



# Attending to the Safety of Children

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*June 23rd from 12-1:30*



# Webinar Information

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Chat

- All are muted. Chat your questions to “ALL PANELISTS” throughout the webinar
- Links to resources will be posted in the chat box or will be at the end of the presentation in a slide
- Please complete the survey following the webinar
- Slides, recording, and resources will be posted on the CTAC website [www.ctacny.org](http://www.ctacny.org)
- Thank you to all of you, who are essential workers during this pandemic!

# Today, we will cover:

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- ▶ An overview of child abuse and neglect during the pandemic
- ▶ The impact of the pandemic on child abuse and neglect
- ▶ How to protect children
- ▶ Safety planning
- ▶ Intervention strategies with parents
- ▶ Mental health providers' experiences
- ▶ Resources

# An Overview of Child Abuse and Neglect During this Pandemic

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# Scope of the Issue

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65,000

1 in 4

96

# The Impact of the Pandemic on Child Abuse And Neglect

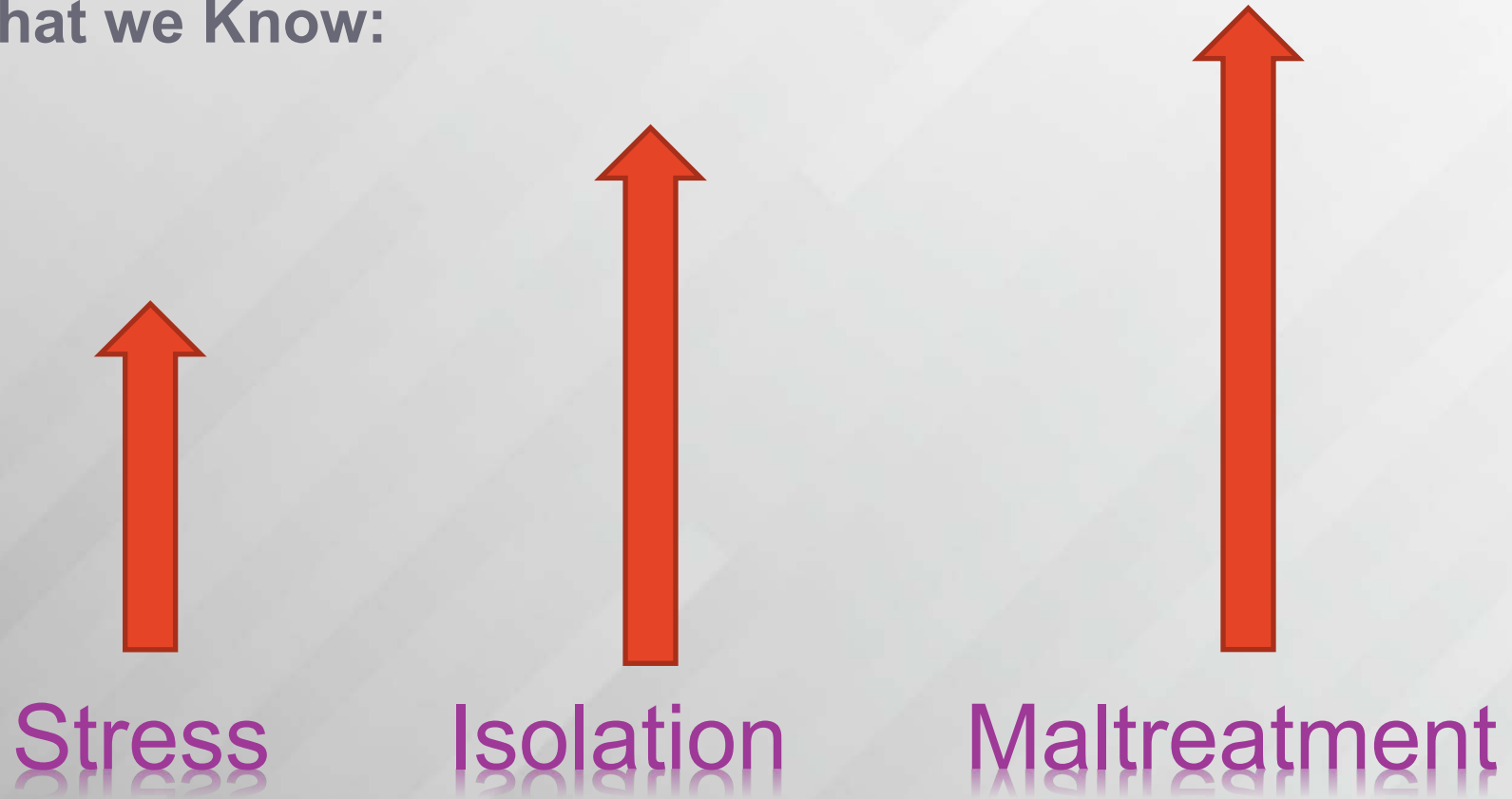
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- ▶ With kids stuck at home, ER doctors see more severe cases of child abuse - *Washington Post*
- ▶ Child Sexual Abuse Reports Are On The Rise Amid Lockdown Orders - *NPR*
- ▶ Divorce during coronavirus: Will splits soar after pandemic quarantines end - *USA TODAY*

# The Impact of the Pandemic on Child Abuse And Neglect

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What we Know:



# Co-occurring Issues

## The Pair of ACEs

### Adverse Childhood Experiences

Maternal  
Depression

Physical &  
Emotional Neglect

Emotional &  
Sexual Abuse

Divorce

Substance  
Abuse

Mental Illness

Domestic Violence

Homelessness

Incarceration

### Adverse Community Environments

Poverty

Violence

Discrimination

Poor Housing  
Quality &  
Affordability

Community  
Disruption

Lack of Opportunity, Economic  
Mobility & Social Capital

Ellis W. & Dietz W. BCR Framework. *Academic Peds* (2017).



# Your ACE Assets

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Remember at time when you faced a difficult experience.

What did you gain?



# How do We Best Protect Children?

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- ▶ **What is the same?**
- ▶ **What is different?**
- ▶ **What have we gained?**
- ▶ **Families without online access?**
- ▶ **What are the long-range changes?**
- ▶ **How will the system change?**

# What Works - Relationship

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- ▶ Increasing skills of parents
- ▶ Reducing social isolation
- ▶ Increasing community knowledge
- ▶ Reducing stress of parents



# What Works - Planning

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- ▶ **Strategies**
- ▶ **Partnerships**
- ▶ **Evaluation**



# Let's Chat

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What are your experiences?



# Safety Planning

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# Confidential Space to Assess

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- ▶ **Assess Privacy**
  - Who else is in the room or home
  - Can they go somewhere to talk privately
    - Bathroom
    - Closet
    - Garage
    - Yard
    - Put on headset/ear buds
- ▶ **Always ask if this is a good time to talk**
- ▶ **Develop signal or safety word**

# With Children or Adult Victims

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- How to call 911 in an emergency
- Names and phone numbers of trusted relatives, neighbors, or friends they can call or go to for help, day or night
- Hiding places/safe spaces and exits in the home
- To stay out of the middle of their parents' fights or arguments
- An agreed upon safety word, phrase, or gesture that can be used in times of danger to signal the use of safety steps with non-abusive household members or supportive individuals



# Assessing Stress in the Home

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- ▶ **Financial Stress**
- ▶ **Vocational/work stress**
- ▶ **Childcare/schooling**
- ▶ **Social Supports/Isolation**
- ▶ **How are they sleeping**
- ▶ **How are they eating?**
- ▶ **How is their mood (depressed, anxious, irritable, angry)**
- ▶ **How is everyone getting along at home?**
- ▶ **What are they doing to relieve stress?**

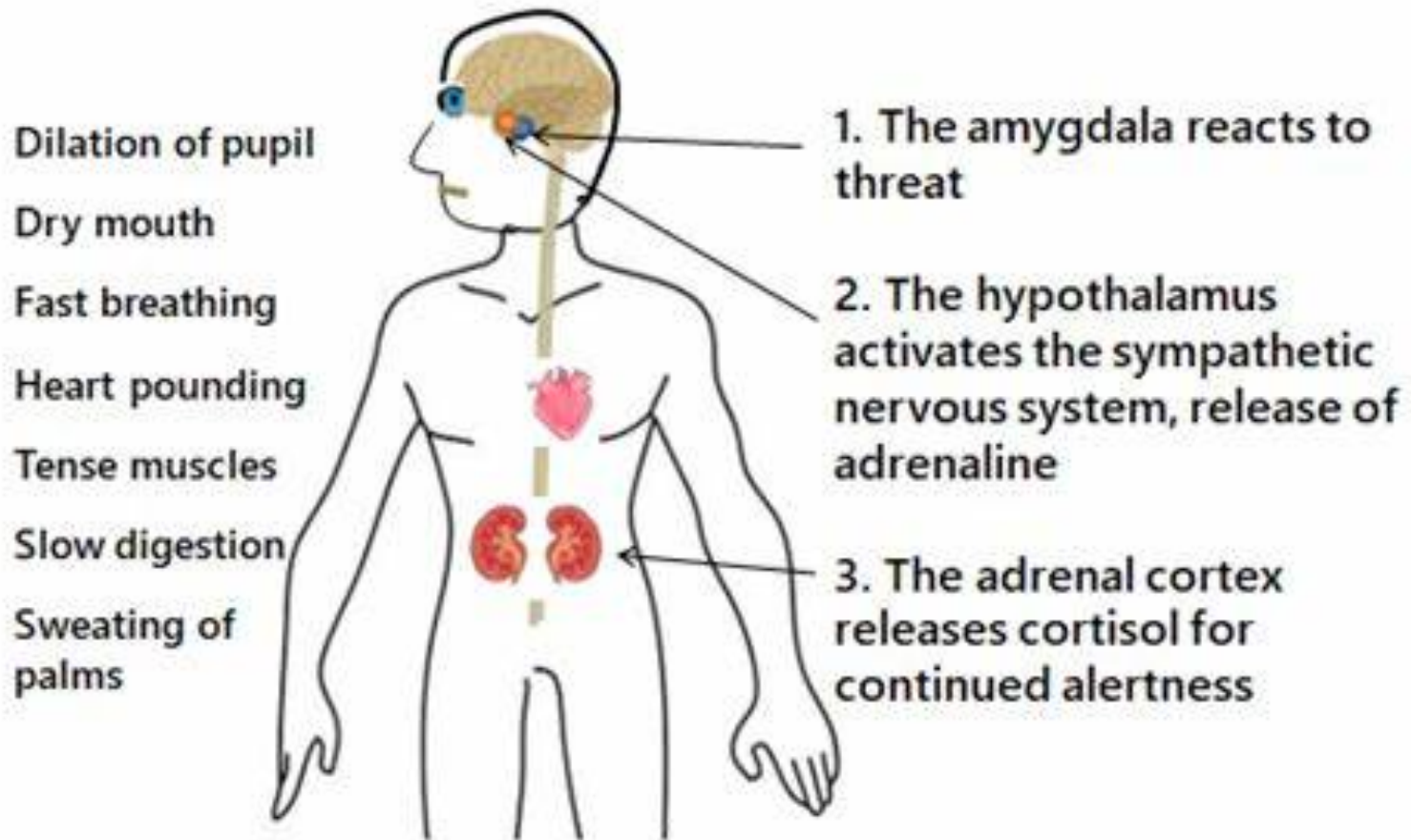
# Intervention Strategies with Parents and Caregivers

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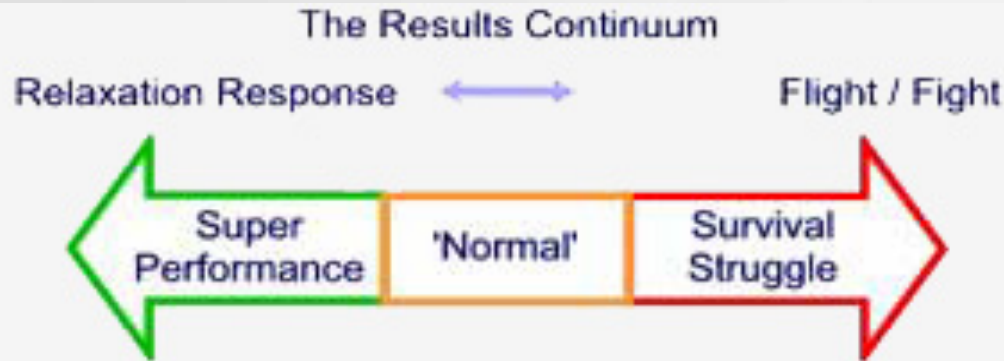
- ▶ **The best way to keep children safe, is to intervene with parents by:**
  - Assessing their stress
  - Giving them coping strategies
  - Connecting them with support

# Stress Triggers our Fight, Flight, Freeze Response

## The fight or flight response



# Stress Reactivity Continuum



## PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

- Reduced heart rate
- Lower blood pressure
- Relaxed muscles
- Increased brain oxygen
- Increased heart rate
- Increase in blood sugar
- Blood to peripherals
- Rapid breathing

## EFFECTS

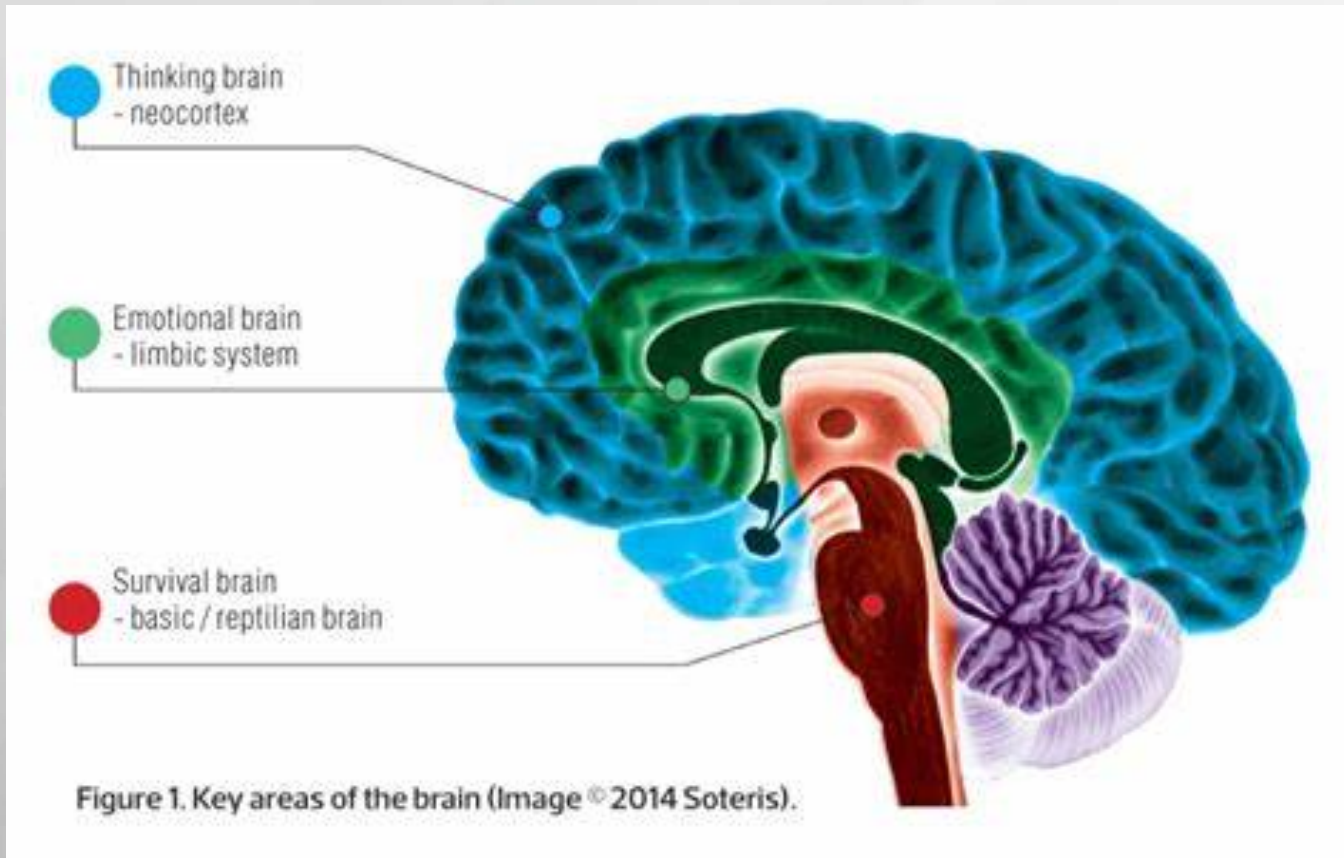
- Creativity
- Low stress
- Receptivity
- Learning
- Poor communication
- High stress
- Aggression
- Poor focus / retention

# Stress Response Impacts Parents

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- ▶ **Thinking**
  - Ability to think clearly and make decisions
  - Perceptions of others intentions
- ▶ **Feeling**
  - Anxiety, Depression, Anger, numbness
- ▶ **Behavior**
  - Aggression, Irritability, Reactive to children in other situations

# Neurobiology of Emotion Regulation



# Impacts on Thinking

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- ▶ You **STOP** thinking clearly or at all-you **REACT**
- ▶ Your perceptions are not clear
- ▶ Make irrational decisions

# Impact on Emotions

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- ▶ Reduces ability to understand feelings or identify emotions clearly
- ▶ Can blunt OR exaggerate emotions
- ▶ Increase anxiety, sadness or anger



# Impact on Behavior

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- ▶ Reactive
- ▶ Irritable
- ▶ Hostile
- ▶ Aggressive
- ▶ Irrational
- ▶ Withdrawn
- ▶ Substance use



**Child  
Abuse/Domestic  
Violence**

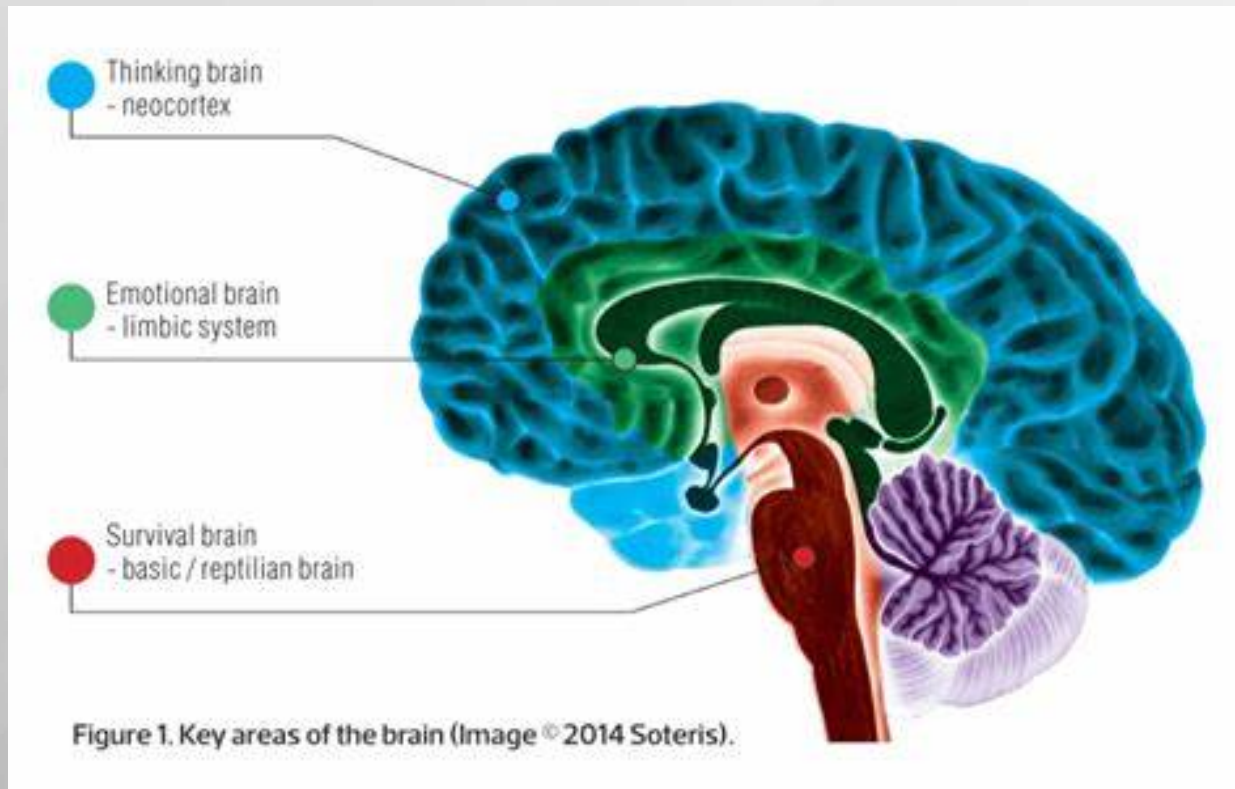
# Case Example

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- ▶ 9 year old girl reports to her therapist that her mother has been increasingly reactive. She is yelling at small things, putting her down and punishing her all the time. Child's anxiety and depression is increasing during stay at home.
- ▶ Therapist sets up a session with mother and assesses mother's stress level
- ▶ Learns mother is under high levels of continuous stress and anxiety, not sleeping
- ▶ Therapist engages mother planning coping/stress reduction strategies
- ▶ Ways she can reduce tension and yelling in the house with the kids

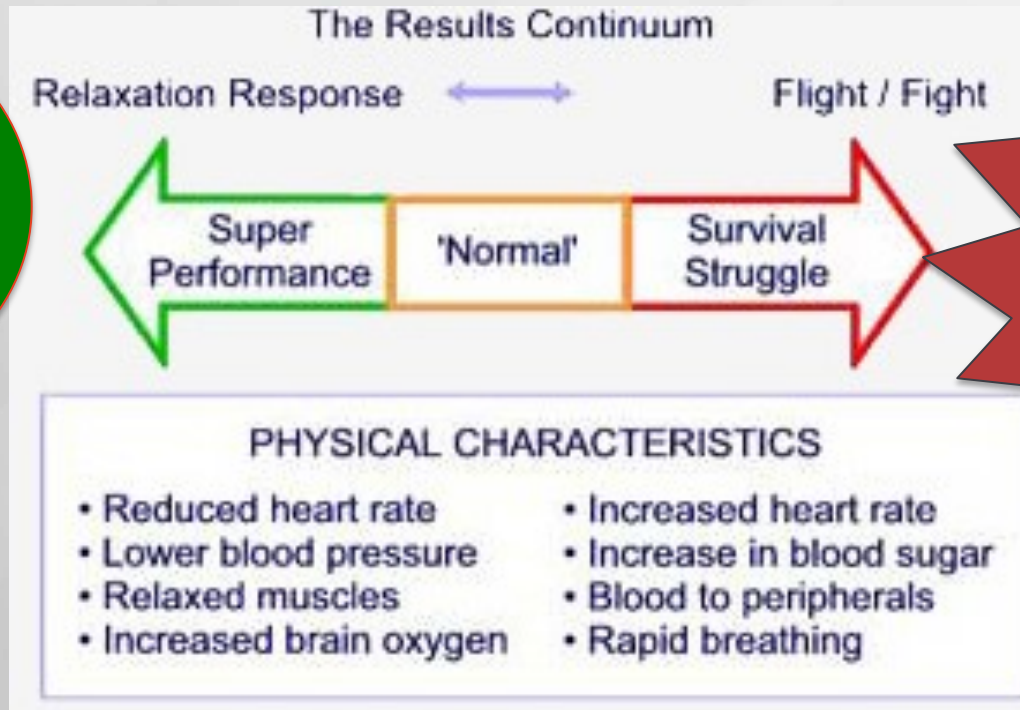
# How Can Parents Get Their Brain Back Online?

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# How Do Parents Get Back in the Drivers Seat?

Parasympathetic  
Nervous  
System



Sympathetic  
Nervous  
System

# Breathing is KEY

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- ▶ **Controlled Diaphragmatic Breathing can bring your Parasympathetic (RELAXATION) Nervous System back on-line.**
  - Breathe in through your nose
  - Take the breath all the way into your stomach NOT chest breaths
  - Hold
  - Breathe out through your mouth for longer then you breathe in

# How does relaxing help?

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- ▶ It brings **THINKING BRAIN** back on-line
- ▶ Makes us feel in control of our physical body
- ▶ Helps us get control of our emotions and reactions

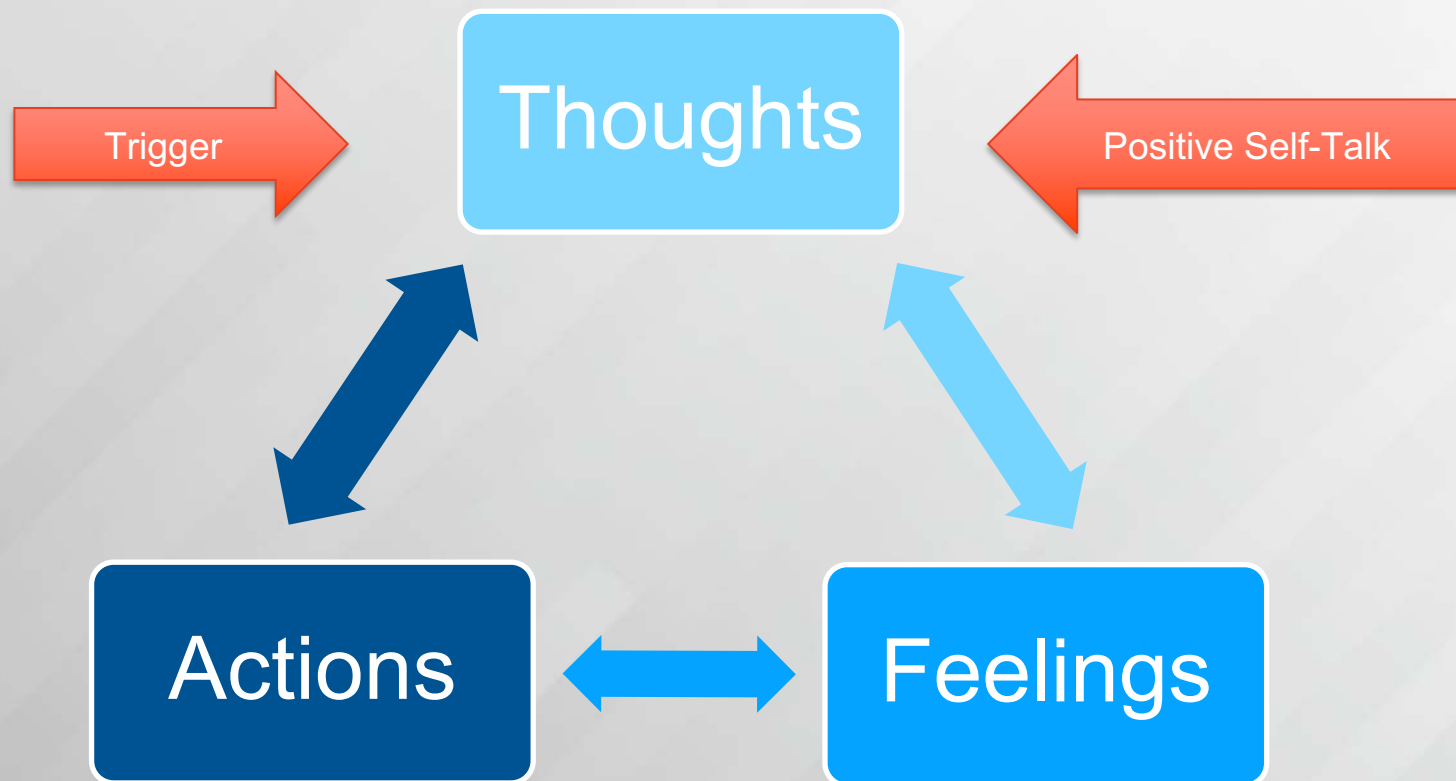
# How is Thinking Impacted by Stress?

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- ▶ **Distorted Thinking**
- ▶ **Self-blame**
- ▶ **Changed world view**
- ▶ **Helplessness**

# How Can Thinking Be Changed?

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# How is Behavior Impacted?

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- ▶ **Irritability**
- ▶ **Aggression**
- ▶ **Reactivity**
- ▶ **Withdrawal**
- ▶ **Substance Use**

# How Can Parents Interrupt Their Behavior?

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## Taking Space

- ▶ **Explain what you are doing quickly and calmly. This should include:**
  - Where you are going
  - When you will return.
- ▶ **State that you will return to the topic later when you are both calm.**
- ▶ **“I’m going to go into the backyard to calm down. I’ll be back in 15 minutes. We can talk about this more then.”**
- ▶ **Exit the room quickly and use the time to calm down using coping strategies**
  - Taking a walk
  - Do deep breathing, guided imagery or other relaxation techniques
  - Try to think about the situation from a child’s developmental perspective

# Taking Space is NOT

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- ▶ **Storming out without saying where you are going or when you will return**
- ▶ **An opportunity or excuse to go out with friends, go drinking, etc.**
- ▶ **Staying out for many hours**
- ▶ **Using the time to come up with a list of complaints/attacks**
- ▶ **Returning and ignoring the problem/acting as if nothing happened**

# Additional Strategies for Parents to Manage Their Emotional Arousal

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- ▶ **Mindfulness Techniques**
  - Grounding techniques that engage the senses
  - Coloring, diamond art
- ▶ **Exercise is a natural mood booster and way to expel agitation, irritability and aggression**
  - Running or other cardio vascular exercise
  - Weight-lifting
  - Push ups, sit-ups etc.

# What if Working with Parents Isn't Possible or Helpful?

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- ▶ Engage youth directly in safety planning
- ▶ Help teens understand ways to de-escalate rather than escalate an interaction
- ▶ What coping strategies can the teen use to combat verbal/psychological abuse
  - Positive self talk
  - Talking to other supportive individuals
  - Focusing on their strengths/things they are good at
- ▶ Removing themselves from the situation

# Case Example: Kim

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- ▶ **Kim-15 year old who has been engaged in TF-CBT due PTSD related to cyber grooming and sexual abuse several years ago. Mother wanted her to receive treatment, but was hesitant to engage in parallel parent sessions or joint family sessions. She has her own sexual abuse history.**
- ▶ **Following switch to telehealth and stay at home, mother has been increasingly stressed due to financial difficulties. Clinician was hearing from the teen that mother was becoming verbally abusive to Kim, blaming her for her abuse and PTSD symptoms and putting her down. Despite clinician outreach, mother will not return calls to speak with clinician or set up a session.**

# Clinician Safety

## Planning/Intervention with Kim

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- ▶ **Direct discussion of how to keep herself safe from her mother's verbal attacks**
  - Disengagement-where she can go in the house
- ▶ **Psychoeducation and processing of who is at fault for sexual abuse**
- ▶ **Psychoeducation about trauma symptoms and normalizing her symptoms based on her sexual abuse experience**
- ▶ **Plan for positive self-talk messages Kim can say to herself**
- ▶ **Plan for outreach to her grandmother by phone to provide support**
- ▶ **Close friends she can call**

# The Impact on Providers' Experiences

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- ▶ Worry about clients
- ▶ Inability to see clients face to face
- ▶ Difficulties with telehealth
  - Technology problems
  - Confidentiality
- ▶ Concerns about how system is responding and protecting families right now
- ▶ Feeling burden of being only support system for families
- ▶ Fatigue/burn-out



# Vicarious Trauma

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- ▶ **Emotional:** feeling anxious, sad, irritable, angry, numb, edgy
- ▶ **Thoughts:** jaded view of the world, cynicism, and negativity. Hard to stop worrying about the individual who has experienced trauma even after work is over. No longer feeling a sense of purpose in your job
- ▶ **Physiological:** headaches, stomach pain, exhaustion
- ▶ **Behavioral:** isolating or disconnecting from others, substance misuse, change in eating habits, engaging in risky behavior, difficulty sleeping, procrastinating, struggling with concentration, decision making, and memory

# Self-Care

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- ▶ Self-care is crucial now
- ▶ Build in screen breaks-stretch
- ▶ Schedule breaks to take walks, get exercise
- ▶ Supportive/reflective supervision
- ▶ Support from peers/colleagues
- ▶ Relaxation strategies to reduce stress level
- ▶ Get enough sleep
- ▶ Good nutrition
- ▶ Take vacation days/time off
- ▶ Seek your own treatment to address vicarious trauma

# Resources

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- ▶ [Emotional Support Line - https://omh.ny.gov](https://omh.ny.gov)
- ▶ [Clinical Support - https://childmind.org](https://childmind.org)
- ▶ [Parent support –](#)
- ▶ [Ace Connection https://www.acesconnection.com/blog/love-in-the-time-of-coronavirus-hope-informed-thoughts-for-parents?eType=EmailBlastContent&eld=24aee5c8-d53c-4449-a882-ce5bdd49c7fd](https://www.acesconnection.com/blog/love-in-the-time-of-coronavirus-hope-informed-thoughts-for-parents?eType=EmailBlastContent&eld=24aee5c8-d53c-4449-a882-ce5bdd49c7fd)
- ▶ [PCANY https://www.preventchildabuse.org/covid-19-resources-and-response](https://www.preventchildabuse.org/covid-19-resources-and-response)
- ▶ [www.nctsn.org](http://www.nctsn.org)

# Q&A

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- ▶ **Chat in your questions to “ALL PANELISTS” in the chat box!**
- ▶ **If you do not see the chat box, click in the center of the screen and click on the chat bubble icon.**

# Thank you!

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If you have questions about CTAC, please contact  
[ctac.info@nyu.edu](mailto:ctac.info@nyu.edu)

Please take a moment to fill out the Feedback Survey  
as you exit the webinar.

# Upcoming CTAC Events

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**Coping with Crisis During COVID-19 Pt 5:  
Providers Report: Sharing Experiences From the Field**  
Wednesday, July 8th: 12-1 PM