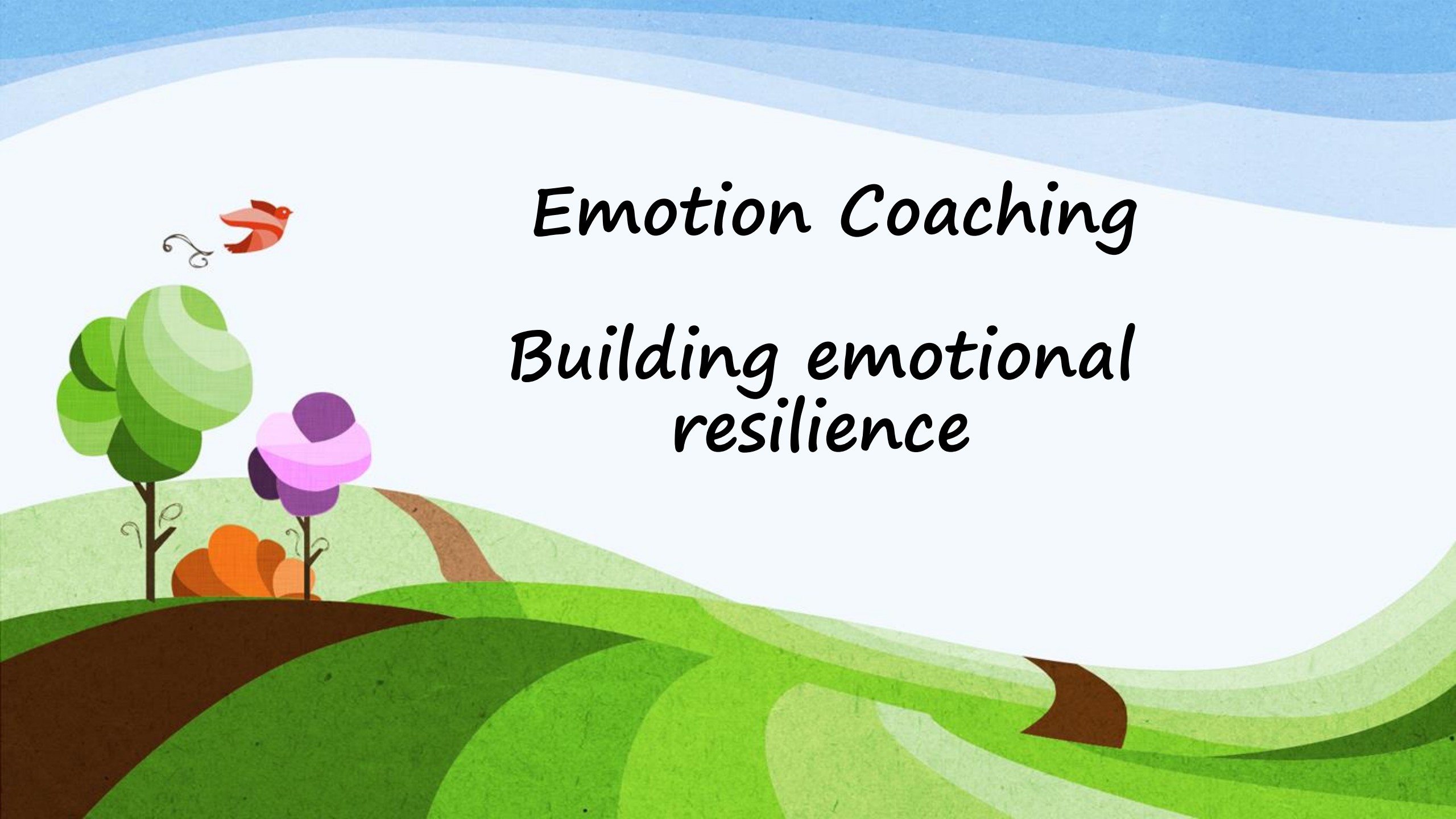


A stylized, colorful illustration of a landscape. The foreground features rolling green hills with dark brown soil. On the left, there is a green tree, a purple flower, and an orange flower. A small red bird is flying in the sky. The background consists of layered blue and white waves, suggesting a sky or water. The text is centered in the upper half of the image.

Emotion Coaching

Building emotional
resilience

Professor John Gottman

“Much of today’s popular advice ignores the world of emotions. Instead, it relies on child-rearing theories that address the children’s behaviour, but disregard the feelings that underlie that behaviour”
(Gottman, 1997)

www.emotioncoaching.gottman.com



Overview

- . Attachment awareness
- Emotional intelligence
- Brain development and brain functioning – impact on emotional intelligence
- Emotion Coaching and its benefits
 - How it works
 - Why it works

Attachment awareness

- Through non invasive scanning of very young babies and children the brain has come to be seen as a 'social organ' – dependent for normal development on stimulation through social interaction.
- The importance of inter connectedness and relationships in human development has been extensively researched. Key early figures are:

John Bowlby, Mary Ainsworth, Mary Main, Patricia Crittendon

Attachment awareness

- Babies are born with the hard wiring neuronal pathways and connections form by the firing of neurones when the baby is stimulated.
- A baby who receives loving attention will form different neuronal pathways from a baby whose parent or care giver is unable to be sensitive and synchronous.
- The 'different' neuronal pathways that form in a baby with a parent or care giver who is unable to be synchronous is thought to be the basis for the formation of unbalanced emotional responses.

Mirror Neurons



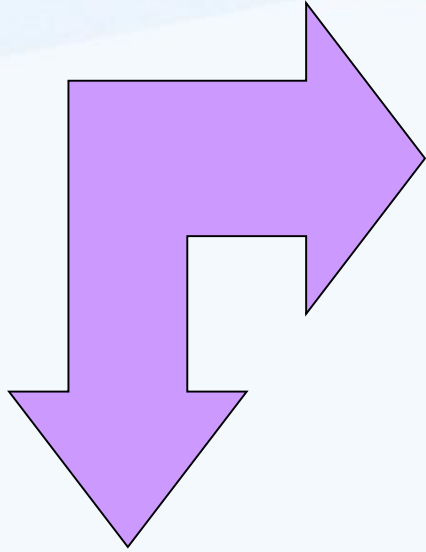
They enable humans to *emulate* others
Still Face Experiment- You Tube

*Your brain is just like a
computer...*



*It processes all the information you get from
the world around and tries to make sense of it.*

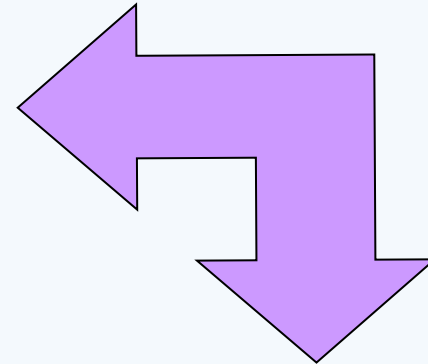
How does your brain work ?



The brain is organized into *different areas of responsibility*. E.g. sight, smell, hearing emotions, logical thought, memory



But the different areas are all connected together by a *network* of neurons

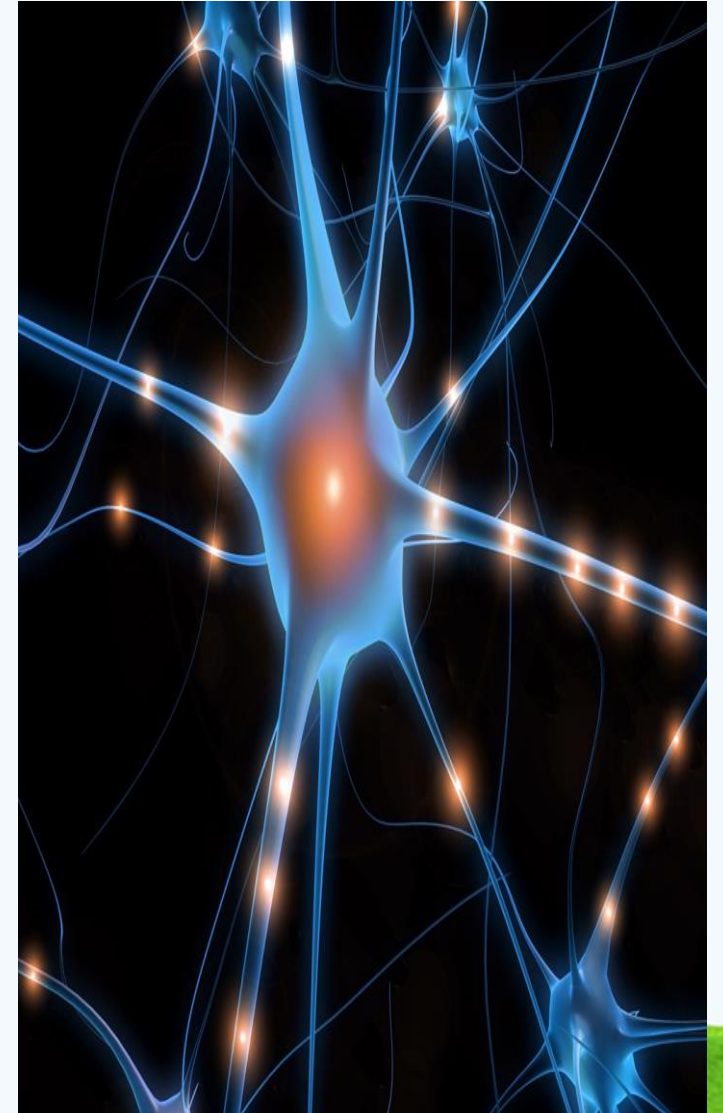


The more you use a network – *the bigger, better and faster it becomes*

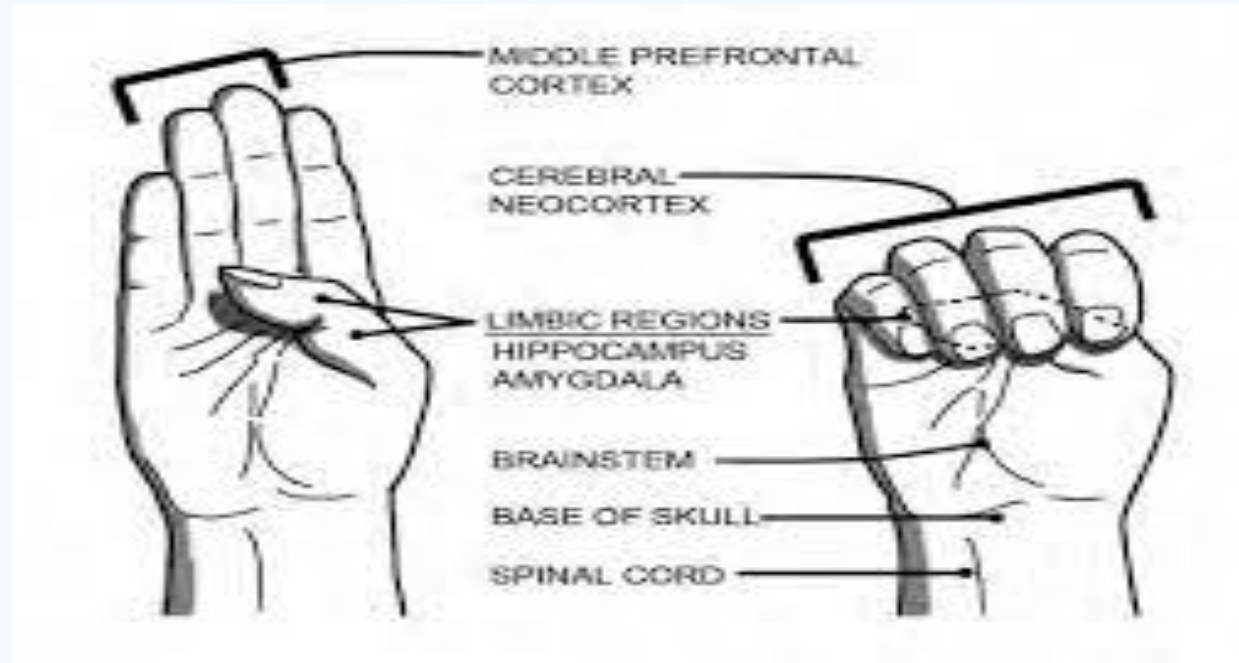
The different areas of the brain receive, respond and store different information but

- There are more connections between the areas of the brain involved with emotions and emotional response and decision making and memory than any other part of the brain.
- All that we see, hear, feel and do passes through the area of the brain involved with emotions and emotional response before it goes onto the area of the brain involved in decision making and memory.

So... your emotions and emotional responses affect your planning, judgements and goal setting

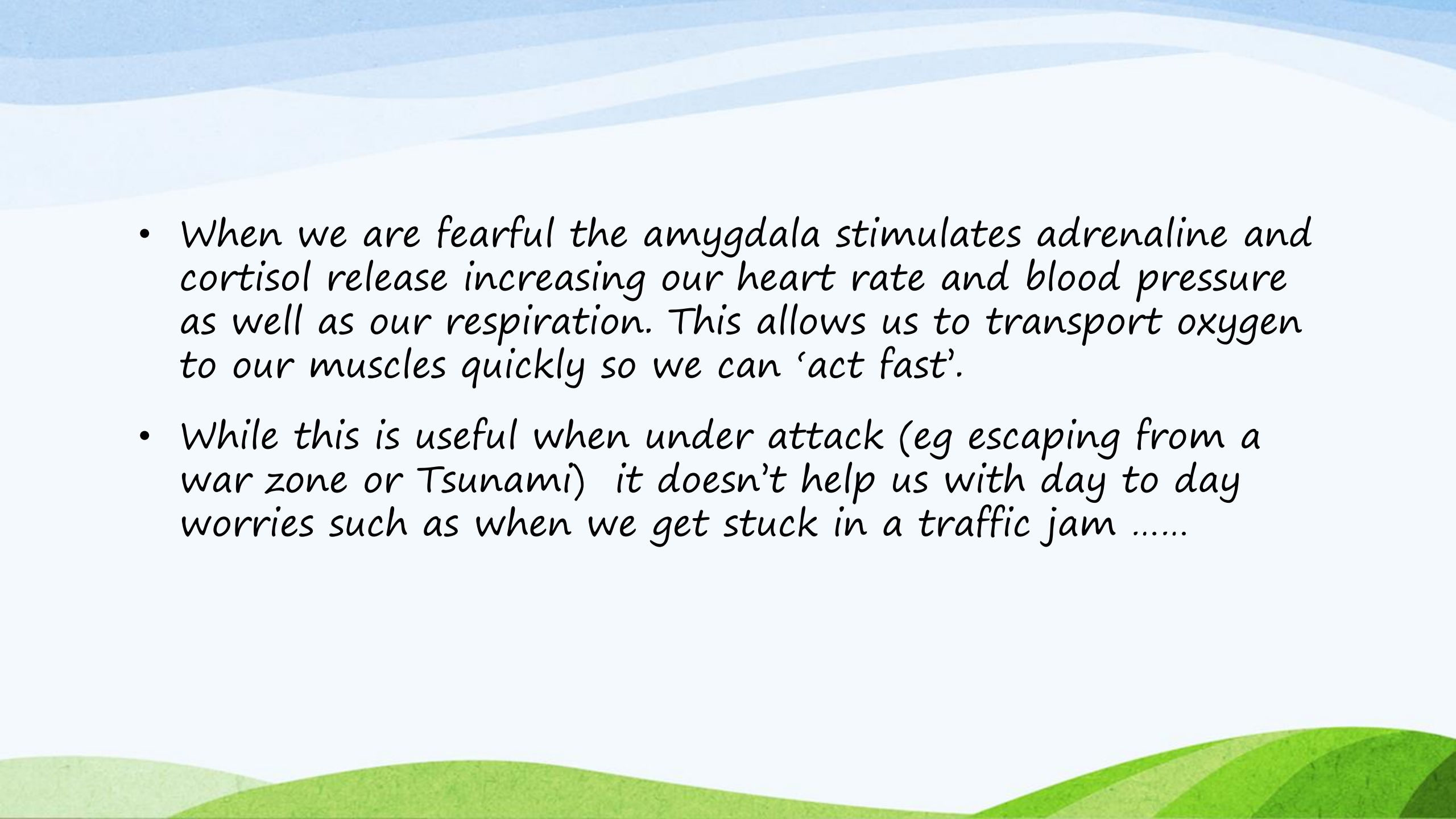


Dan Siegel, The Mindsight Institute Hand Model of the brain



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gm9CIJ74Oxw>

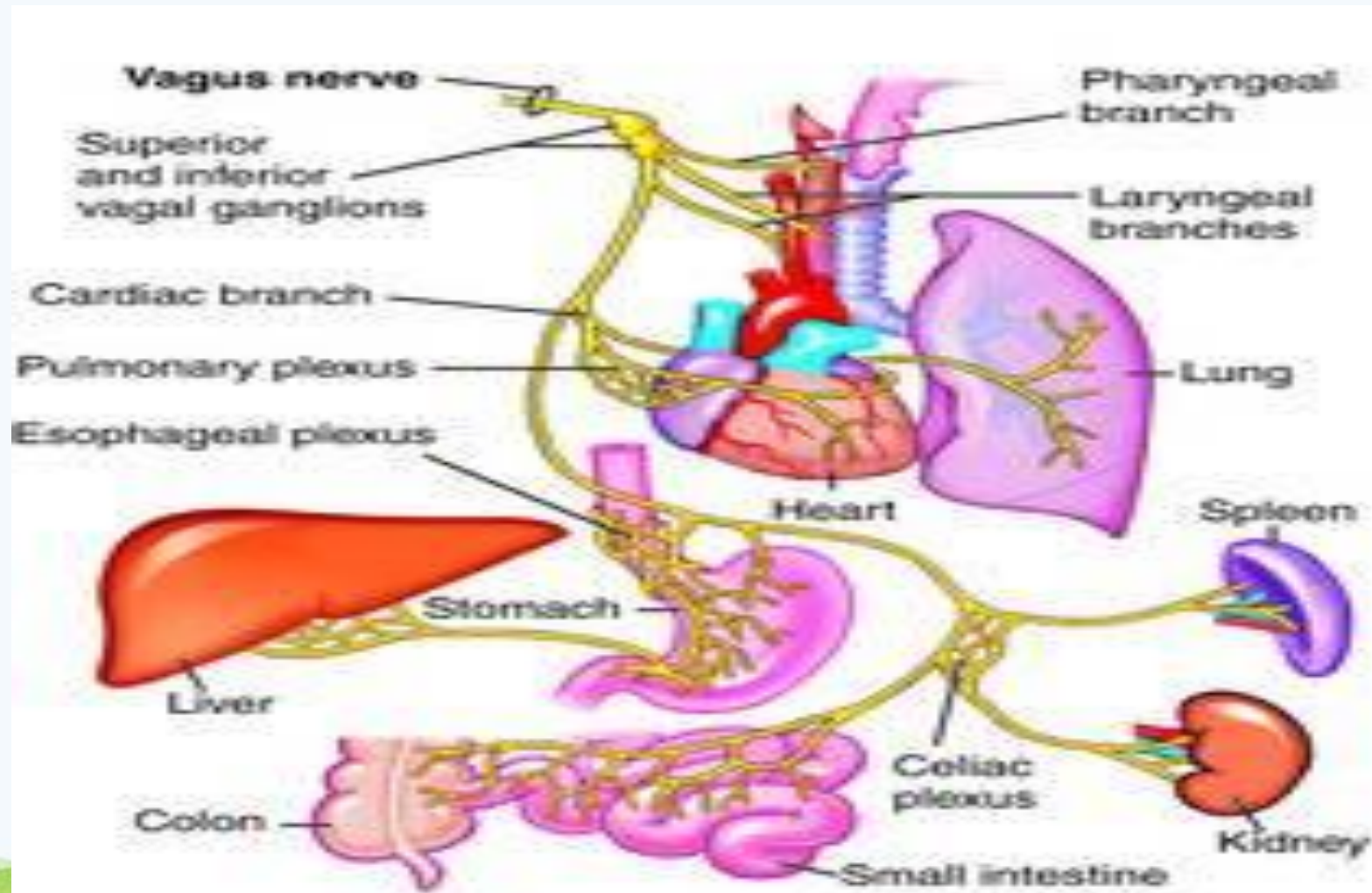
(Siegel, 2012)

- 
- When we are fearful the amygdala stimulates adrenaline and cortisol release increasing our heart rate and blood pressure as well as our respiration. This allows us to transport oxygen to our muscles quickly so we can 'act fast'.
 - While this is useful when under attack (eg escaping from a war zone or Tsunami) it doesn't help us with day to day worries such as when we get stuck in a traffic jam

Emotion Coaching

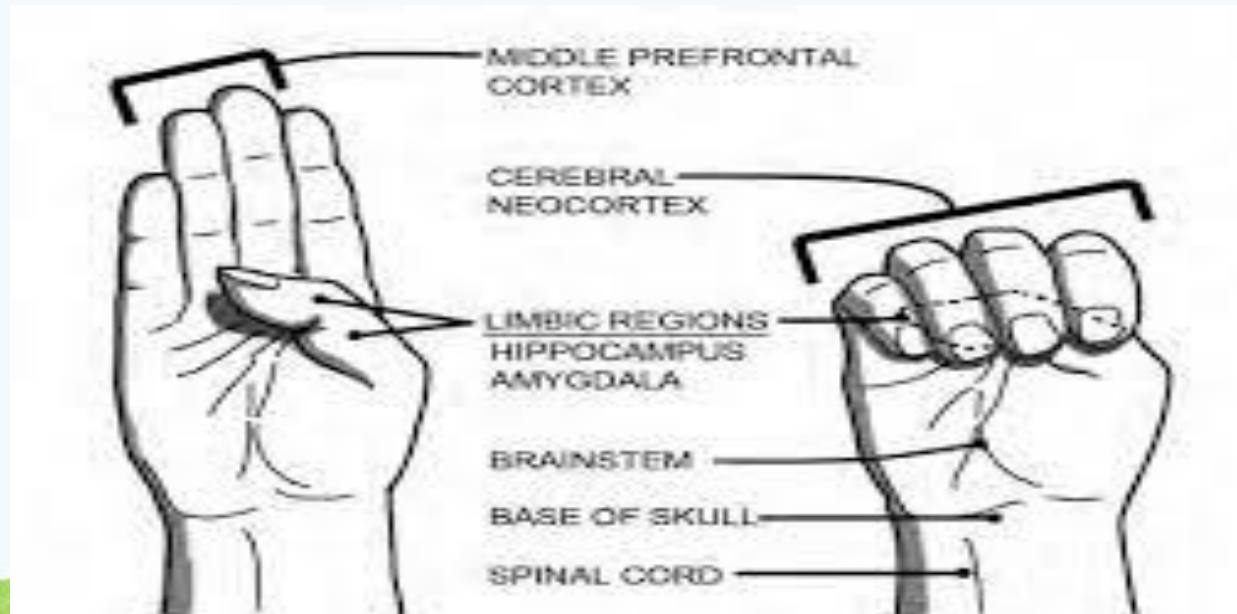
- Dan Siegel's model can also be used to explain emotion coaching – we function at our best when the pre frontal cortex, amygdala and brain stem are linked effectively
- When we flip our lid the pathways between the pre frontal cortex and the amygdala function differently
- When we are calm and emotionally balanced, the pathways function well
- The pre frontal cortex moderates the vagal response and hence the term vagal tone.

The vagal system allows us to maintain continued social engagement by modulating and fine-tuning sympathetic arousal during emotional interpersonal exchanges” (Cozolino, 2006: 61)

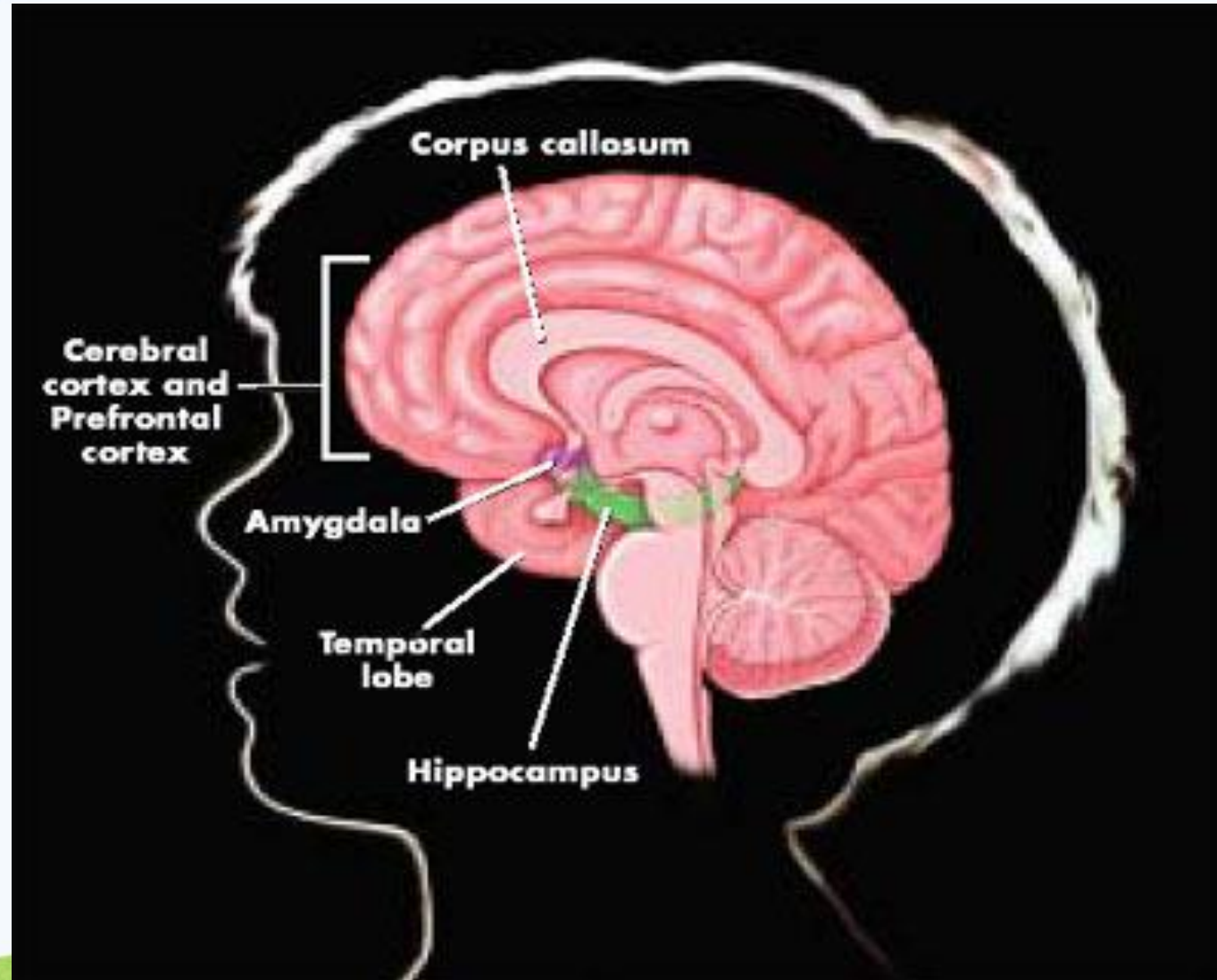


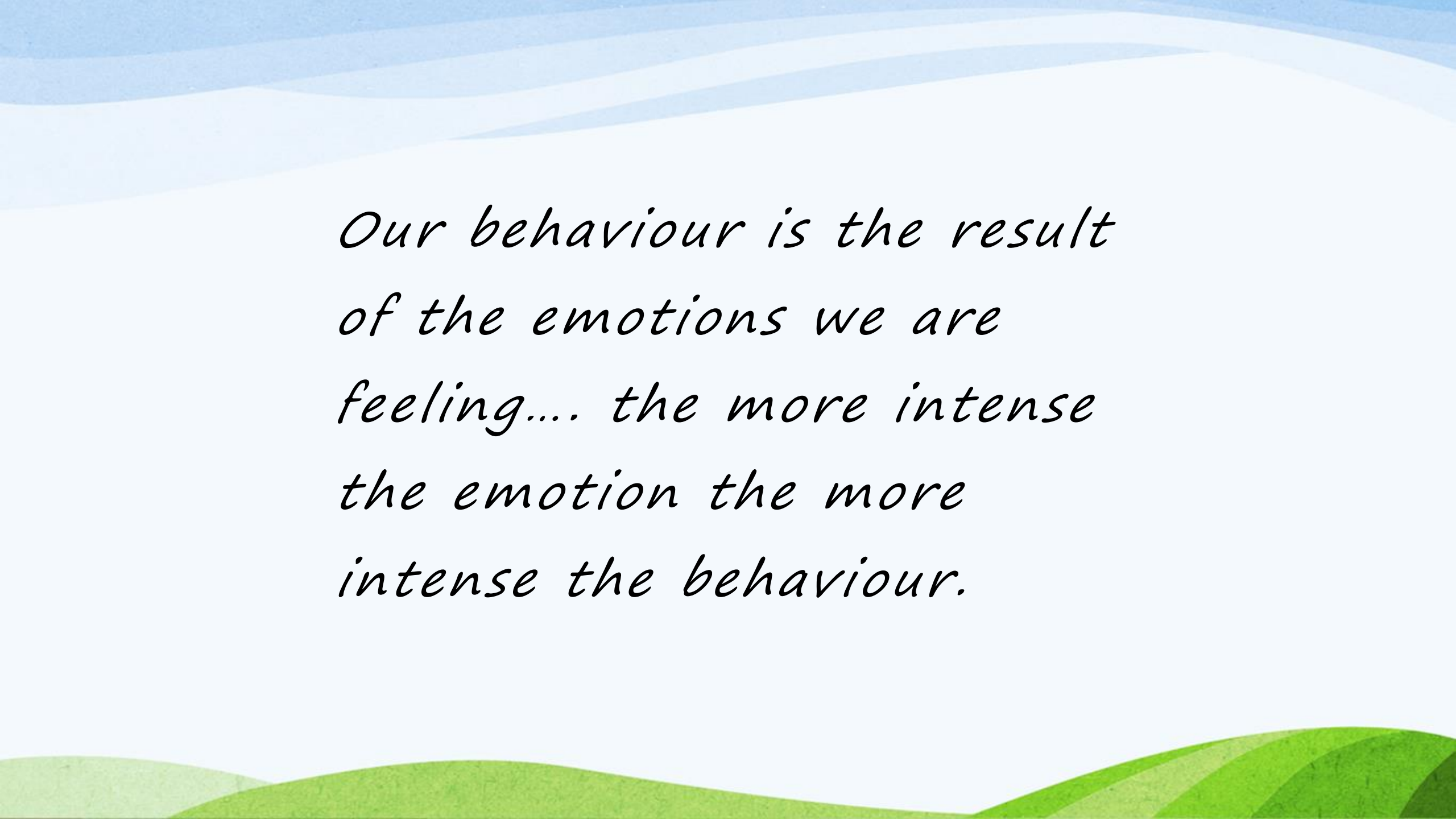
Emotion Coaching

- When we flip our lid the pre frontal cortex is less effective in triggering vagal tone and brain stem responses are less well moderated



Young children (pre school) – Parents, Carers, Teachers act as the child's frontal brain (co dependence) children become independent at different rates





*Our behaviour is the result
of the emotions we are
feeling.... the more intense
the emotion the more
intense the behaviour.*

What is Emotional Intelligence?

- Identify and understand your own emotions.
- Successfully use emotions during social interactions.
- Use your emotional awareness to guide you when solving problems.
- Deal with frustration and be able to wait to get what you want.
- Keep distress from overwhelming your ability to think.
- Be in control of how and when you express feelings.

What is Emotional Intelligence

- It allows you to have awareness and control over what you do
- It results in lower levels of stress, which are associated with better health
- Enables more satisfying friendships and lasting intimate relationships
- You can sooth yourself and are therefore able to calmly focus, concentrate and think when faced with a challenging situation
- It makes you more resilient (better able to deal with change and stress).

How does emotional competence develop?

- Temperament
- Parental modelling, parental reactions to emotion expression, discussion of emotions
- Family emotional climate
- Parental Meta-emotion philosophy (MEP)
 - The way we think and feel about emotions
 - Comes from our family of origin experience

Eisenberg et al, 1998; Gottman et al 1997

Emotion Socialisation Styles

- Four patterns of responding to children's emotions
 1. **Emotion Disapproving:** disapproves or is critical of emotions being expressed (particularly uncomfortable emotions)
 2. **Emotion Dismissing:** ignores uncomfortable emotions.
 3. **Laissez Faire:** accepts all emotions but fails to place guidance around behaviour.
 4. **Emotion Coaching:** values all emotions and helps understand feelings while also guiding behaviour.

Gottman, J. M. and J. DeClaire (1997). The heart of parenting: How to raise an emotionally intelligent child. London, Bloomsbury.

Emotion disapproving responses

Disapproves of negative emotions – viewed as

- a sign of weakness, lack of control, unconstructive
- lacks empathy, noticeably critical and intolerant
- tries to get rid of negative emotions via discipline, reprimand, punishment
- focuses on the behaviour rather than the emotions generating the behaviour
- more likely to view negative emotional displays as a form of manipulation, lack of obedience, sign of bad character
- often motivated by need to control and regain power and/or to 'toughen up' child

Emotion dismissing responses

- You might be warm and concerned but do not respond to the child's emotions.
- Or you might:
 - Jump straight to problem-solving (e.g., offer advice "You should have...")
 - Ask 'why...'
 - Tell the child not to worry
 - Immediately offer distractions or reassurance
 - Moralise (the parental agenda, values)
 - Take another person's side instead of the child's perspective
 - Immediately explain why..... (defensive responding)

What we think about disapproving/ dismissing messages sent to child

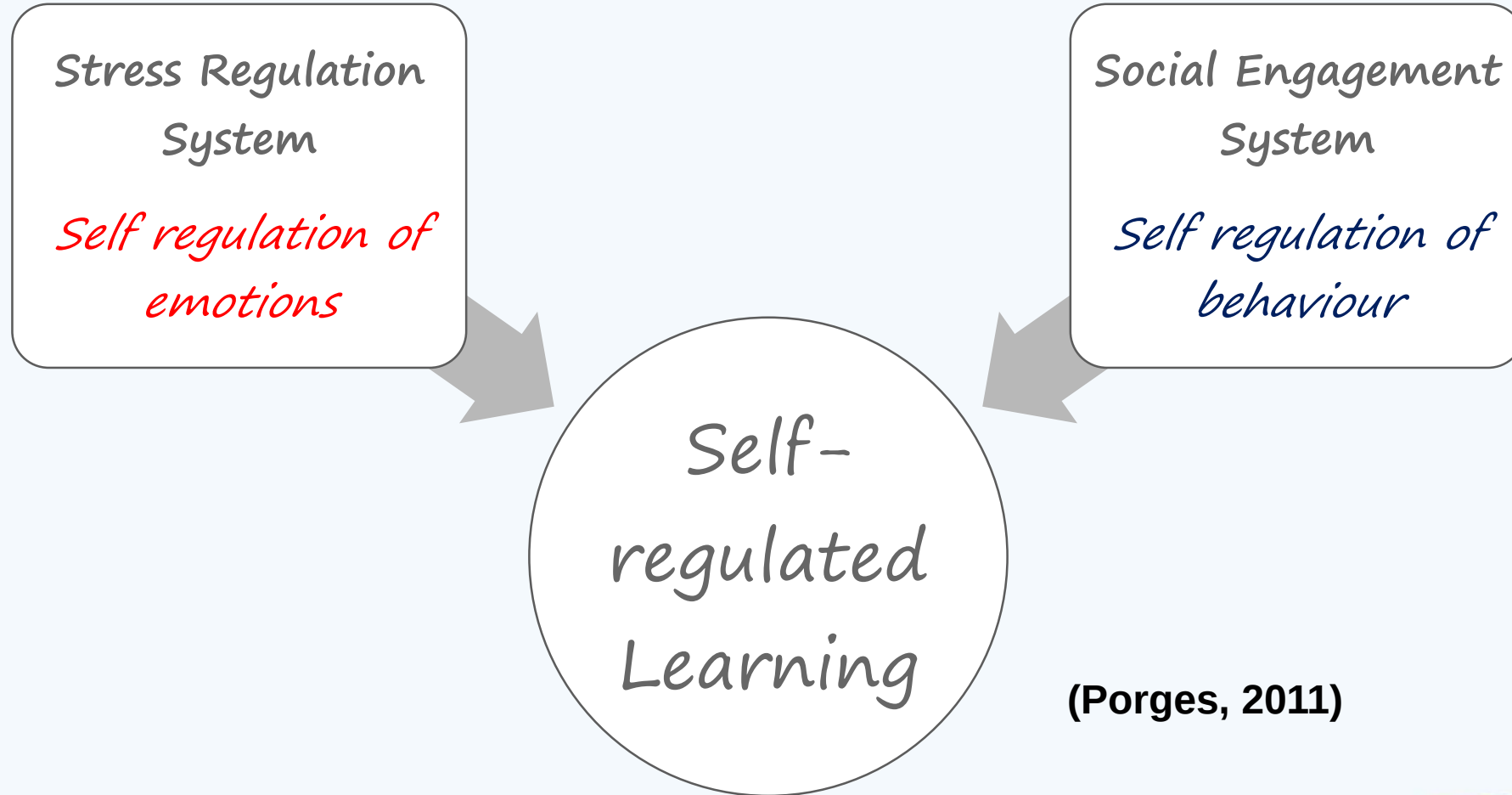
"It works so it must be good!"

- *BUT the actual message is.....*
- *What you are feeling is not right, your assessment of the problem is wrong, you must not feel this way*
- *Child does not learn to trust own feelings affecting decision-making*
- *Not given opportunities to experience emotions and deal with them effectively so grow up unprepared for life's challenges*
- *Not given opportunities to self-regulate or problem-solve*
- *Can lead to suppression of natural emotions, less or lack of self-regulation, reliance on distraction to get rid of emotion*
- *Generates more negative feelings - Resentment, guilt, shame, anger*

Why does emotion coaching work?

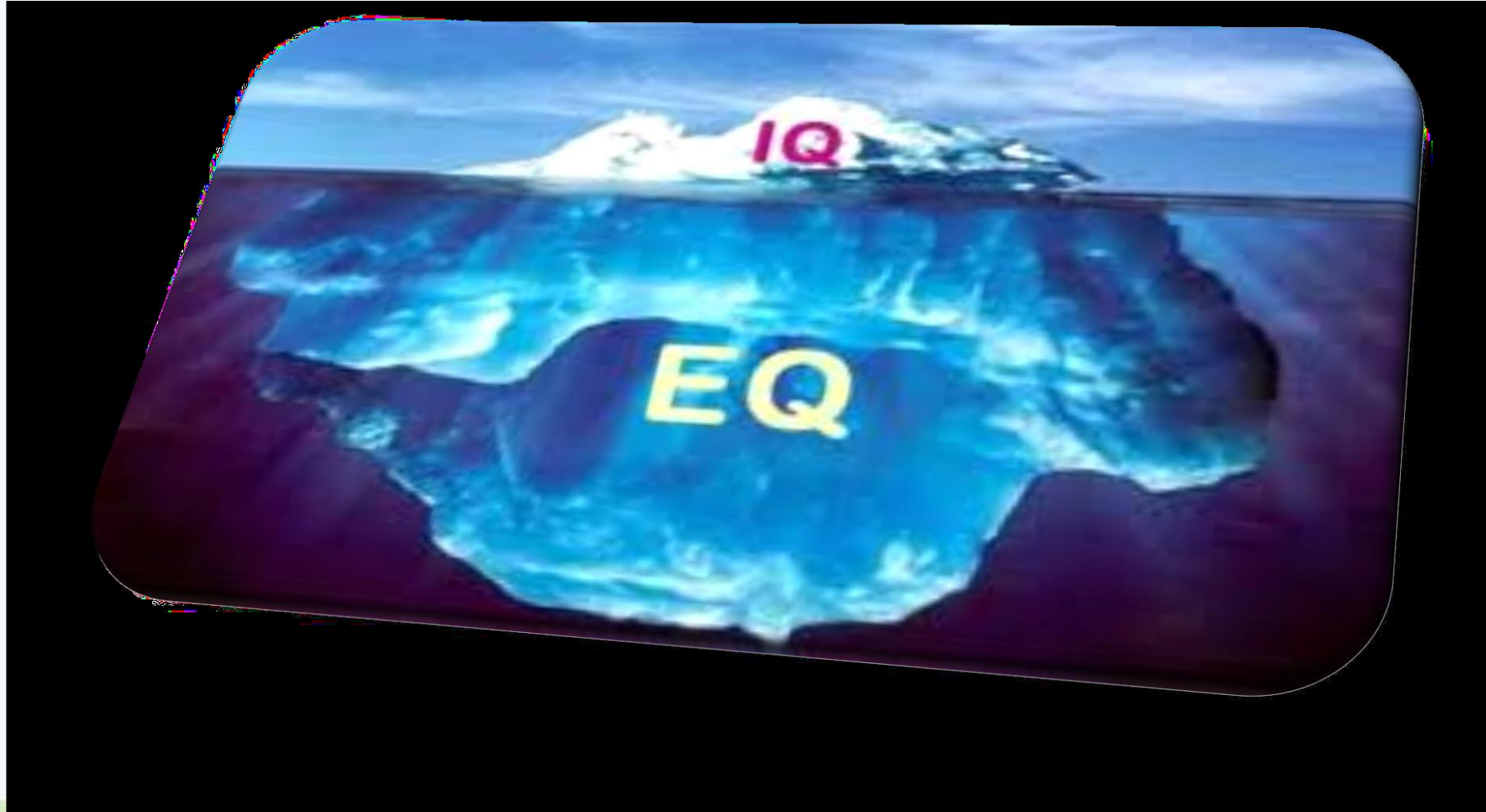
- Emotions are noticed, the child does not have to escalate to have feelings noticed
- Emotions are accepted, conflicts are not escalated
- More optimal time to teach about emotions (frontal lobes are still engaged)
- Can work pro-actively to lower stress chemicals (e.g., check sleep, food, calming/letting off steam activities; be more mindful during high risk times)

Emotion Coaching Helps To Build 2 Key Mechanisms



(Porges, 2011)

Emotion coaching recognises that EQ is more important than IQ



Helping emotional behavioural regulation

Practitioner can help to regulate child's emotions

- Can crucially affect brain development
- Provide a scaffold for the child (co-regulate) until they can self-regulate
- Can do so by 'containing' – sharing, supporting and 'carrying' the child's emotional state by tuning-in/empathising – *'I understand how you feel, you're not alone'*
- Helping the child to cope with and come to terms with boundaries – *'We can't always get what we want'*
- Working with the child to resolve the problem until they can self-resolve and self-repair – *'We can sort this out'*
- This ensures affect (emotional) develops in tune with cognitive (thinking) – i.e. cognitive and affective meaning of experiences

Emotion coaching

- There are five key steps to Emotion Coaching (John Gottman, 1997)
 1. Become aware of the child's emotion, especially noticing lower intensity emotions (e.g., disappointment, frustration).
 2. View these emotions as an opportunity for connecting and teaching.
 3. Communicate understanding and acceptance of the emotion (i.e., show empathy).
 4. Help the child identify and put words to the emotion – verbally label feelings.
 5. Set limits while helping children to problem-solve. Communicate that all wishes and feelings are OK but not all behaviours are OK.

Tuning in to Kids, Sophie Havighurst and Ann Harley (2007)

Gottman, J. M. and J. DeClaire (1997). The heart of parenting: How to raise an emotionally intelligent child. London, Bloomsbury

Other helpful pointers

- Be aware of your own feelings – emotions are contagious
- Manage your own feelings of anxiety/frustration/etc
- Sharing your own worries can make things worse for them
- Acceptance is crucial – show respect and empathise
- ‘Name it to tame it’ – labelling fear can help to calm
- But avoid labelling the child
- Avoid saying ‘Don’t worry/don’t think about it’
- Help the child face their fear by scaffolding gently – be creative
- Externalise the problem and work together with your child

Research evidence

- Children who are emotion coached are more likely to:
 - Have better cognitive abilities
 - Stronger social skills
 - Display more pro-social behaviour
 - Have fewer physical illnesses
 - Lower behaviour problems and lower anxiety or depressive symptoms

Eisenberg et al, 1998; Havighurst et al 2009, 2010, 2012; Kehoe et al 2014

- Greatest benefit for children with higher levels of
 - Emotional negative reactivity
 - Externalising behaviour (particularly at a young age)
 - Anxiety or depressive symptoms

Denham et al, 2000; Duncombe et al 2012; Kehoe et al 2014