Understanding the "Why" Behind Behaviour + Practical Strategies for Children & Educators

Trisha Mendoza MSW, RSW
The MEHRIT Centre Ltd.

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So many of the behaviors we see in children today seem inexplicable until we realize that we are dealing with the effects of excessive stress.

- Dr. Stuart Shanker

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Is it Misbehaviour or Stress Behaviour?

If it's Misbehaviour

- Individual can chose to act a certain way
- Is aware shouldn't act "that" way
- Could have chosen/acted differently

If it's Stress Behaviour

- Individual did not *choose* to act a certain way
- Behaviour caused by limbic and sub-limbic processes
- Extremely difficult for individual to control this behaviour

Stress behaviour results from the stress "backpack" outweighing resources.

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Shanker Self-Reg: A process for understanding STRESS and managing TENSION and ENERGY.

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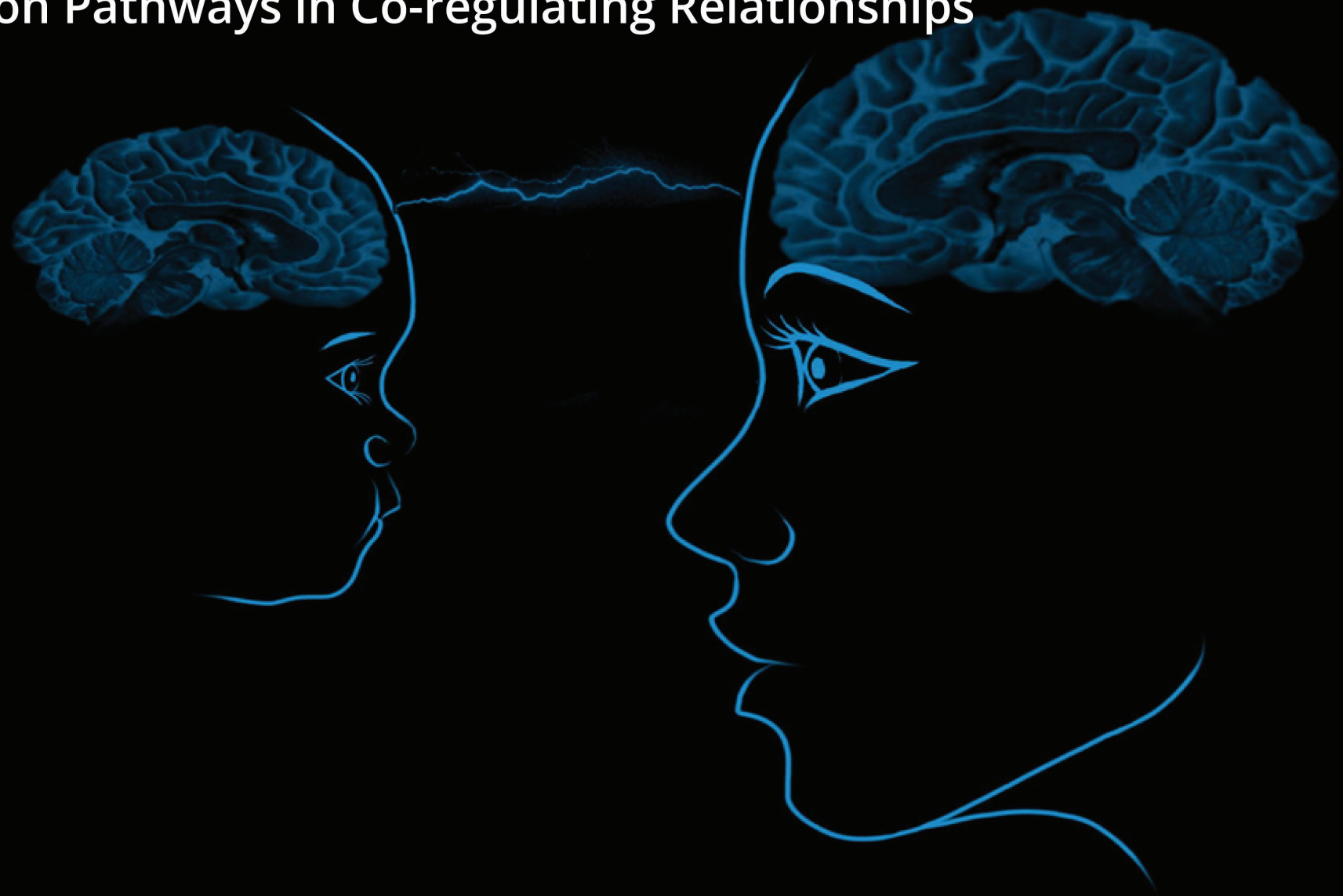
The Interbrain:

Communication Pathways in Co-regulating Relationships



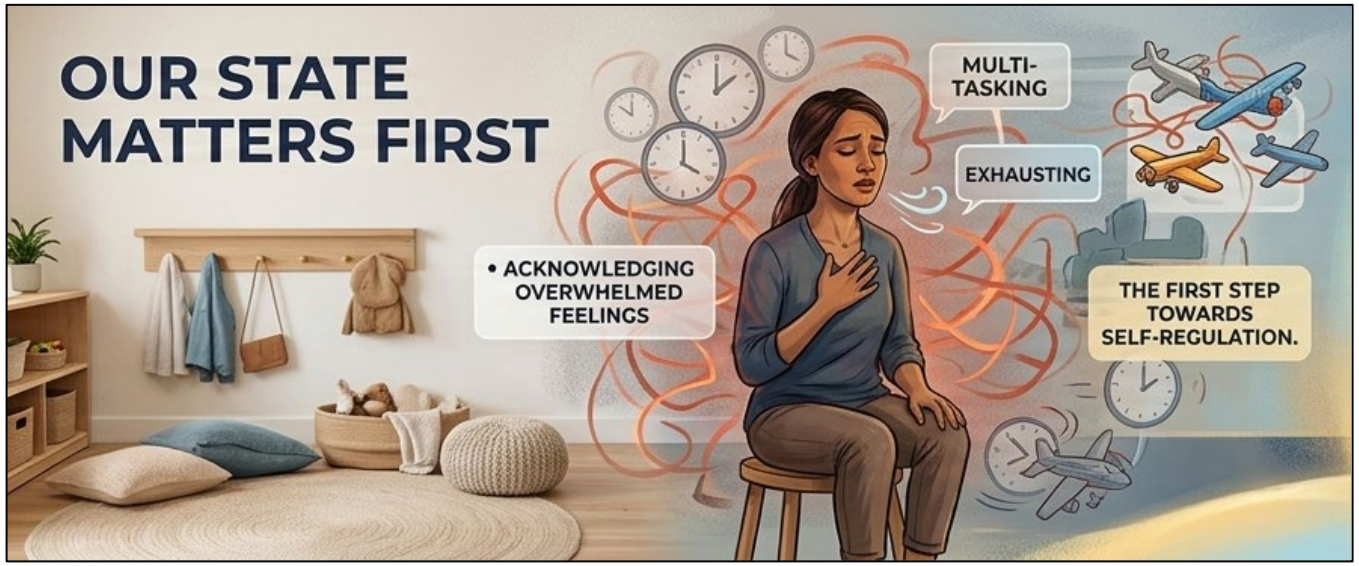


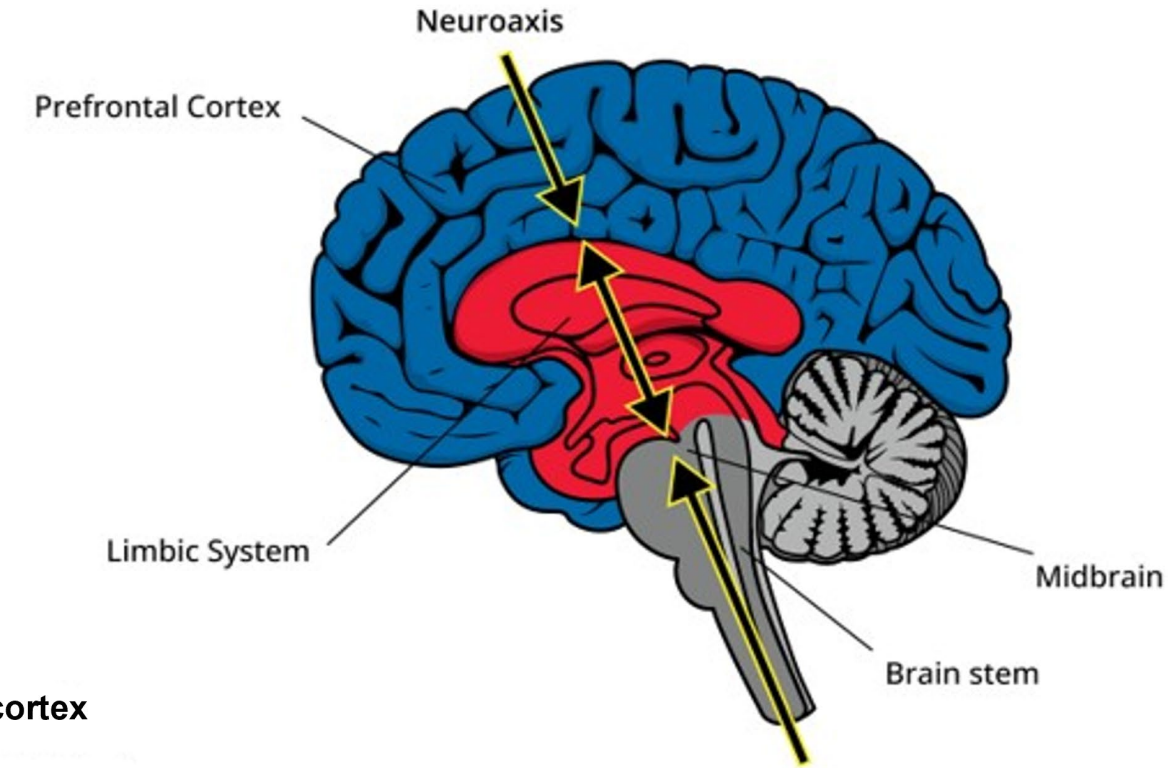
Photo credit: Gemini

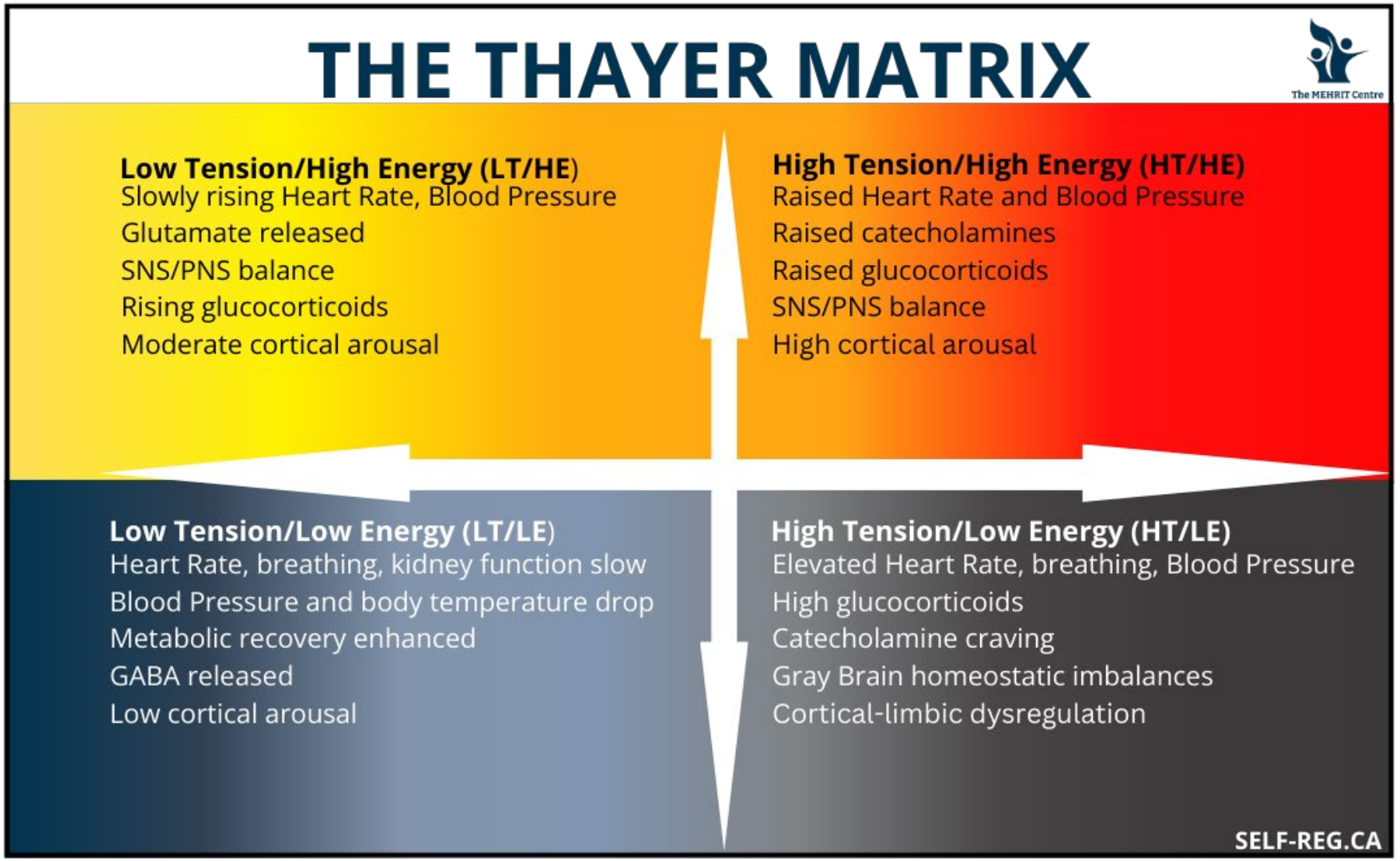
YOU
@kwiens62
ARE THE
Strategy
~ SUSAN HOPKINS ~

WE BRAIN

ME BRAIN

SEEKS *Balance*, SEEKS *Safety*





Adapted by The MEHRIT Centre from: Robert E. Thayer (1996): The Origin of Everyday Moods:
Managing Energy, Tension, and Stress

THE THAYER MATRIX

The MEHRIT Centre

Low Tension/High Energy (LT/HE)

High Tension/High Energy (HT/HE)

Low Tension/Low Energy (LT/LE)

High Tension/Low Energy (HT/LE)

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Managing Energy, Tension, and Stress

Photo credit: Gemini

SELF-REG HAS 5 DOMAINS

Biological

Sensory input, sleep, nutrition, and physiological states

Emotional

Managing strong positive and negative feelings

Cognitive

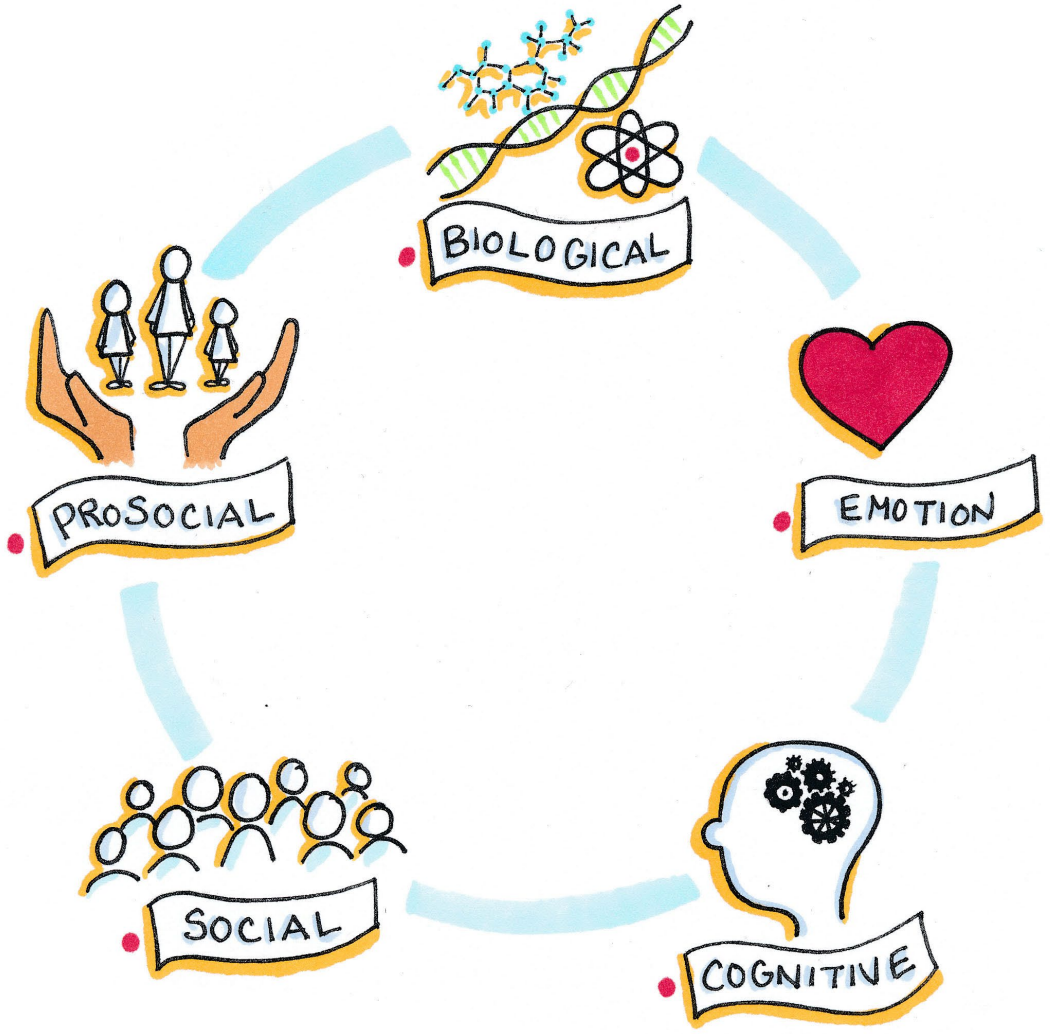
Processing info, focus, and executive functions

Social

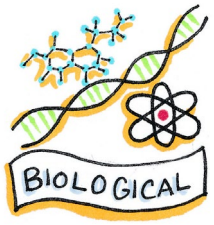
Navigating social cues and interpersonal dynamics

Prosocial

Coping with others' stress, feelings of injustice, empathy and sympathy

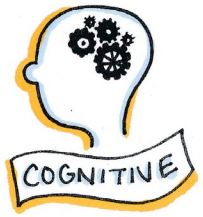


EXAMPLES OF STRESSORS TO REDUCE



Loud noise, crowds, too much visual stimulation, not enough exercise, exhaustion, junk food, allergies, headaches, asthma, smells.

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



Difficulty processing certain kinds of information, recognizing patterns.

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

Difficulty coping with other people's stress; sense of injustice, empathy is an "expensive" emotion.

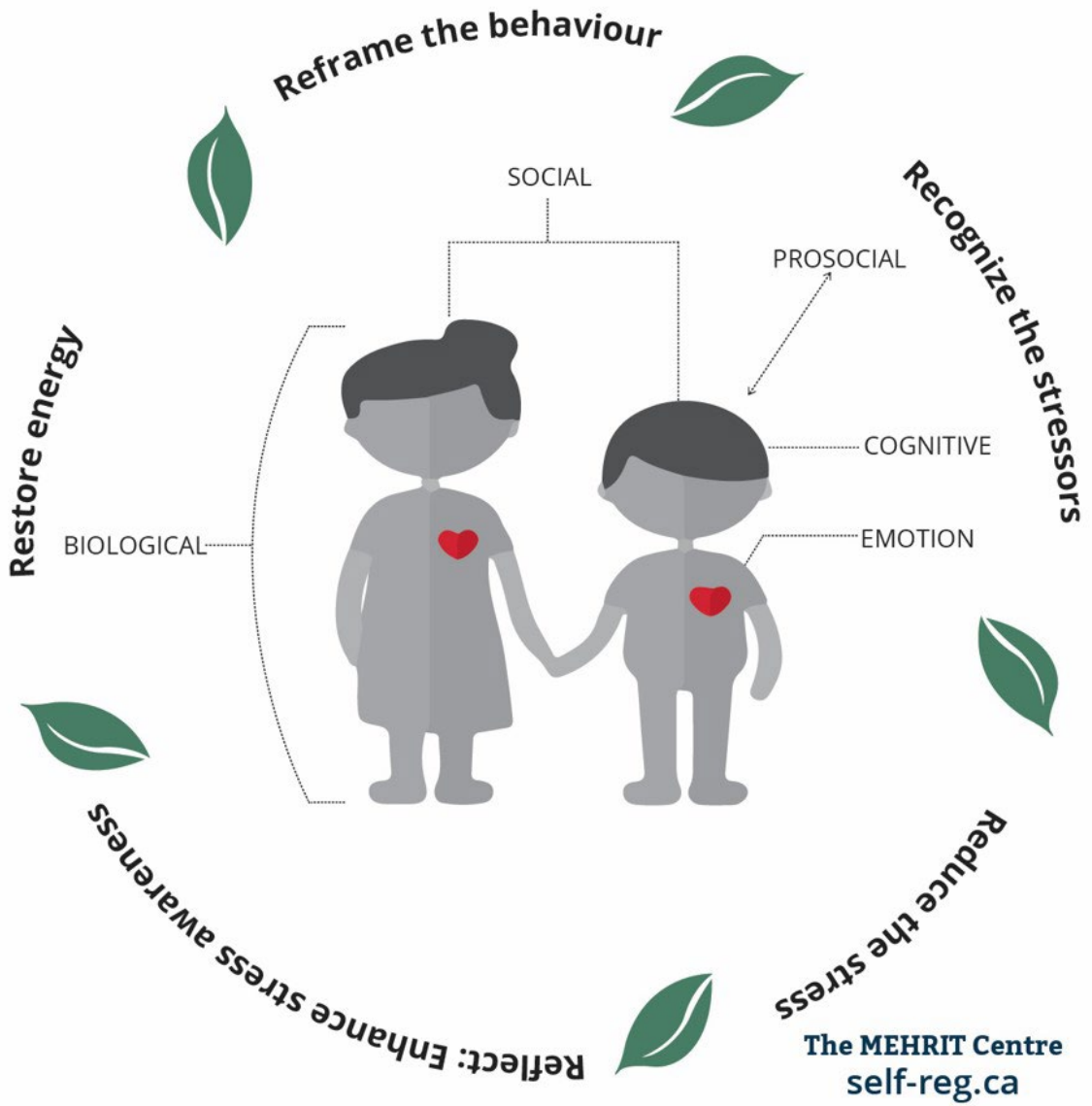
A *busy* day

at the *park*

The Big Questions:
Why? & Why Now?

Photo credit: Gemini

SELF-REG:
5 STEPS ACROSS
5 DOMAINS



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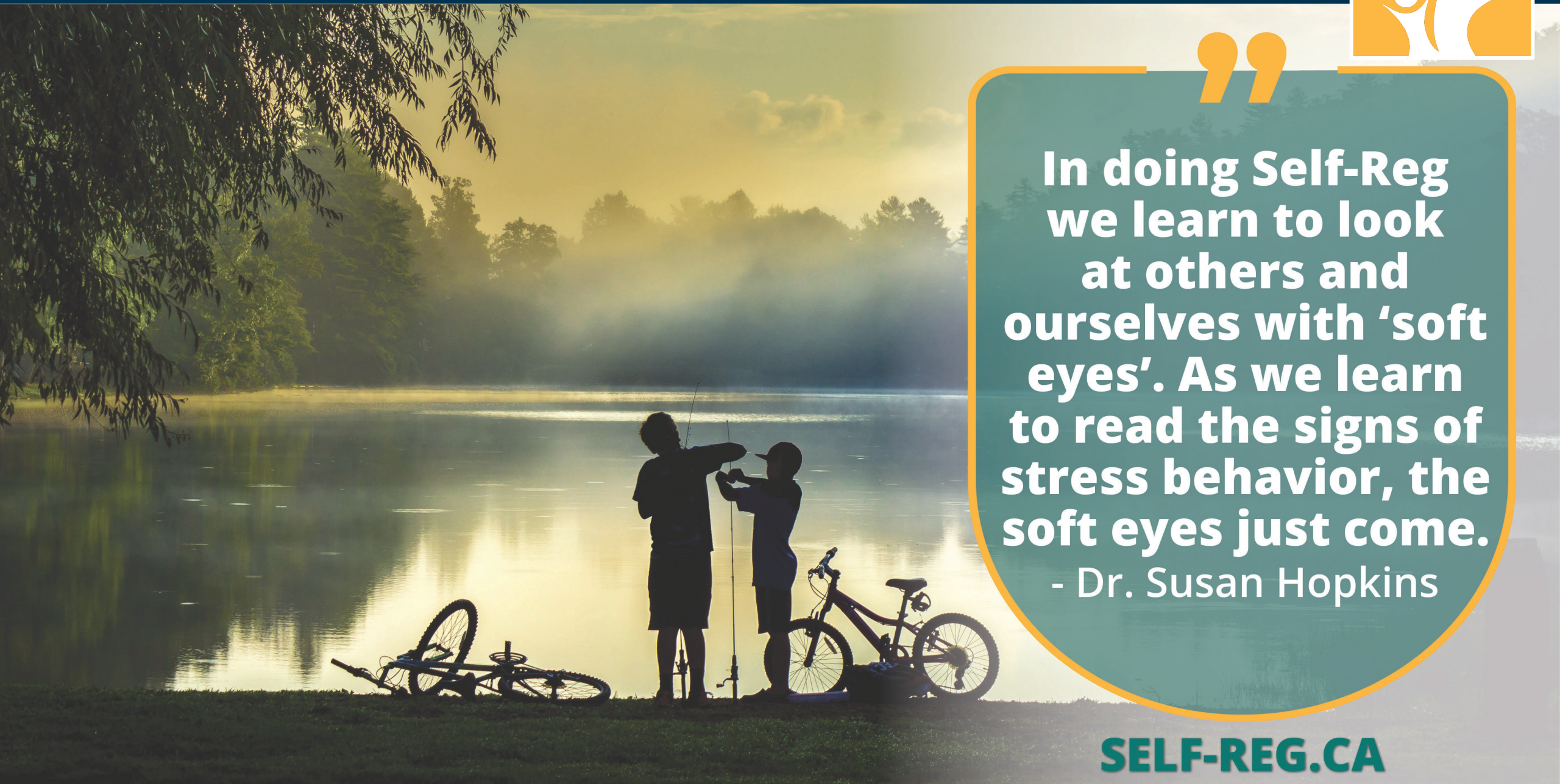

In doing Self-Reg we learn to look at others and ourselves with 'soft eyes'. As we learn to read the signs of stress behavior, the soft eyes just come.

- Dr. Susan Hopkins

SELF-REG.CA

Practical Strategies for the

ECE Environment

Photo credit: Gemini

Tell Me About Your *Stress*...

Environmental *Tweaks*

Photo Credit: Cassie St. Amand (Applejacks Preschool)

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Photo Credit: Cassie St. Amand
(Applejacks Preschool)

Classroom Environment Reflection

The environments we are in are full of stressors across the 5 Domains of Shanker Self-Reg®, and classrooms are no exception. Classroom environments are known to have a substantial impact on children's learning and behaviour. Although ideal environments are individual and context dependent, this poster identifies some key areas to consider and offers some suggestions as to how to make your space as Self-Reg friendly as possible.

Possible Stressors

Stressors come in many shapes and sizes.
Below are some examples of possible stressors you may find in a classroom.

Visual Clutter

Consider decluttering wall, bulletin boards, shelves and furniture, particularly in instructional areas. Minimize, organize and group visual material on walls and shelves, as well as student and teacher work areas. Consider an art gallery which focuses on grouping similar items, simply, tastefully and even colourfully done for visual pleasure and to grasp the attention of the viewer. This helps students find information more easily.

Noise

Allow students to reduce background noise by making noise cancelling headsets or ear buds available. Headphones do not need to be connected to a device.

Scents

Minimize the presence of strong scents, like perfumes, certain foods, or cleaning chemicals.

Lighting

Adjust the amount of lighting needed throughout the day, according to the arousal needs of the classroom. Do what you can to maximize available natural lighting or lessen the intensity of fluorescent lighting.

Hydration & Nutrition

Make sure students have access to, and are encouraged to take, hydration breaks throughout the day. Also ensure that students have access to healthy breakfasts, lunches and snacks.

Seating Options

Offer a variety of seating or standing options allowing for the child to change their body positions. For example, standing desks, a couch, bean bag chairs, peddle desks, etc.

Microenvironments

Microenvironments are spaces within spaces that meet a diverse range of Self-Reg needs. Within a single room, multiple microenvironments can be used to reduce the stressors that negatively impact children's learning and behaviour. Consider incorporating microenvironments into your classroom by creating areas which down or up regulate, for example:

- A carpeted floor area with clipboards
- A tent or fabric over a desk
- A comfy chair or couch away from the desks
- Stationary bikes or foot pedals under desks
- A long table with curtains over the front and pillows underneath

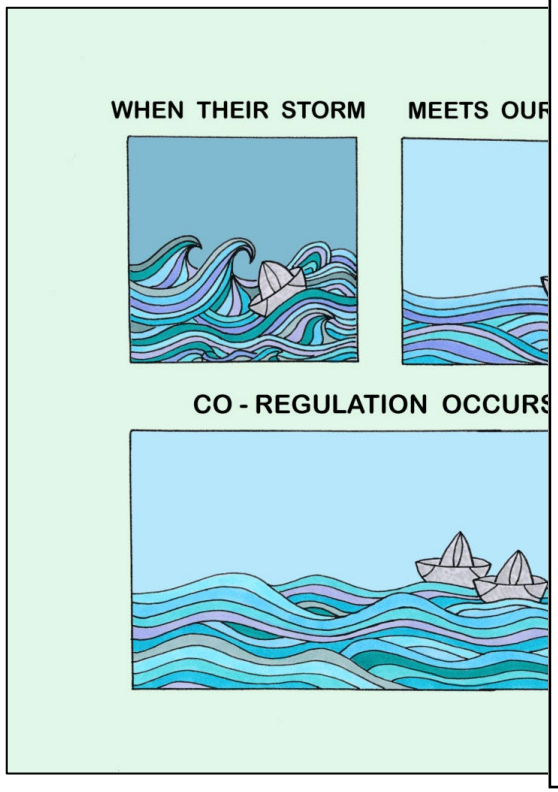
Teach Your Students About Their Environment

Talk to your students about the impact of stressors in the classroom and teach them how to use what you have put in place in their environment (e.g. noise cancelling headphones or a stationary bike) to help them better self-regulate.

Different *Spaces* for Different *Needs*

Photo Credit: Cassie St. Amand (Applejacks Preschool)

The Powe
Co-Regulat



Feeling *Stress* Coming On Like a *Sneeze*

Gentle reminders :

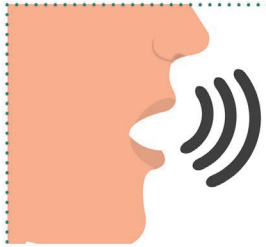
- Self-Reg is a process, not a quick fix.
- Prioritize your own stress reduction. You cannot co-regulate if you are dysregulated.
- Always keep asking “Why?” and “Why now?”

What Helps?

Do a **spring cleaning**

Do a **noise audit** and dial down unnecessary sources of noise where you can

Bring more **nature** into your space



Observe your own **voice** and how to use it

Use **natural colors** in your space

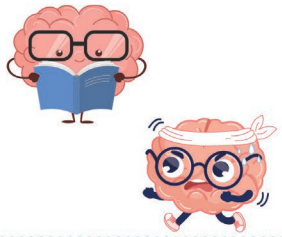
What Helps?

Use **predictable routines/**schedules that are consistent yet with novelty

Build **movement** breaks into your day

Tell **stories,** listen to stories, look for the story within the experiences

Nurture interests



Learn to **recognize the shift from "learning brain" to "survival brain"**

What Helps?

Think **shared** routines and problem-solving

Build in **daily** rituals - time spent purposefully together

Squirrel-away areas: caves, cubbies, tents, tipis

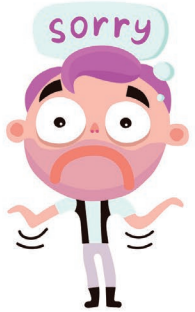
Provide materials, space, and **joy** for camp-building

Allow **“space”** for the emotions - whatever they are

What Helps?

Kindness and patience

Normalizing ruptures in relationships



Apologizing when it is the right thing to do

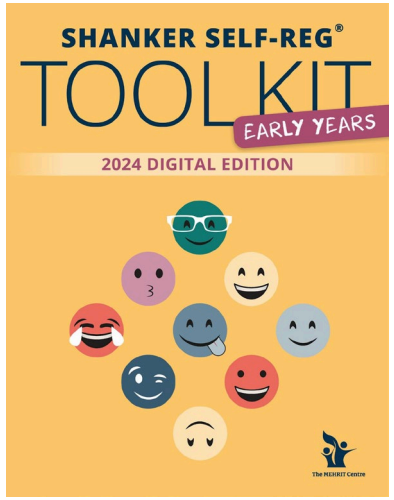
Respectfully saying no to social invites when you know you are depleted and need a break

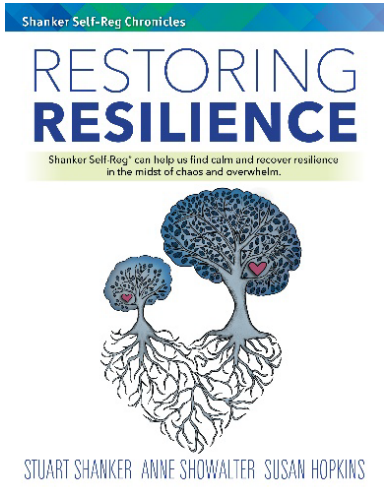
See a child differently, you see a different child.

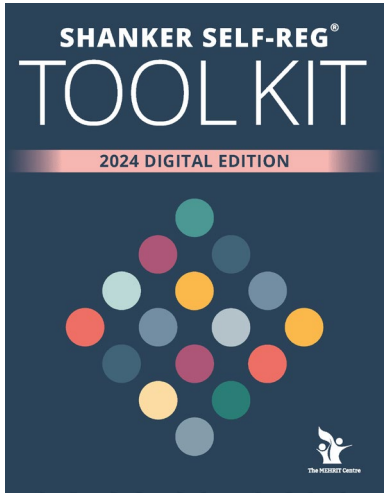
- Dr. Stuart Shanker

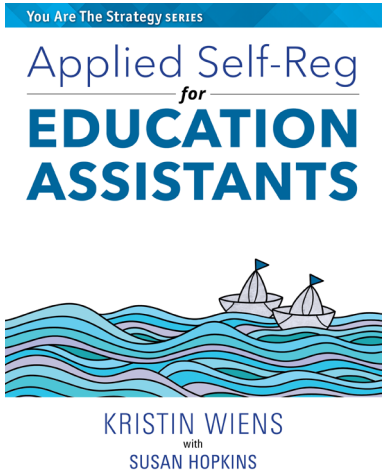
STOP	ADD
CHANGE	**KEEP**

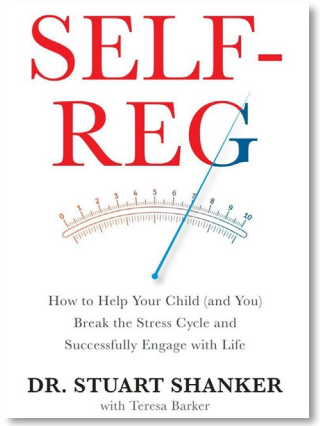
SELF-REG PUBLICATIONS

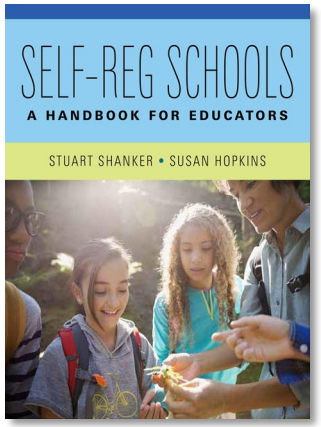


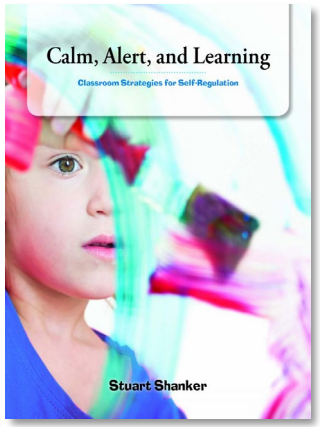


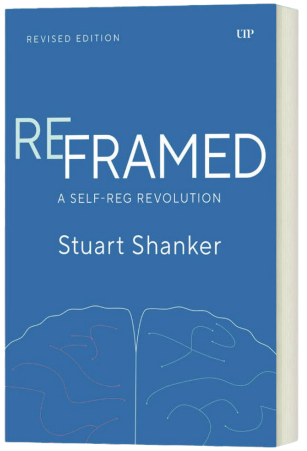












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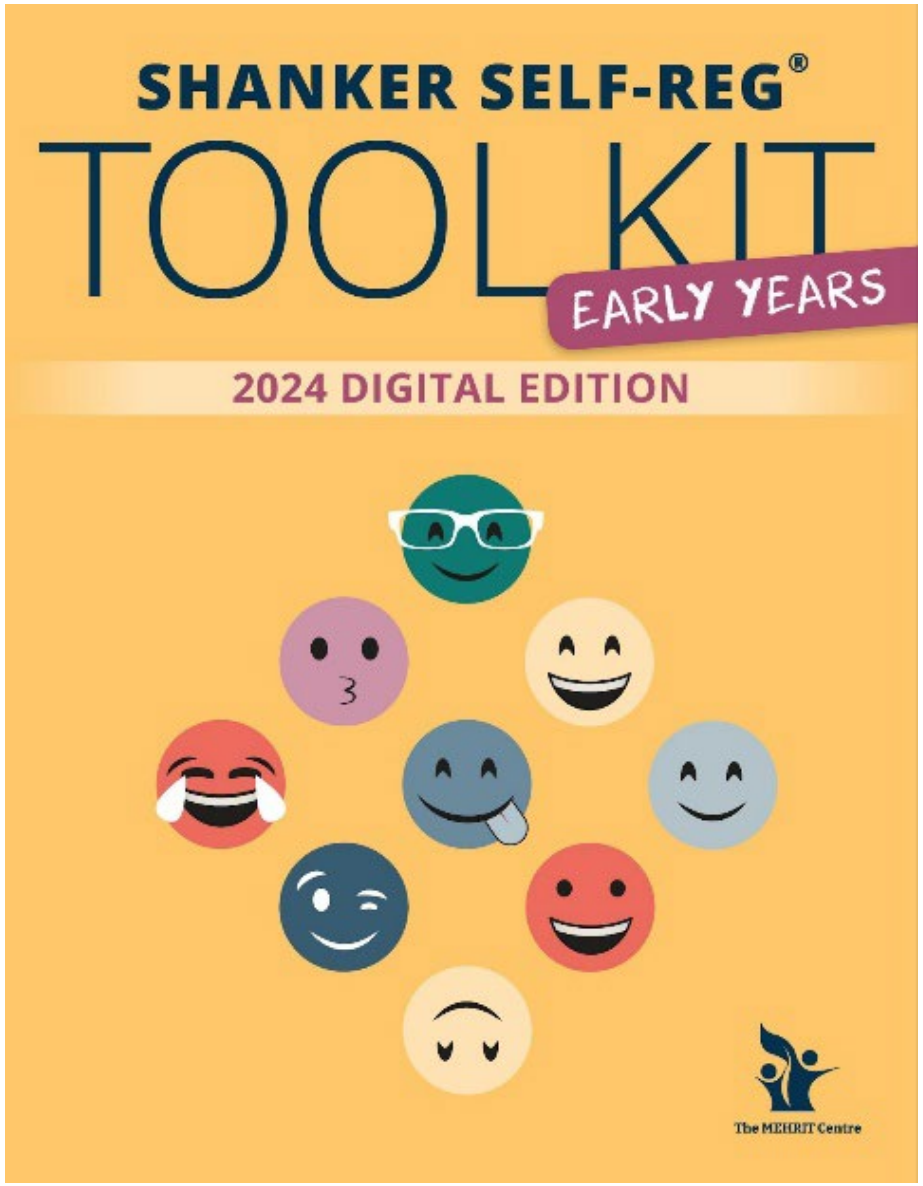
LEADERSHIP FOR SELF-REG SCHOOLS CERTIFICATE



Shanker Self-Reg® Toolkit – Early Years

By popular demand and as follow-up to our TOOLKIT 2024, we are excited to share our newest Toolkit with a focus on the Early Years.

Individual and Team Access is Available.

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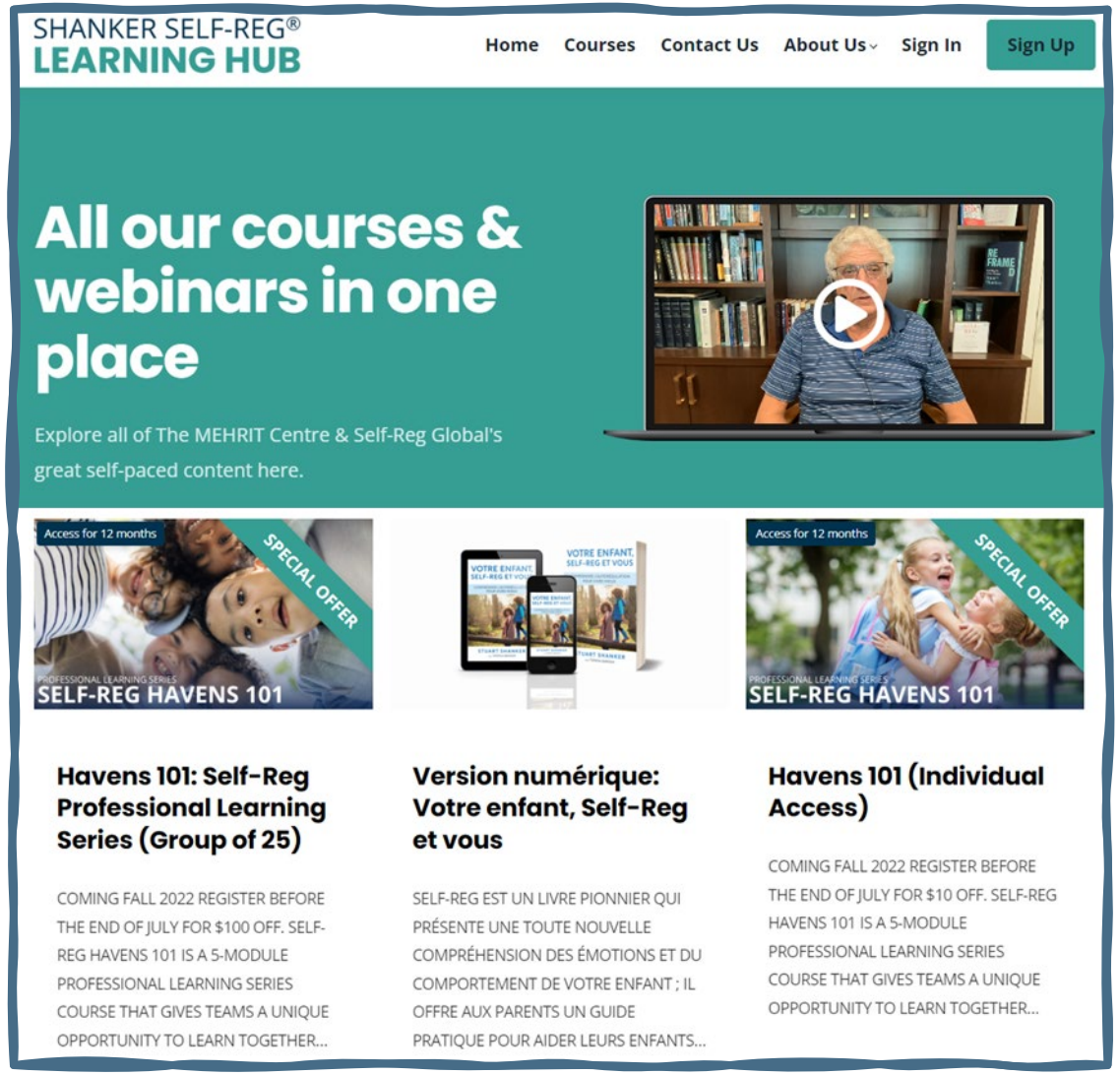

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