Seeing Your Child With ADHD Differently

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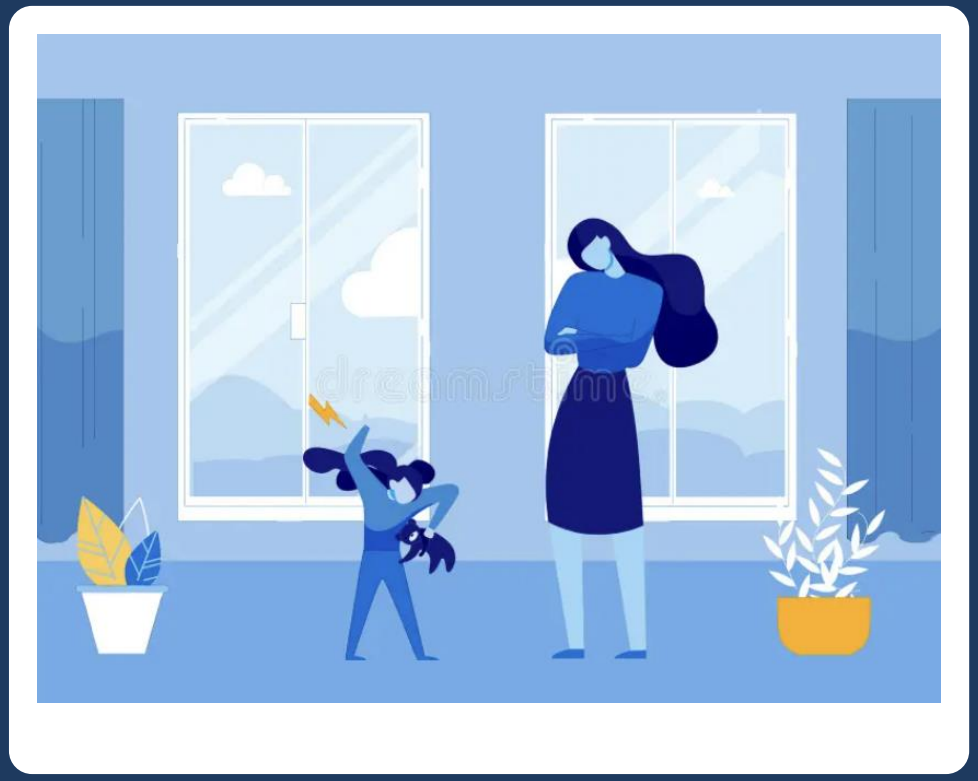


ADHD Basics

01

ADHD is a ‘magnet’ and often associated with learning, language, anxiety, ASD or specific medical issues

02

It is probably underdiagnosed and overdiagnosed at the same time

03

There is a significant genetic component

Some things that help with understanding the how and why of people with ADHD

Time Blindness

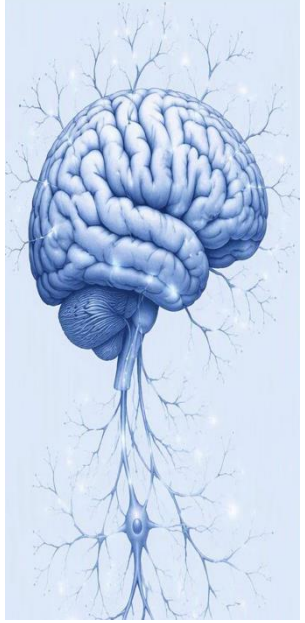
- Every Time Is Like the ‘First Time’
- Do not reflect on past experiences
- Struggle with sequential thinking
- The impact of this on ‘emotional regulation’

But You Did It Yesterday!

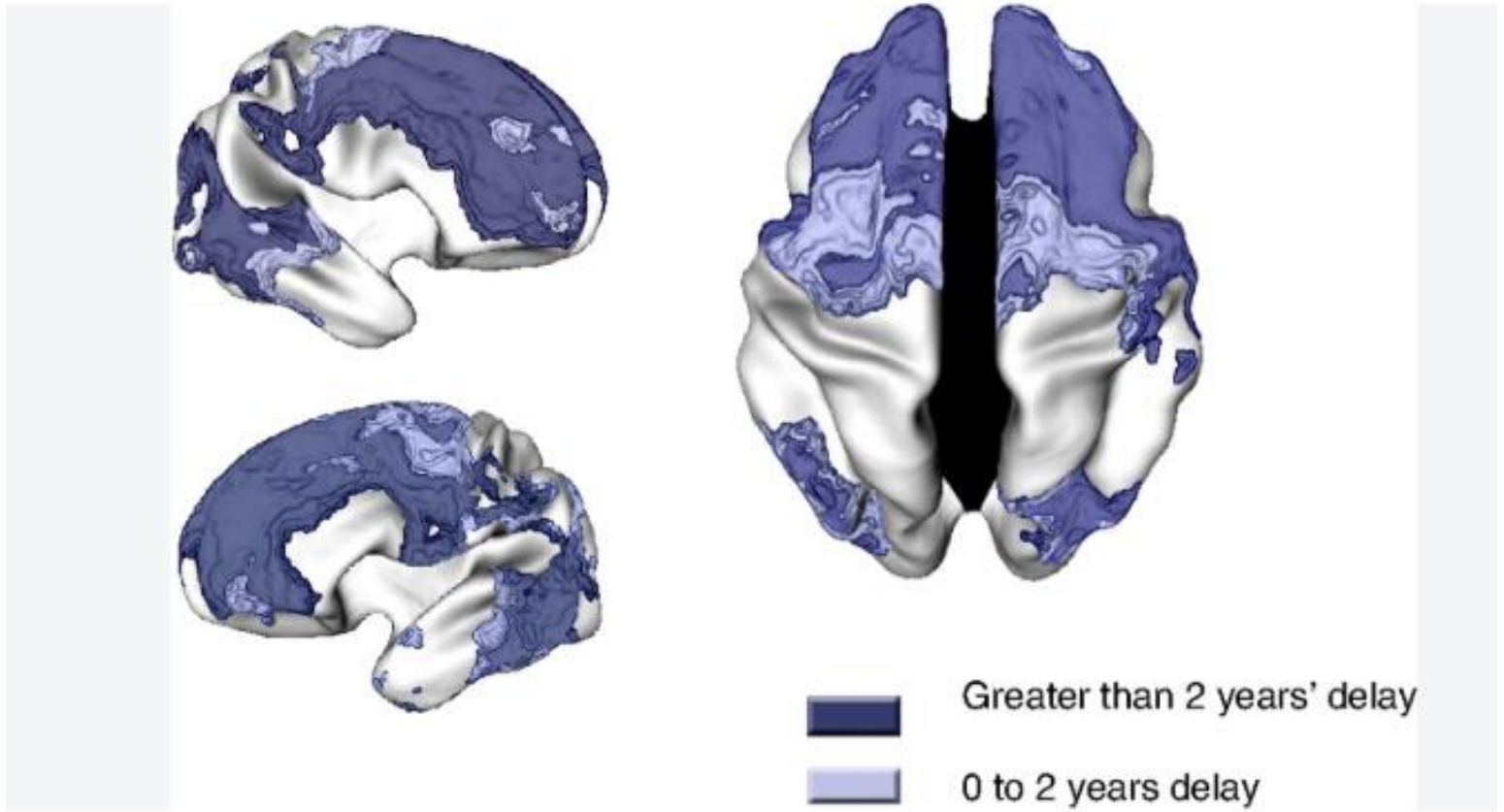
- ‘Consistently inconsistent’
- Able to practice focused attention on tasks of interest
- Cultivating motivation in the context of inconsistency

Cognitive Patterns and Neurology Matter

- Sleep and Working Memory
- Screen time and Executive Functions
- Exercise and Neurotransmitters
- Some neurology…



Neuromaturation in ADHD (and maturation…)

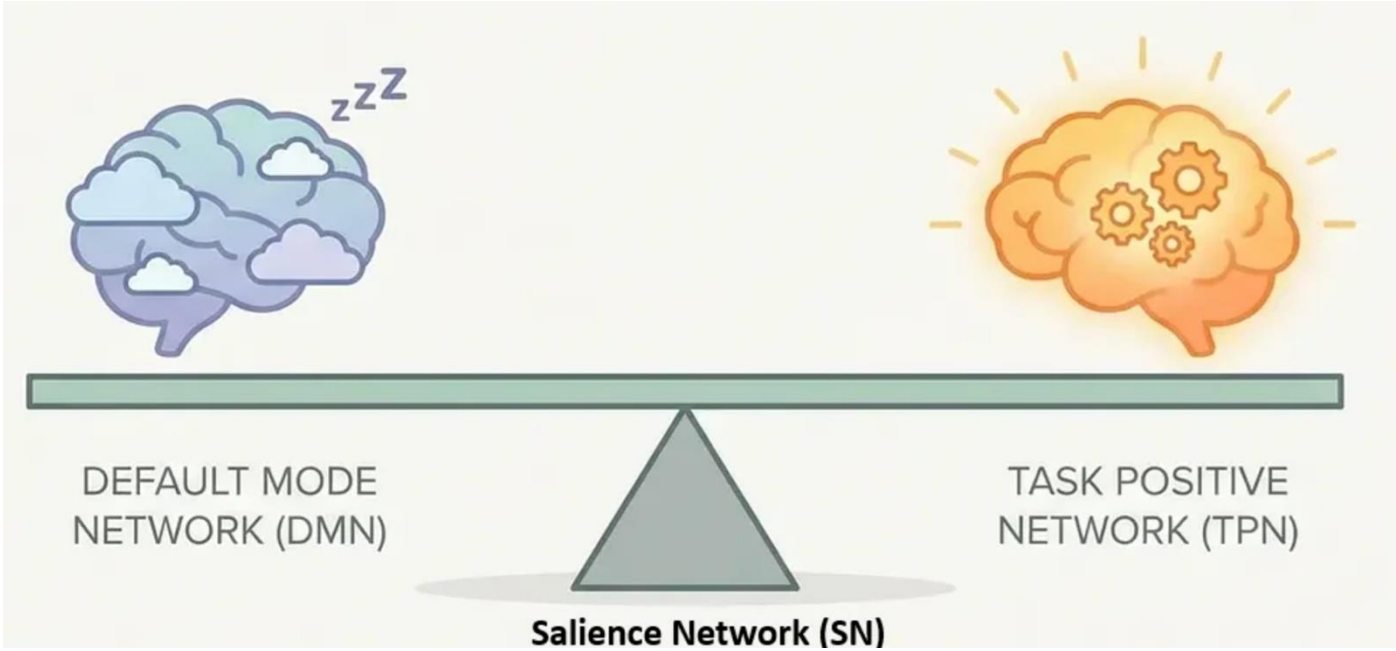


The Default Mode Network – Task Positive Network

DMN daydreaming, mind wandering, ruminating

TPN deliberate focused attention

What is different in ADHD??



With These in Mind:

1

Won't vs. Can't

2

Control vs. Agency

3

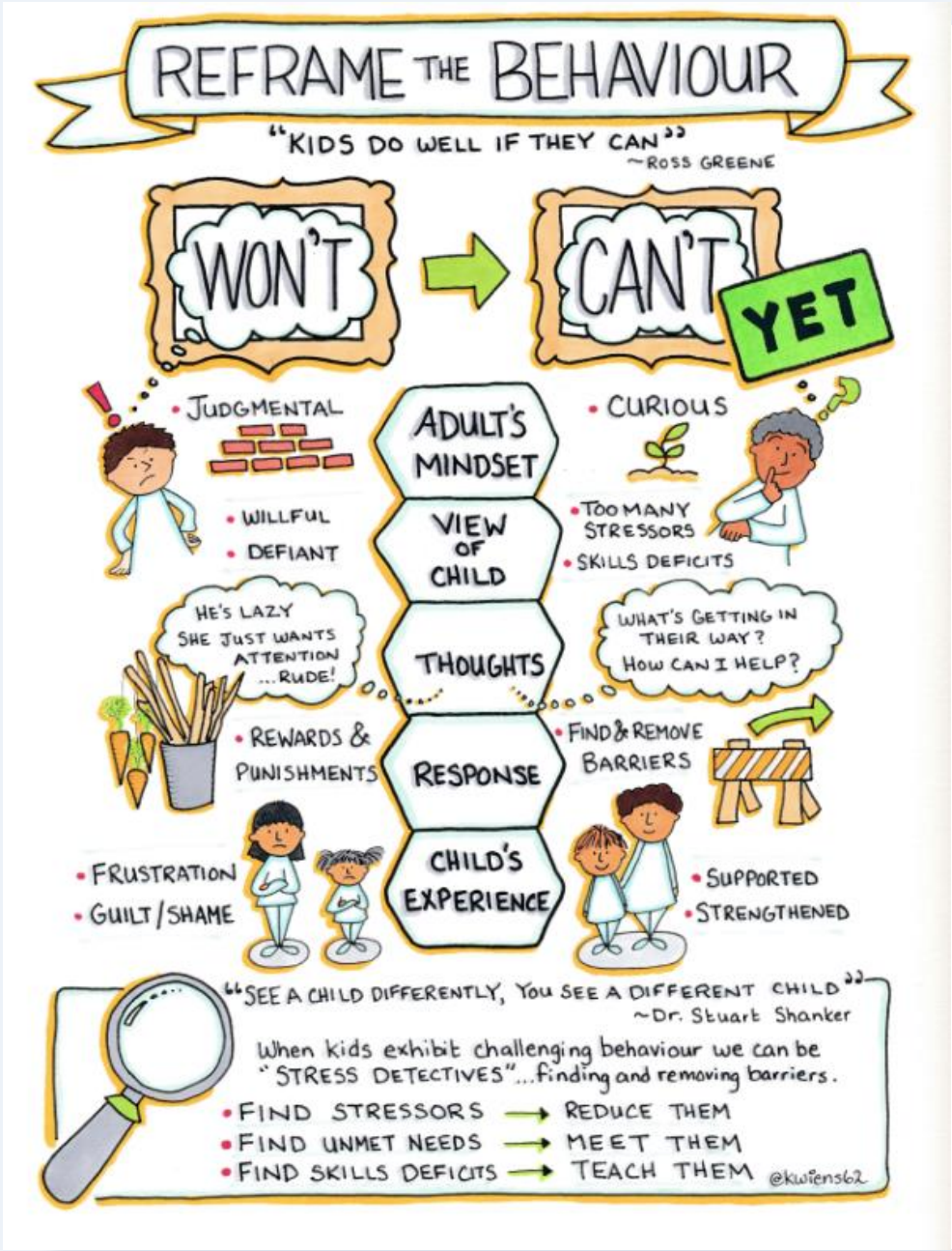
Perfection vs. Resilience

4

ADHD and the Whole Child

5

Expectations vs. Connections


REFRAME THE BEHAVIOUR
"KIDS DO WELL IF THEY CAN"
~ROSS GREENE
WON'T
CAN'T
YET
ADULT'S MINDSET
• JUDGMENTAL
• CURIOUS
VIEW OF CHILD
• WILLFUL
• DEFIANT
• TOO MANY STRESSORS
• SKILLS DEFICITS
THOUGHTS
HE'S LAZY SHE JUST WANTS ATTENTION ...RUDE!
WHAT'S GETTING IN THEIR WAY? HOW CAN I HELP?
RESPONSE
• REWARDS & PUNISHMENTS
• FIND & REMOVE BARRIERS
CHILD'S EXPERIENCE
• FRUSTRATION
• GUILT/SHAME
• SUPPORTED
• STRENGTHENED
"SEE A CHILD DIFFERENTLY, YOU SEE A DIFFERENT CHILD"
~Dr. Stuart Shanker
When kids exhibit challenging behaviour we can be "STRESS DETECTIVES"...finding and removing barriers.
• FIND STRESSORS → REDUCE THEM
• FIND UNMET NEEDS → MEET THEM
• FIND SKILLS DEFICITS → TEACH THEM
@kwiens62

On Being Curious and Collaborative

Thinking this way:

- About the child's inconsistencies
- About repetitive 'misbehavior' – what is hard for my child and why, what skills does my child need to learn?
- About explosive responses

And using 'Collaborative Problem Solving' Approaches

(Dr. Ross Greene)

1 **Empathy Step**
Gathering Information… 'I've noticed that…' To understand child's perspective/concern – active listening only

2 **Define the Problem Step**
Adult introduces their concern. Concerns are treated as equally relevant… 'I am concerned that…' … 'The thing is…'

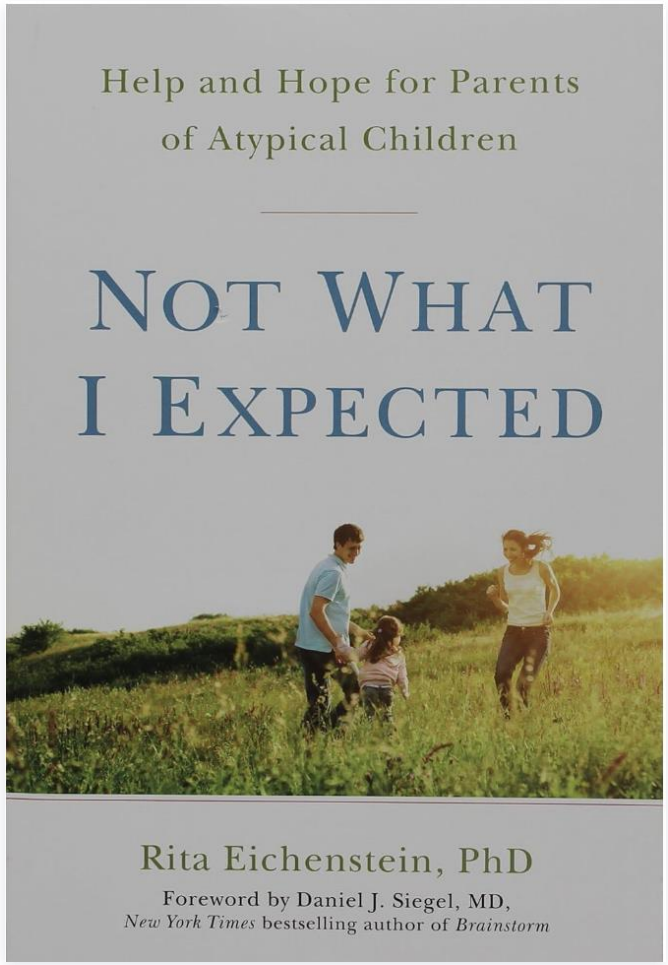
3 **Invitation Step**
Brainstorm mutually satisfactory solutions together… 'I wonder if there is a way…' – leading to a solution both agree they can perform

"Lives in the Balance" · *"The Explosive Child"*

Why CPS with ADHD??

- Parents model and teach the flexibility and problem solving **skills** the child needs to learn (can't becomes can!)
- The 'script' is readily applied for a variety of situations and for a variety of ages
- It feels a lot better to be collaborative than confrontational – for parents and children
- It does not displace the use of other strategies for reinforcing skills the child does have, but needs to practice

Collaborative Problem Solving Fosters Connection



- Confronts the fallacy of **'Should'** – If they could, they would
  - Who gets to decide the 'should'?
  - Variation, Delay, Deviation … Diagnosis
- **Normalizes** the challenges the child is experiencing – along with **empathizing**, the parent is providing a sense of the 'typicality' of what the child is experiencing
- Creates a sense of **emotional safety** for the child – replaces shame/guilt cycle with a sense that they are part of the 'team' with their parent (or teacher)
- Research shows there is diminished 'oppositional behavior', improved impulse control, flexibility, frustration tolerance >> improved self regulation

If parents want to give their children a gift, the best thing they can do is to teach their children to love challenges, be intrigued by mistakes, enjoy effort and keep on learning. That way, their children don't have to be slaves of praise. They will have a lifelong way to build and repair their own confidence.

— Carol Dweck

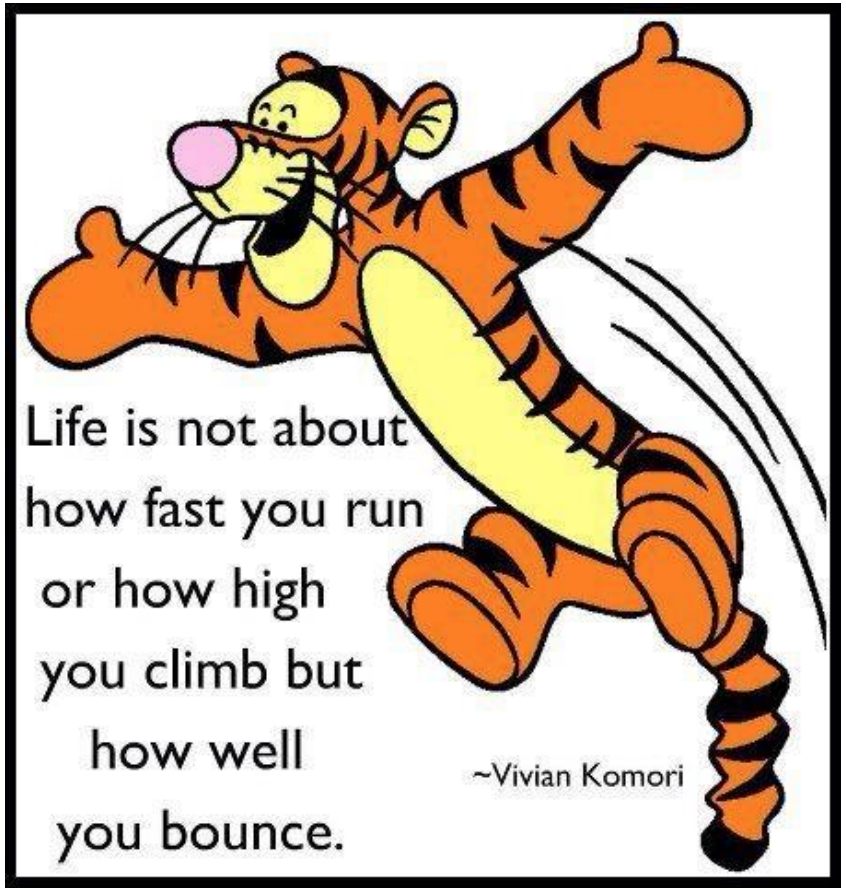
Resilience Is A/An...

Process

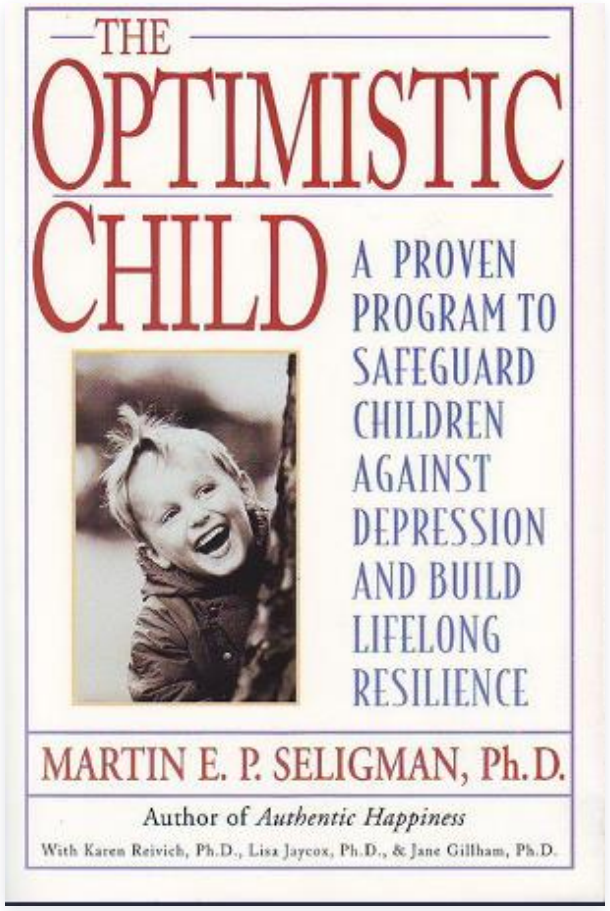
Bouncing back or recovering when hit by unexpected demands, from **out of the blue**.

Outcome

Normal development under difficult conditions.



Resilience Vs. Perfectionism



- Perfection is inherently incompatible with inconsistency… so people with ADHD are frequently misunderstood and ‘accused’ because of their inconsistency
- We can do nothing to completely guarantee what the future will bring our children, we can guarantee they have the resilience to deal with it
- Research shows that for children with specific learning differences, for example, **tenacity** is the single most important attribute. Tenacity is sustained in a resilient mind set.
- There is more neuroplasticity in early childhood than at any other time in life.
- The importance of ‘inoculation’ with small stressors…

Cultivating Self Reliance

An internal locus of control, a sense that you are in capacity of the ability to master your life circumstances. If you feel you can guide your own destiny, you are more likely to adapt positively to adversity.

What do impulsivity, inattention, diminished executive function do to your sense of self reliance?

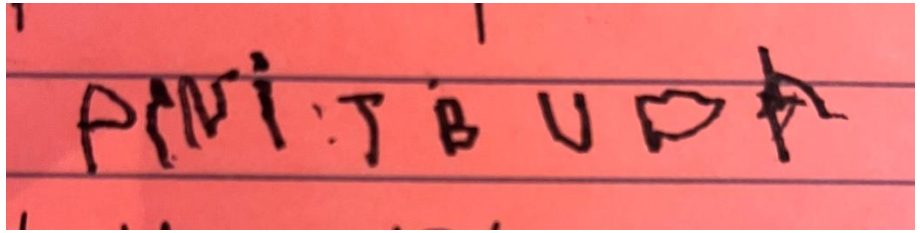
Agency is… A socially situated capacity to act

Sense

I have the ability to make my own decisions and choices, I can influence events and control my own life

Opportunities to Exercise that Sense

There are situations where I am afforded the chance to exercise my sense of agency… I take initiative, set goals, make choices and act on them…



Agency takes many, different forms at different ages!

Thinking about a transition from ‘control’ to ‘agency’

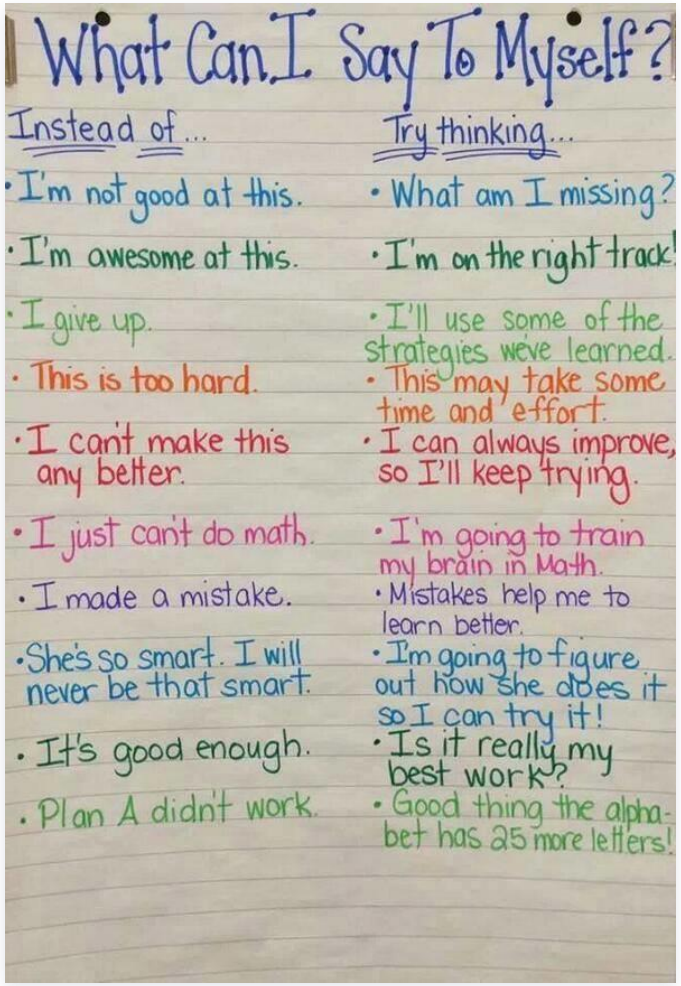
Control

- Critical for issues of safety and basic respect
- Can take the form of preparation, anticipation, planning, informing
- Age and developmental stage specific considerations
- Often with very specific objectives/outcomes related to a predefined sense of what is optimal
- Specific concerns about lack of alertness to social cues or to environmental challenges

Agency

- Children often only want to solve problems they define – give them practice in doing this and entrust them to define and solve, with support
- They feel they are valued and heard
- They are motivated and interested to try
- Feel capable of understanding themselves and relating to others
- Embodies the sense that even if there are challenges, they have capacity to address them
- Goes hand in hand with resilience

‘Resilient’ in the Classroom



	Resilient Students	‘Helpless’ Students
Goals	set learning goals – learn for understanding	set performance goals – learn for grade
Tasks	to test themselves	to gain approval or avoid disapproval
Challenge	seek out new challenges	avoid new challenges
To achieve success	believe effort is more important than ability	believe ability is more important than effort
Reaction to failure	take responsibility, learn from mistakes	take no responsibility, repeat, give up
View of intelligence	is flexible, can be developed and grown	is fixed, unalterable with definite limit
Locus of Control	internal	external
Future expectations	optimistic	pessimistic

Who Is Your Child??

The language of the 'whole child'. A child has been 'diagnosed with ADHD' – they are NOT ADHD any more than they are Asthma or Eczema

Identifying and strengthening strengths

- How to make this a priority
- Areas of strength are where children build tenacity and resilience – because they are inherently motivated to work at them
- A chance to focus on the importance of effort
- A place to find their 'tribe'

Learning to use their inherent capacities differently

Default network ramblings…

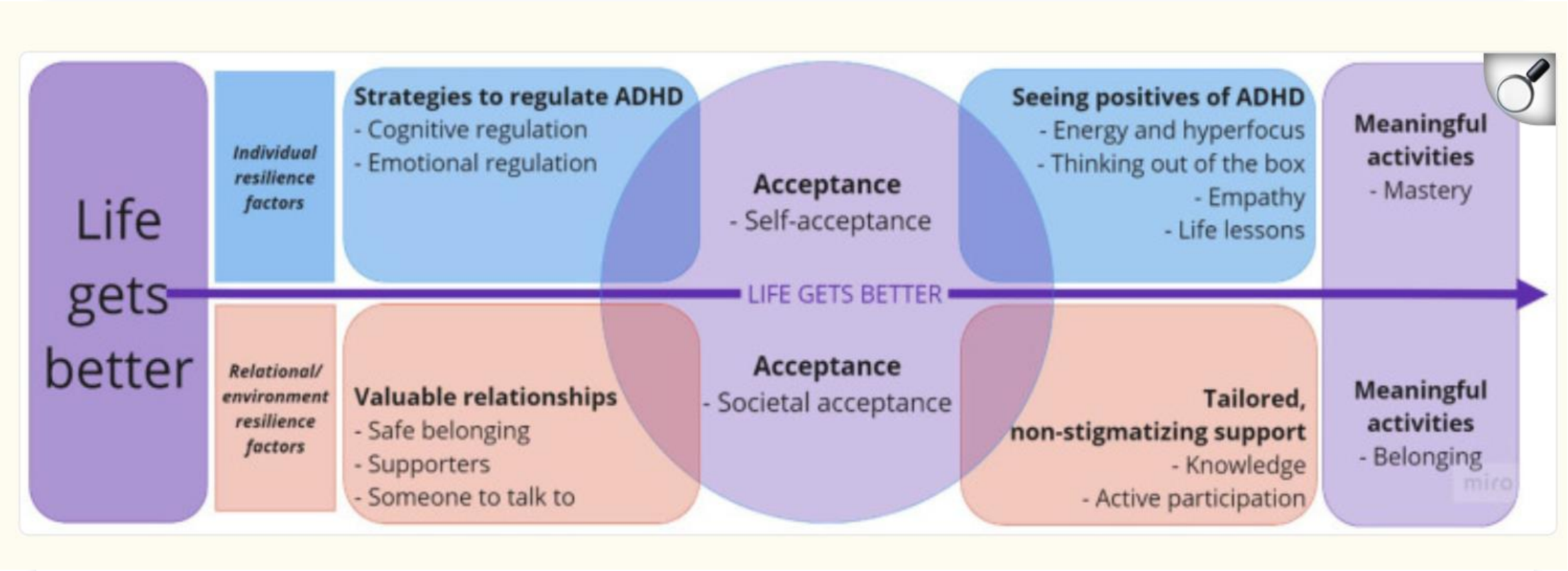
'Overfocus'…

Insatiability…

Empathy

About the cultivation of resilience and adult life!

Life Gets Better: Important Resilience Factors When Growing Up with ADHD



Cecile R. Dangmann et al. Journal of Attention Disorders, April 2024