

"The path that leads will become the habitual condition of stress and the path of stress will become the habit and the condition that is the conflict."

When we think of stress and of conflict we immediately think of:

- Fight
- Flight
- Freeze
- Fawn
- Flight
- Fight
- Freeze

The Conflict Path



Evasion

- Avoidance
- Denial
- Withdrawal
- Flight
- Fight
- Freeze
- Fawn
- Flight
- Fight
- Freeze
- Fawn

Confrontation

- Negotiation
- Mediation
- Arbitration
- Litigation
- Trial
- Verdict
- Appeal
- Judgment
- Sentence
- Execution
- Death

Win

- Victory
- Triumph
- Success
- Achievement
- Reward
- Honor
- Glory
- Fame
- Wealth
- Power
- Influence



Training from Inside: How to Change the Conflict

When people sense conflict:

- Recognize
- React
- Role

It's difficult to move from roles to responses

How can we move?

Practical Steps to Minimize Conflict

- Collaboration
- Power Balance
- Joint Agenda/Agreement Creation
- Address and Normalize Tension
- Plan Your Escape/Neuroplasticity

Yes our brains are wired to sustain conflict. By understanding why the self and others are in conflict we can move towards a place of understanding.

neuroplasticity

window of tolerance

Flowers once again



- role**
- react**
- neurotic**

Using Neuroscience and Psychology to Make the Most of the Special Education Process

Some Applications and Benefits of the Special Education Identification and Assessment Process



What do you want?



Self-advocacy skills

Self-advocacy skills

Self-advocacy skills

What makes you?

Let's Liberate!



What are your goals?

What are your goals?

Thank You So Much

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Training Your Brain. How To Respond To Conflict



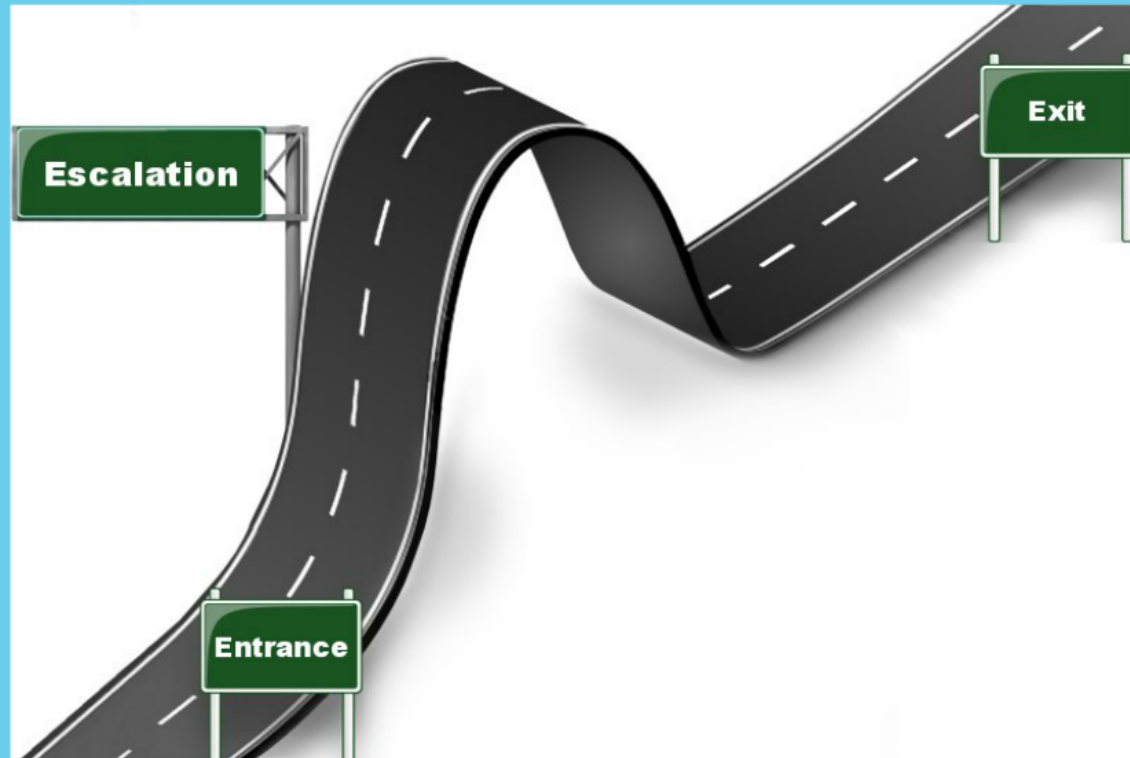
Whose responsibility is it to manage conflict throughout the special education system?

- **Psychologists**
- **Mediators**
- **Facilitators**
- **School Administrators**
- **Teachers**
- **Para Professionals**
- **Parents**

This portion of our training will focus on the biological mechanisms of stress and the effects of stress on the mind, body, behavior, and systems we work in.

Pick a conflict...

The Conflict Path



Entrance

Common Triggers

- Stress
- Unclear Roles
- Resource Scarcity
- Value-based Conflict

DailyRushbo



YouTube

Escalation

- Frustration
- Lack of Validation
- Feeling Attacked/Defensive
- Previous Negative Experiences
- Value-Based Conflict
- External Stressors

Exit

Common Exits to Conflict

- Feeling Safe
- Feeling Heard/Understood
- Winning
- Losing
- Collaborating

When people sense conflict:

- Recognize
- React
- Role

recognize

Trigger:
Value-Based

Instinctual
Physiological changes

react

Fight

Flight

Freeze

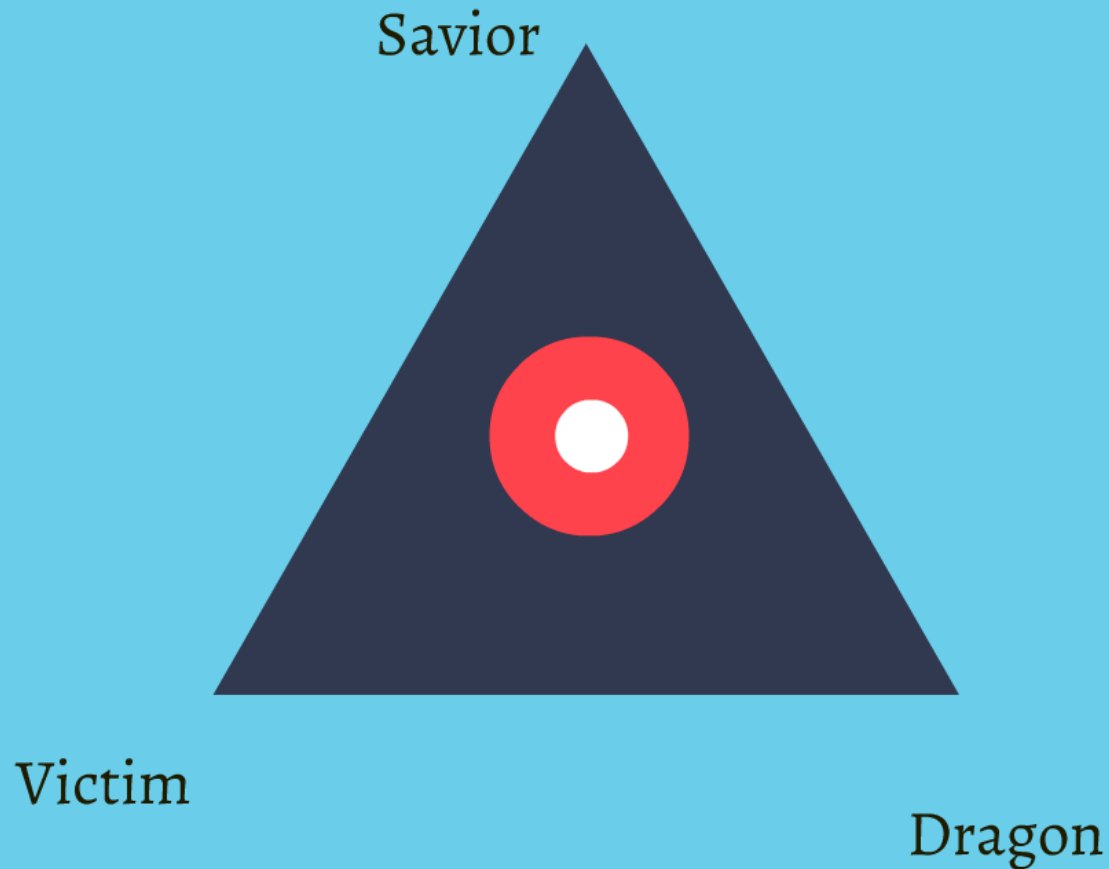
Escalation:

What's my part in this?



role

Exit:
How do I treat you?

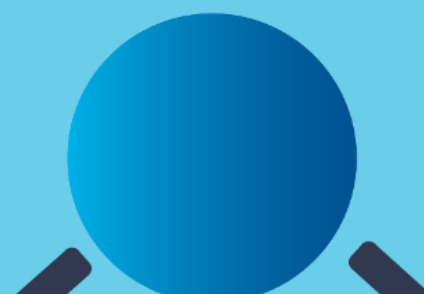


**It's difficult to
move from roles
to interests**

to
roles

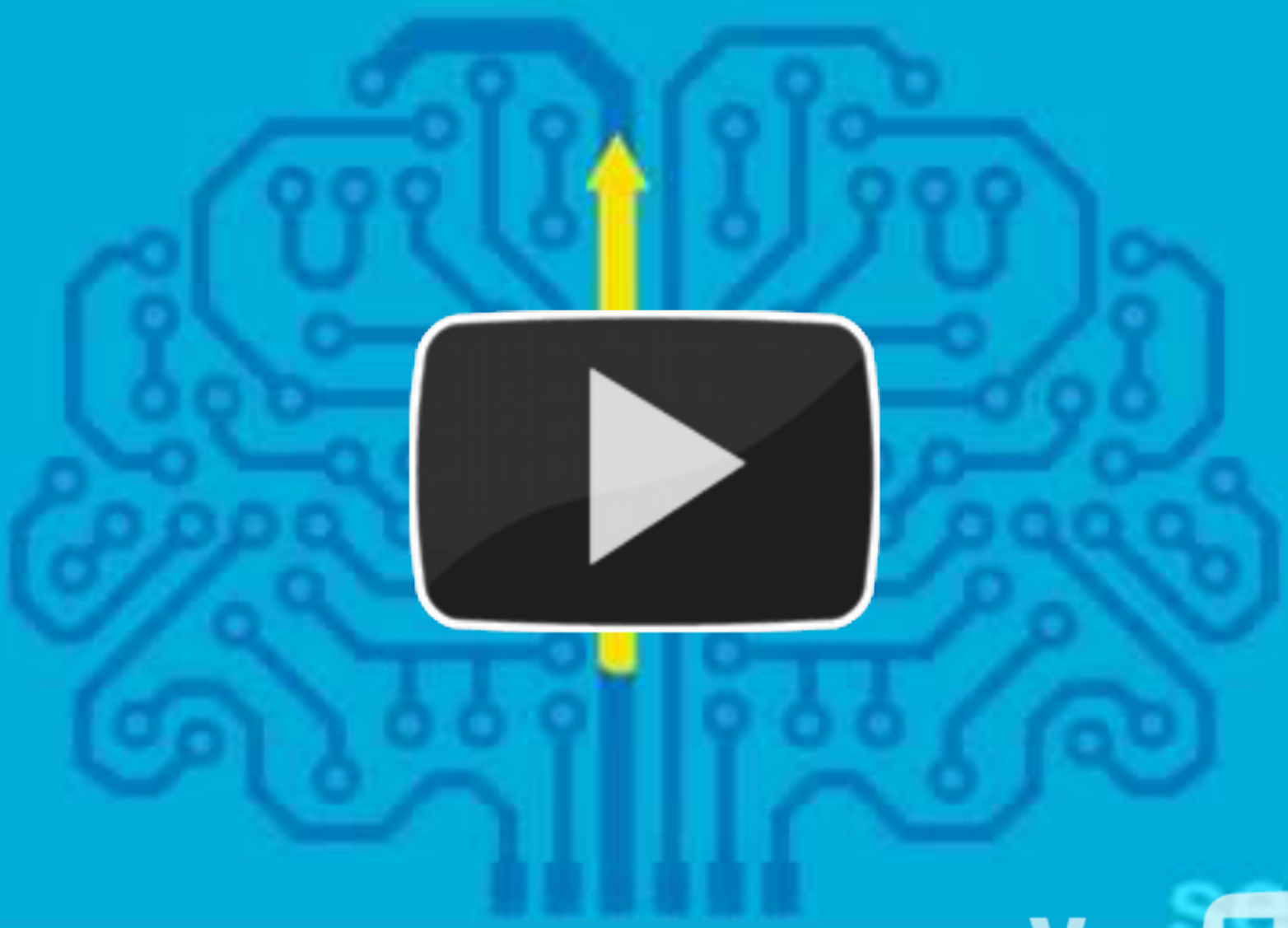


How can we move?





neuroplasticity



YouTube

window of tolerance



Pleasure over anger

Practical Steps to Minimize Conflict

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- **Address and Normalize Tension**
- **Plan Your Escape/neuroplasticity**

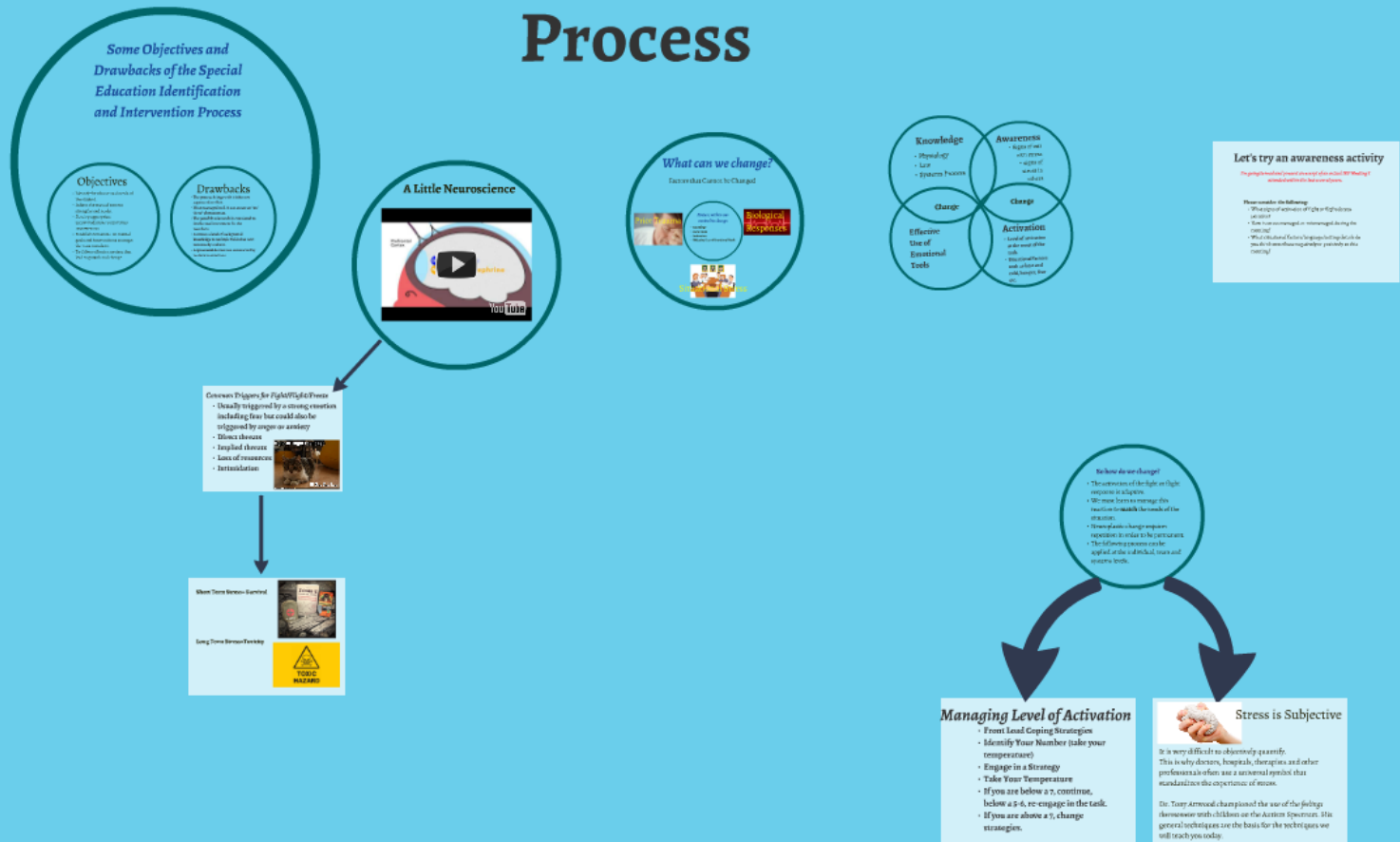
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• Plan Your Escape/neuroplasticity

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Using Neuroscience and Psychology to Make the Most of the Special Education Process

Pleasure over anger



Some Objectives and Drawbacks of the Special Education Identification and Intervention Process

Objectives

- Identify the educational needs of the student.
- Inform the team of current strengths and needs.
- Develop appropriate accommodations/treatments/interventions.
- Establish consensus on mutual goals and interventions amongst the team members.
- To deliver effective services that lead to growth and change.

Drawbacks

- The process brings with it inherent aspects of conflict.
- If not managed well, it can create an "us/ them" phenomenon.
- The possible mismatch in emotional vs. intellectual investment for the members.
- Assumes a level of background knowledge in multiple fields that isn't necessarily realistic.
- Aspirational desires are constricted by realistic restrictions

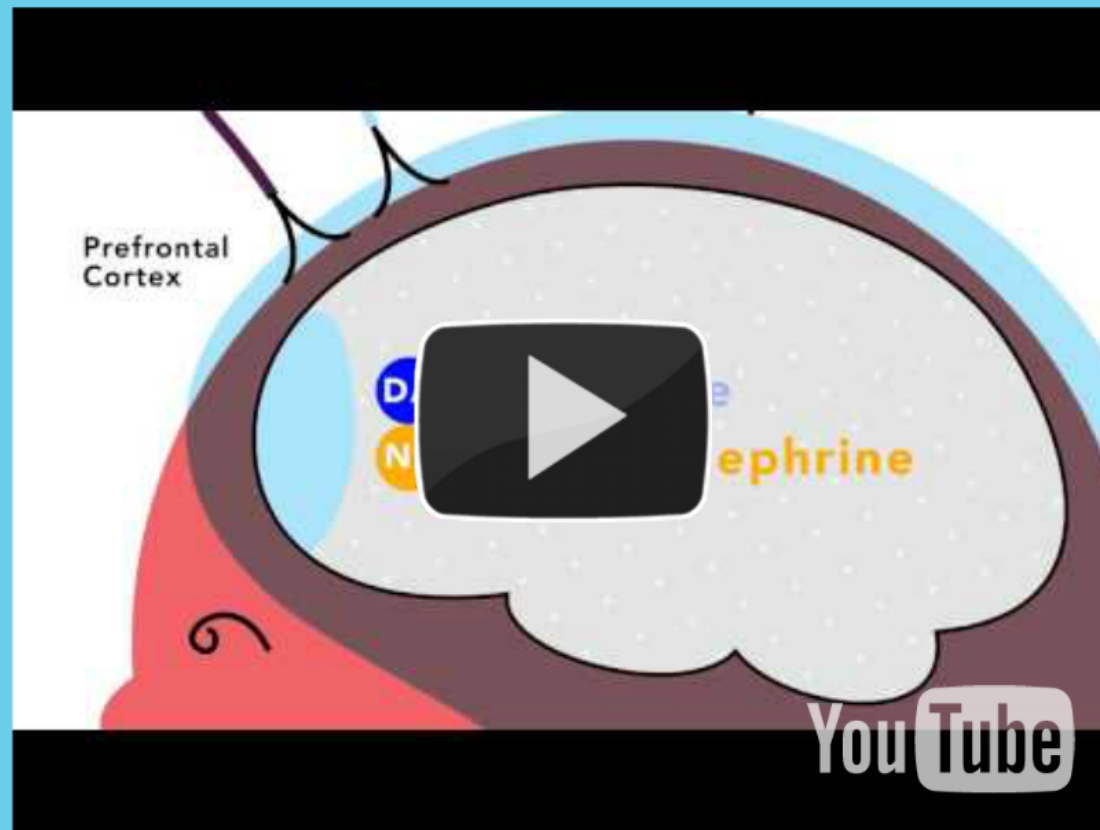
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A Little Neuroscience



Common Triggers for Fight/Flight/Freeze

- Usually triggered by a strong emotion including fear but could also be triggered by anger or anxiety
- Direct threats
- Implied threats
- Loss of resources
- Intimidation



Short Term Stress= Survival



Long Term Stress=Toxicity



What can we change?

Factors that Cannot be Changed



Factors within our control to change

- Knowledge
- Awareness
- Activation
- Effective Use of Emotional Tools



Biological Responses





Factors within our control to change

- **Knowlege**
- **Awareness**
- **Activation**
- **Effective Use of Emotional Tools**



Knowledge

- Physiology
- Law
- Systems Process

Awareness

- Signs of our own stress
- signs of stress in others

Change

Change

Effective Use of Emotional Tools

Activation

- Level of activation at the onset of the task.
- Situational factors such as heat and cold, hunger, fear etc.

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Change

So how do we change?

- The activation of the fight or flight response is adaptive.
- We must learn to manage this reaction to **match** the needs of the situation.
- Neuroplastic change requires repetition in order to be permanent.
- The following process can be applied at the individual, team and systems levels.

Stress is Subjective

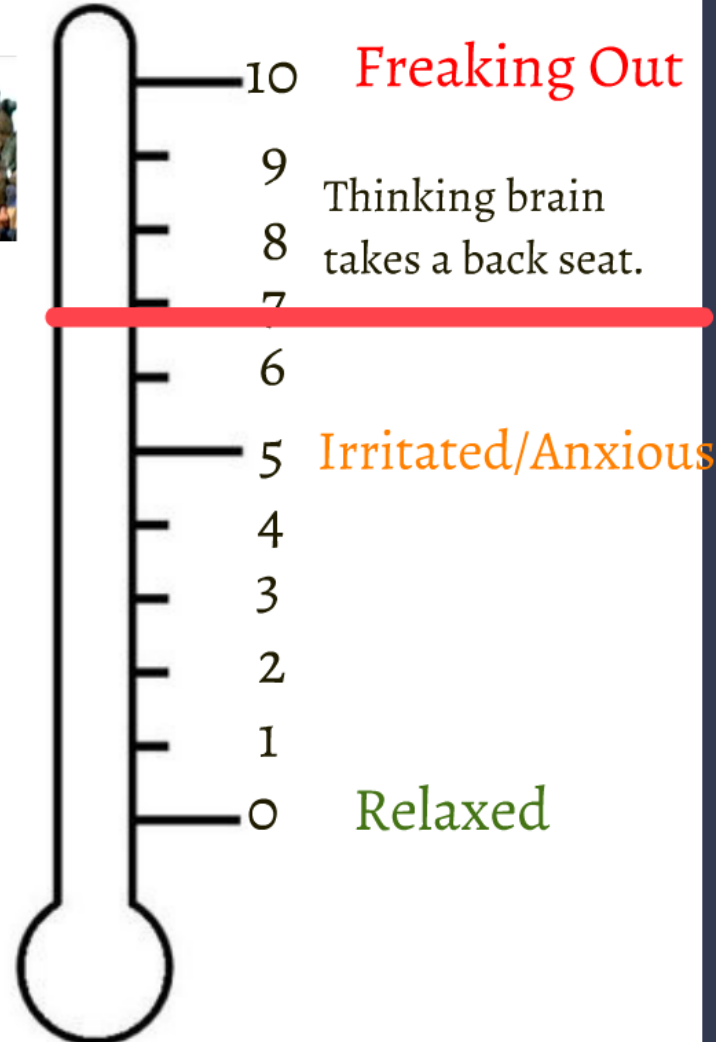


It is very difficult to objectively quantify.

This is why doctors, hospitals, therapists and other professionals often use a universal symbol that standardizes the experience of stress.

Dr. Tony Attwood championed the use of the *feelings thermometer* with children on the Autism Spectrum. His general techniques are the basis for the techniques we will teach you today.

thermometer



Managing Level of Activation

- **Front Load Coping Strategies**
- **Identify Your Number (take your temperature)**
- **Engage in a Strategy**
- **Take Your Temperature**
- **If you are below a 7, continue, below a 5-6, re-engage in the task.**
- **If you are above a 7, change strategies.**

Let's try an awareness activity

I'm going to read and present an excerpt of an actual IEP Meeting I attended within the last several years.

Please consider the following:

- What signs of activation of fight or flight do you perceive?
- How is stress managed or mismanaged during the meeting?
- What situational factors/language/setting details do you think contribute negatively or positively to this meeting?

The team calls in Ms. Smith and her sister who have been waiting in the front office for the meeting to begin. When they enter, they see 10 people sitting at the far end of a round table. They are greeted warmly and asked to sit. The care coordinator introduces herself and asks that the other professionals do the same. When it comes to Ms. Smith, she introduces her self as "just the mom". The team then shares the rights and responsibilities of the parents and hands them a copy of their rights in printed form. They pull up a partially completed IEP on the screen and begin discussing the findings from the assessment that were discussed at the last meeting.

Ms. Smith is listening quietly. When asked if she has any input or questions she says no. The team goes on to begin listing goals and objectives one by one. Ms. Smith shifts in her chair. Goals, objectives and services are now fully listed and the team asks Ms. Smith again if she has anything to offer or ask. She asks how the team is going to help her son who has autism learn how to use a bank account. The care coordinator reminds Ms. Smith that the IEP is about academic goals and also reminds the team that they are short on time. Ms. Smith disagrees that teaching her son how to use a bank account should not be on the IEP and asks why. The response from the team is that the goals have to match the identified needs from the assessment. Ms. Smith says that she has no idea what that means and that this meeting is a joke and storms out with her sister feeling angry and confused. The team is equally confused and has no idea what has happened.

Did You Notice?

- Setting factors
 - Where was everyone before the meeting?
 - When did the stress begin?
 - The tone was positive and supportive, why didn't the parent feel supported?
 - What opportunities were missed?
- The Power Seat
 - Team was inside together, parents outside. Parents come in to an already formed system and are identified as outsiders.
 - "Just the mom"
 - Unspoken factors influence stress. The power differential was potent in this meeting.
 - Team could have greeted the parents in the front office
 - Team could have used "us" language.
 - Team could have prepared the family better with knowledge of the system, limitations of the system and time expectations. Team could have noticed and commented on the rising tension.
 - you may have noticed other opportunities.

What happens when everyone goes home?



- Stress is a ghost, it can haunt you.
- Generalized or carryover stress can cause you to begin a new task at a higher "number" before any situational stressors exist.
- Chronic stress in work environments can lead to burnout and disconnection from the purpose of tasks.
- McEwen, 1998

**Signs of major stress in a parent/
child/professional that should be
directly addressed during the
Special Education Process**

- Body Language
- Tone
- Change in perspiration, heart rate etc.
- Decrease in questions and increase in directive statements
- Any others?

What we often forget

Parents

- Often have no idea how the system or the law work
- Are emotionally activated
- Have often been inappropriately prepped
- They know more about their child than anyone else ever will

Professionals

- Are constrained by the rules and regulations of their field
- Genuinely want to help
- Must follow a sequence of events during the special education process
- Possess specialized knowledge and skills that can add to the education of the child
- Have feelings and opinions about the process themselves

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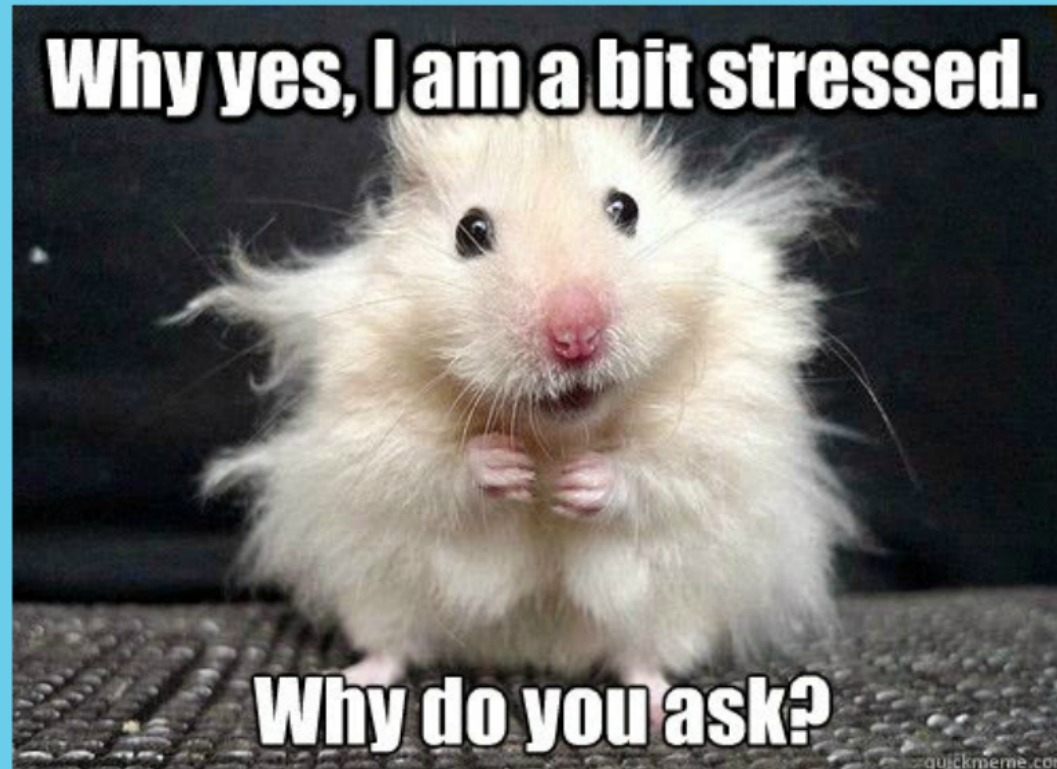
Let's talk turkey!

What can we do to minimize and manage conflict during the special education process?

- Setting
- Background knowledge
- Managing expectations
- Building awareness of signs of conflict
- Recognizing activation of fight or flight
- Using emotional tools Keeping the goal in mind
- Use a facilitator/ mediator/advocate



What tools are you using to lower the "temperature"?



Ideas from previous groups:

- Moving--taking time to stretch, yawn, etc.
- Discuss something good--about student, week, etc.
- Bring in video of kids
- Communication training for teachers/staff
- Evening info session for parents about process
- **Be brave enough to acknowledge tension**
- Thermometer of feelings in the room
- Acknowledge frustration
- Recalibration--putting your stress in perspective
- Telling the family story
-

Where are the Facilitators and Mediators?

FREE!

**ADVERTISING
FOR YOU!**

Benefits of Facilitation and Mediation in Special Education

- **Improves relationships**
- **Models appropriate communication**
- **Clarifies messages**
- **Provides opportunities to resolve conflicts
in the moment**
- **Identifies previously unknown options**
- **Typically lower general stress than regular
meetings**
- **Supports follow through**

Thank You So Much

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