

Student Well-Being
Through Co-Regulation,
Executive Function
Coaching, and Trauma-
Informed Practices

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CEC 2026

SPECIAL EDUCATION
CONVENTION & EXPO

SALT LAKE CITY

MARCH 11-14, 2026

Collaborative Abstract:

The collaborative session explores educators' intentionality to foster student regulation, resilience, and emotional security through integrated executive function strategies, trauma-informed neuroscience, and co-regulation practices.

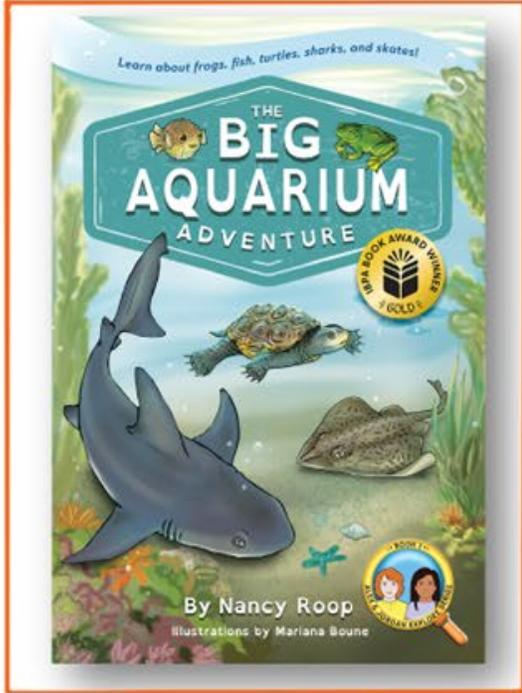
Participants will learn evidence-based approaches to strengthen planning, self-monitoring, and emotional security that cultivate inclusivity and promote autonomy, mental health, and academic success for all learners.

Collaborative Outcomes:

After this presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Examine the integration of executive function (EF) strategies grounded in theory, coaching, neuroscience, and co-regulation practices in supporting student well-being.
2. Develop proactive trauma-informed and co-regulation supports that promote autonomy, resilience, and academic success to reduce anxiety, strengthen emotional security, and foster autonomy and academic success.
3. Apply differentiated strategies to strengthen planning, self-monitoring, and emotional security for diverse learners in inclusive classrooms in support of goals and developmental needs.

Nancy Roop



Author Publisher

The Big Aquarium Adventure

Paraeducator Coach and Trainer

Para to Para

Former Paraeducator

Special Education Substitute Teacher

Long-term ASD Center Program

Education

BA in Integrative Studies

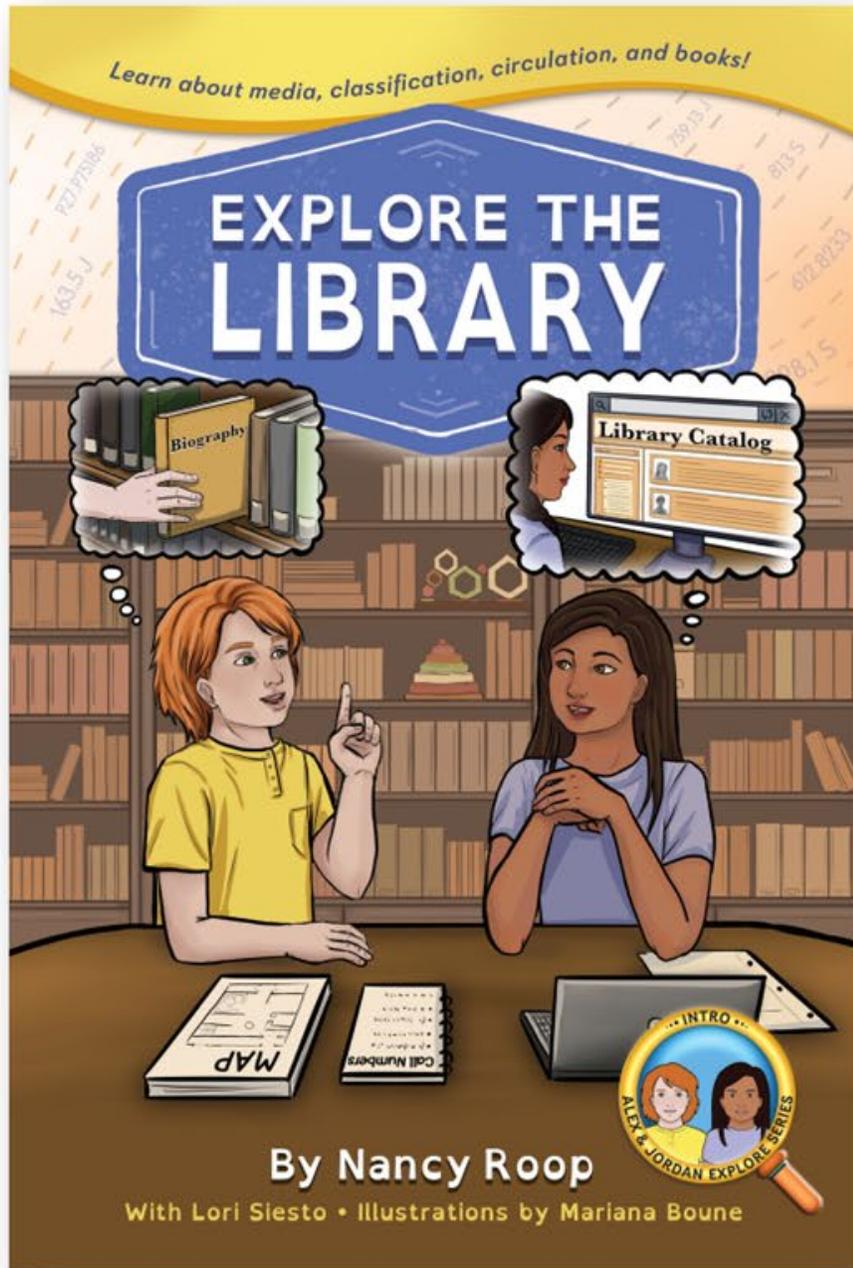
Oakland University

Website resources

Nancyroop.com



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Explore the Library

Learn about media, classification,
circulation, and books!

Advance reader copy in 2026



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Stephen Porges PhD.

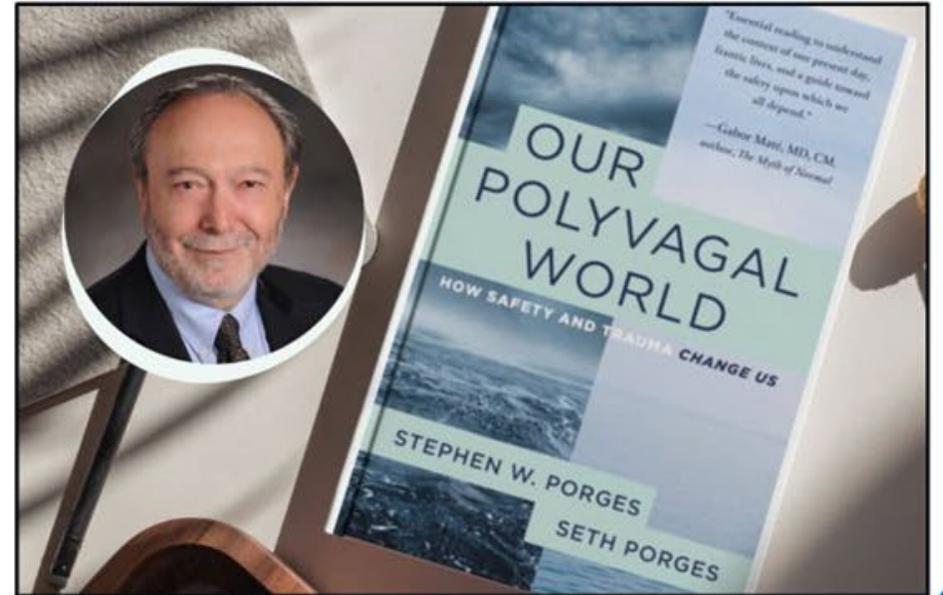
Co-Author: Our Polyvagal World

Neuroception: the body's automatic ability

- To assess danger
- Reacts to keep us safe
- Directs attention

Self-regulation:

- A development skill
- Learning varies per person
- Is influenced by the nervous system
- Nervous system can override thinking and feeling when triggered

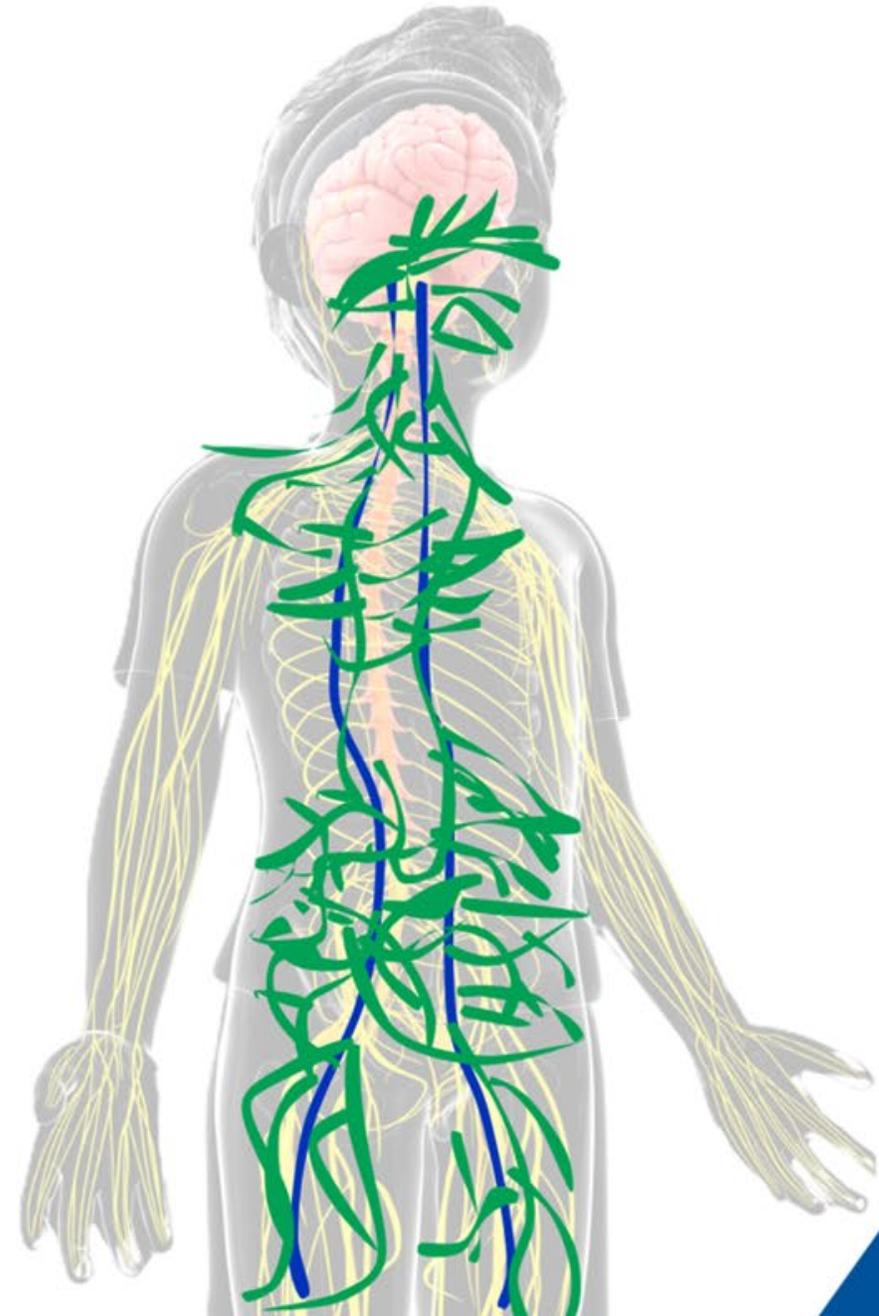


The Vagus Nerve

Blue: vagus nerve

Green: vagus nerve connections

Yellow: central nervous system

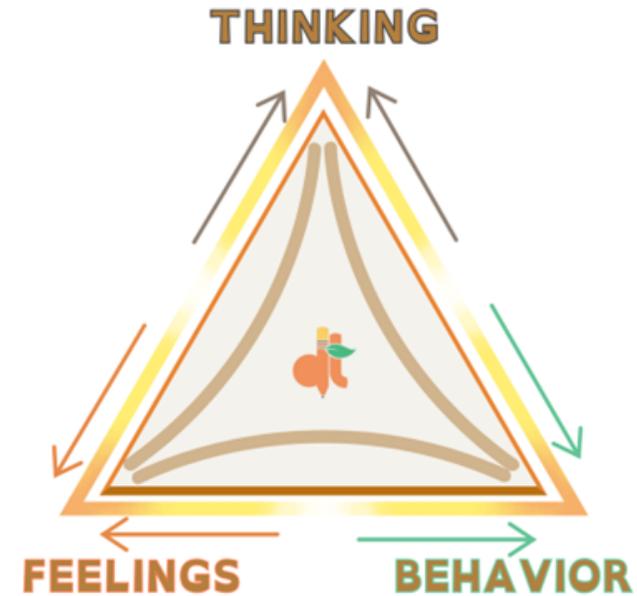


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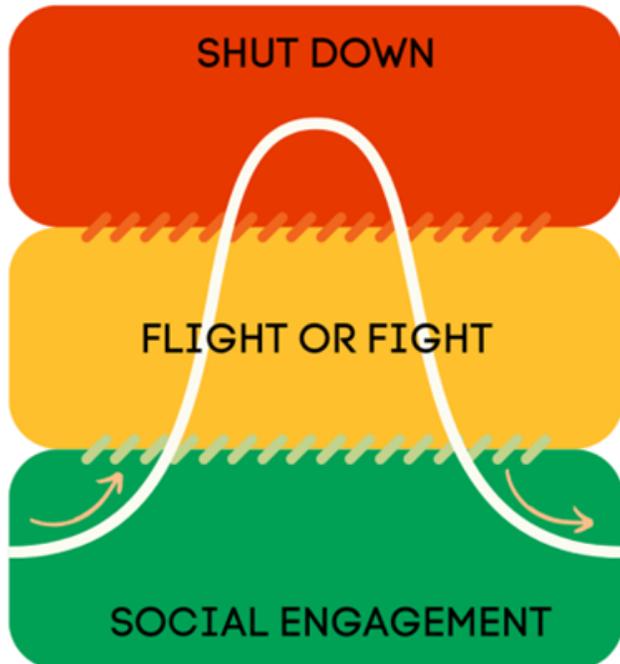
Polyvagal Theory

Physiological state is the sum of:

- Emotions and sensory perceptions
- Ability to manage executive functions
- Carry out the chosen behavior



STRESS RESPONSE

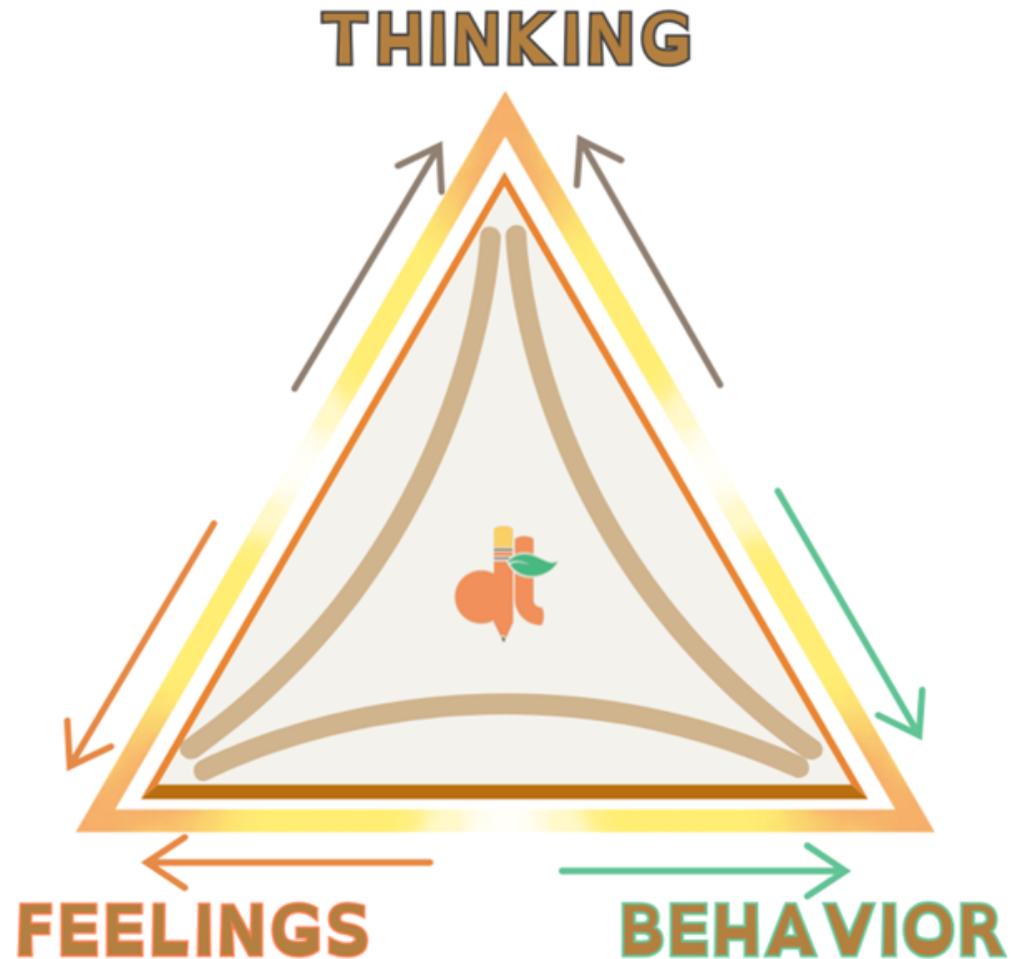


Humans must feel safe to maximize thinking

Environment
Emotionally
Physically (sensory)

When feelings and behavior are regulated, learning is possible!

TFB Triad Overview



Thinking

Executive Functions
Decisions / choices
Thoughts about feelings
Thoughts about behavior
Learning

Feelings

Physical: internal & external
Sensory
Emotional

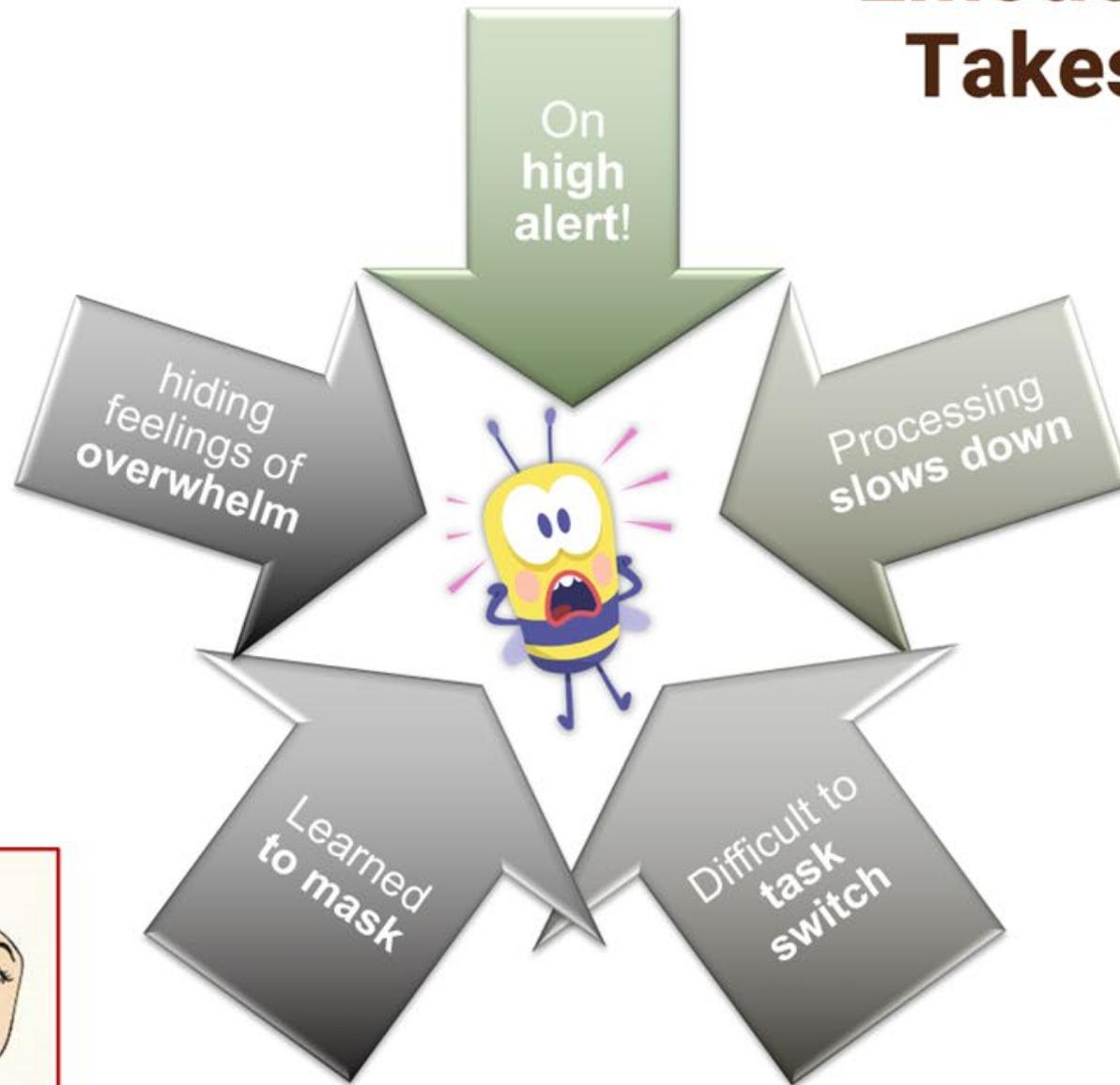
Behavior

Physical actions
Behavior choices in action
Stress response
impulsive reactions



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Emotional Regulation Takes Attention and Energy!



248-821-0415



Co-regulation

Empathy is our foundation

- understanding and honoring another person's situation, thoughts, and feelings

Check in with a feelings chart

- Provides language to what is going on inside

Model desired energy level and manner

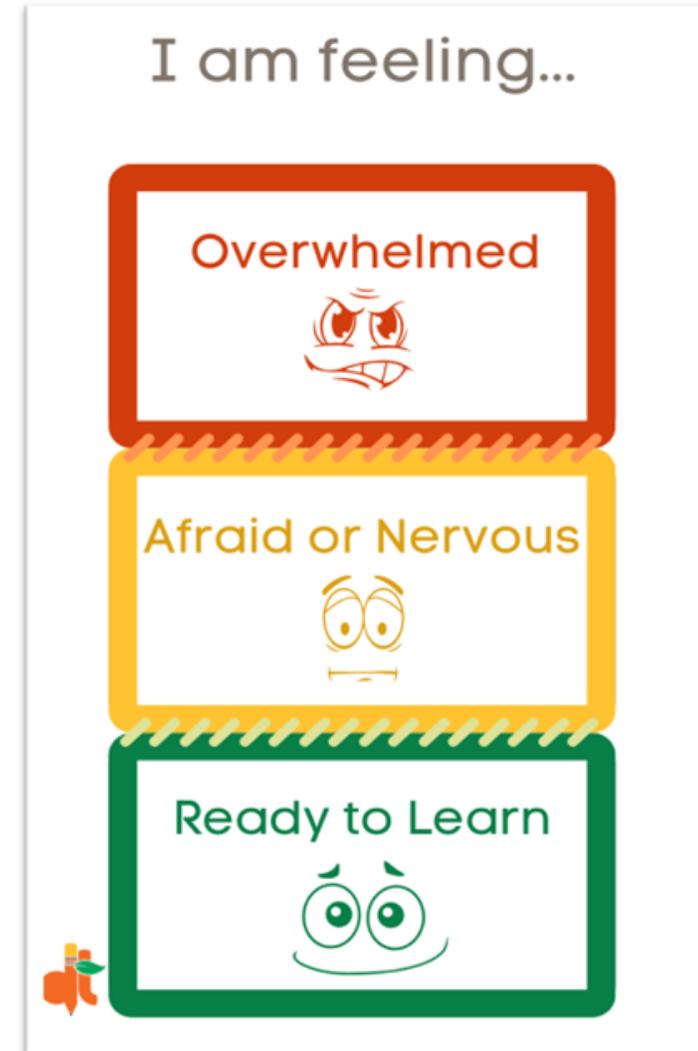
- Match the energy level to task
- “When you are ready...”
- Provide explicit directions

If agitated or unable to attend, say

- “What will help you feel better?”
- “I can help you get started.”

Offer breaks as needed

- “Do you need a break?”





TFB Triad

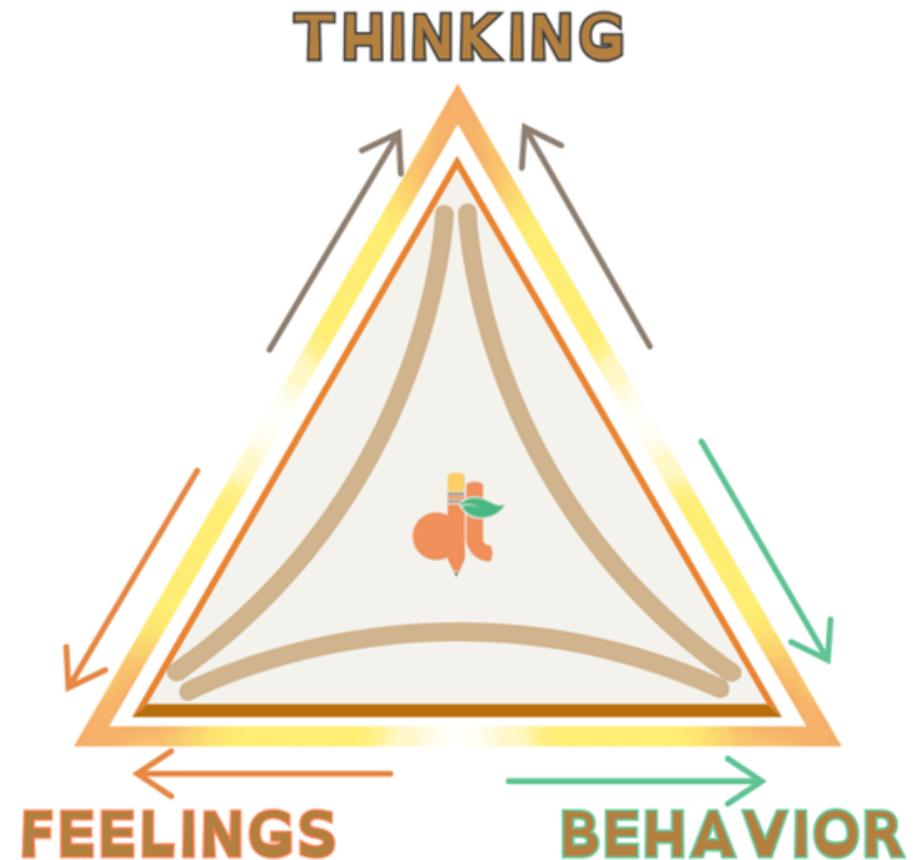
Feelings

- Physical: internal & external
- Sensory
- Emotional

Improve Sensory Input

Add sensory supports

- Thinking is improved
- Behavior is improved





STEPHEN'S QUICK TIP FOR STAYING CALM



When I start to feel too much in my body, I can take deep breaths.
I breathe in with a deep belly-breath and count to five: 1 2 3 4 5.
I focus on the numbers and remember to go slowly.
Then, I exhale slowly and count backwards from five: 5 4 3 2 1.
I repeat these two more times.
I look at frogs, squeeze a toy, or listen to music.



Deep Breathing

- Breathing and mindfulness calms the vagus nerve
- Practice with students when they are calm
- This is in the handouts and at nancyroop.com/resources
- Print and laminate
- Print a poster size for sensory room



TFB Triad

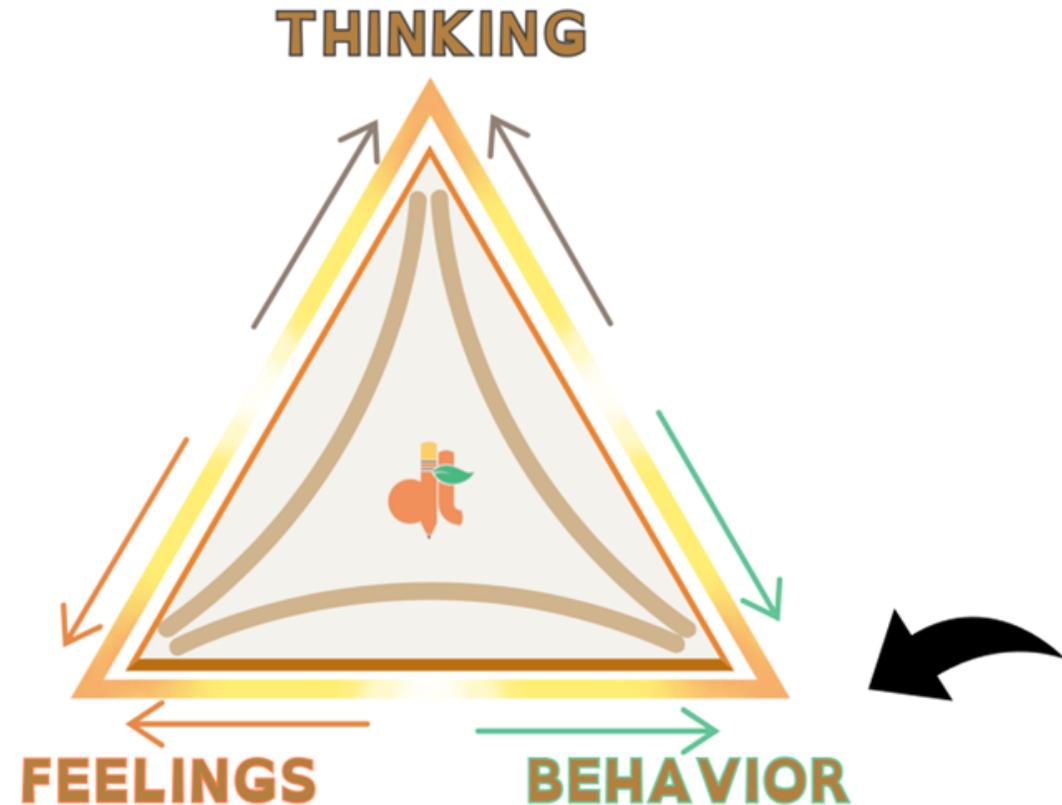
Behavior

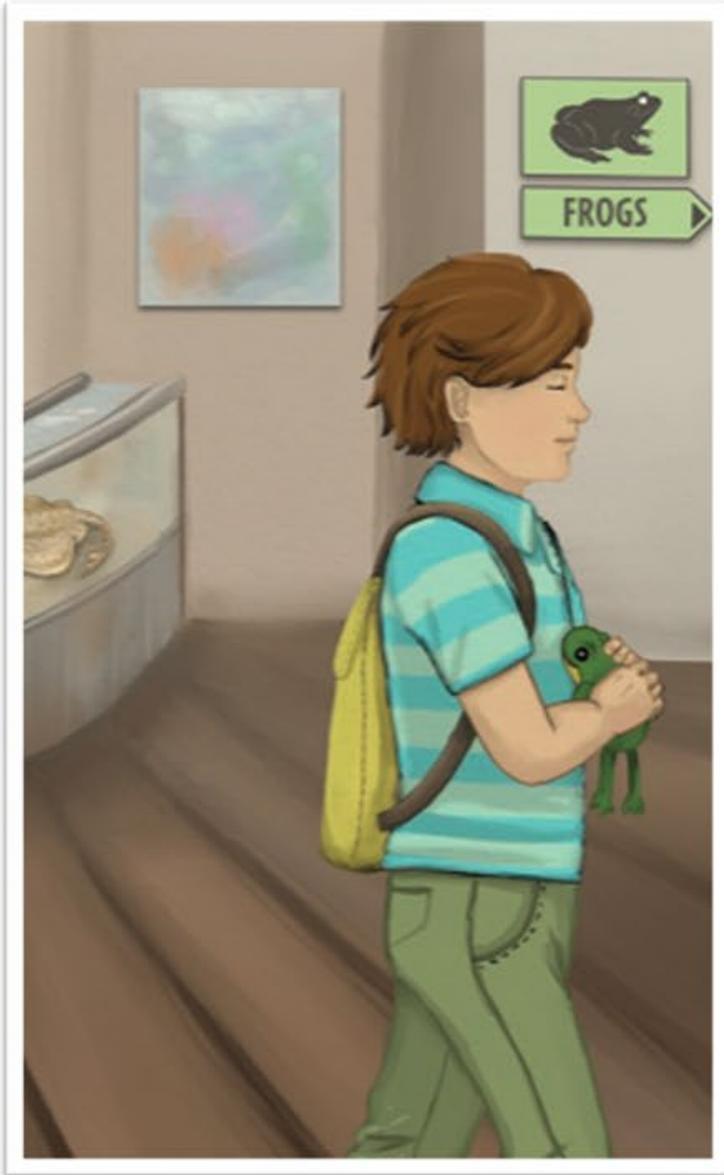
- Physical actions
- Behavior choices in action
- Stress response / impulsive reactions

Change up Behavior

Add movement

- Thinking is improved
- Feelings are improved (both sensory and emotional)





Movement

Walking helps regulate the Vagus Nerve

- Bilateral Stimulation
- Cross midline: eyes are sweeping
- Other area with different sensory input

All movement outside is optimal

- Natural sensory input

Occupational therapist prescribed activities

- Activating vs. deactivating





TFB Triad

Thinking

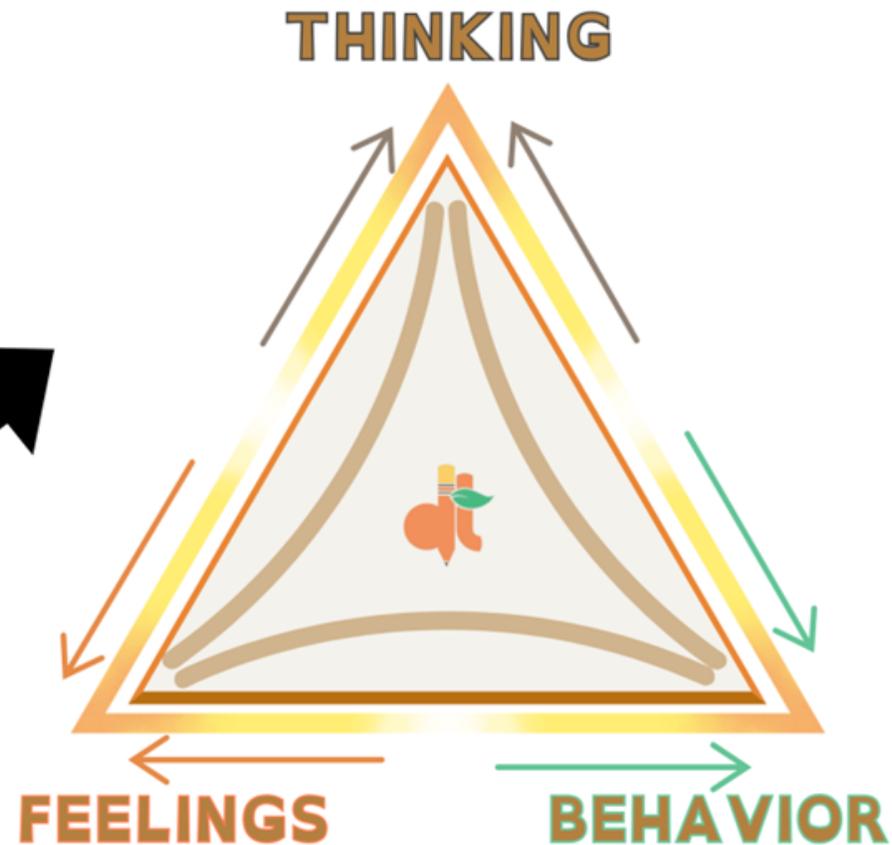
- Executive Functions
- Decisions / choices
- Thoughts about feelings
- Thoughts about behavior
- Learning

Change up Thinking

Add Provide praise

Model Positive self talk

- Feelings are improved
- Better able to make good behavior choices





The Power of Visuals in Communication

The only part of the autistic brain that is not affected by autism is **visual processing.**

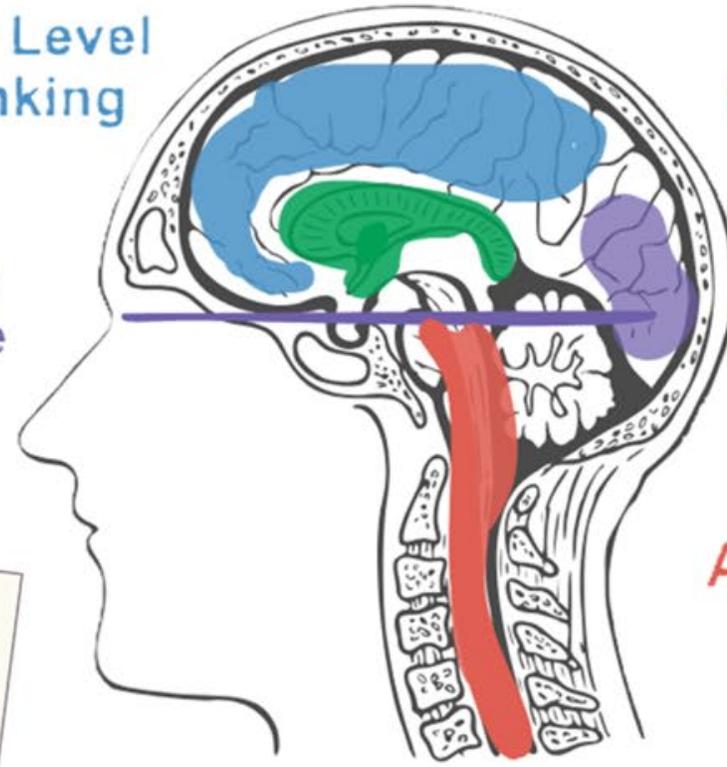
Language takes higher-level processing.

I am feeling...



High Level Thinking

Optic Nerve



Emotions

Visual Processing

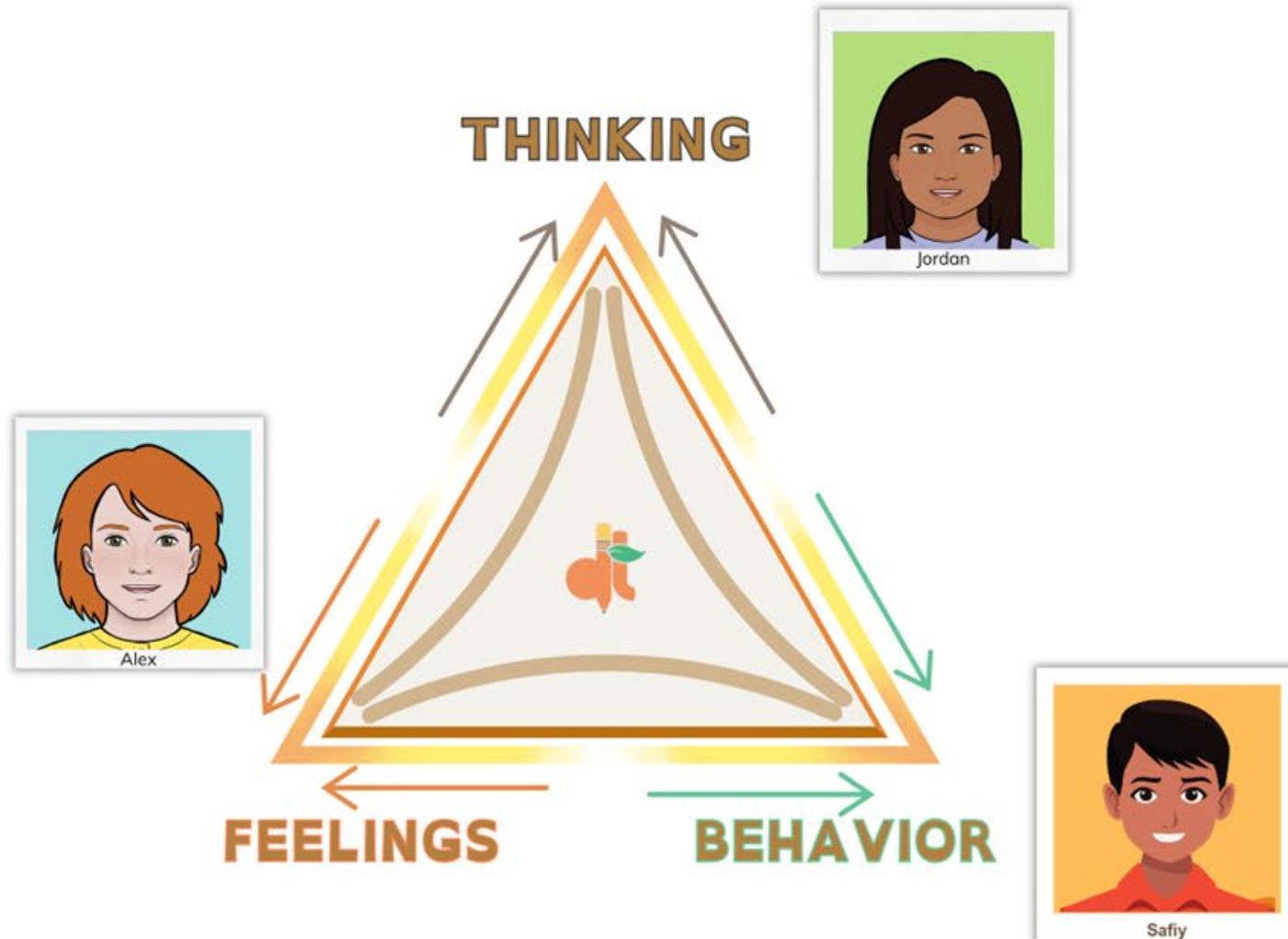
Action



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Three Student Profiles





Student Profile: Safiy

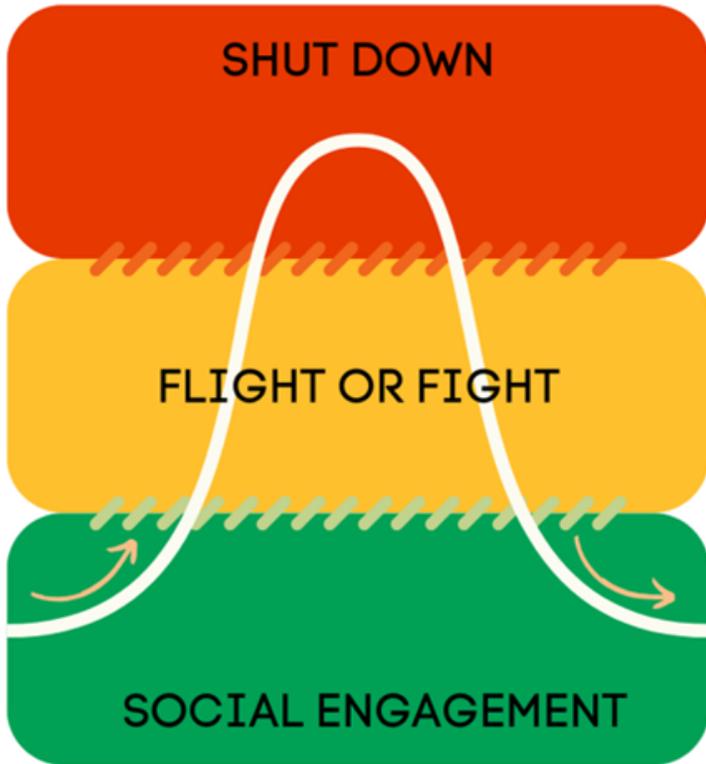


Safiy

- Fourth Grader
- Hesitant with everything new
- Easily overwhelmed
- Reading level: first grade
- CPTSD due to unstable home
- Level three autism



STRESS RESPONSE



Safiy

Often hovers near red

- Body feels trauma
- Transitions are hard

Is seldom in green

- Routine schedule
- Favorite activities

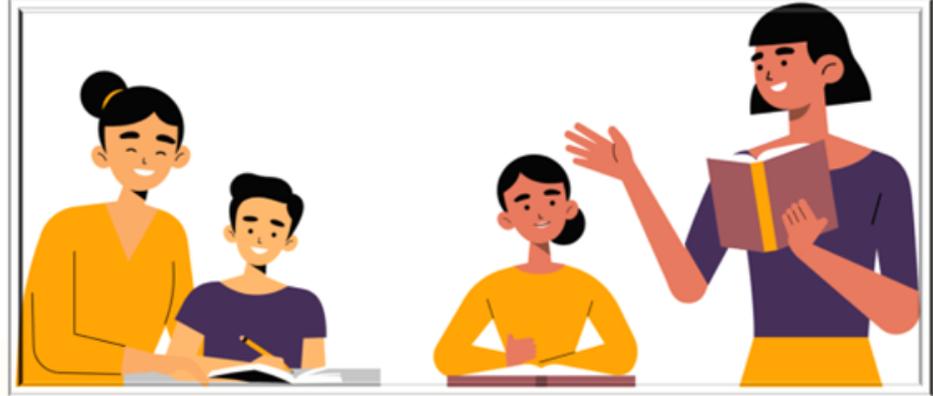
Needs extra time to process

- Finish scripting and routines
- Needs to work on one goal at a time.

Safiy benefits from access to many sensory tools and breaks.



The Roop Method



Focus on core content standard in chunks of 2-3 days

Capitalizes on familiarity, repetition, and routines

Builds executive function skills

1. Attend the teacher's daily lesson
2. Student repeats the lesson 1-2 times

High to low scaffolds / modifications change daily / follow their lead

3. When class begins a new unit, move on to first lesson and repeat



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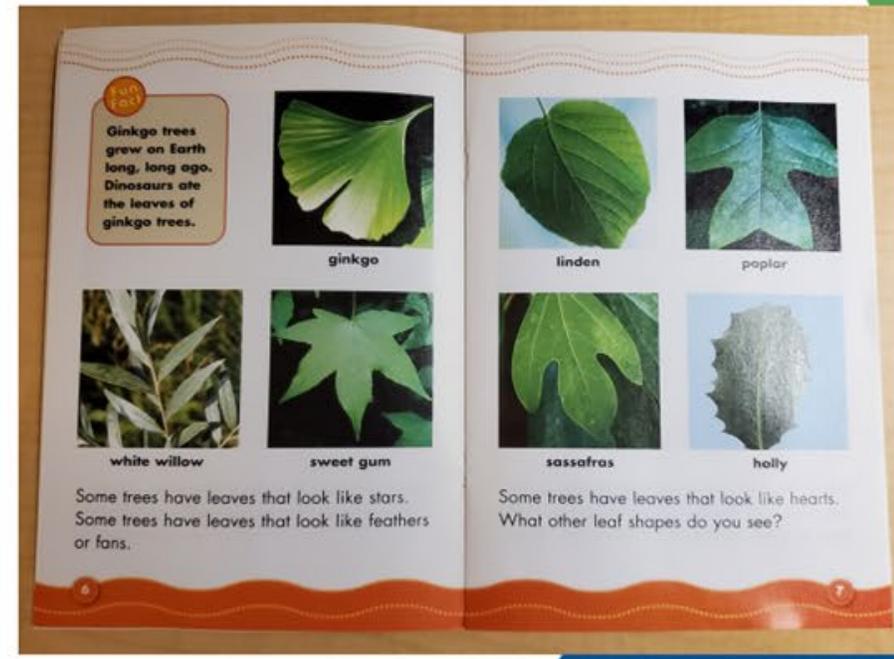
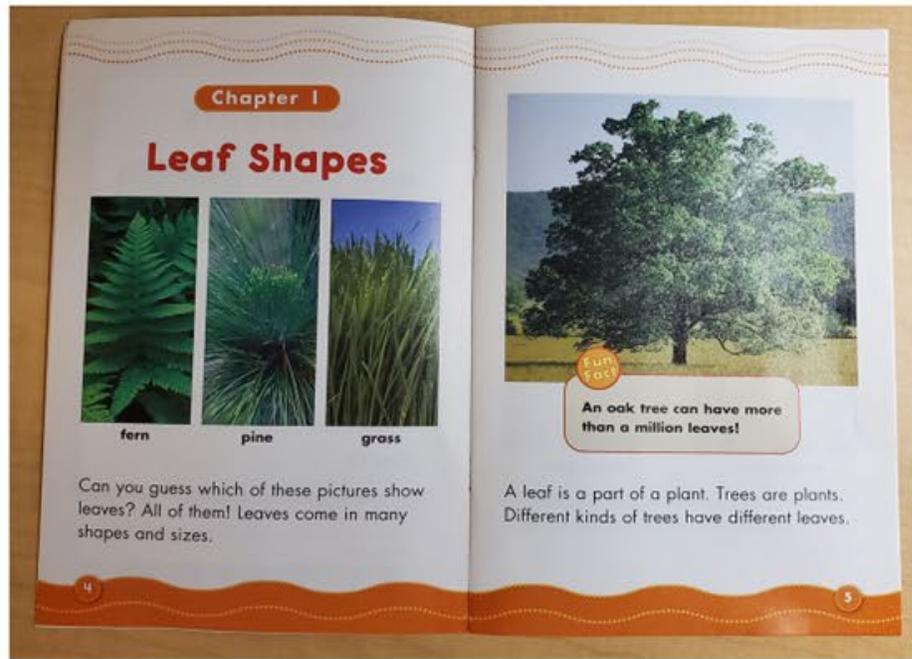
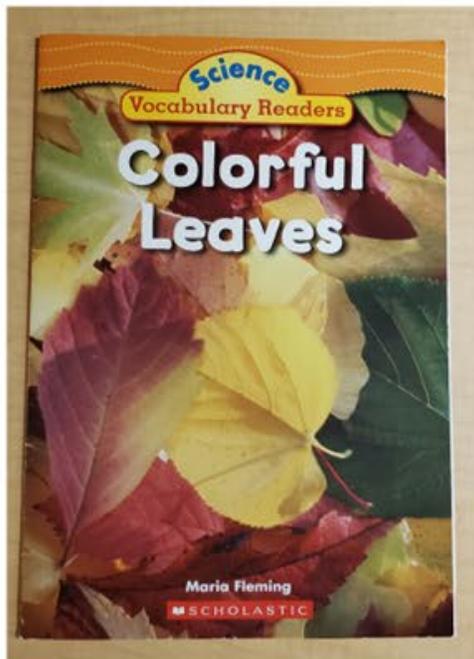
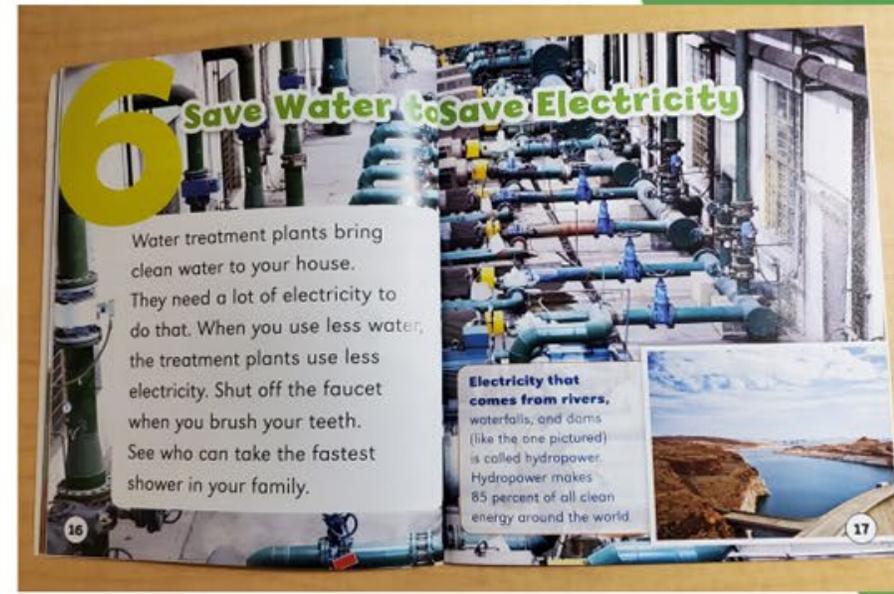
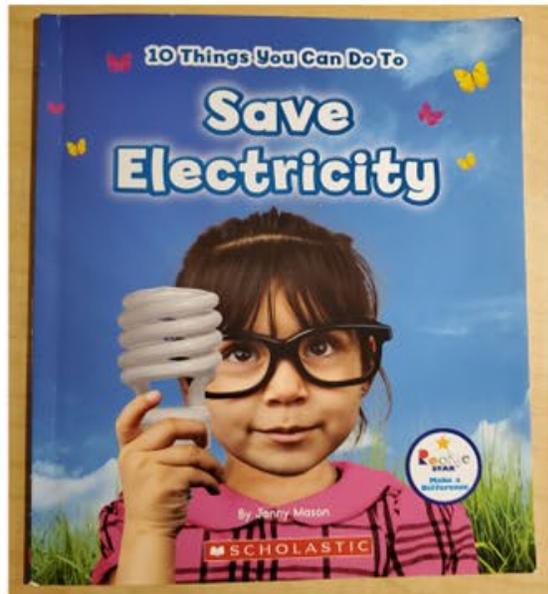


Book Features for Reluctant Readers



1. Match sensory needs of book to reader
2. Accessible: rounded font on white paper
3. Systematic organization is predictable
4. Avoid figurative language; complex social situations
5. Nonfiction; or real & relatable stories
6. Series are predictable and familiar
7. Graphic novels: picture processing a +
8. Repeated readings allow familiarity







Alex

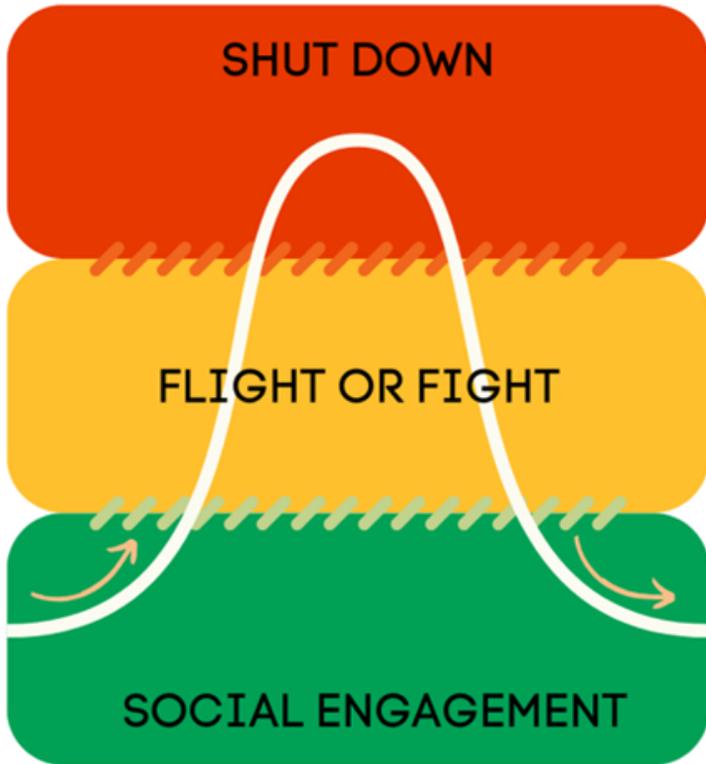


Student Profile: Alex

- Fifth Grader
- Likes to ask questions
- Hyperactive body and mind
- Reading level: third grade
- Social and emotional delay
- Dysgraphia



STRESS RESPONSE



Often in green

- Very social
- Has agency over sensory needs

Goes up to yellow quickly

- High demands
- Task switching too fast

Demands continue

- Escalates into red
- 20 minutes until de-escalation
- Is on alert for the rest of the day



Alex benefits from movement, choices and breaks.



Student-led Bookmaking

**Use topics of interest or common items at school.
Use a binder, lined paper, and plain white paper**

Create a picture book—one page a day

1. Write a word, phrase, or a sentence on lined paper
2. Draw an illustration on plain paper
3. Put pages in binder
4. Read the book after new pages are added
5. Create cover page when book is complete.

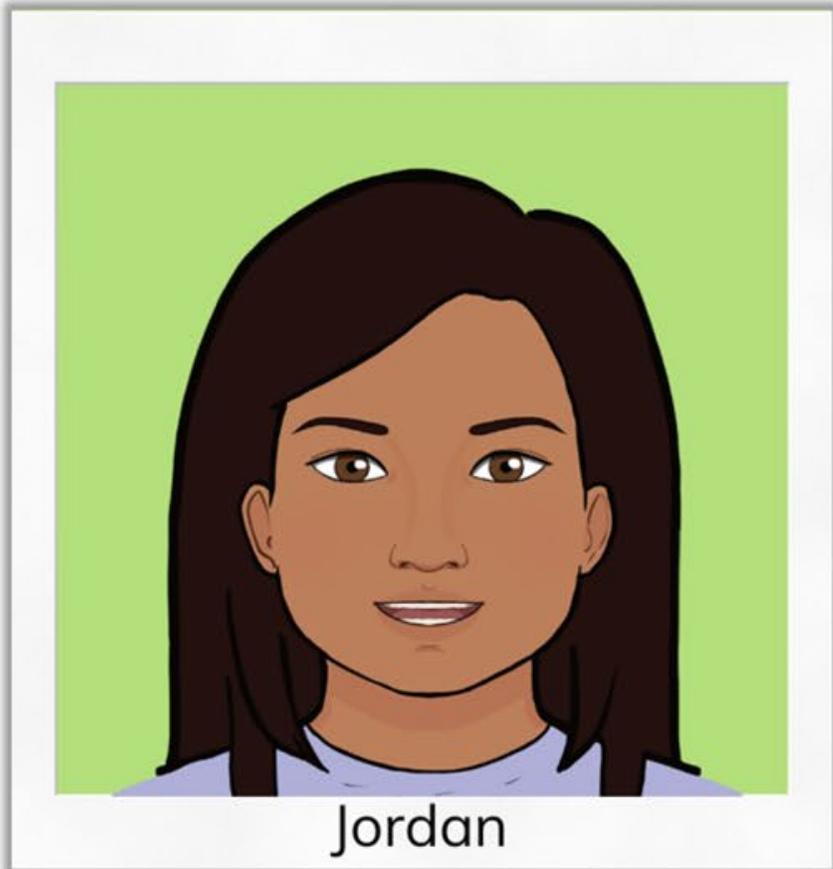


Scaffold as needed: sentence choices or outline illustration



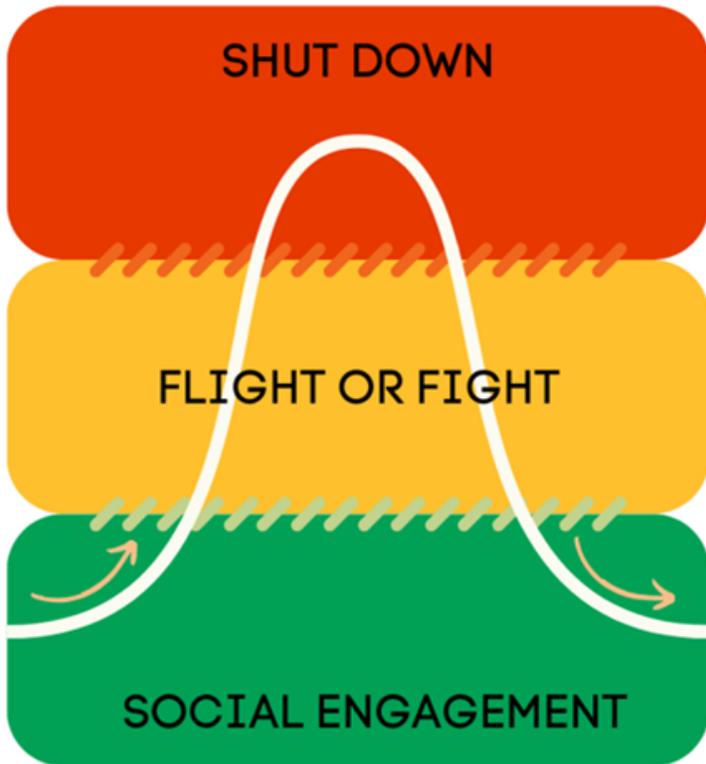
Student Profile: Jordan

- Fifth Grader
- Likes to do research projects
- Gifted
- Reading level: eighth grade
- Social and emotional delay
- ASD and A.D.H.D



Jordan

STRESS RESPONSE



Jordan



Often in yellow

- But appears to be in green
- She masks her anxiety

Goes up to red slowly

- Works hard to not escalate
- She cannot learn in this state
- Starts to show agitation

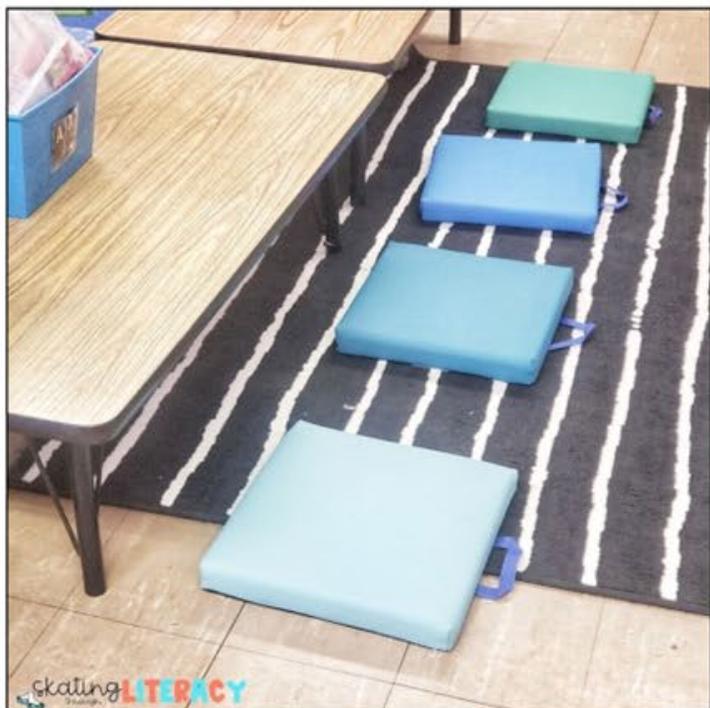
Loses control

- Short period of time
- Tends to blow up after getting home

Jordan benefits from access to multitasking and breaks.



Sensory Regulation



Flexible Seating

- Chairs or stools that allow for movement
- Low tables, so student sits on the floor
- Put a colored tape boundary
- **Access to fidgets**
 - Quiet items like scrunchies

Drawing

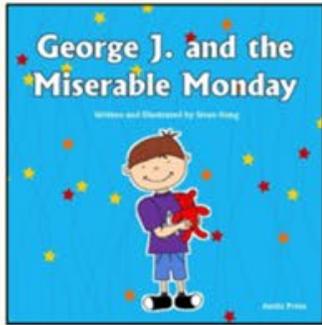
- Six-sided crayon or multi-colored pen

Calming Station

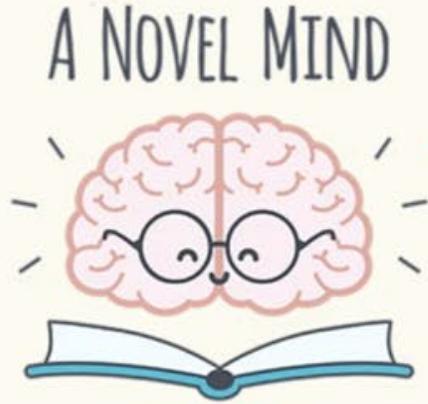
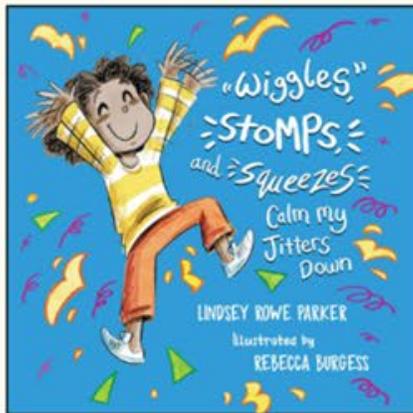


Finding Specialized Books

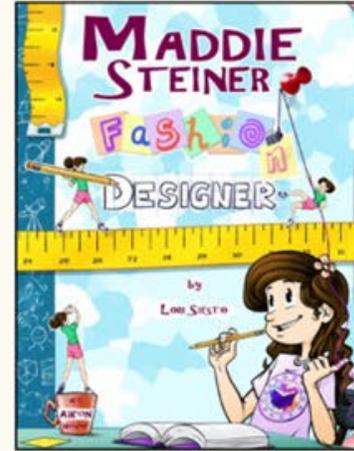
NEURODIVERSE
INCLUSIVE
BOOKS



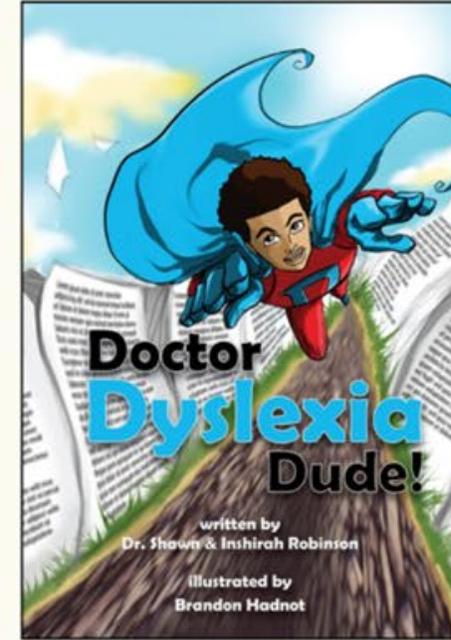
#SPDAuthor



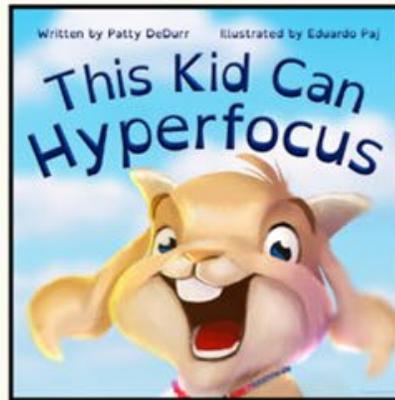
anovelmind.com



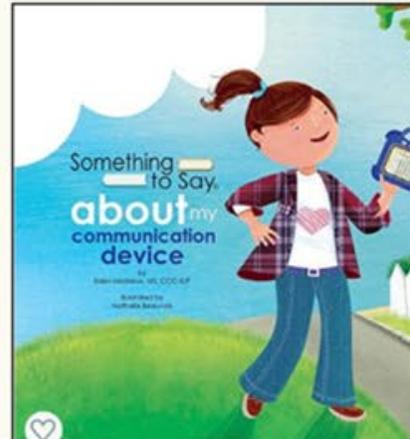
#ASDAuthor



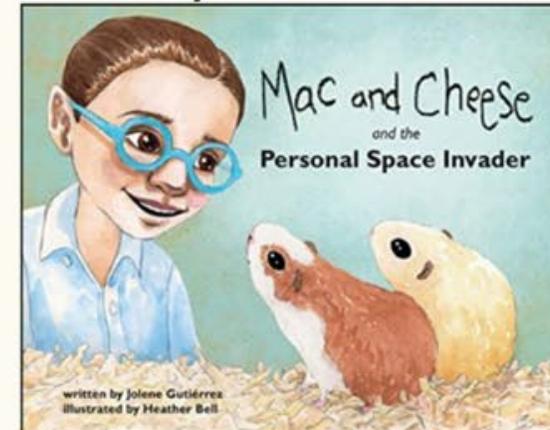
#DyslexiaAuthor



#ADHDAuthor



#AACAuthor



#proprioceptionauthor



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BREAKS AS NEEDED TO BE READY TO LEARN!



- SCHEDULED
- REQUESTED
- STAFF INITIATED



TYPES: MOVEMENT, SENSORY, COMFORT, REST, MUSIC





Quick Tip from my Pets!

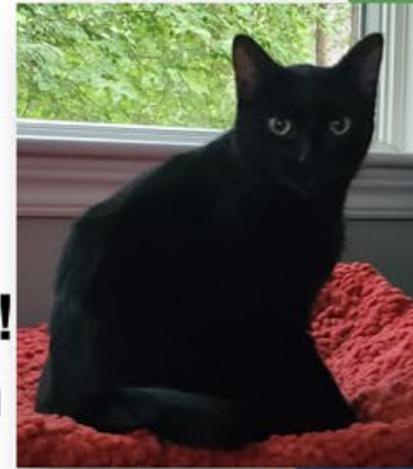


Brains are naturally wired to focus on negative thoughts to keep us safe. Modern brains haven't evolved.

Glimmers are micro-moments of regulation that foster feelings of well-being.



Use good gossip!
Positive narration
Mindfulness
Affirmations



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Reading Journal Templates

The Hockman method is accessible to all!

1. Read a book; complete a page
10 - 15 of each template in order of difficulty.
2. Put page in binder.
3. Review the last five pages daily to boost retention.

Name _____ Who _____ Date _____

I read _____

who	does or is
-----	------------

Draw a picture

Write a sentence

I read _____ What _____

what	does or is
------	------------

Draw a picture

Write a sentence

I read _____ why _____

Something happened	why
--------------------	-----

Draw a picture

Write a sentence

Who ?
What ?
When ?
Where ?
Why ?
How ?



The Writing Revolution
Poster available at
thewritingrevolution.org

Friday, March 13th
1:00 pm
Room 250 F



Take Back to Class Accommodation Guide

Student Led: use favorite topics & characters.

Audiobooks and read alouds: listen then create three action pictures from the story.

Paras can scribe for a student so they can get their ideas down with less frustration.

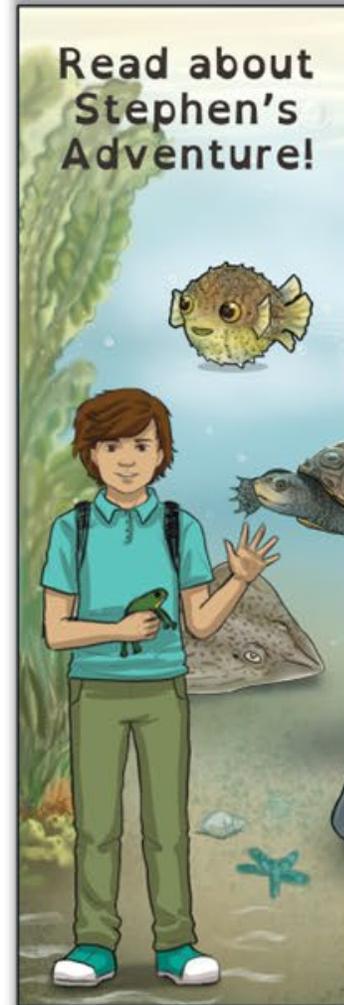
Reduce the number of multiple choice answers to two.

Give the answer key of the review sheets to students with blanks for them to copy one or more words based on their level. Or they can use a highlighter to highlight the answer already given which allows the review the correct information!

**Empathy, compassion,
and patience are key!**

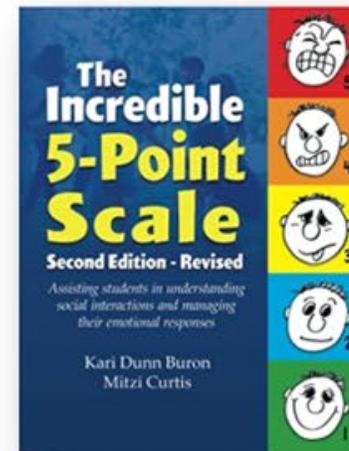
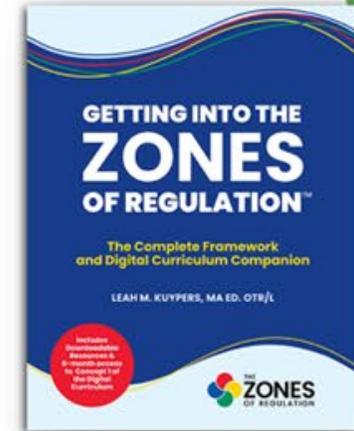
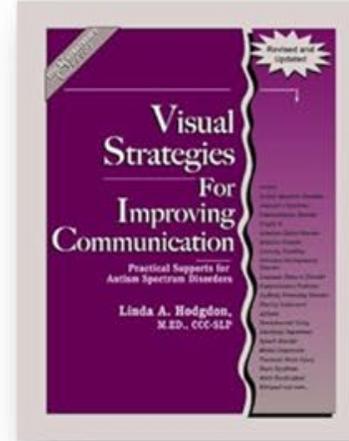


Nancyroop.com/resources



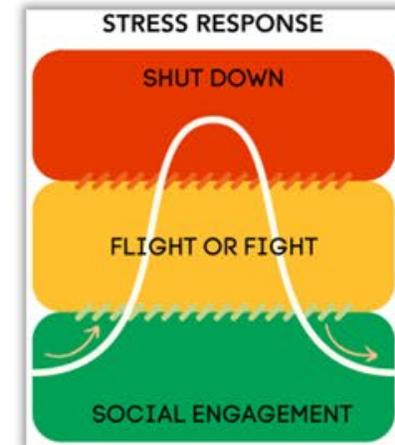
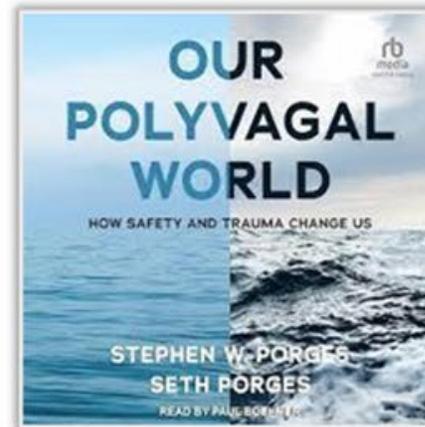
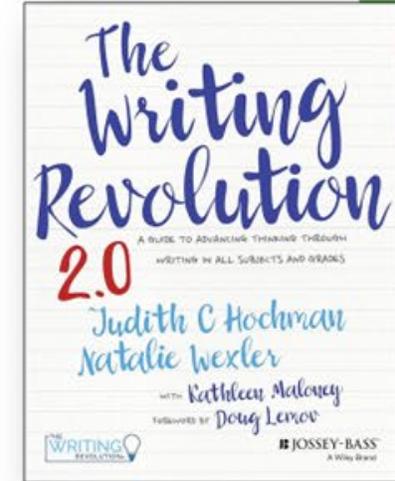
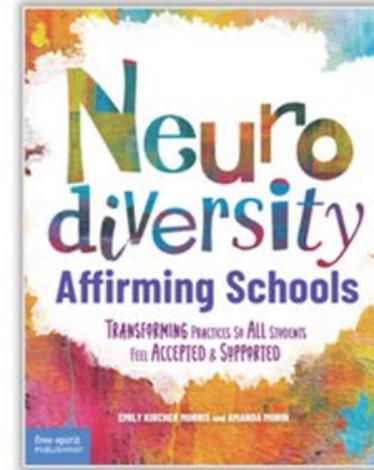
Resources

- Visual Strategies for Improving Communication
Linda A. Hodgdon
- The Zones of Regulation
Leah M. Kuypers
- The Five Point Incredible Scale
Kari Dunn Buron
Mitzi Curtis



Resources

- Neurodiversity Affirming Schools
Emily Kircher Morris
Amanda Morin
- The Writing Revolution 2.0
Janet C. Hoffman
Natalie Wexler
- Our Polyvagal World
Stephen W. Porges
Seth Porges



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Educators as Co-Regulators. Its impact on Student Mental Health and Security

Dr. Chris Abildgaard
(abildgaar@hartford.edu)



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Defining Co-Regulation in Educational Contexts

What is Co-Regulation?

A dynamic process where adults or peers help students manage emotions, behaviors, and thinking to build self-regulation.

How does it work?

Through responsive interactions and scaffolds that gradually transfer emotional responsibility to the learner.

Why does it matter?

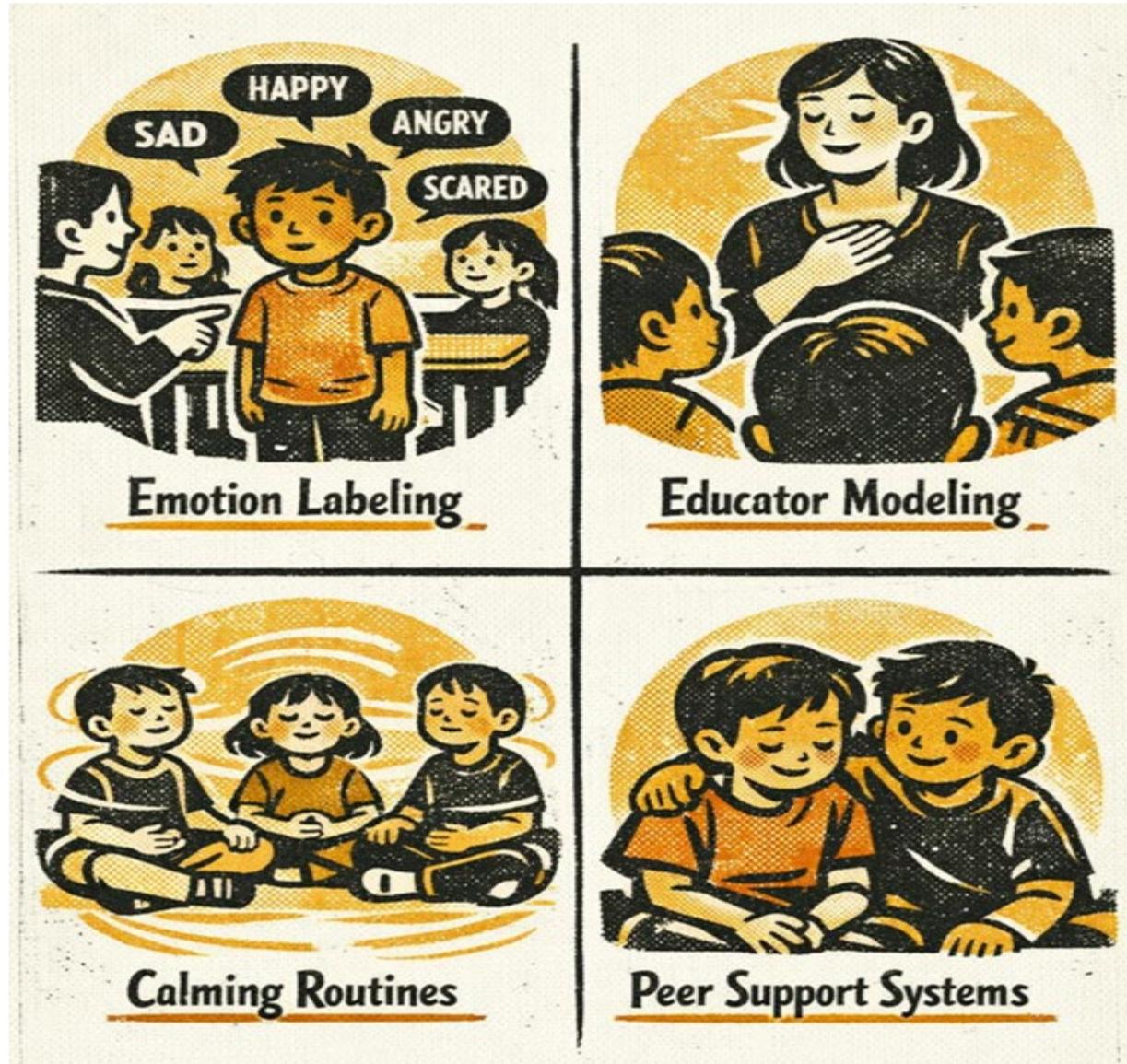
Research shows that it creates safety and trust that boost engagement and learning in supportive classrooms.

Co-Regulation & EF Link

- Co-regulation and executive function work together.
- Adults help students manage emotions and thinking skills.
- Co-regulation gradually builds student self-regulation skills, which aligns with executive function processes.



Classroom Strategies for Effective Co-Regulation



Reach out for more information regarding:

Theoretical Frameworks:

- Self-Regulation Vs. Co-Regulation
- Research on Fostering Student Autonomy

Embedding Executive Function Coaching into Inclusive Classrooms: Implementing the GUIDE-C Model

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What if...?

- Impulse control was not a problem
- Time management and organization were on point
- Initiating tasks was never an arduous undertaking
- Distractions were never a challenge
- Stress or loneliness did not exist



What Have Your Experiences Been Like?

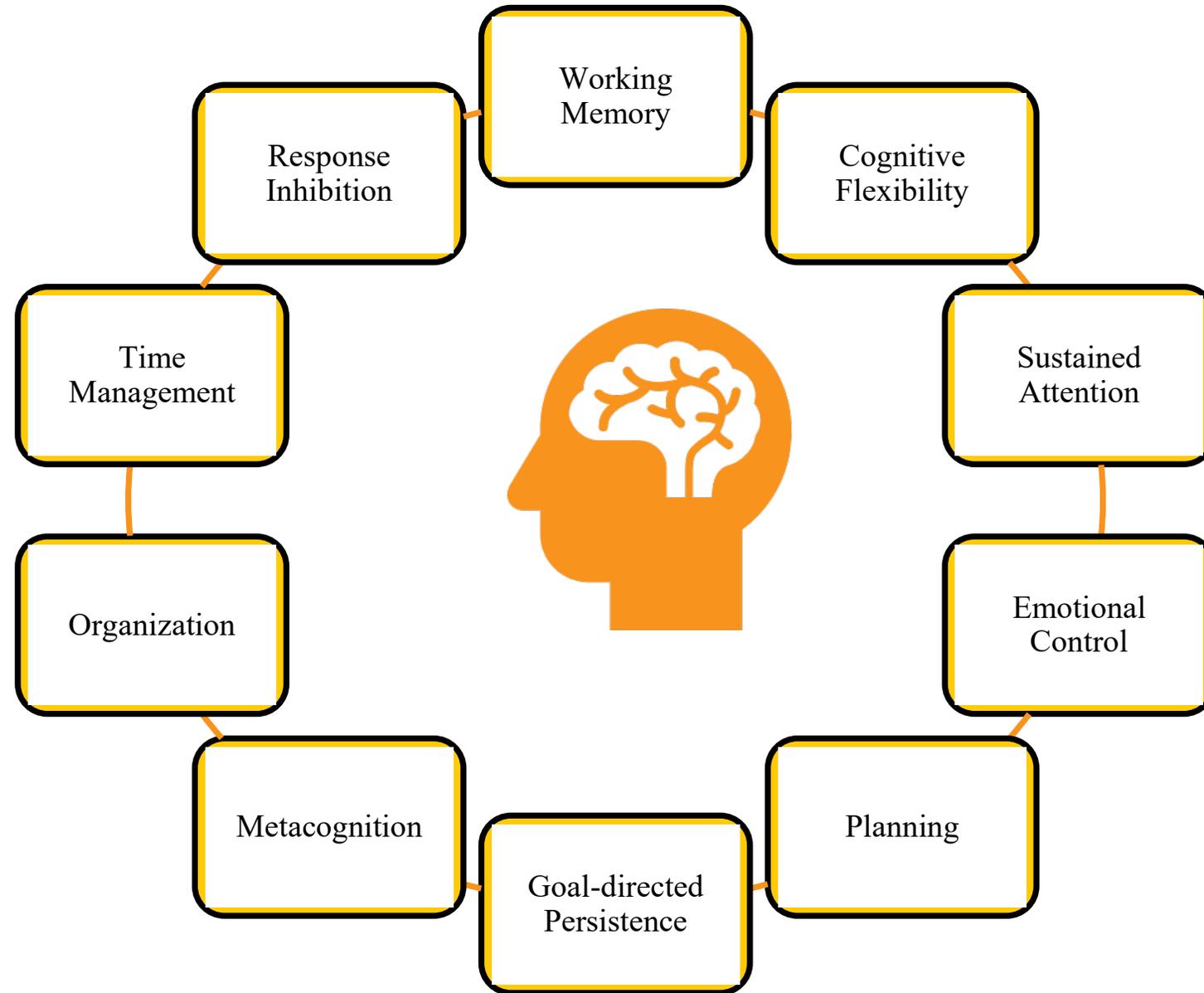


Executive Function Matters

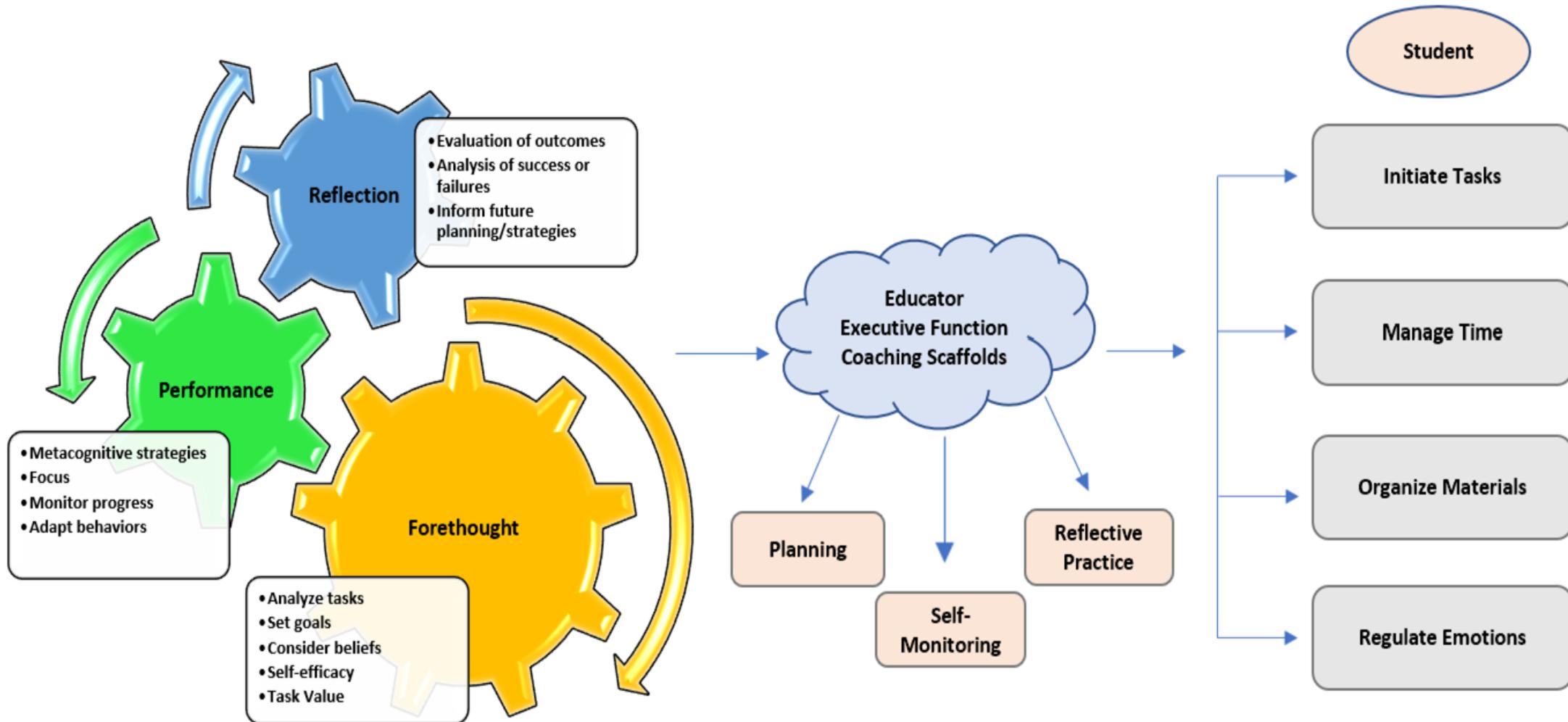
- Insufficient teacher preparation
- Persistent gaps in direct EF instruction. (Houchins et al., 2012).
- Reactive accommodations rather than proactive, self-regulatory interventions.
- Link between EF and academic/postsecondary outcomes (U.S. Department of Education, 2021; Newman et al., 2011)



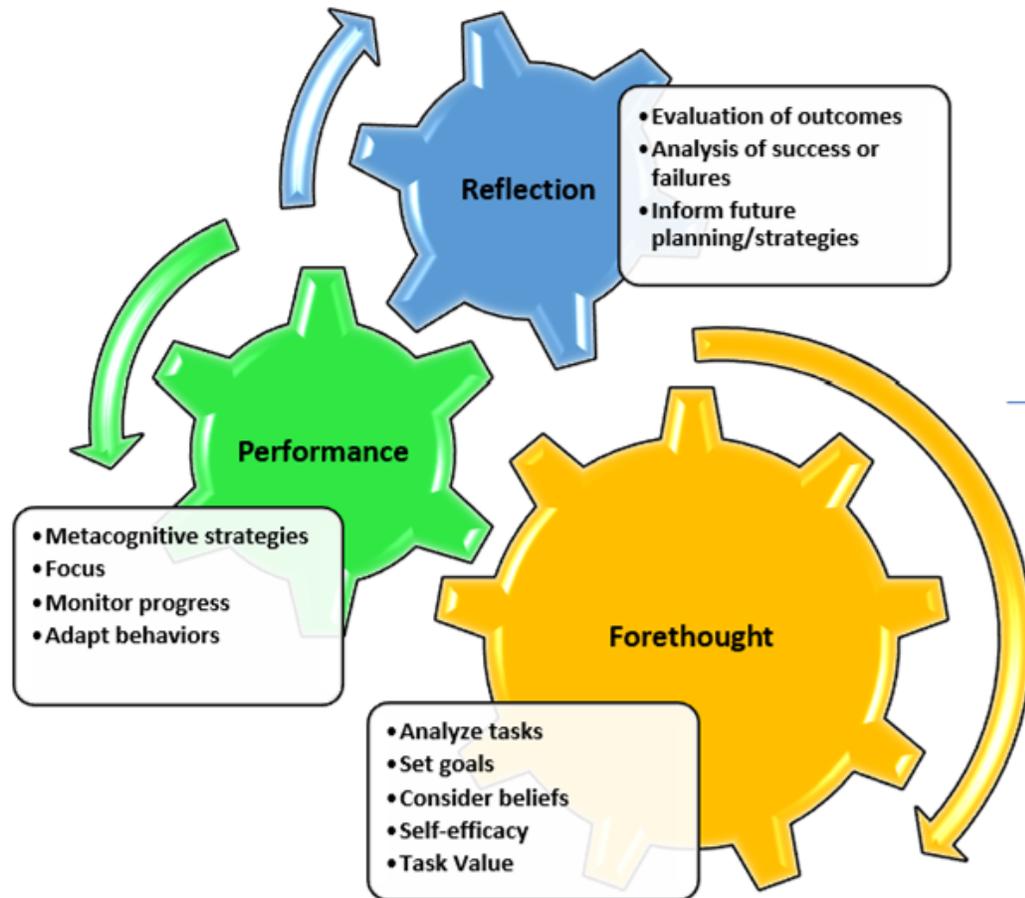
Executive Function Skills



Theoretical Foundation: Zimmerman's (2000) Theory of Self-Regulated Learning (SRL)



Connecting SRL and Executive Function



Alignment between SRL phases and EF processes

- Goal setting → Planning
- Monitoring → Attention and inhibition
- Reflection → Metacognition and emotional regulation

(Follmer & Sperling, 2016; Zimmerman, 2000)

Introducing GUIDE-C

- **Goal-directed**
- **Unified**
- **Individualized Development through Executive Function Coaching**

Coaching template

- Alignment with SRL forethought phase
- Student-friendly

Executive Function Coaching Session Form

Client Name: _____ Session Number: _____ Date: _____

Subjective: Describe the client's self-reported thoughts, emotions, or challenges related to executive function and task performance:

Objective (Goals)

Previous Goals:

1. _____
(Met / Not Met / Partially Met)

2. _____
(Met / Not Met / Partially Met)

3. _____
(Met / Not Met / Partially Met)

Current Goals:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Assessment

Brief summary of session discussion, including identified barriers, strategies used, and progress made:

Plan: Outline planned strategies, tools, or behavioral supports to address identified needs and promote goal attainment:

Identify barriers to goal completion	●
Apply compensatory techniques (e.g., self-reward, task apps, reminders)	
Utilize digital tools (e.g., calendar apps, task organizers)	
Schedule follow-up and adjust goals as necessary	

Notes:

Coach Signature: _____ Client Signature (optional): _____



Implementation: Coaching Framework

- Student-centered collaborative relationship
- Designed to elicit self-awareness
- Allows focus on contextual, academic, and occupational needs for optimal performance
- Provides supports not typically received from typical accommodations
- Addresses the WHOLE person



Implementation: Coaching Framework Cont.



- Integration into daily instructional routines
- Alignment with IEP goals
- Differentiation across general and special education settings
- Learning considerations
- Cost-effective
- Offered in multiple modalities

Practice-Based EF Strategies



- Visual goal-setting organizers
- Self-monitoring checklists
- Reflection prompts
- Task initiation and sustained attention supports
- Guided metacognitive questioning
- Emotional regulation prompts

EF Areas	Question Topics	Examples of Goals Created
Self-Management to Time	Procrastination, forgetfulness, poor task initiation, undermotivated	Calendars, timers, assessing predicted task labor
Self-Organization	Slow information processing, difficulty organizing thoughts, actions, and writing, difficulty problem-solving	Organizing personal space, personal activities, and academic tasks, taking notes, recording lectures
Self-Restraint	Poor inhibition, impulsivity, not keeping consequences in mind	Using features on devices (e.g., do not disturb, sleep mode). Setting time limits for leisure activities
Self-Motivation	Inconsistency with quality of work, poor effort, requires frequent supervision and instruction, poor persistence	Life balance goals including sleep-hygiene and exercise, implementing rewards for task completion
Self-Regulation of Emotion	Have difficulty calming down when upset, difficulty changing to positive mindset	Implement positive self-talk goals, meditation and mindfulness goals, preparing self for emotionally charged conversations

Implementation Checklist



EF instruction promotes autonomy and equity.

- Requires explicit instruction and coaching within authentic learning contexts.
- Intervention can reduce long-term disparities in access to cognitive and behavioral supports.

SRL provides a coherent theoretical structure.

- Educators play a critical role in cultivating student autonomy, persistence, and goal-directed learning.
- SRL emphasis on motivation and affect relates to EF engagement during learning tasks.

GUIDE-C offers sustainable, scalable implementation.

- Structured, developmentally responsive framework adaptable across grade levels and inclusive settings
- Coaching models promote sustained academic engagement and adaptive learning behaviors.

References and Materials



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Thank you for listening & stay in touch

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