

# Befriending Stress: A Neurological Perspective Q&A



- 1. Does COVID 19 isolation create more problems for children regarding their nervous systems?**

No. It depends entirely upon the way the primary caregivers respond to COVID 19. If they are stressed and it REFLECTS in their interactions with the children in their care, it will dysregulate the children.
- 2. Can all of this information be applied to adults as well?**

Yes- It's just important for the person interacting with the adult to be aware of their own self-regulation. For example, if the service provider is raising their voice, it means they are in the 'defensive mode' and may need to do some deep breathing to shift to the 'engaged mode'.
- 3. It looks like the neocortex is bigger than the other parts in the picture on your slide. When one part dominates the others does it look bigger?**

I'm not sure if size dictates the ability to regulate (I'm assuming that's what you mean by dominate). However, the neocortex has many more functions other than regulating the fear response.
- 4. Can engaging the 5 senses be useful for someone dissociating, which is an extreme example of trauma reaction of the connection between the amygdala and the prefrontal cortex impaired by trauma?**

It is useful in priming the brain to be more receptive to intervention. However, it is a small but effective piece in a comprehensive treatment model that involves trauma treatment, etc..
- 5. Are adults who have not had the caregiver experience of co-regulation able to develop their amygdala after their brain stops developing or are they always going to have to rely on others to co-regulate?**

They could be neurotypical adults who did not have good caregiving then they will not be able to co-regulate with a child and can learn to do this. However, if it is an adult with special needs, then they would need to rely on others to co-regulate.

It really depends on their developmental level. If their developmental level is below 13, they will depend on their primary caregiver to help them make the shift emotionally. If they are taught to make that shift- it is possible to teach them this skill- they can then learn mindfulness to regulate.

Neurotypical children who have learnt to cope and function by using their defensive neural pathways- grow up to be adults who tend to be defensive and feel it's the child's fault. They don't recognise that they are using their defensive neural circuit because they don't know the signs of a defensive state.

Most providers and caregivers follow their core beliefs and expectations, however if they learn to recognise their neurological states and are aware of how they can shift to an engaged state from a defensive state- they can help any individual- adult or child.

**6. If one is dealing with a trauma and another traumatic event is added to the current trauma, resulting in feeling completely numb: can this be considered Primitive parasympathetic?**

When someone is experiencing trauma, they are usually in the red zone. It really depends on the manifestations- are they withdrawn, isolating (red zone or primitive parasympathetic).

**7. What is the most helpful for kids to stay or get into the green zone, aside from helping them feel safe? Or, do we need to really practice safety differently? Kids may say they feel safe but they really don't?**

Safety means different things to different people. The acronym BRAVING is a way of checking if you are incorporating the strategies that spell out safety- especially for someone who has emotional challenges. Making a child feel safe is paramount.

**8. Do you know if low levels of oxytocin is connected with post-partum depression and babies' stress levels?**

I'm not sure. It may explain poor bonding between mother and infant but I'm not sure.

**9. How can we help build co-regulation with caregivers and children?**

Teaching caregivers how to respond to children (verbally, non verbally and with body language and tone of voice).

You can go back to the **BRAVING** acronym, which consist of co-regulation tips

**B**oundaries and Breathing

**R**outines (Predictability)

**A**ction plan with clarity of next steps and people responsible/accountable.

**V**isual props/**V**erbal Behavior

**I**ndependence and Instructional Control

**N**eural regulation

**G**oal selection

**10. Where can I read up more on the zones? I found it very helpful.**

You can look up Polyvagal Theory. Here are a few resources:

- <https://ct.counseling.org/2016/06/polyvagal-theory-practice/>
- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3108032/>
- <https://www.stephenporges.com/>
- <https://www.rhythmofregulation.com/>

[The Polyvagal Theory](#)