“The well-being of children is inseparable from the well-being of all the critical adults in their lives.”

- Dr. Stuart Shanker
Looking at Resilience through a Self-Reg Lens

KidsAbility School Authority Waterloo

Linda Warren
The MEHRIT Centre
www.self-reg.ca
@Self_Reg
Starting with Ourselves:
Finding Calm

What does calm feel like for you?
Learning for Today

- A Quick Review of Self-Reg
- Stress and the Brain Body Connection
- The Five Domains
- The Shanker Self-Reg™ Method
- Self-Reg and Resiliency
- So Now What
  - Self-reg of adults is critical
  - Planning for our students
What would you like to accomplish today?

A quick update...
Self-Regulation: Energy Tension and Recovery

Self-Reg is a process that defines how effectively and efficiently a person deals with stressors and then recovers.

With each stressor, the brain or body responds with processes that consume energy.

This is followed by restorative processes to recover from this energy expenditure.
Self-Reg in the Early Years

• Refers to the manner in which a child recovers from the expenditure of energy required to deal with stressors

• Prolonged and excessive stress can impact language, problem solving, self control and all executive function

• Is wiring the response to stressors, developing pathways

• Need to help the child feel safe and secure and return to calm when they are startled
Energy/Tension Matrix

Hierarchy of a Stress Response

Social Engagement → Fight or Flight → Freeze

Dr. Stephen Porges

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“There is no such thing as a bad kid.”

-Dr. Stuart Shanker
When Calmly Focused and Alert

• Modulate emotions
• Pay attention and ignore distractions
• Inhibit impulses
• Assess the consequences of an action
• Understand what others are thinking and feeling and the effects of their own behaviours
• Feel empathy for others
• Can exercise improved self-control
• A person’s capacity to learn is not pre-determined
Shanker Self-Reg

Reflect: Stress awareness

Respond: Restoration & resilience

Reframe the behaviour

Biological

Emotion

Social

Cognitive

Reduce the stress

Recognize the stressors
Bringing self-reg to your students

Select a student and record some concerns.
The Shanker Method™: 5 Steps

1. Read and **Reframe** the Behaviour
2. **Recognize** the Stressors
3. **Reduce** the Stress
4. **Reflect**: Develop Stress Awareness
5. **Respond**: Develop Personal Strategies to Promote Restoration and Resilience
1 Read and Reframe
Misbehaviour vs. Stress Behaviour

**Misbehaviour**
A child/youth/adult:
- has the capacity to act differently
- *could* have acted differently
- is aware that he/she could have acted differently

**Stress Behaviour**
A child/youth/adult:
- is not fully aware of his/her actions
- is not fully aware of why
- has limited capacity to act differently

**Stress behaviour is caused by too a high stress-load.**

The challenge in doing Self-Reg is figuring out why the stress is so high.
REFRAMING THE BEHAVIOUR

"Kids do well if they can."

--- Ross Greene

**WON'T**
- Judgmental
- Willful
- Defiant
- He's lazy. She just wants attention... rude!

**CAN'T**
- Curious
- Too many stressors
- Skills deficits
- What's getting in their way? How can I help?

**ADULT'S MINDSET**
- Find & remove barriers
- Supported
- Strengthened

**VIEW OF CHILD**
- Find & remove barriers
- Supported
- Strengthened

**THOUGHTS**
- Rewards & punishments
- Frustration
- Guilt/shame

**RESPONSE**
- Find & remove barriers
- Supported
- Strengthened

**CHILD'S EXPERIENCE**
- Find & remove barriers
- 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

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Bringing self-reg to your students

Read and reframe.
Recognize the Stressors

Biological: Noises, crowds, too much visual stimulation, not enough exercise, lack of sleep, junk food

Emotion: Strong emotions, both positive (over-excited) & negative (anger, fear)

Cognitive: Difficulty processing certain kinds of information

Social: Difficulty picking up on social cues, or understanding effect of behaviour on others

Prosocial: Difficulty coping with other people’s stress; sense of injustice (may include misinterpreting stress behavior as misbehavior)
A Five Domain Scan

- Stressors including hidden stress
- Impact of excessive stress
- Recovery time

- At the same time, there are protective factors

Be open to understanding
Bringing self-reg to your students

Recognizing the stressors with a Five Domain Scan
Effects of Allostatic Overload

- Heightened stress reactivity, impulsivity or numbing
- Reduced ability to regulate/show emotions
- Reduced ability to read affect cues
- Finds it difficult to stay focused and alert
- Increased sensitivity to pain (physical and emotional)
- Negative Bias
- Person becomes chronically hypoaroused or hyperaroused
- Disrupts learning (hippocampus; HPA pathway)
- Increased immune system problems
- Diminished ability to return to baseline after activation of the stress response
Reduce the Stress
Bringing self-reg to your students

Reduce the stress: consider some strategies
Reflect on Stress Awareness

- Can be in relation to temporary stimulus (someone screaming “fire”!)
- Can be chronically triggered from early trauma (heightened vigilance was adaptive in early years of brain development and promoted survival)
- Can be chronically triggered from excessive stress
Behaviour is a communication tool – an activated stress response

- Difficulty tolerating frustration
- Heightened impulsivity
- Difficulty ignoring distractions
- Inattention
- Problems in mood (sees everything negatively)
- Oppositional Behaviour
- Erratic mood swings
- Trouble listening
- What student is saying doesn’t make sense
- Hyperarousal/Hypoarousal

Why and why now?
Self-Regulation ≠ Self-Control

Self-Control lens: inhibit or manage problems as they arise.

Self-Regulation lens: identify and reduce the causes of problems in mood, thought, and behaviour.

Self-Regulation comes first. It makes Self-Control possible.
“Children can only exercise self-control when they are calm, and that requires knowing when and why they are agitated and what they can do to return to being calm.”

- Dr. Stuart Shanker
Bringing self-reg to your students

Who is reflecting on stress awareness?
How do we support?
Respond: Restoration and Recovery

- Practice holistic, proactive restoration
- Create connections and positive relationships
- Craft safe, welcoming and inclusive spaces
- Model self-regulation practice
- Learn and share
  - Brain/body connection
  - Five Domains
  - Shanker Self-Reg Method©

Personal Respond Reflection
Bringing self-reg to your students

Step 5: A Proactive and Holistic Response
Neuroception

Safety is not about the absence of threat, it is about the presence of environmental and relationship cues that inhibit defense circuits (i.e. stress response). Subcortical surveillance.
Dr. Jean Clinton on the Early Years

• From her learning in First Nations she shares that children are our sacred ones
• The quality of the relationship is builds the brain connections across multiple areas which sets the child up for a success beyond the early years
• Consider connection and/or correction
• Expression of our DNA gets altered by our experiences. It’s about how nurture interacts with nature
• Quality of interactions can help to mitigate stress
Dr. Jean Clinton on the Early Years

• Toxic Stress “becomes a threat when the system is turned on and there isn’t any buffering relationship to help children turn it off or help them learn how to deal with stress. It’s problematic when children experience toxic stress because we know the consequences affect brain and health development along with the immune system.”

• Toxic stress can be transmitted inter-generationally
What is resilience?

- Ability to overcome adversity?
- Ungar defines it as the ability to navigate psychological, social, cultural and physical resources along with the capacity to negotiate for these resources to be provided in culturally meaningful ways.
- Shanker, through a “self-reg view, rests on how well we can stabilize after a challenge, serious or otherwise...the ability to get back to our optimal state of equilibrium.”
Questions about resilience

- First question was “What were the protective factors?”
- Better question is “Why is it that only some and not all students can negotiate for and navigate their way to these resources?”
- Important question, “What can we do to help those who lack these ‘protection seeking factors’?”
How to impact resilience

• According to Ungar, “connectedness”
• Porges speaks about homeostasis
• Shanker looks at co- and self-regulation and being able to recognize the need to rest and recover

• In all, social engagement is important for resiliency
Paradox of Resilience

• We need social engagement to feel safe
• Only when we feel safe, are we able to utilize social engagement

• In order to strengthen a non-resilient student, we need to increase their capacity to connect by helping the child to turn off their alarm, especially if it is kindled
• They can start to read their own internal signs

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Questions?

Hmmmmm...
So Now What?

Ground Outline, Peter Kolisnyk, 1978
“We need to help the child learn, and maybe we ourselves need to relearn, what it feels like to be calm and to notice when one is dipping into a low energy and high tension state.”

- Dr. Stuart Shanker
Create a Self-Reg Haven

Attitude

Understanding

Teamwork

Self-Care

Thinking and Being
Lend Your Calm

What does it change for you and others?
Building Your Own Resiliency

What are some things you are already doing to support self-regulation for yourself?

What is the impact on those in your personal and/or professional life?
Start Small in Your Work Space

Take a mental snapshot of the space

What could be modified?
Are there challenges?
Consider all the stakeholders.
Supporting Your Students

• With a partner, consider a second student through a self-regulation lens
  • Profiles may be helpful
  • Might you view them differently?

• How have you, or can you, support the student in learning how to self-regulate?

• What have you, or can you, change in your environment to reduce stress levels?

• What do you do to support all students in recognizing when they are under or over-stimulated?

• How can you help all students recognize what sorts of activities help them to become calm and what activities do they need to limit?
The MEHRIT Centre website
Critical Role of Adults
Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing ever has.

Margaret Mead
See a child differently, you see a different child.

-Dr. Stuart Shanker
Where to Begin

- Where you are
- Finding and lending your calm
- Co-regulation as the norm
- Be a stress detective
- The Shanker Method
Questions?

Hmmmmm...
Self-Reg on Social Media

The MEHRIT Centre
@Self_Reg  Follows you

The Shanker Method
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Reduce stress, restore energy and learn about Self-Reg for 30 days. $30/person (12 class) or $95/person for the full-package with tracking, mentoring, extra content from Dr. Shanker, and a completion certificate.

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Recognize Self-Reg Everywhere
“no such thing as a bad kid”

-Stuart Shanker