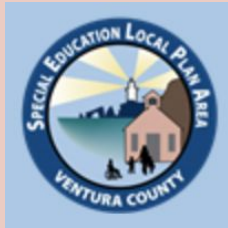# Radical Acceptance: Applied Strategies for Building Hope & Resilience in Service Providers

A Tri-Counties Collaboration

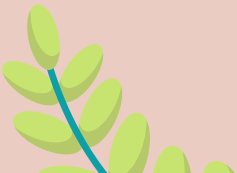Special Education Local Plan Area — VENTURA COUNTY
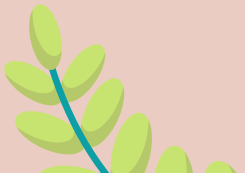
Santa Barbara County SELPA

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY SELPA
INCLUDE · ENGAGE · INSPIRE

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Disclosures: None

01

Welcome & Grounding

Introductions

Ventura County SELPA

Regina Reed, Director
Personnel Development

Santa Barbara County SELPA
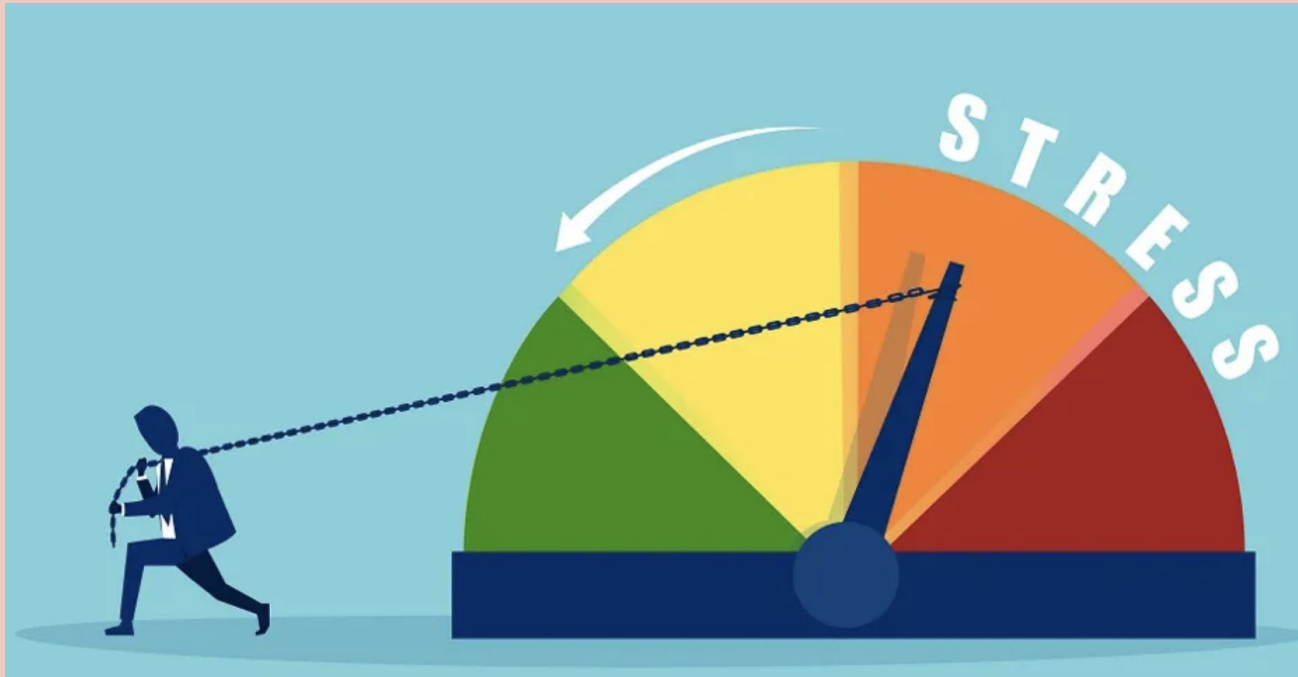
Alison Lindsey, LMFT, PPS
Mental Health Manager

Rosy Bucio, PhD, BCBA-D
Behavior Specialist

San Luis Obispo County SELPA

Ashlee Leonardo,
Education Specialist

Current State of Service Providers Supporting In-and-At-Risk Populations

Brief Recap of How We Got Here

Depression ↑

About 1 in 4 teachers said they were experiencing symptoms of depression in an early 2021 survey by the RAND Corp

Burnout ↑

In the 2022 Gallup Poll on occupational burnout, 44% of American K-12 teachers reported feeling burned out often or always. In the case of teachers at universities and colleges, the figure stood at 35%

Attrition ↑

A survey of 3,621 members of the National Education Association (NEA) revealed that 67% of these leading educators consider burnout to be a "very serious" issue.

- Devlin Peck

Increased Needs

Mental Health
Behavior
Learning Loss

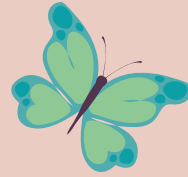# Ok, so now what???

Building Resilience   Building Hope

02
Informed
Consent

"Transformation is often more about unlearning than learning."

-    Richard Rohr

Acknowledgments

This work is hard

…and what we do matters.

…and we are making a difference.

…and there is a way to talk about the hard that strengthens connection and builds resilience.

This work is hard.

You can expect to be yelled at, insulted, disrespected, intimidated, cussed at, hit, kicked, etc. You can also expect to support students who are intoxicated, being sexually trafficked or otherwise abused, getting into fights, or who make threats towards themselves, you or others.

How do we cope?

We Remember our Values <u>and</u>...

"We" Care

We create community within our teams built on shared values. We learn to sit in the hard with each other. When we do this, we support a collective shift and create space for new learning and problem-solving to occur.

Self-Care

We develop and engage in wellness practices for ourselves that help us to regulate in the moment and build our window of tolerance so we can weather distress with greater ease.
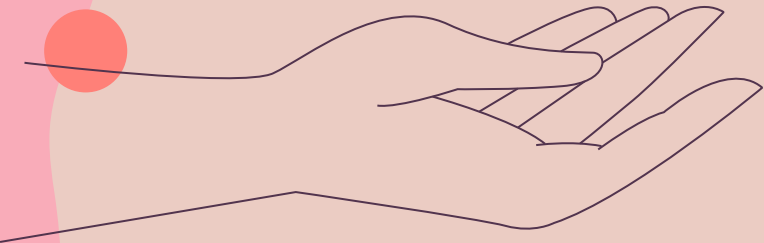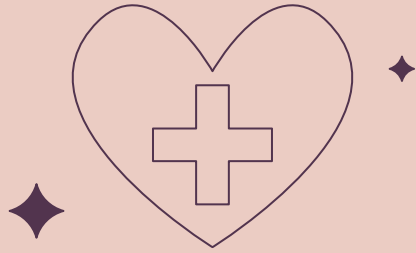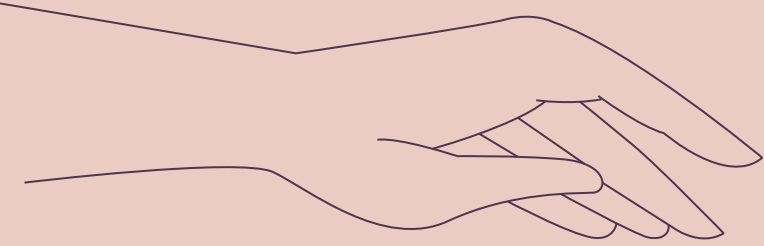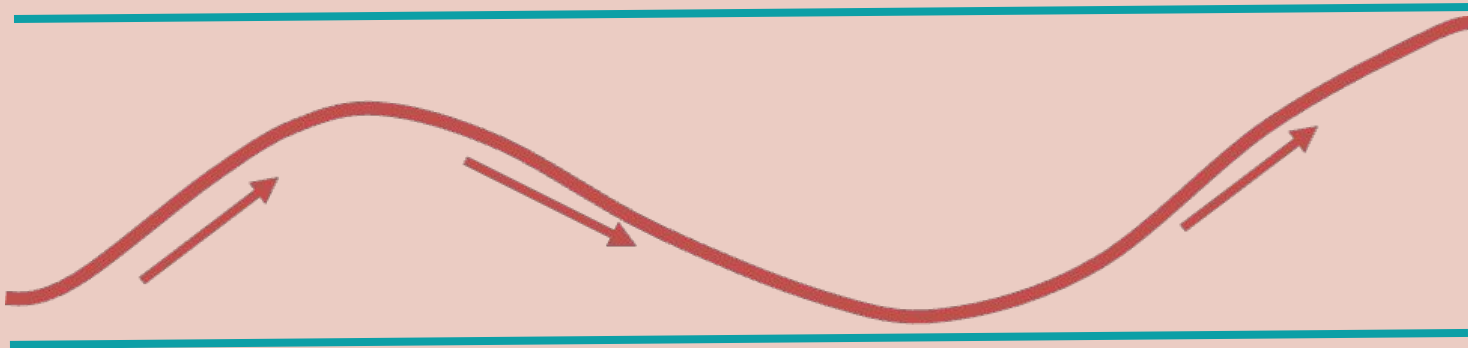
Your wellness is everything.

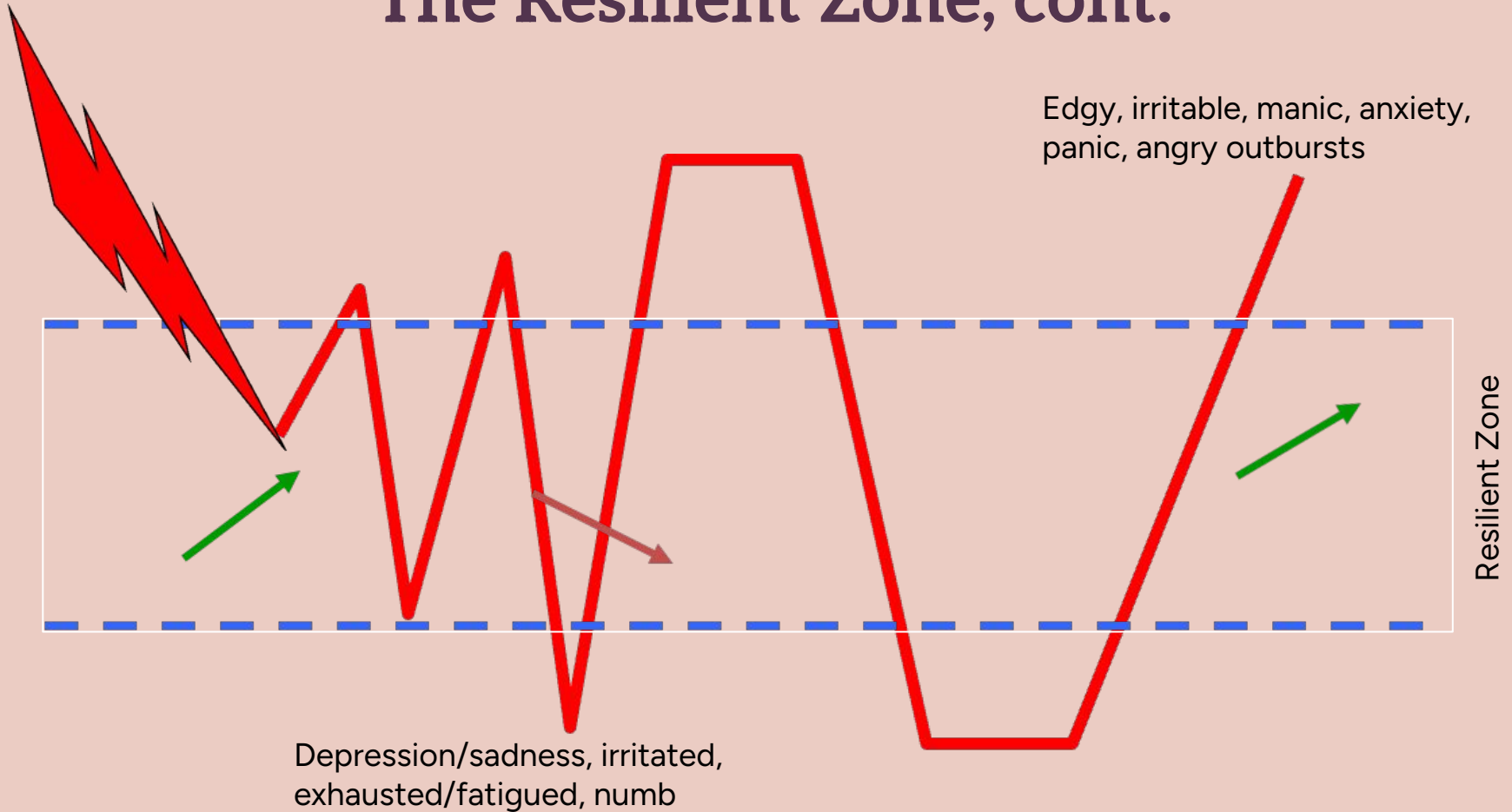We need to learn to tolerate others' distress by first learning to manage our own.

This requires a lot of internal work.

The Resilient Zone

- A state of well-being in mind, body and spirit
- When in the Resilient Zone, one is able to handle the stresses of life
  - You can be annoyed or even angry but do not feel like you will lose your head
  - You can be sad, but not feel like you will be washed away by the river of sorrows

The Resilient Zone, cont.

Edgy, irritable, manic, anxiety, panic, angry outbursts

Resilient Zone

Depression/sadness, irritated, exhausted/fatigued, numb

Expanding our Resilient Zone

Notice
Learn the internal signs telling you that you're out of your resilient zone

Acknowledge
Accept where you are and engage in a grounding practice or seek support

Practice
Try something different next time based on new learning

Reflect
Journal about or verbally process your experience

03

Stress Response System

Why Understanding Stress Response System is Critical for Service Providers

Chronologically & Developmentally Appropriate Expectations

potential power struggles
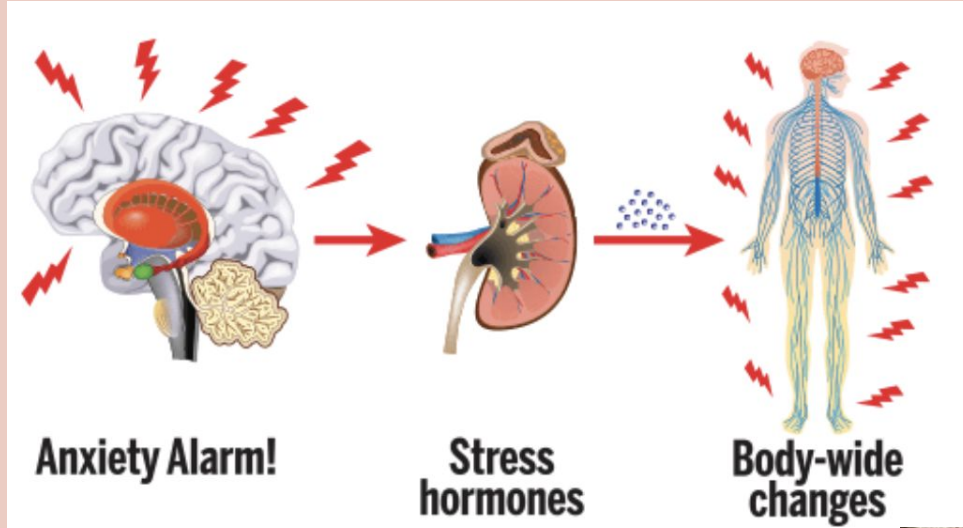
potential dissonance & and burnout

learning opportunities

staff wellbeing and satisfaction

Neuroscience: Stress Response System

Anxiety Alarm!   Stress hormones   Body-wide changes

anxietycentre.com

Neuroscience: Stress Response System

The stress response system is a neural pathway that involves the autonomic nervous system (ANS) to help the body adapt to stress. The ANS is made up of two parts:

Sympathetic Nervous System

Triggers the "fight or flight" response; think of it as the "gas."

Parasympathetic Nervous System

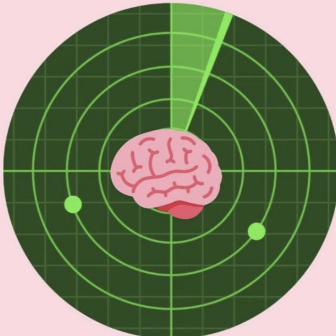Triggers the "rest and digest" response; this of it as the "break."

Neuroscience: Neuroception

Term for how the neural circuits of our Autonomic Nervous System (ANS) are constantly scanning our environments for potential "sign" of threats. In other words, our spidey sense.
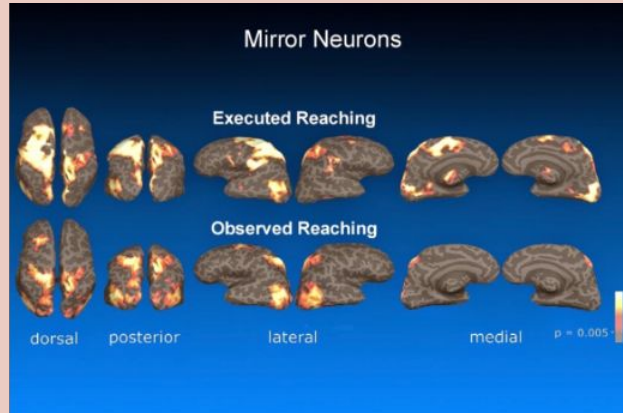

Our Safety System

Neuroception

Our Safety System is constantly scanning for safety and danger. Trauma may bias this system.

DR. JUSTINE   @HEYDRJUSTINE

Brain Development: Mirror Neurons

Why Do We Need To Know This?

Without this knowledge we will:

1) Continue to rely on default ways of <u>reacting</u> to behavior that are not aligned with current knowledge and don't help our own nervous systems or those we are serving

2) Have difficulty learning new ways of <u>responding</u> to behavior that are aligned with science and are more helpful to ourselves and others

04
Adult Skills

Expanding our Resilient Zone

Notice
Learn the internal signs telling you that you're out of your resilient zone

Acknowledge
Accept where you are and engage in a grounding practice or seek support

Practice
Try something different next time based on new learning

Reflect
Journal about or verbally process your experience

Strategies for When You're in Distress

Ask for help
Allow a colleague to take over.

Observe
Objectively observe the behavior without intervening.

Grounding
Focus on some aspect of the physical world.

Pause, think, then do
Pause what you're doing, think about how you're going to support, then respond.

Breathe
Take three slow, deep breaths and/or physiological sigh.

Resourcing
Think of a time, place, or activity that helps you feel at ease or joyful.

Adult Skills

Definition

Supporting students behaviorally requires <u>unlearning</u> default ways of *reacting* and *learning* more adaptive ways of *responding*. Doing so benefits our own adult well-being, as well as the students and teams we support.

Strategies and Tips

AWARENESS

Notice
Monitor your own physiological responses. For example, when a student is struggling, how is your heart rate, the pace of your breathing, your facial expressions. Simply notice; this will help you become more consciously aware.

Label It
Once you notice your physiological state, label it without judgement for yourself or the student you're supporting. "Yep, my stress cycle is activated. My heart is racing." Focus on using language that describes what you're feeling vs judgements.

Tolerate It
Stress cycles don't last forever. Part of completing a stress cycle is increasing our own distress tolerance to these body signals vs trying to shut them down. We will be okay. My stress cycle will subside.

REAL TIME

Physiological Sigh
When stress response cycles are activated, a quick way to respond to our own nervous system is to use this very deliberate way of breathing. One long inhale followed immediately by a second super quick inhale then slowly exhaling. Repeat 2-3x.

Of Course…And
How we talk about hard things matters. Acknowledge the hard *and* the work. "<u>Of course</u> he is having a hard time *and* we are helping". Replace negative self-talk with this. Multiple feelings can co-exist.

Pause & Offer Help
Before presenting more demands to the student: pause, offer help. It's okay to reduce/pause talking and wait until they are ready for your help.

Pass the Torch
When your stress response activation is prolonged ask to switch to avoid power struggles. This is key!!

PRACTICE

Coping Skills
Find two coping skills that you will focus on developing proactively. Choose things thing you can do in the classroom while supporting students and practice daily. For example, every hour label 5 things you see/hear/feel. This is also great modeling for students.

Breath Work & Water
Proactively work on your breathing. Set a timer at intervals throughout the hour to take breaths and drink water prior to your nervous system being activated and students struggling.

Distress Tolerance
Stress response cycles are a part of being human and most of the time they are activated because we have little distress tolerance. Learn to talk about how to tolerate the distress of <u>students</u> vs becoming overly activated too.

Things to Avoid:

- Jumping into correcting the student; instead take a second to reflect on your own nervous system & regulation. A dysregulated adult cannot regulate a dysregulated student. And yes, we ALL get dysregulated as adults.
- Ignoring the physiological cues that your stress activation cycle is <u>not</u> slowing down. Ask for help as soon as it is possible. This usually means once the student is <u>safe</u> and another adult can switch with you. Take a few minutes to reset.
- Talking negatively about the student and/or their family. This does not help and only increases your reactivity the next time.

Additional Ways to Expand Your Resilience Zone

Start your day in a mindful way.

What does this mean to you? What are some things you can do to be mindful?

Try not to engage in activities that don't serve you.

What are some activities that you can avoid?

Practice self-care.

These can be physical, mental, or social. What are some examples of each type of self-care?

HOPEFUL
moment

All I need to do right now is breathe.

What is HOPE to you?

Take a moment to connect with how you experience HOPE

Gratitude Tree and Reflection Activity
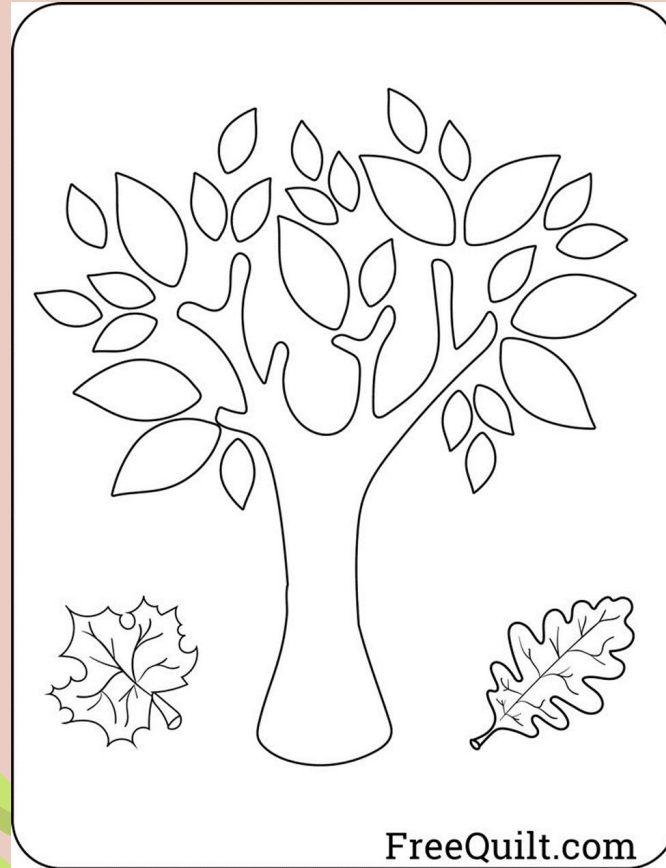
Thank You!

Do you have any questions?

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