

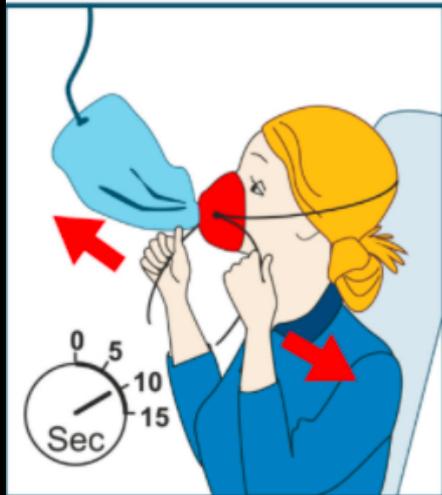
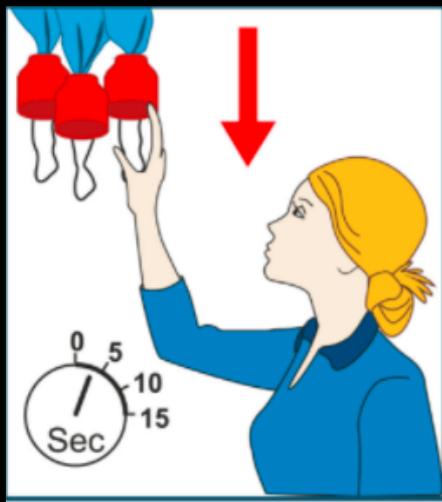
# Understanding (Challenging) Behaviour

Gavin Cass

# THE OXYGEN MASK

## PRINCIPLE

**YOU MUST TAKE  
CARE OF YOURSELF  
BEFORE YOU CAN DO  
ANYTHING FOR  
ANYONE ELSE.**



**It always seems  
impossible until it's done.**

Nelson Mandela

# Confirming a Value Base

*Important personal values  
that a staff  
member should possess!*

**What does a safe environment  
look and feel like to you?**

# **Acceptable and Unacceptable Behaviour**

What common circumstances do  
our children experience?

# YOUR Self Regulation...

**‘What’s the weather like in your head?’**

Ruby Wax



When children can't read... we teach them.

When children can't write...we guide them.

When children can't self regulate and handle big emotions...they get punished!

We need to look beyond the behaviour.

Not all children learn in conventional ways or in conventional settings.

We don't know all the answers and never will. There is no magic wand.

Key element is a process of enquiry.

Part of our role is to discover

Our job to find out. Walk and Talk. Investigate and Discover

## Secure Attachment

Securely attached children are more likely to:-

Better problem solvers

More curious

Have higher academic achievement

Co-operate and Self Regulate

More self aware

## Non - Negotiables

- **Research** the pupils you are working with
- **Know** the pupils
- **Know** school policy
- **Be confident**
- **Be firm/fair and consistent**
- **Follow up!**

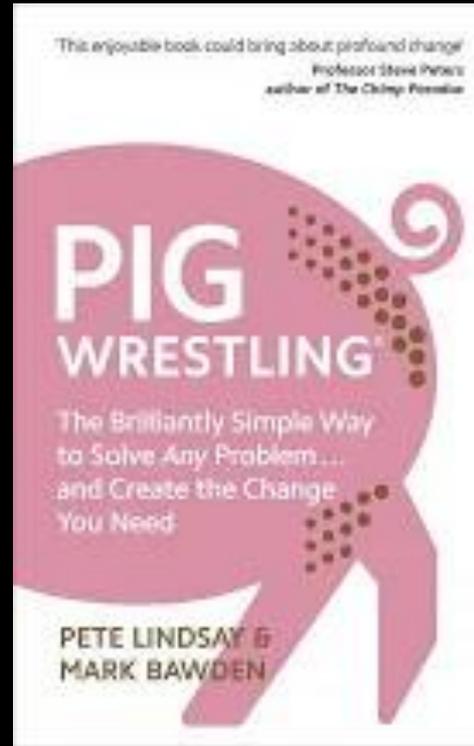
# Common Triggers

- Negative interaction with an **adult**
- Negative interaction with a **peer**
- **Change** in schedule or activity
- **Disappointment**, expectations unmet
- High rate of failure on a task
- Confusion about a task
- Low preference activities
- Being told no, or being denied something
- Environment variables: lighting, noise level, seating arrangement
- Medication changes
- Unmet physical needs: hunger, thirst, sleep
- Anxiety about school or activities
- Negative events at home: arguments with parents or siblings, divorce, new sibling, moving

# Reframing

## Rats in Hanoi

## Amsterdam airport



**What got you here, won't get  
you there!**

Goldsmith

*Rarely have I met someone, be it an adult or a child, who's behaviour didn't make complete sense when the context came to light. We just have to make sure we are shining the light in the right places.'*

M Armiger



If our children could articulate  
their experiences, thoughts &  
worries, what would they say?

**When I think of “.....” at my school...**

**1. Who's it for?**

**2. What's it for?**

**3. How am I feeling about solving this problem?**

Every behaviour is a form of communication.  
It is our job to work out what they are telling  
us.

We might not remember the trauma but a  
trigger such as a smell or a sound can set us  
off.

The body keeps the score

Bessel van der Kolk.

1. Rigorous Relentless Routines'
2. Silence is your friend
3. Condemn the **action** not the child
4. Be mindful of your voice and body language
5. (Move around; accessibility)
6. Remain detached from situation
7. Remove audience pressure
8. Build up your 'tokens'
9. Model- every expectation
10. Treat everybody fairly

# Brain Development

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ij-yplYtMs>

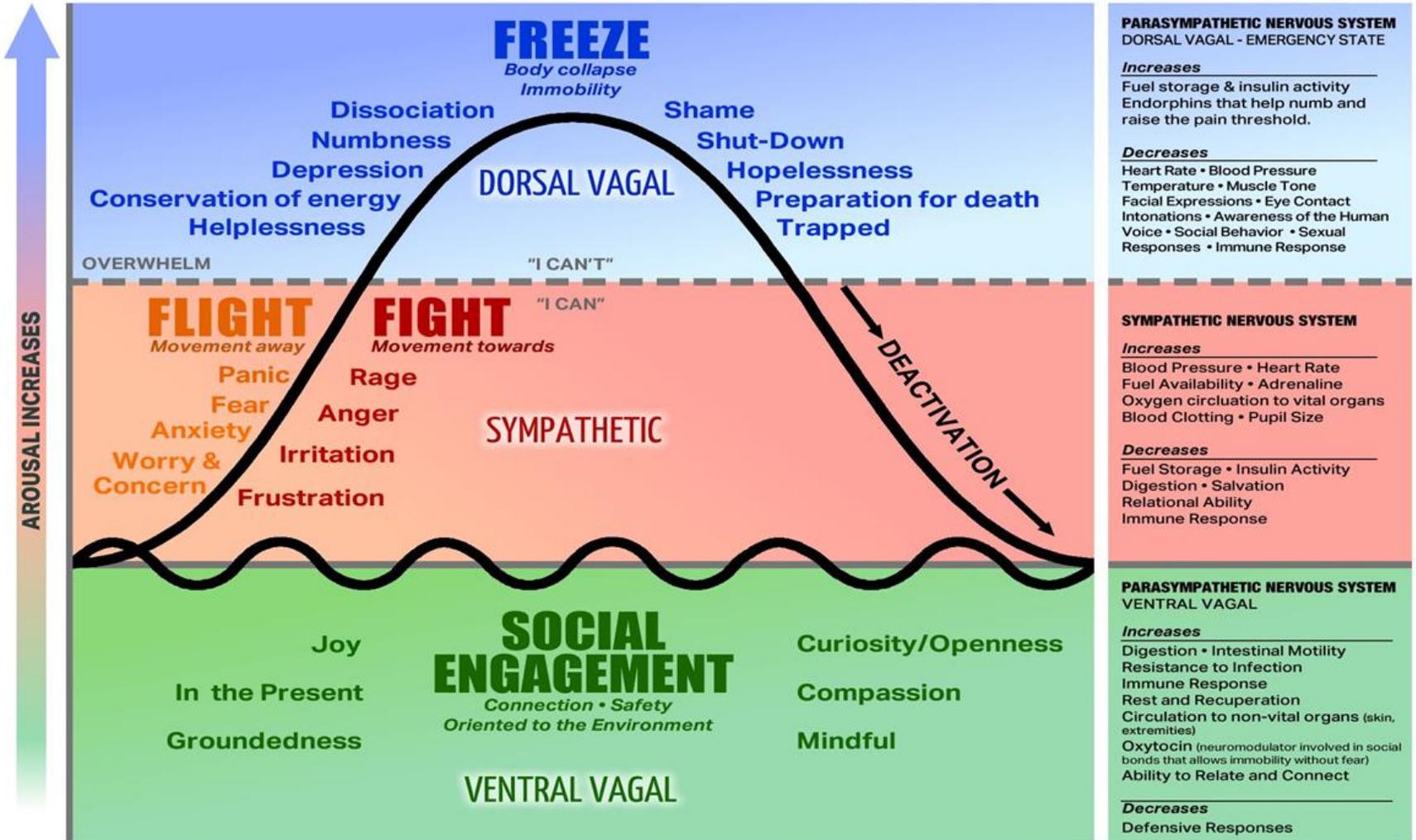
Survival  
Thinking

Emotional

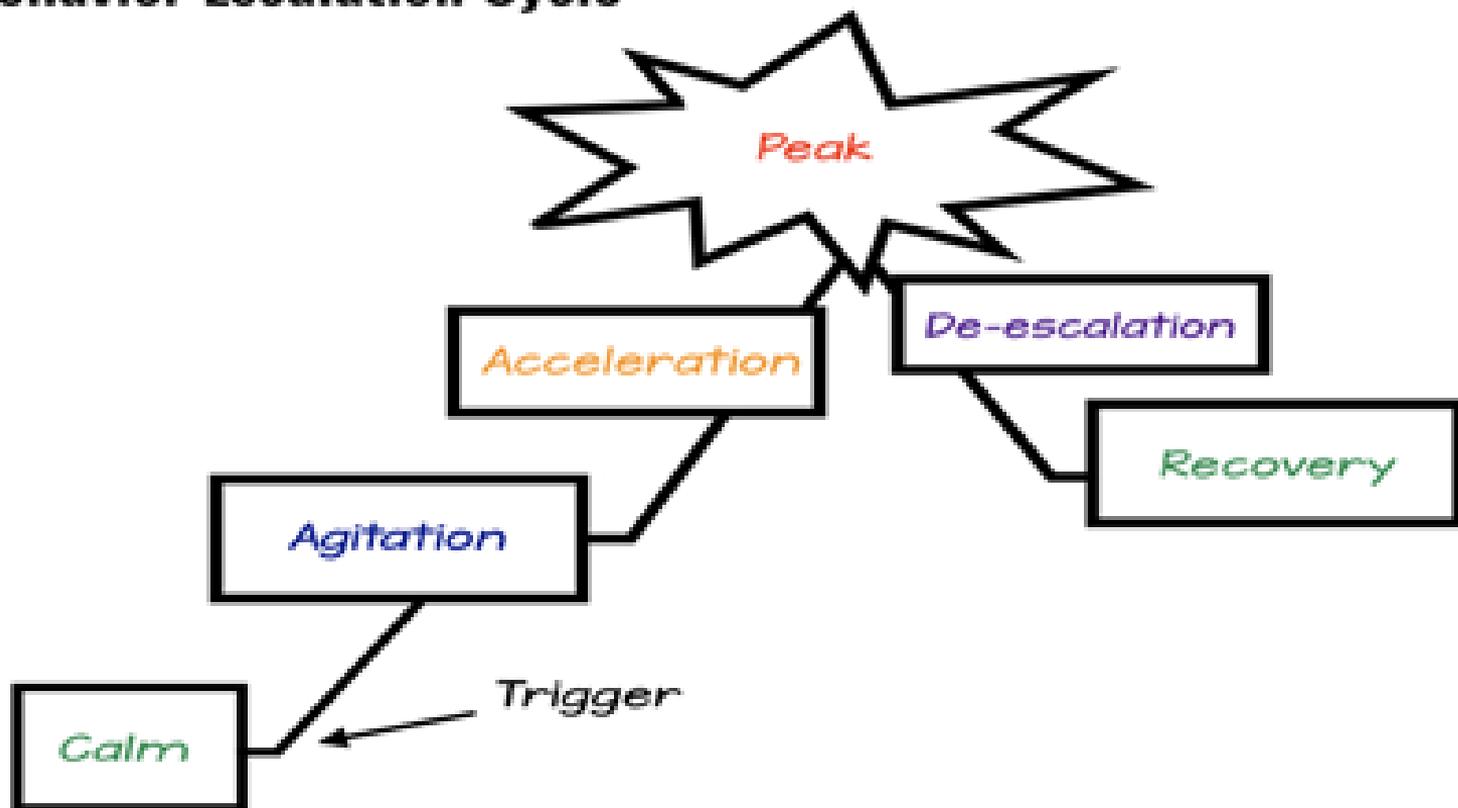
Can get stuck in the survival brain stage.

Feel emotion first

Cognition comes much later



# Behavior Escalation Cycle



# THE STRESS RESPONSE IN KIDS

## FIGHT

Yelling, Screaming,  
Using Mean Words

Hitting, Kicking, Biting,  
Throwing, Punching

Blaming, Deflecting  
Responsibility, Defensive

Demanding,  
Controlling

"Oppositional",  
"Defiant", "Noncompliant"

Moving Towards What  
Feels Threatening

Irritable, Angry,  
Furious, Offended  
Aggressive

## FLIGHT

Wanting to Escape,  
Running Away

Unfocused, Hard  
to Pay Attention

Fidgeting, Restlessness,  
Hyperactive

Preoccupied, Busy with  
Everything But the Thing

Procrastinating, Avoidant,  
Ignores the Situation

Moving Away From What  
Feel Threatening

Anxious, Panicked  
Scared, Worried,  
Overwhelmed

## FREEZE

Shutting Down,  
Mind Goes Blank

Urge to Hide,  
Isolates Self

Verbally Unresponsive,  
Says, "I don't know" a lot

Difficulty with  
Completing Tasks

Zoned Out,  
Daydreaming

Unable to Move,  
Feeling Stuck

Depressed, Numb,  
Bored/Apathetic,  
Helpless

# Four Categories of Function

Social Attention

Escape/Avoidance

Tangibles

Sensory

# Social Attention

The person we support has learned that behaving in a particular way is a *reliable* way of gaining attention.

# Escape/Avoidance

The person we support has learned that behaving in a particular way is a *reliable* way of escaping from or avoiding a particular activity.

# Tangibles

The person we support has learned that behaving in a particular way is a *reliable* way of gaining access to preferred items or activities.

# Sensory

The person we support has learned that behaving in a particular way is a *reliable* way of meeting a sensory need.

# MINDSET

Everyday is a new chance to connect with your most  
difficult children.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q\\_h8saSZWXg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q_h8saSZWXg)

Every single interaction is an opportunity to develop

Before we move people forward we need to  
appreciate the problem

Our bodies remember what the mind may not recall

We need to reframe how we see behaviour

# SHOCK

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ox7Uj2pw-80>

Anger



Fear



Disgust



Happiness



Sadness



Surprise



Neutral



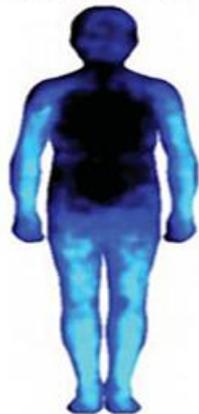
Anxiety



Love



Depression



Contempt



Pride



Shame



Envy



# Regulate before articulate

Soothing survival brain in the absence of our thinking brain (cognition)

Asking a child to stop running away and coming to talk instead is like jumping from the top step to the bottom step. Someone will get hurt. We need to meet them halfway.



# Yoga

**Meditation  
therapy**

**Deep breathing    Vibration**

**Brain breaks**

**Bouncing**

**Relaxation**

**Lego**

**Singing**

**Arm Hanging**

**Running**

**Full body movements – Boxing, weightlifting, most sports!**

Focus on a single identifiable  
positive learning attitude that  
you are going to recognise  
whenever you see it

Resist the temptation to connect their behaviour with your feelings. You risk giving pupils route map to your emotions.

Verbalise the behaviour you want to see -  
Make it explicit in words and actions.

Recognition Boards

Tell learners you have  
noticed...anything.

Phone Calls

Positive rapport and great relationships cannot be fast tracked.

Little and often, slow and steady.

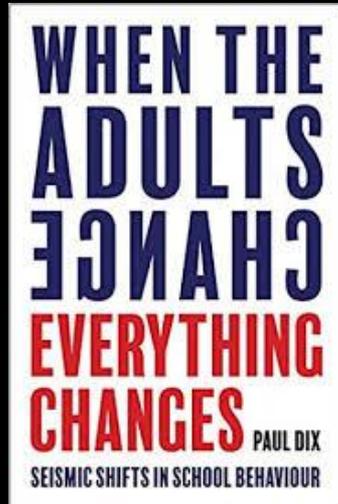
Let them know you care in the most subtle and discreet ways possible.

Avoid looming!!!

When you ask for behaviour to change walk away  
and give them time.

Be dogged, persistent and consistent in using praise with challenging learners. Initially they may reject it.

30 days!!!



# The first five minutes

Oscar winning performance got to interest, provokes and engages

Short bursts of highly engaging performance to inject eagerness

Meeting, Greeting, Smile, Shaking hands, Be pleased to see them, Make them feel not just important but irreplaceable

‘Thank goodness you have arrived’.

Catch the ones that are following your routine and doing the right thing.

# Low level disruption

Reduce the time spent talking to the whole class

Use a recognition board

Appropriate work, enthusiastic presentation.

Private short term targets for tricky individuals matched with regular reinforcement

Be explicit about the behaviour you expect to see

Catch learners following what you want

Positioning in the room

Show me how I can help you?

*When dysregulated, children often seek their version of safety. Sometimes this can make them even more unsafe. So where we can, let's build that safety into our provisions.'*

Where are the common places that children go when dysregulated?

# Routine Review

Coming in to school

Into Class

Transitions

Social times

Assembly

Classroom

# Regulation in the classroom

Flexible seating

Safe space

Backed seating and seating to feel the floor

Visualisations

Music

Headphones

Essential oil lamps (peppermint/rosemary)



It doesn't have to be expensive!

Everything you see in the above photos was ordered from well known retailers online.

This space is used for multiple needs. There's tiered approaches to meet all needs.

high activation—Foam rollers, padded wall for kicking, tension exercises

Low arousal—Canopy, flickering light, music player, and softer bags. Notice the neutral colours.

This space is just an example.

Don't forget some children need raised spaces as they prefer to be above floor level. This doesn't require you to build a bunk bed or tower. But a raised wooden box with portable cushioning may be a good way to incorporate those needs.

Think repetitive exercises that can start off maybe at a high intensity and then after a while, become regulating and soothing. Colouring, foam rolling, sensory cushions and much more will achieve this.

It's important to also think about tension and what we see our young people do physically when dysregulated. Do they need large movements? Do they put their head in between their legs? Do they clench their fists? Probably the majority of these things. So if designing for specific needs in different spaces, consider thinking of these students at design stage.



# Building Safety Throughout school

Outside

Corridors - Hidden spaces

Classrooms - spare seats

Playground zoned

You don't have to be a therapist to be therapeutic.

What can we do for every child?

**What do you want your school to look like?**

**Habit 1 - Whole School Buy-in**

**Habit 2 - Data Analysis**

**Habit 3 - The Right People on the Bus**

**Habit 4 - The Core Team**

**Habit 5 - Planning for Establishing Habits**

# Guaranteed Success

1. Make people feel special. Kindness is Key!
2. Don't indulge in moods!
3. Recognise the art of the possible
4. Live for TODAY not the next job!
5. It's NOT about you...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q3xoZXS5yc>

Jaz Ampaw Farr - Please watch her Ted Talk. She is amazing.

A black and white close-up photograph of Nelson Mandela. He is smiling broadly, showing his teeth, and has his hands placed on his cheeks. The image is centered on a black background.

I never lose. I either  
win or learn.

Nelson Mandela