrawal
- Tone changes

Adult responses (Supportive):

- Stay calm and empathetic.
- Active listening: "I hear that you're upset about homework."
- Offer choices, reduce demands, provide reassurance.

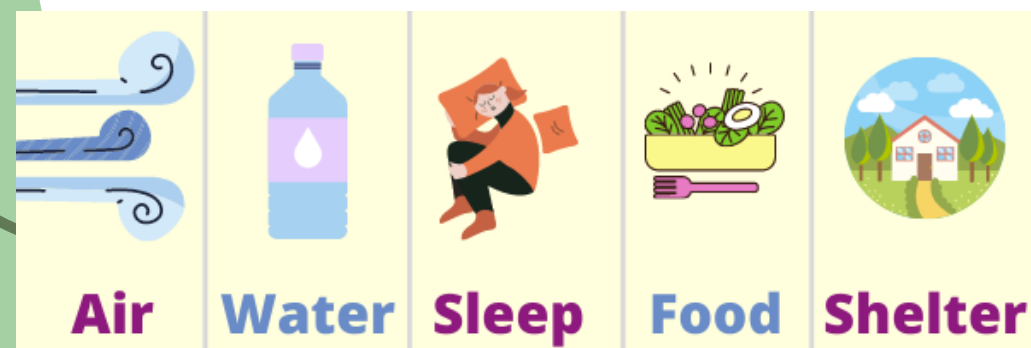
What early signs do you see in your child?



Respect personal space



Use touch as appropriate or comfortable for child (i.e. hand on shoulder, holding hands, hug)



Is there a basic need you can meet?

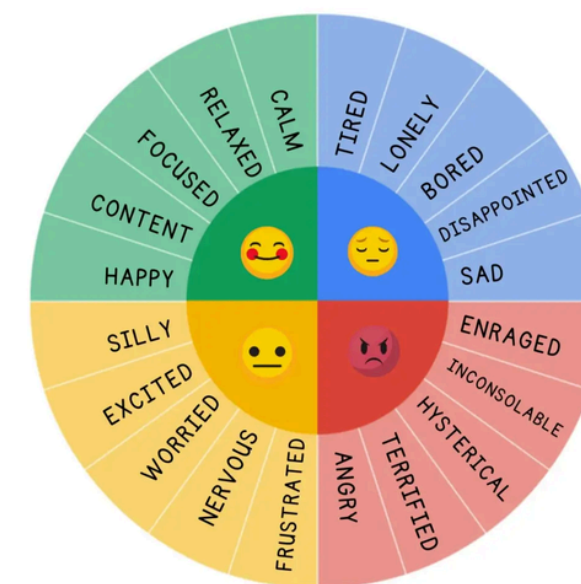
SUPPORTIVE STRATEGIES



When safe, get on their level



Use body language that communicates respect safety



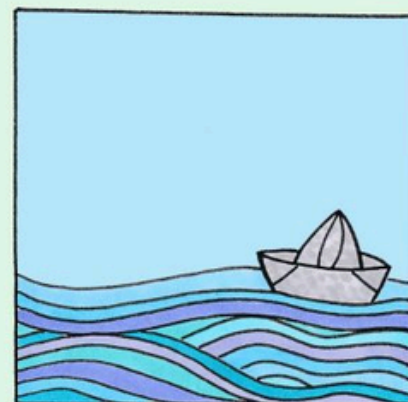
Try using visuals to support communication

SUPPORTIVE STRATEGIES

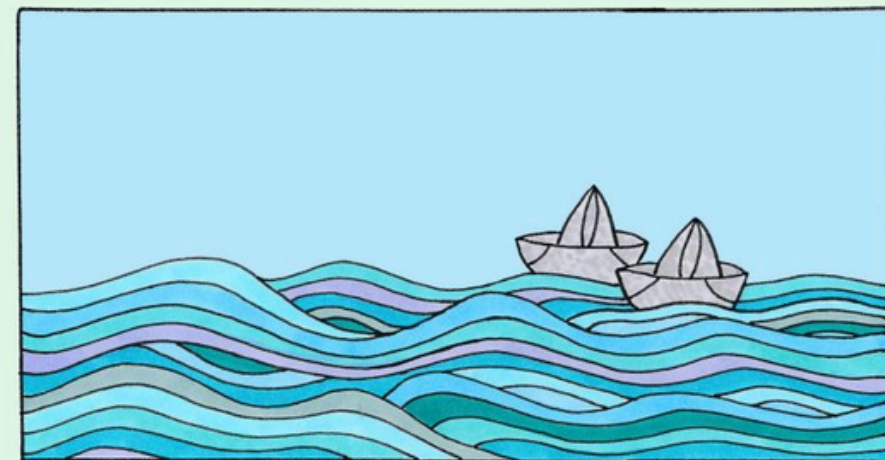
WHEN THEIR STORM



MEETS OUR CALM



CO - REGULATION OCCURS



@kwiens62

A Dozen Ways to Co-Regulate with your Child



Lower your Body Position



Lower your Voice



Soften your Facial Expression



Model Deep Breathing



Do Heavy Work Together



Walk Outside



Offer Deep Pressure



Model a preferred sensory activity



Move your Body Together



Dim the Lights



Stop Talking



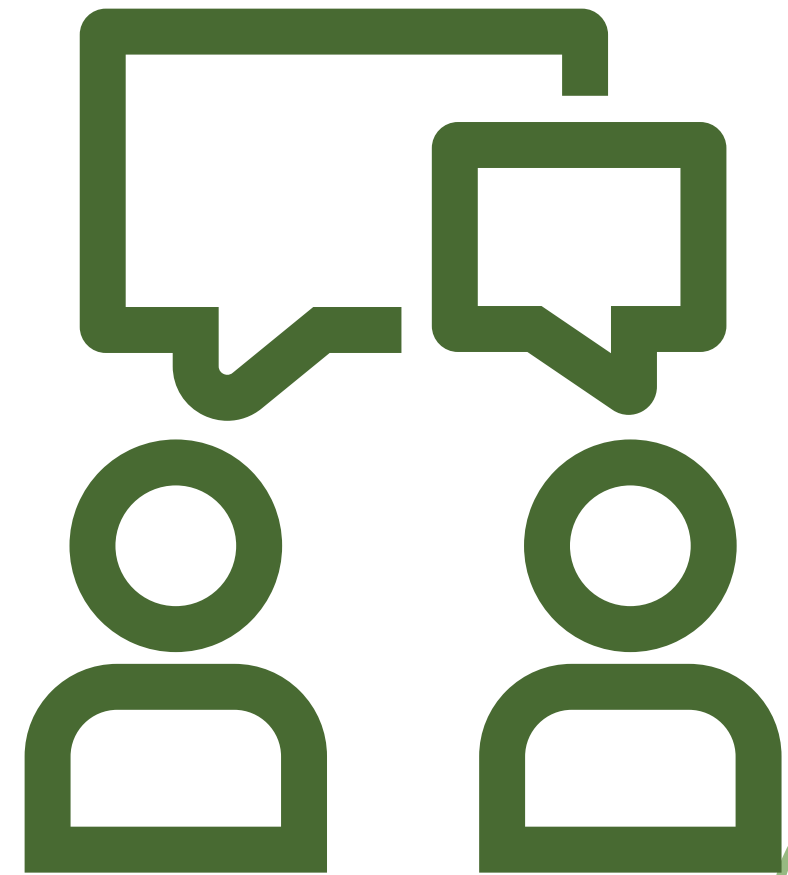
Change your Proximity

@coastalconnectionsot

SUPPORTIVE COMMUNICATION

It's not just the words you say, but the way you say them that makes a difference

- Acknowledge feelings
- Ask open questions to help identify underlying causes
- Offer Help
- Keep sentences short, simple and clear with a caring supportive tone and volume
- Deliver message at a speed the person can process



DEFENSIVE

Behavior that indicates that the child is responding to a real or perceived threat

Child behavior (defensive):

- Refusal
- Questioning
- Intimidation
- Release / venting

Adult response (Directive):

- Set clear, respectful limits.
- Avoid power struggles.
- Use calm, concise directions.
- Provide structure ("You can choose to cool down in your room or sit with me quietly").

Activity: Share phrases that escalate vs. de-escalate ("You never listen!" vs. "I want to hear you, let's take a pause.").

DEFENSIVE STRATEGIES

DEFENSIVE BEHAVIOR

INTIMIDATION: LANGUAGE OR BEHAVIOR THAT COMMUNICATES A THREAT

REFUSAL: ANYTHING THAT COMMUNICATES “NO”

INFORMATION SEEKING QUESTION: QUESTIONS THAT SEEK A GENUINE ANSWER

CHALLENGING QUESTION: A QUESTION THAT SEEKS TO CHALLENGE YOUR AUTHORITY

RELEASE: AN EMOTIONAL OUTBURST

ADULT RESPONSE

TAKE ALL THREATS SERIOUSLY, ASSESS THE LEVEL OF HARM

PROVIDE SAFE AND RESPECTFUL CHOICES AND POSSIBLE OUTCOMES

ANSWER THE QUESTION

STAY ON TOPIC, DOWNPLAY THE CHALLENGE

LISTEN

RISK BEHAVIOR

Child behavior (risk-taking):

- Hitting
- Biting
- Scratching
- Throwing
- Running away
- Breaking things
- Self injurious behavior

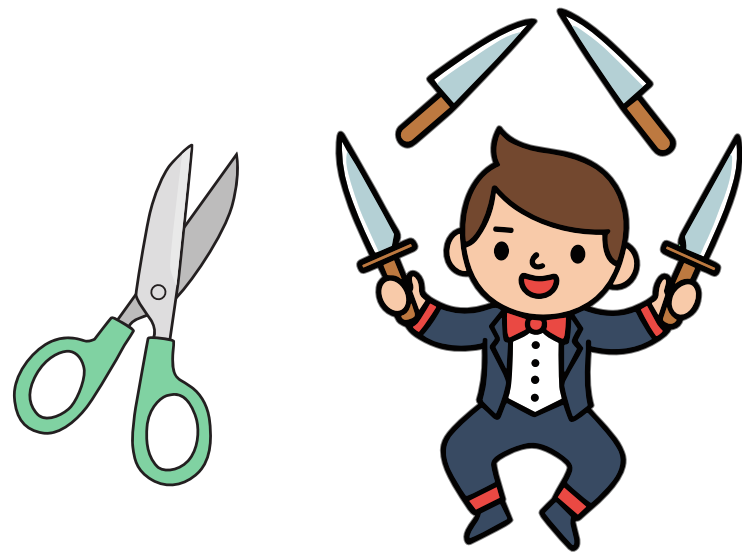
Adult response (Safety Interventions):

- Prioritize safety—remove siblings, dangerous items, or step back.
- Don't try to reason in the heat of crisis.
- Use minimal words and calm body language.
- Call for help if safety is at risk.

Parent reflection: What does safety look like in your home during these moments?

SAFETY INTERVENTIONS

Changing the environment to maximize safety and minimize harm



Remove potentially harmful objects



Clear pathways



Use soft objects to block strikes



Remove the audience



Call for help

TENSION REDUCTION

A decrease in physical and emotional energy, the child is returning to baseline.

Child behavior (tension reduction):

- Crying
- Exhaustion
- Withdrawal
- Apology attempts
- Preoccupation with consequences

Adult response (Therapeutic Rapport):

- Reconnect: show care and reassurance
- Reflect after calm: "What do you need next time?"
- Make a plan for next time
 - Getting at root causes to prevent future occurrences
 - Teach coping strategies (breathing, drawing, movement).
- Restorative Practices

THERAPEUTIC RAPPORT

Re-establish the relationship, reflect on the incident, and make a plan for the future

PRESENT

Provide support & Meet needs

Repair the relationship

Re-establish communication

Rebuild trust

PAST

Seek to understand

Reflect on behavior and consider the impact

Identify patterns and underlying causes

FUTURE

Create a plan for next time by collaborating and problem solving

Cultivate a sense of ownership and responsibility

THERAPEUTIC RAPPORT STRATEGIES

SUPPORT IN THE PRESENT

Meet needs first

Ask open-ended questions

Listen with empathy

Do not rush

Acknowledge feelings, show
care and concern

UNDERSTAND THE PAST

What happened?

Where and when did it
happen?

Who all was impacted?

What can we do to
repair any harm or
move on?

PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

What helps you feel calm?

What is not helpful?

What do you need or want
from me when you feel
stressed?

How much time do you need
before you are ready to talk?

QUICK GROUNDING STRATEGIES FOR PARENTS TO KEEP THEMSELVES CALM IN AN ESCALATED SITUATION

Breath-Based



Box breathing

Inhale 4 – hold 4 –
exhale 4 – hold 4



Long exhale

Breathe in through
your nose, exhale twice
as long (ex. in 5, out 6).
This signals safety to
your nervous system

Preventive Micro-Resets

- Keep water nearby – sipping water calms the body and helps regulate breathing.
- Take 3 deep breaths before responding – pause, breathe in slowly, exhale longer.
- Step away briefly (if safe) – even 30 seconds in another room can reset your nervous system.

Body-Based



Plant your feet

Feel your feet pressing
into the floor, wiggle
your toes



Progressive release

Tighten fists/shoulders
for 5 seconds, then
release. Repeat.



Drop your shoulders

Notice tension and
consciously relax them

Mind-Based



5-4-3-2-1 grounding

Name 5 things you see,
4 you feel, 3 you hear
2 you smell, 1 you taste



Mantra/affirmation

"I can stay calm."
"This moment will pass"



Zoom out

Remind yourself,
"This is a small moment
in a big picture."

Connection-Based



Gentle touch

Place your hand on your
heart or over your belly



Temperature reset

Hold a cool glass of
water, splash cold water
on your face, or use a
warm drink for soothing



“

WHEN LITTLE
PEOPLE ARE OVERWHELMED
BY BIG EMOTIONS, IT'S OUR
JOB TO SHARE OUR CALM
NOT JOIN THEIR CHAOS.

”

L.R KNOT

Q&A

INTENTIONAL CLOSE



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THANK
YOU